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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted by
David Eli Stern

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

Rain Men:
Honi the Circle-Drawer, Hanina Ben Dosa and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity

This thesis entails a close literary and thematic analysis of all the talmudic stories about Honi ha-Meaggel and Hanina ben Dosa, as well as selected aggadot about other charismatic figures which are found in B.T. Hagiga, Chapter Three. The selection of Honi and Hanina as focii for this study was due to the fact that they are the most prominent Jewish "holy men" in early rabbinic literature and lived at a time of tremendous change and schism, the first century BCE -first century CE. The author attempts to set the stories against the backdrop of this period of instability as well as analyzing them in light of the amoraic context in which these stories were redacted.

Having decided on the topic of the charismatic activity of certain rabbinic figures, the author proceeded to read and critique a number of the major studies about charismatic and holy men, chief among them being the work of Max Weber and Peter Brown, which is written from the perspective of the sociology of religion. As a result of this research, Mr. Stern was able to shape a series of key questions with which to approach the rabbinic stories as well as isolate common cultural characteristics of holy men and their portraits. Mr. Stern, as he studied the stories about Honi and Hanina, attempted to see what they reveal about the attitude of the rabbis toward holy men, to what extent they tell us about the relationship between charismatic activity and institutional authority, why these stories are included in the rabbinic corpus and these stories represent a response to human need for order and meaning in a chaotic world.

In Chapter Two, the author describes the historical contexts in which Hanina and Honi were purported to live as well as that of the amoraic period in Babylonia in order to provide the reader with the contextural framework to better understand the stories under consideration. His goal is to find out how these stories function for the rabbis and what they reveal about the rabbis' attitudes toward characteristics. In order to do so, he outlines the instability of First and Second Century C.E. Jewish Life in Palestine, which was characterized by sectarian schism, belief in spirits and demons, and the chaos experienced with the destruction

of the Temple. Following the loss of independence and the collapse of the cult, there was a tremendous need for a reassertion of rabbinic control, centralization and institutional authority, as was the case too during the amoraic period in Babylonia. It was in that context that the activity of pagan and Christian wonder wonders and the belief in magic provided a backdrop for the shaping of the stories about rabbinic holy men.

In Chapter Three, the author proceeds to focus on the stories about Honi, the circle - drawer, especially those concering his activity vis-a-vis rain, drought and fasting, found in Tractate Ta'anit. These stories reveal Honi's closeness to God, his popularity amongst the masses, his personal charisma, yet at the same time his use of conventional rabbinic vocabulary and forms. Occasionally, however, in these stories Honi's activites are criticized by rabbinic authority figures, the chief example of which is found in the story of Honi and the carob planter.

In Chapter Four, the author proceeds to analyze the larger corpus of traditions concerning Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, which describes his reputation, rehearses his teachings and links him with a variety of rabbinic personages, including Rabban Gamliel and Yohanan ben Zakkai Though he is a charismatic figure with majestical power, he is pictured as being concerned about the needs of his fellow Jews and involved in righteous acts. He is considered a true tzaddik, but has unique ability to perform miracles, effect rescue and bring healing.

Since B.T. Ta'anit, Chapter Three is the main source for stories about Honi and to some extent Hanina, the author in Chaper Five analyzes a selection of other stories found in this tractate which deal with charismatic behavior. Most of these stories involve individuals who cause the rain to fall, while others deal with the prevention of disasters, protection from plagues and other actions affecting the natural order. Most of these aggadot bear out the characteristics of charismatics which we saw in the previous material, while emphasizing the rabbinic attitude that holy men can perform miracles due to their humility before God and their merit.

In his Conclusion, Mr. Stern summarizes the rabbinic ambivalences towards charismatic activity which he found in the traditions analyzed. The rabbis at one and the same time describe the activity of holy men in detail, but also devalue it as something to be emulated. They also try to institutionalize it by juxtaposing it to rabbinic concepts of righteous behavior, relationship with God and the observance of the commandments. Frequently, the rabbis de-emphasize the power of the individual charismatic by making sure that the structure and thrust of the story about him subordinates the miracle performed to the holy man's righteous behavior. In essence, these stories underscore the possibility of holy men and their power within the parameters of a rabbinic world view, which stresses God's omnipotence and the human being's need to do God's will.

Although it is very difficult to gain a clear sense of these diverse stories while avoiding the pitfalls of questions regarding their historicity, Mr. Stern has handled this material in a very sophisticated and creative manner. He has studied the various aggadot using the analytic tools of sociology, history and anthropology, while also paying close attention to the nature of the historical contexts in which they were shaped. The questions he brings to bear on these stories enable him to uncover their essential messages and the purpose for which they were created.

To be sure, much more remains to be done with this genre of rabbinic stories, which would add to the analysis, e.g., an overall literary analysis of B.T. Ta'anit III, paying attention to the arrangement of material and the juxtaposition of stories. In addition, further study of Christian and pagan charismatics from the same time period would add a dimension missing in this study.

Nevertheless, Mr. Stern is to be most highly commended for his meticulous analysis, creative approach and clear presentation. He has demonstrated his ability to deal in a sophisticated manner with difficult rabbinic texts, to integrate diverse material and to express his ideas crisply and coherently. His thesis provides us with a creative angle by which to view the rabbinic stories about holy men and a critical approach to rabbinic stories in general.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Norman J. Cohen
Professor of Midrash

April 21, 1989

RAIN MEN:

Ḥoni the Circle-Drawer, Ḥanina ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity

David Eli Stern

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
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Referee: Dr. Norman J. Cohen

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Rabbi Jacob Philip Rudin, zikhrono livrakha.

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PREFACE

My interest in holy man literature began with an undergraduate term paper on the topic of magic in Renaissance drama. In examining plays like The Tempest and Dr. Faustus, I was struck by the extent to which the plays presented magic as a radical means of human assertion in an often inscrutable world. The attempt to control events not only on a natural, but a supernatural, level emerged as an act both consummately presumptuous and at times consummately noble. The plays suggest that in their desire to make sense of a chaotic universe, human beings attempt to establish order and meaning in the natural realm by resorting to supernatural acts. Most important, the desire to transcend the limitations of human capacity, while perhaps more acute in certain periods than others, seemed to be a part of the human condition, a fact of life not only in the turbulence of the English Renaissance, but in all ages.

Four years after completing the term paper, I enrolled in a course at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles entitled "Rabbinic Stories and Rabbinic Self-Image." The course, taught by Dr. Lewis M. Barth, introduced me to holy man literature in general, and particularly to the fascinating genre of rabbinic stories.

As the title indicates, we examined stories about the remarkable capacities of rabbis (most of the figures were later than those studied here) in an attempt to comprehend how the rabbis understood and desired to present themselves.

While this thesis was still two years off, the charismatic bug had bitten. The questions of radical human assertion seemed particularly interesting in a religious context, because the religious enterprise has as one of its primary functions the task of making sense of the world, of helping adherents to discover stability and meaning amidst all of the unanswered questions which confront them day by day. On the one hand, the charismatic individual and the religious institution thereby share the goal of discovering and creating order and meaning in the world; on the other, they employ fundamentally different, and mutually antagonistic, means to reaching the goal. Ultimately, to borrow and bend the concept of Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, both the charismatic and the institution are involved in a "meaning game"; they play, however, by radically different rules.

The selection of Talmudic aggadah as a vehicle for exploring rabbinic attitudes towards charismatic activity was purposeful. First, Talmudic stories have been preserved--as far as I know, Judaism has not preserved any examples of Jewish aretalogy or sacred biography. Moreover, aggadah as a genre seems to embody important issues and tensions which inform charismatic activity in Judaism: the stretching and

breaking of boundaries of expectation, and the opportunity to make meaning by simultaneously altering and adhering to traditional forms and texts. These elements of aggadah become even more compelling in the Talmud itself, where aggadot are placed in juxtaposition and partnership with the halakhot which dominate Talmudic literature.

I selected Honi the Circle-drawer and Hanina ben Dosa as the subjects of this study for a number of reasons. First, they are generally regarded as the clearest and most prominent examples of Jewish holy men in the Talmudic corpus. Moreover, they are compelling because of the period in which they reportedly lived: Honi, during the first century B.C.E. to the first century C.E.; Hanina ben Dosa, during the first century C.E. Honi the Circle-drawer and Hanina ben Dosa thereby act within an historical context of remarkable schisms, doubts and instability. Similarly, the stories about the figures reflect another period of transition and flux, as the Babylonian rabbis attempted to transform and recreate Jewish society in the rabbinic image. The turbulent historical context for both the figures and for the literature which describes them provides an important and fitting element to their charismatic status.

In analyzing the rabbinic stories about Honi the Circle-drawer, Hanina ben Dosa and other figures, this thesis seeks to answer several questions. What do these stories reveal about rabbinic attitudes towards holy men? How do the

stories communicate their diverse messages? What do the texts suggest about the relationship between charismatic and institutional authority in Judaism? To what extent do the texts correspond to or depart from models of charismatic behavior and holy man literature discussed in the first chapter of this study? Why did the rabbis, the representatives of institutional authority, include stories about charismatic figures at all? Finally, what do these stories reveal about Judaism's response to the human yearning for order and meaning in the world?

While the rabbinic attitude towards charismatic activity is more variegated than monolithic, certain tendencies are discernible. First and most important, the texts reflect rabbinic ambivalence. The tradition canonizes and thereby preserves holy man stories; at the same time, the stories often include elements which serve to undercut the wonder-working abilities of the protagonists. Sometimes the cautionary note is explicit, as in Shimon ben Shetah's lemma at the end of the Honi story in Mishnah Ta'anit 3:8. Sometimes the rabbinic attempt to control the image of charismatic figures is more subtle, as in the tendency to link the holy man's unique powers to mainstream Torah learning or to rabbinic models of righteous behavior. The stories thereby reflect and refract both the first chapter's exploration of the relationship between charismatic and

institutional authority, and its examination of holy man narratives.

In the first chapter, I will introduce a number of theoretical considerations for the study of charismatic activity and the accounts which describe it, derived primarily from the theory of Max Weber, as well as from other examinations of holy man activity and holy man stories. The tension between charismatic and institutional authority developed in the first chapter sets the frame for the rest of this investigation. The second chapter narrows the focus to Jewish charismatic activity in particular, and examines both the possibilities and limitations of historical context as an aid to understanding the rabbinic portraits of Honi the Circle-drawer and Hanina ben Dosa. In the process, chapter two outlines the historical context in which Honi and Hanina ben Dosa lived, and the historical context in which the stories about them were finally redacted.

The succeeding three chapters focus upon the rabbinic texts themselves, and examine them in light of the theoretical and historical considerations suggested by the first two chapters. In chapter three, I analyze the rabbinic view of Honi the Circle-drawer by examining the relatively limited number of stories which describe his activities. Chapter four focuses upon Hanina ben Dosa, and the variety of texts which give evidence of his reputation, his activities, and his teachings. Chapter five provides the crucial element

of literary context. B.T. Ta`anit Chapter Three is the chief source for the traditions concerning Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, and a significant locus for Ḥanina ben Dosa stories as well. In chapter five, I analyze samples of the numerous aggadot in B.T. Ta`anit Chapter Three which shed light upon the rabbinic portraits of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer and Ḥanina ben Dosa. In the conclusion, I attempt to synthesize the various considerations discussed in the body of the thesis, and to employ them in suggesting answers to the questions posed above. Finally, I hope to suggest new questions and directions for understanding the fascinating Jewish matrix of charismatic behavior, institutional authority, and the challenges of religious leadership.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction:
Charismatic Activity and Holy Man Literature

THE PROBLEM OF CLASSIFICATION

The study of figures like Ḥoni the Circle-drawer and Ḥanina ben Dosa presents a problem of classification.[1] Terms such as "holy man," "divine man," "charismatic," "wonder-worker," and "magician" are used to describe these and similar figures, but not always with consistency or clarity of definition. The problem is compounded by the fact that the value-laden labels applied to such figures by their contemporaries, their chroniclers and modern scholars alike are more often subjective than descriptive. Jonathan Z. Smith has suggested that in the late Roman world, the terms "magician" and "magic," rather than describing a specific kind of practitioner or a distinctive set of functions,

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[1]Issues of classification and terminology are prominent in research on holy men and aretalogies, and receive attention in many of the studies cited here. For a good survey of the classification problem in the development of holy man research, see Eugene V. Gallagher, Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series #64 (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1982), 1-40. For a similar examination of classification problems in the study of asceticism, see Steven D. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in Jewish Spirituality From the Bible Through the Middle Ages, ed. Arthur Green (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 253-288.

instead located the practitioner and his practices beyond the bounds of social legitimacy;[2] Jack N. Lightstone suggests that this use of "magician" as a locative rather than a descriptive term is as much a problem for scholars as it was for the ancients:

> To cite a common adage: one man's religion is another's superstition. So too, one man's Holy Man is another's magician (or madman). And the scholarly treatment of these data more gives evidence of the truth of the adage than shows that scholarship has become sensitive to the issues highlighted by the saying.[3]

The solution to terminological confusion does not lie, however, in broad definitions which encompass all possible figures and accounts. In his discussion of holy men in the Greco-Roman world, Morton Smith emphasizes the quantity and diversity of holy man narratives and warns against sweeping conclusions:

> This is the life of the hero as a holy man. Its ramifications in folklore and mythology run through all ages and continents, appear in widely different forms, and are therefore extremely difficult to study. Books

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[2]Jonathan Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," Aufsteig und Niedergang der Romischen Welt II 16.1 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyper, 1979), 1425-1439; quoted in Jack N. Lightstone, The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Greco-Roman Diaspora, Brown Judaic Studies 59 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), 4. Cf. Lightstone, "Magicians, Holy Men and Rabbis: Patterns of the Sacred in Late Antique Judaism," in Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman Context, vol. 5, ed. William Scott Green (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 133-148. Lightstone notes that Judaism's charismatics constituted Christianity's magicians, and vice-versa: "In so labeling the 'other's' Holy Man, the boundaries of legitimate religious authority seem drawn" (Lightstone, Commerce, 56).

[3]Lightstone, Commerce, 17.

> which attempt to survey all the material, or even one of the major branches of it, are almost necessarily pretentious, superficial, and of little scholarly value.[4]

The classification problem, then, is manifold: one must be wary of value-laden terminology, of using labels subjectively, and of using classifications in a locative rather than a descriptive sense. Moreover, while the identification of similarities among various forms of holy man activity is important, such activity and the accounts which describe it emerge as a set of diverse phenomena which resist pristine classification.

Before examining how the texts characterize Jewish holy men, this study begins with a working definition: the holy man is a figure credited with wonder-working abilities believed to derive from a special relationship with the divine.[5] As later chapters will indicate, "wonder-working" for our Jewish figures entails displays of supernatural powers in healings and the control of nature.

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[4]Morton Smith, "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus," Journal of Biblical Literature 90 (1971): 179.

[5]This study will use the terms "holy man," "charismatic," and "wonder-worker" interchangeably to identify the figures described by this functional definition, though the three terms have varying nuances elsewhere in the literature: "charismatic" often evokes a sociological perspective, with a concomitant emphasis on issues of leadership and authority; "wonder-worker" is a broad term which identifies the figure by his miraculous acts, and "holy man" makes explicit the link between the supernatural abilities of the figure and some divine source. "Charisma," when used in its narrower sense, suggests a divine source as well.

MAX WEBER: CHARISMA, INSTITUTION AND ROUTINE

Some of the most important contributions to the understanding of the role of the holy man have been derived from the field of the sociology of religion, most notably from the work of Max Weber. The Weberian concepts most important for this study are `charisma´ and `routinization.´ According to Weber, charismatic authority arises in times of "psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, political distress," in order to meet "demands that go beyond those of everyday routine":

> The natural leaders in distress have been holders of specific gifts of the body and spirit; and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody.[6]

Charisma, by its nature, is opposed to the institutionally permanent:

> In order to do justice to their mission, the holders of charisma ... must stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as outside the routine obligations of family life.[7]

Charismatic authority is therefore directly opposed to

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[6]Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 245.

[7]Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," 248.

rational, bureaucratic authority, which is a form of "everyday routine control of action."[8]

The charismatic himself is credited with unusual powers, and is the object of personal rather than institutional allegiance:

> The legitimacy of their [the charismatic leaders'] rule rests on the belief in and the devotion to the extraordinary, which is valued because it goes beyond the normal human qualities, and which was originally valued as supernatural. The legitimacy of charismatic rule thus rests upon the belief in magical powers, revelations and hero worship. The source of these beliefs is the 'proving' of the charismatic quality through miracles, through victories and other successes, that is, through the welfare of the governed.[9]

The charismatic's followers submit to his authority because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person; they lend their support for as long as they perceive that these extraordinary powers are being used for the public weal.

Charisma becomes even clearer when compared to those forces which it opposes. Weber emphasizes that charisma is opposed to all institutional routines;[10] it stands in direct contrast to bureaucracy, whose central characteristics include rules and regulations, the authority to impose these,

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[8]Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization," in Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 51.

[9]Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in From Max Weber, ed. Gerth and Mills, 296.

[10]Gerth and Mills, "Intellectual Orientations," in From Max Weber, ed. Gerth and Mills, 53.

and the methodical provision for their fulfillment.[11] The authority of institutions and bureaucracies is legal, i.e., it rests upon impersonal bonds and obedience to rules rather than belief in and devotion to specific persons.[12] In fact, because charismatic activity poses a threat to institutional stability, institutional authority seeks to quash the charismatic's expressions of "virtuoso religion":

> Every hierocratic and official authority of a 'church' ... fights principally against all virtuoso-religion and against its autonomous development. For the 'church,' being the holder of institutionalized grace, seeks to organize the religiosity of the masses and to put its own officially monopolized and mediated sacred values in the place of the autonomous and religious status qualifications of the religious virtuosos.[13]

Emile Durkheim noted the same contrast between the individuality of the charismatic and the institutional stability of the "church" in his functional distinction between magic and religion. Durkheim observed many similarities between what is labelled as magic and what is labelled as religion: both consist of beliefs and rites; both rely upon myths and dogma; both contain ceremonies, sacrifices, prayers and chants; they even address themselves

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[11]Weber, "Bureaucracy," in From Max Weber, ed. Gerth and Mills, 196.

[12]Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," 299.

[13]Ibid., 288.

to the same superior beings.[14] The difference, Durkheim argues, is in their level of institutionalization. Durkheim writes that throughout history, "we do not find a single religion without a Church."[15] Magic, on the other hand, is non-institutional by nature:

> There is no Church of magic. Between the magician and the individuals who consult him, as between these individuals themselves, there are no lasting bonds which make them members of the same moral community, comparable to that formed by the believers in the same god or the observers of the same cult. The magician has a clientele and not a Church.[16]

While the two sociologists use different terms, the basic distinction is the same -- the individual charismatic and the religious institution stand in opposition to one another, one insisting upon obedience to set rules and behaviors, the other representing the spontaneous, extraordinary and thereby potentially revolutionary powers of an individual figure.

According to Weber, the fundamental opposition between charisma and institutions is resolved through the process of routinization, in which the charismatic situation ultimately gives way to incipient institutions, and the institutions become the carriers of the charismatic leader's message, appropriately modified to meet the goals of institutional

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[14]Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (New York: The Free Press, 1915), 57.

[15]Ibid., 59.

[16]Ibid., 60.

survival.[17] In fact, the concept of routinization teaches that charismatic authority, or traces of charismatic teaching, can survive only if they become routinized, i.e., only if they become a part of (and transformed by) the stabilizing force of institutions. Once the authority of the individual charismatic begins to wane (e.g, when the charismatic dies), rules rather than extraordinary persons come to govern.[18] According to Weber, the process is inevitable:

> In its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both ... Charismatic authority ... is by nature unstable; it ultimately participates in an inevitable process of rationalization.[19]

Ironically, in order for any traces of a charismatic movement to survive, they must submit to their opposite, the processes of rationalization and institutionalization.

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[17]Gerth and Mills, "Intellectual Orientations," 54.

[18]Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," 297. Succession procedures, Weber notes, represent the renewed emphasis on rules at the death of a charismatic personality.

[19]Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization," 54. Cf. Weber, "The Meaning of Discipline," in From Max Weber, ed. Gerth and Mills, 253.

CHARISMA, SANCTITY AND THE DOMESTICATION OF CHAOS

Charles F. Keyes, in his analysis of the function of sacred biography, links the charismatic's function in times of distress to the human pursuit of the sacred. The charismatic is believed to have access to the sacred because he is perceived to have power over the forces which threaten the stability of society:

> The charismatic is a person who is perceived to have 'domesticated' ... the forces of dissolution and pollution that threaten the sense of ordered and meaningful existence. The charismatic is one who has realized in his or her own action (or inaction) direct contact or union with some being, force, or state that is believed to transcend chaos.[20]

As in Weber's model, the charismatic provides leadership in times of distress; the people look to the charismatic individual for access to the sacred when they find themselves in "marginal situations."[21] Keyes emphasizes that social recognition is essential to the charismatic's authority, it depends upon the charismatic's ability to prove his powers of domestication, and thereby his access to the sacred.[22] The

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[20]Charles F. Keyes, "Charisma: From Social Life to Sacred Biography," in Charisma and Sacred Biography, ed. Michael A. Williams, Journal of the American Academy of Religion Thematic Studies 48, no. 3-4 (1982): 2.

[21]Ibid., 8.

[22]Ibid., 7. Cf. Lightstone, Commerce, 41-44. Lightstone identifies "authority" as the characteristic which distinguishes the holy man from the magician in late antiquity: "Without the requisite authority the magician has recourse only to lower beings or to the power of demons in overcoming yet other demonic powers." In connection with

most common sign of domestication is the conquest of death, for death is seen as the ultimate threat to life's order; similarly, curing abilities serve frequently as primary signs of charismatic power.[23] The most important characteristic of the charismatic sign is that it be "culturally reasonable"[24]: i.e., the words and actions of the holy man must correspond to cultural understandings of the sacred.[25] Without such correspondence, the people will not identify the actions of the charismatic as indicating access to the holy, and the charismatic will thereby not have any basis for authority. Keyes makes a helpful distinction between cultural authority and institutional authority. Cultural authority refers to the charismatic's provision of understandable signs: indications or activities that will lead the people to perceive him as having access to the sacred, and which thereby grant him popular authority. Institutional authority refers to "how a charismatic person relates to existing ecclesiastical and secular powers."[26] As Weber suggests, the charismatic, who by definition demonstrates cultural

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Keyes's emphasis on access to the sacred, Lightstone's holy man derives his authority in part from being perceived as "an intimate of the divine realm."

[23]Keyes, "Charisma," 3.

[24]Ibid., 7.

[25]Ibid., 8.

[26]Ibid.

authority, often constitutes a potent threat to existing institutions.

The models presented by Weber and Keyes exhibit interesting points of intersection. In both, periods of distress emerge as fruitful context for charismatic activities. Both also emphasize the difference between popular and institutional perceptions of the holy man. In "marginal" periods, the people might well look to the person of extraordinary (and "sacred") powers as a source of order, while the institutional authorities will see the holy man as a source of further disintegration and a threat to stability. The charismatic, a marginal, disruptive figure himself, is associated with the sacred because of his ability to domesticate the "forces of dissolution and pollution"; he is valued as one capable of transcending chaos, but precisely because of this ability, he is associated with the chaotic. The charismatic figure is a source of domestication, but by virtue of his nature, he must ultimately be domesticated himself.

THE SOCIAL BASIS FOR CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

The social basis for charismatic authority receives further attention in Eugene V. Gallagher's study of the debate between Celsus and Origen regarding Christian claims

for Jesus's divinity.[27] Gallagher affirms Michael Hill's assertion that the power to authorize figures or activities as charismatic lies with the people:

> No leader can be labelled charismatic unless he is accredited with the possession of such a quality by his followers; his claim must be evaluated by the 'population' which constitutes his potential followers in the light of those characteristics that may be registered as having a source in revelation or inspiration, and if this claim is validated, then obedience to the leader ... is a matter of obligation.[28]

Hill's characterization reflects the same criteria that Keyes presents. The authorization of charisma resides in popular support, and popular support depends upon the would-be charismatic's evincing characteristics which correspond to implicit criteria held by the audience:

> Far from being a purely abstract undertaking, the attempt to evaluate candidates for divine status was finally rooted in social experience.[29]

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[27] Following a prominent concern in current anthropological theory, Gallagher emphasizes the role of native systems of classification in providing insight into cultural realities: "If the outlines and fragments of systems of classification can be uncovered, and if some of their categories and principles of assignment can be described, it should be possible to detail not only the native perceptions of the divine man but also the view of the larger world which those perceptions fit, and possibly even the social reality which shaped them." Gallagher, Divine Man or Magician, 37. Cf. Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 15.

[28] Michael Hill, A Sociology of Religion (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 163; quoted in Gallagher, Divine Man or Magician, 179.

[29] Gallagher, Divine Man or Magician, 177.

In fact, as Gallagher indicates, this social construction of charismatic authority, in which the evaluation of certain actions is more important than the performance of those actions, fosters the subjective and inconsistent identification of holy men: "The deed which demonstrates divinity for one audience may well demonstrate the malign influence of demons for another."[30] Gallagher, like Morton Smith, resists the attempt to create a unified portrait of the Hellenistic divine man, precisely because society itself was far too complicated to produce unanimous assent on the nature of divinity.[31] Rather than presenting a specific pattern of evaluation, Gallagher concludes that "a spectrum of possible evaluations" existed for a given candidate for divine status in the Hellenistic period; the basic criterion

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[30]Ibid., 33. Other scholars have demonstrated not only that different groups authenticate divinity according to different criteria, but that portrayals of specific figures were sometimes recast to reflect changes in societal values. See, for example, William Scott Green, "Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition," Aufsteig und Niedergang der Romischen Welt, II, 19.2 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyper, 1979), 621; David Lenz Tiede, The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 1, 1972), 98; and M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 186. Green discusses the rabbinic shaping of the Honi tradition. Tiede argues that claims for the divinity of figures like Pythagoras vary in different eras. Smith cites the development of the Ascelpius figure (as a god), and of Jesus and Apollonius (as divine men) as evidence that portraits of gods and divine men change to reflect the tenor of a given society.

[31]Gallagher, Divine Man or Magician, 178.

consistent throughout the spectrum is that a worthy candidate for divine status "ought to do good for humankind."[32]

HOLY MAN STORIES AND THE QUESTION OF CANON

The general significance of popular support for the holy man, and especially the emphasis on the evaluation of the holy man's deeds rather than on the deeds themselves, points to the central importance of the accounts which describe holy man activity. The stories told about holy men constitute a crucial area of study, not only because of the cultural reflections the stories provide, but because of their impact on the development of subsequent religious attitudes. In their study of spiritual biographies in late antiquity, Moses Hadas and Morton Smith underscore the importance of "image" in this regard:

> For the effect exerted upon the course of history the authorized image of the hero is more important than his historical personality. It is upon the image rather than the person that reverence is bestowed, whether formally in an organized cult or informally in popular tradition, and it is the cult, formal or informal, that ensures the survival of the image.[33]

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[32]Ibid., 175.

[33]Moses Hadas and Morton Smith, Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies in Late Antiquity (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 4. Cf. Gallagher's discussion of Bieler's research on the holy man type: "The characteristics with which people are endowed in folktales, sagas and myths indicate what their audience knew or expected to hear about them; Bieler is concerned not with the 'historical Apollonius' or the 'historical Alexander of Abonuteichos,' but with how they have been viewed" (Divine Man or Magician,

The value of the story lies in the images it seeks to convey, images which in turn suggest the constellation of fundamental convictions, beliefs and relationships which constitute the world-view of the story's creators, editors or preservers.[34]

The act of identifying and preserving stories as authoritative constitutes the creation of a canon. Writing of religious literature, James Sanders suggests that a canon begins to take shape in answer to questions of identity or authority.[35] Sanders's view corresponds to what literary critic Hazard Adams calls the "power criterion" in the formation of a canon;[36] Adams acknowledges the prevalent view of canon as a reflection and assertion of social order:

> The canon, like all cultural production, is never an innocent selection of the best that has been thought and said; rather, it is the institutionalization of those particular verbal artifacts that appear best to convey and sustain the dominant social order.[37]

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[34]Jacob Neusner, There We Sat Down: Talmudic Judaism in the Making (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) p. 23.

[35]James A. Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 91.

[36]Hazard Adams, "Canons: Literary Criteria/Power Criteria" Critical Inquiry 14 (Summer 1988): 748. I am grateful to Rabbi William Cutter of HUC-JIR, Los Angeles, for bringing this article to my attention.

[37]Arnold Krupat, "Native American Literature and the Canon," Critical Inquiry 10 (September 1983): 146; quoted in Adams, "Canons," 749. Cf. Barbara Hernstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," Critical Inquiry 10 (September 1983): 22; quoted in Adams, "Canons," 750: "What must be emphasized ... is that the value -- the 'goodness' or 'badness' -- of an evaluation, like that of anything else

We examine stories because they have much to teach us about the dominant values of a given society or social group. Canons emerge to answer questions of authority and legitimacy, which are essentially questions of order; from the perspective of "power criteria," canon is a forum for institutional self-assertion.

How then do stories about charismatic threats to the social order come to be included as part of the Talmudic corpus? One possibility suggested by canon theory is that the rabbis include stories about charismatic figures in order to control the image of those figures that is transmitted to posterity. Institutional self-assertion does not require the exclusion of threats to the social order; it may indeed call for an inclusion and reshaping of those elements which threaten existing or nascent institutional authority. Most important, the stories which the rabbis tell about the charismatics provide evidence of both how the rabbis regarded charismatic behavior, and how they defined their own role in the social order.[38]

(including any other type of utterance) is <u>itself</u> contingent, and thus a matter not of its abstract `truth value,' but of how well it performs various desired/able functions for the various people who may at any time be concretely involved with it."

[38]While the stories reflect certain rabbinic attitudes, one must be careful about assuming that rabbinic attitudes are easily accessible through the stories, and equally careful about ascribing too much authority to rabbinic intention. As Adams observes, "literary canons can ... be harbors of antithetical characteristics in spite of the

ARETALOGY

While scholars such as Adolph Buchler,[39] William Scott Green[40] and Geza Vermes[41] have made significant contributions to the study of stories treating Jewish holy men,[42] questions

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motives which brought texts into them" (Adams, "Canons," 754).

[39]Adolph Buchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.: The Ancient Pious Men (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968). Buchler's priority is to examine figures classified as hasidim, and to prove that they could not have been Essenes. In the process, he examines certain Talmudic accounts of Hanina ben Dosa, and especially of Honi the Circle-drawer, to whom the last section of his essay is devoted. On the portrait of the hasid in rabbinic literature, cf. Shmuel Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," Journal of Jewish Studies 16, no. 1 (1965): 15-33.

[40]See Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 619-647. Green provides a detailed literary and redactorial analysis of the Honi traditions in the two Talmuds. He uses the texts to demonstrate the "rabbinization" of Honi: i.e., the ways in which the rabbis reshaped the Honi tradition to make it conform to rabbinic values and authority.

[41]Geza Vermes, "Hanina ben Dosa," chap. in Post Biblical Jewish Studies (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 178-214. Vermes provides a comprehensive portrait of Hanina ben Dosa based upon texts in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmuds and midrash.

[42]For further discussion of the function of rabbinic stories, see the following: Lewis M. Barth, "Recent Studies in the Aggadah," Prooftexts 4, no. 2 (May 1984): 204-213; Norman J. Cohen, "Structural Analysis of a Talmudic Story: Joseph-Who-Honors-the-Sabbath," Jewish Quarterly Review 72 (1982): 161-177; Jonah Fraenkel, "Paranomasia in Aggadic Narratives," Scripta Hierosolymitana 27 (1978): 27-51; Zipporah Kagan, "Divergent Tendencies and their Literary Moulding in the Aggadah," Scripta Hierosolymitana 22, (1971): 151-170; Shmuel Safrai, "Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud," Scripta Hierosolymitana 22 (1971), 209-232; G.B. Sarfatti, "Pious Men

regarding holy man accounts have been much more prevalent in the study of Christianity and pagan religion. Much of the discussion has focused on the literary genre of aretalogy.[43] The word is ancient, but its return to prominence in modern scholarship as a term describing sacred biographies and collections of miracle stories raises the issue in New Testament criticism of the similarities between Gospels and Acts on the one hand and ancient collections of miracle stories on the other.[44]

The term "aretalogy" is derived from aretalogus, a Latin word whose meaning in ancient sources seems to have meant "teller of miracle stories,"[45] and eventually (from the fourth century BCE onward) came to refer to "an evangelist who proved the stature of a deity or a holy man by reciting

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of Deed and the Early Prophets," Tarbiz 26, no. 12 (December 1956): 126-153 [Hebrew with English summary]; Ephraim E. Urbach, "The Talmudic Sage: Character and Authority," in Jewish Society Throughout the Ages, ed. H.H. Ben Sasson and S. Ettinger (London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1971), 116-147.

[43]Gallagher's discussion of problems of classification also serves as a helpful survey of the study of questions of aretalogy. See also Jonathan Z. Smith, "Good News is No News: Aretalogy and Gospel," in Christianity, Judaism, and other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), part 1, 21-38; and M. Smith, "Prolegomena."

[44]M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 176.

[45]Ibid., 175. The evidence used by Smith and others to determine the meaning of aretalogus appears in Suetonius' Life of Augustus, 74, and Juvenal 15.16. Smith avers that since the evidence indicates that aretalogus was a popular rather than a technical term, its usage was probably inconsistent.

his miraculous works," or "one who professionally speaks the wondrous deeds of a deity or a divinely gifted human."[46] Based on such definitions of aretalogus, scholars assigned to the term "aretalogy" a group of related definitions and functions, including "a miracle story or collection of miracle stories" whose primary function was "the praise of and propaganda for the deity supposed to have done the deeds",[47] and "a formal account of the remarkable career of an impressive teacher that was used as a basis for moral instruction."[48] While these serve as adequate general definitions, Gallagher and Howard Clark Kee have called for greater rigor of definition, arguing that "the pattern of the biographical so-called 'aretalogy' ... is not nearly so fixed as its proponents claim," and especially that biographies of miracle workers or the collections of miracle stories on which they are based "do not always or even regularly have as their claim the demonstration of the divine nature of the performer of the miracles."[49] Scholarship indicates a lack

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[46]Hadas and Smith, Heroes and Gods, 61.

[47]M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 176.

[48]Hadas and Smith, Heroes and Gods, 3.

[49]Howard Clark Kee, Aretalogies, Hellenistic "Lives," and the Sources of Mark (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 1-2; quoted in Gallagher, Divine Man or Magician, 27. Kee's point is valuable for the study of Jewish holy men because it emphasizes the fact that the holy man accounts need not have as their goal the establishment of the divinity of the protagonist. Tiede also claims the usage of the term aretalogy does not reflect sufficient rigor of definition;

of consensus on the elements of the form, and on the relationship of the form to its content. Morton Smith asserts that the genre is better distinguished on the basis of content as opposed to form, requiring that the aretalogy have a "hero whom it celebrates by reporting one or more of his marvelous deeds."[50] Hadas argues that the creators of aretalogies of Pythagoras, Moses, Jesus and Apollonius attempted to adapt unrelated miracle stories about a given figure to the chronological and geographical requirements of a Greco-Roman biographical form. He concludes therefore that "none of these is properly a 'life' of its hero."[51]

THE FUNCTION OF HOLY MAN STORIES AND SACRED BIOGRAPHY

Given the spontaneous, interpersonal and histrionic nature of charismatic activity and authority, the story which purports to record and preserve charismatic elements faces questions of its own authority.[52] What is the force and

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his study argues that the unified aretalogy of the divine wise man/miracle worker represents a fusion of two originally distinct traditions (Charismatic Figure, 13).

[50]M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 196.

[51]Hadas and Smith, Heroes and Gods, 103.

[52]The question is not one of historical accuracy, but rather, of how the story which purports to record and preserve the charismatic activity can retain the immediacy and authority of the original event. The tension is expressed in the contrast between the following two quotations. Weber claims: "In its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of

function of the charismatic story once it is distanced from the charismatic event itself? On one level, the stories function as mnemonics: they provide people with the means to recognize signs or incidents of charisma when they next occur.[53] But the function of the charismatic story, and of the sacred biography in particular,[54] goes beyond the descriptive to the teleological. It orients the reader to future action, and particularly, to future access to the sacred:

> The sacred biography as a particular type of text points backward in time ... to events in which the sacred became manifest in a historical person and makes these events relevant to the present, and it points forward to a time when those who read or hear the biography will themselves reach beyond their own historicity to an ultimate reality.[55]

Because the sacred biography presents access to the sacred in the context of a human life, and in the context of human

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originating" ("The Nature of Charismatic Authority," 54); Keyes argues: "For most people, charismatic acts are but memories or stories told by others" (Keyes, "Charisma," 12).

[53]Keyes, "Charisma," 13.

[54]The stories of Jewish figures under consideration here are not sacred biographies: they do not indicate any attempt to create a "life," a biographical account with a beginning, middle and end, no matter how artificially imposed. Moreover, they do not constitute aretalogies, because the groups of stories studied here do not appear as independent collections; while they may be clustered in one area or another, they are generally interspersed within the greater body of the Talmud. Nonetheless, while our works are better classified as stories rather than biographies or collections, the themes and considerations that inform the investigation of aretalogy and sacred biography also play a central role in this study.

[55]Keyes, "Charisma," 13.

history,[56] it serves as not only a reminder of things past but a model for emulation.[57] By placing miracles stories within a biographical form (and thereby a social context), the author or editor of sacred biography makes the stories and their protagonists more accessible to the reader as models for behavior.

Just as the power of the charismatic activity depends on its being "culturally understandable," the story depends on the author or editor's ability to employ recognizable signs of charisma and sanctity in portraying the life or career of the holy man. This again is the charisma-institution tension: the charismatic derives his power from being outside of institutional norms, but in order to be

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[56]Cf. Michael A. Williams, "The Life of Antony and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom," in Charisma and Sacred Biography, ed. Williams, 34-35: "Robinson and Koester have argued with respect to early Christian literature, especially gospel literature, that the choice of genre itself may be the first and most important clue to the world-view and theological intention of the author. A person who gathers Jesus-sayings into a collection with no historical narrative or frame ... may have chosen that genre (perhaps even unconsciously) because it suits the non-historical, other-worldly wisdom of the sayings; likewise, one who incorporates Jesus-sayings into a continuous narrative so that the sayings occur within the course of a life whose links with history and society are related (as in Luke-Acts) may have chosen this genre because of a consciousness of a close relation between divine revelation and ongoing history."

[57]Keyes, "Charisma," 16. Cf. Hadas and Smith, Heroes and Gods, 9. While Hadas claims that the primary function of aretalogies is religious rather than biographical, he notes in reference to Xenophon's Cyropedia that the inclusion of biographical details makes the presentation of the ideal gentleman more "serviceable" as a paradigm for personal behavior.

understood, he and his actions must "speak" an understandable and recognizable language. This responsibility is all the more incumbent upon the charismatic story, already distanced from the original event. It bears a double burden -- it must express continuity in relationship to the life of its subject, and continuity in relation to the lives of its readers:

> The biography ... stresses ... continuity between individual and tradition, rather than the sudden appearance of the unique and radical break with the past."[58]

Especially if the author or editor is describing a figure whose charismatic authority is already firmly established, accessibility might also be established by humanizing the portrait of the charismatic, through "the anchoring of the hero within human society."[59] In this case, humanizing may function not to undercut the extraordinary power of the charismatic, but to preserve it.[60] Indeed, while all of these contextualizations of the original action inevitably transmute the authority of charisma, they are also means to maintaining it.[61] By presenting human, historical and social contexts even for the extraordinary activities they relate,

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[58]Williams, "Antony," 38.

[59]Ibid., 36.

[60]Note the correspondence to Weber's claim that institutionalization is necessary to the preservation of charismatic elements.

[61]In this sense, the sacred biography performs the Weberian function of routinization.

sacred biographies reveal accessible models for emulation, and may thereby continue to suggest for their readers the potential for transcendent action, the potential for "a wisdom that lies beyond the meanings and contexts" in which the stories are framed.[62]

Jonathan Z. Smith presents a different understanding of the function of aretalogy.[63] Smith sees aretalogy as an apology compelled by the ambiguous status of miracle:[64]

> For those figures for whom an ultimate religious claim is made (e.g., son of god), their biographies will serve as apologies against outsiders' charges that they were merely magicians, and against their admirers' sincere misunderstanding that they were merely wonder-workers, divine men or philosophers.[65]

The aretalogical response was crucial:

> The solution of each group or individual so charged was the same, to insist on an inward meaning of the suspect activities. The allegedly magical action, properly understood, is a sign. There is both a transparent and a hidden meaning.[66]

In other words, Smith argues, one of the primary functions of aretalogy was to show that miraculous acts are devoid of

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[62]Keyes, "Charisma," 18. Cf. ibid., 6, where Keyes poses the question of sacred biography's function in terms of the relationship between gnosis and logos.

[63]J.Z. Smith, "Good News is No News," 24.

[64]Cf. E.R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 125-126: "In a world where everyone believed in magic, miracles were both commonplace and morally suspect; they might serve to impress the masses, but arguments based on them were inevitably two-edged."

[65]J.Z. Smith, "Good News is No News," 24.

[66]Ibid., 25.

value unless they indicate some transcendent insight or power on the part of the figure who commits them.

Smith also disputes the contention that the aretalogy always presents a model for emulation. He argues that the impact of the aretalogy depends upon an "experience of discrepancy" in the interplay between the text and the reader's experiential context:

> This experience of discrepancy provides an important corrective to our usual understanding of aretalogies as models to be imitated by disciples. The devotee does not passively reenact or imitate. Rather he has an experience which both validates and challenges the model proposed by the "Life," and through a process of double-reflection, his understanding of both his experience and the "Life" requires reinterpretation.[67]

The protagonist is both accessible and inaccessible because the reader's own experience both validates and challenges the experience presented in the text.

According to Smith, the aretalogy reflects rather than resolves the tension between the charismatic's essential uniqueness and his potential as a role model.[68] Smith defines aretalogical protagonists such as Apollonius and Pythagoras as "sui generis."[69] Pythagoras is difficult to locate, neither man, magician, nor god; he is "in a class by

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[67]Ibid., 22.

[68]This tension is essential to understanding rabbinic self-portraits and attitudes towards charismatic activity in the texts under consideration.

[69]J.Z. Smith, "Good News is No News," 27.

himself .... the mysterious `included middle.'"[70] Likewise, Apollonius is "himself alone":

> We are presented with a portrait of a powerful figure who muddles all models. The disciples (and his later readers) are incapable of being like him, even of truly understanding him, because he is fundamentally not like us. He is himself. He is an Other.[71]

THis sui generis protagonist is portrayed not only as enigmatic, but estranged; he is a figure who "breaks all previous cosmic and social structures."[72] In fact, Smith argues, in a Greco-Roman society where independence rather than obedience is the criterion for distinction,[73] the sui generis holy man's defiance of structures and expectations emerges as a source of transcendence.[74]

CHARISMATIC ACTIVITY: A SOCIAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

While the above theoretical considerations regarding charismatic figures and the accounts which describe them rely to varying degrees on empirical observation of textual

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[70]Ibid., 31.

[71]Ibid., 27.

[72]Ibid., 36. Note the parallel to Weber's "holders of charisma" who stand "outside of the ties of this world."

[73]Hadas and Smith, Heroes and Gods, 13. Hadas contrasts this emphasis with the monotheistic system presented in the Hebrew Bible: "Under a paramount authority the only kind of distinction accessible to the individual is that which promotes the interests of the authority" (ibid.).

[74]J.Z. Smith, "Good News is No News," 38.

evidence, Peter Brown's study on charismatic activity in the late Roman Empire is an explicit example of social history rather than a presentation of categories for the sociological or anthropological understanding of religion.[75] Though from a different methodological perspective than the literature reviewed above, Brown's examination of the role of the holy man in the Roman Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries[76] reveals important functions of the charismatic, both affirming and refining concepts set forth above, and presents categories of charismatic activity which shed light on the Jewish figures studied in the following chapters.

In assessing the conditions which gave rise to holy man activity in the region and period of his study, Brown notes the fluidity and concomitant instability of the village populations which constituted the followings for holy man activity. He refutes, however, the traditional claim of social historians that charismatic activity arose from some overwhelming sense of misery felt by the country folk, or

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[75]Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," chap. in Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 103-152. Brown describes the historian's task: "It is for the historian ... to analyse this image [of the holy man] as a product of the society around the holy man. Instead of retailing the image of the holy man as sufficient in itself to explain his appeal to the average late Roman, we should use the image like a mirror, to catch, from a surprising angle, another glimpse of the average late Roman" (ibid., 106).

[76]Brown focuses upon Syria; "the great province for ascetic stars" (ibid., 109).

that it represented "the rise of more primitive religious sentiments in a depleted and insecure society."[77] He thereby modifies and focuses the factor of distress presented by Keyes and Weber; Brown refers to the crisis of late antiquity as a crisis of leadership, and more specifically, a crisis of freedom.[78] Amidst the absence of stabilizing institutions, the holy man provided security and direction:

> Such a need for certainty and for leadership is not usually experienced by more stable societies, where the objectivity associated with the supernatural is more securely lodged in impersonal and enduring institutions, in great temple sites ...We know that the later Roman Empire was the very opposite of such a society. On every level of life, the institutions that had seemed capable of receiving the awesome charge of permanence and divinity in classical times either declined or exploded. Men were left with nothing to fall back on than other men.[79]

In meeting the need for leadership, the holy man played the role of the "good patron" who served as a mediator in village life, the "hinge-man" who belonged to the outside world, yet placed his knowledge, culture and values at the disposal of the villagers.[80] Villagers looked to the holy man for intervention and reconciliation, often through communal ceremonies which would serve to enhance communal identity. Given the holy man's role as patron and village leader, power

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[77]Ibid., 148.

[78]Ibid., 115, 148.

[79]Ibid., 148.

[80]Ibid., 118.

emerges as his primary characteristic.[81] Miracle was one of the foremost demonstrations of power; thus miracles were important not in and of themselves, but as evidence of the holy man's authority.[82] Brown warns consistently against seeing miracle as the core of the holy man's craft: "The miracle condenses and validates a situation built up by more discreet means."[83] Miracles which demonstrated the holy man's power, such as curses and exorcisms, were evidence of the holy man's ability to mediate the forces of disruption and rebellion within society.[84]

The power of the holy man and his role as patron were directly related to a more transcendent characteristic: "In late Roman society, the holy man was deliberately not human.

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[81]Ibid., 121: "Above all else, the holy man is a man of power." Note the correspondence to Lightstone's emphasis on authority as the holy man's distinguishing characteristic.

[82]Note the relationship to arguments by Keyes, J.Z. Smith, and Dodds above. Keyes argues that the miracle is influential only insofar as it corresponds to cultural understandings of the sacred, especially to the extent that it demonstrates the charismatic's capacity to domesticate chaos. Smith emphasizes the importance of "hidden meaning" as a validation of the miracle, the miracle which in and of itself Dodds describes as "both commonplace and morally suspect."

[83]Brown, "Rise and Function," 122. Cf. ibid., 147: "Altogether, we get a very wrong impression if we look only at the miraculous element in the holy man's relations with his clients."

[84]Ibid., 122-123.

He was the 'stranger' par excellence."[85] Brown identifies the ascetic feats of the holy man in Syria as "a long drawn-out, solemn ritual of disassociation -- of becoming the total stranger."[86] As a mobile figure who stood outside the ties of place, family, and economic interest, and as a figure whose very power was attributed to non-human sources, the holy man owed nothing to society, and was therefore able to serve as the consummate bearer of objectivity.[87] A destabilized Late Roman society required objective mediators, and was prepared to invest a human being rather than an institution with such a position.[88] As the consummate stranger, the holy man was invested with "utterly objective, inalienable power."[89]

As a figure who both stood outside the village and was the source of reconciliation within it, the holy man was by definition a straddler of boundaries -- not only between the village and the desert or city beyond, but between human beings and the divine. The holy man served to make a distant God relevant and accessible to human needs:

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[85]Ibid., 130. Note the parallels to J.Z. Smith's portrait of the sui generis aretalogical protagonist and to Weber's "holder of charisma."

[86]Ibid., 131.

[87]Ibid., 134.

[88]Ibid., 132.

[89]Ibid., 143.

> In his [the holy man's] person, the acute ambivalence of a Christian God was summed up in a manageable and approachable form: for the holy man was ... easily moved to tears of compassion, and, at the same time, the heir of the Hebrew prophets ... He could be approached directly, as God never could be.[90]

Brown's portrait of holy man activity emphasizes significant elements of the charismatic type outlined in this chapter: the holy man's leadership is personal rather than legal; moreover, as a stranger with extraordinary power, the holy man serves as a professional intercessor both within the human realm and between human and divine, and thereby as a source of stability in a society struggling with the collapse of institutional order.[91]

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[90]Ibid., 144.

[91]Ibid., 146.

CHAPTER TWO

Jewish Charismatic Activity and the Rabbinic Role: Historical Contexts

HISTORY AND STORY

The previous chapter explored theoretical considerations related to the study of holy men and holy man stories, as well as certain characteristics of the holy man which emerge from Brown's social historical study. Many of these considerations serve as important concepts for this study of Jewish holy men: the domestication of chaos in a situation of distress, the emphasis on social recognition, the subordination of miracle to transcendent meaning, the importance of culturally understandable sings of the sacred and the breaking of traditional norms are phenomena which emerge as crucial to the study of specific Jewish figures and stories.

In examining the phenomenon of Jewish charismatic activity, at least two possible approaches present themselves from the outset. The first is to ask a social-historical question regarding the lives of the Jewish figures themselves, e.g., what roles did Honi the Circle-drawer and Hanina ben Dosa play in their respective societies during the period in which they are reported to have lived, from the first century B.C.E. through the first century C.E.? The

problem with the historical question, as will be developed below, is that the rabbinic texts of the two Talmuds are not necessarily accurate sources of historical information about the periods they purport to describe; moreover, while rabbinic texts may provide some guidance to the historian, this author is not adequately equipped to determine which descriptions of a given figure or period might be historically accurate. Thus, in order to avoid the historicity trap, this thesis asks a second question: how do rabbinic stories about holy men function, and what do they reveal about the rabbinic attitude towards charismatic behavior? With this second question, the focus of the study becomes the texts themselves. Nonetheless, given the didactic aim of rabbinic texts, one cannot ask even textual questions without consideration of the texts' historical dimension.[1] One must approach rabbinic history warily, perhaps especially so when examining the role of marginal figures,[2] but one must still approach it. In fact, the historical context for the rabbinic stories examined in the succeeding chapters consists of two discrete periods: first, the period and circumstances in which our figures purportedly lived; second, and more importantly, the period

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[1]Cohen, "Structural Analysis of a Talmudic Story," 164.

[2]M. Smith, on the reliability of Celsus' portrait of holy man activity in late antiquity, states: "The spiritual underworld of antiquity -- the world of wandering prophets and magicians and miracle workers -- is known to us only by occasional glimpses" ("Prolegomena," 181).

and circumstances in which the stories about them were finally redacted.[3]

First and Second Century C.E. Judaism in Palestine

THE CRISIS OF INSTABILITY

Jewish life in Palestine at the dawn of the common era was characterized by instability. Jews faced considerable economic difficulties.[4] Jewish society was marked by social disequilibrium: rural and urban dwellers were at odds, and significant rifts existed between Hellenized and non-Hellenized segments of the population. Palestinian Jewry at large and the Temple hierarchy in particular lacked leadership and consensus, and had already begun to corrode from within prior to the destruction of the Temple.[5]

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[3]The work of Salo Wittmayer Baron for the earlier period and Jacob Neusner for the latter, as cited below, form the basis of this historical overview. Histories of the Second Commonwealth are numerous, as are the discrepancies among them. See Solomon Zeitlin, The Rise and Fall if the Judean State (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962-1978), especially the second and third volumes. Also of interest are Gedaliah Alon, Jews, Judaism, and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and Talmud (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977); and Alon, The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age, 70-640 C.E.

[4]Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), vol. 2, 54.

[5]Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 1, 271-285.

The most significant factor in the Palestinian turmoil at the turn of the millennium was the pervasive force of sectarianism.[6] Salo Baron refers to the Second Commonwealth as the "richest period in the history of Jewish sects";[7] Jewry's rapid expansion both within Palestine and without after the Maccabean revolt stimulated further sectarian formations.[8] The most significant Jewish sectarian conflict occurred between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Theories regarding the characteristics and constituencies of these movements are manifold.[9] While the historical origins

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[6]The prevalence and passion of messianic sentiment were an integral part of sectarian identities and conflicts. Baron claims that the messianic ideal dominated religious discussion, appearing not only in apocalyptic literature but in Hellenistic and Palestinian literature as well. Messianic belief allowed Jews to see all of the pressures and crises of contemporary life as signs of the dissolution of the old order, and portents of the new. Though messianic expressions varied, they were generally characterized by expectation of "the cessation of historical processes, and a fundamental change in the laws of nature." Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 2, 55-65.

[7]Ibid., 26. Cf. ibid., 45-65, for Baron's discussion of the Zealots, the Essenes, and the Damascus Sect, and the relationship of each group to Pharisaism and to messianic sentiments.

[8]Ibid., 35.

[9]Much disagreement persists regarding the Pharisees' position in Palestinian society before 70 CE. A brief summary of prominent viewpoints appears in Robert Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 216-220. Seltzer includes views expressed by Ephraim Urbach, The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs (Jerusalem, The Magnes Press, 1975) vol. 1, chapter 16; Ellis Rivkin, A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), and Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971),

of the schism between the Pharisees and the Sadducees is unclear, a comparison of the movements reveals various distinctions, especially regarding their attitudes towards the Temple cult and Torah.[10]

Baron emphasizes the difference between Sadducean and Pharisaic attitudes towards the Temple cult. The Sadducees were attached to the Temple not only because they were the priestly class, but also because of the general importance of state and territory in their world-view; more than a religious center, the Temple was politically important as a territorial symbol and integral part of the Commonwealth. The Pharisees, while they did not reject the Temple, tried to popularize it by encouraging pilgrimage. With their own power interests in mind, they linked priestly power to popular assent. In contrast to the exclusive Temple-focus of the Sadducees, the Pharisees had greater concern for instruments of Diaspora Jewry -- they stressed Sabbath

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chapter 3; Morton Smith, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century" in Israel: Its Role in Civilization, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 67-81; and Neusner, From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973). See also Baron's view of the Pharisees as an "official minority supported by an unofficial majority" (Social and Religious History, vol. 2, 35-36).

[10]One should note at the outset that Baron's account seems to favor the Pharisees as the group whose flexibility enabled the survival of Judaism.

observance, the function of the synagogue, and especially Torah.[11]

The Pharisees' central concern for Torah constituted a definitive departure from the Sadducean focus on the Temple cult. The Pharisees' doctrine of the three interdependent crowns of kingdom, priesthood, and Torah underscores a crucial concept of Pharisaic doctrine: the Temple, while the cultic center and an important political symbol, is not the sole locus of power. The concept of Torah, without a specific territorial locus, merits a crown of the same status as kingdom and priesthood; in fact, the crown of Torah is not only equal to the other two, but superior:

> The Crown of Torah is offered to everyone, and I consider him who has won it as if all three had been offered to him and he had won them all.[12]

Pharisaic doctrine thereby asserted not only the significance of Torah, but its accessibility; in contrast to the exclusive nature of kingdom and priesthood, the Crown of Torah was available to all.

Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees expressed the sanctity of Torah through continuous hermeneutic reinterpretation rather than literal application. Jacob Neusner describes "the Pharisaic religion of `Torah'" in light of Weberian categories of charisma and routine:

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[11]Baron, Social and Religious History. vol. 2, 37-45.

[12]Sifre on Numbers, Pisqa 119, Friedman edition, fol. 40a.

> Routine is imposed by the requirement to regularly study a given text. Spontaneity and charisma emerge in two ways: first in the very content of the biblical text, which embodies the highly charismatic experiences of earlier ages; second, in the unexpected and unpredictable response of the sage to the text.[13]

Neusner thereby perceives Yohanan ben Zakkai and the Pharisaic sages as pursuing an intermediate course between the spontaneous, undisciplined and charismatic atmosphere of Galilean religion and the institution-bound routine of the Temple cult.[14]

THE JEWISH WORLD OF SPIRITS

The person dwelling in Palestine in the first century of the common era lived not only in a world of sectarian schism, but a world of spirits. Popular interest in astrology and magic satisfied a general absorption in the unknown and

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[13]Jacob Neusner, First Century Judaism in Crisis: Yohanan ben Zaccai and the Renaissance of Torah (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp. 13-14. See also Neusner, A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai, ca. 1-80 C.E. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967). First Century Judaism in Crisis is an abridgement and condensation of A Life.

[14]According to Neusner, Galilee was the center of charismatic religious practice in Palestine; not only Jesus, but other charismatics who were met with rejection in Jerusalem were able to find followings in the Galilean countryside: "In Galilee Yohanan encountered the opposite of the rigid traditional routine of the priests ... This was an open, primitive, unlettered faith, pure and all-embracing, but with more enthusiasm than discipline." This free-wheeling and intimate Galilean religion stood in contrast to "Jerusalem's routine of cultic technology." Neusner, First Century Judaism in Crisis, 67-68. Cf. Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 80.

mysterious. Some of the influence came from outside of Jewish culture. Hellenistic mystery cults were prominent in the period; Chaldean astral religion was a "dominant and expansive force" in the Mediterranean world;[15] the influence of Irano-Chaldean demonology and angelology answered and fueled the popular desire to master mysterious forces.[16]

Intertestamental Judaism exhibited elements of belief in magical healing and exorcism. Apocryphal literature applied patterns set by the miracle-working prophets Elijah and Elisha to earlier Biblical figures, crediting them with powers of healing and exorcism: Abraham, Moses and Solomon were reputed to have occult healing powers; David, and especially Noah and Solomon, were described as masters of exorcism, using esoteric knowledge to exert control over demons.[17] Contemporary Jews also practiced the art of

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[15]Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 2, 15.

[16]Ibid., 15-20. Cf. ibid., 43: "The world of the average Palestinian became filled with spirits of good and evil."

[17]Vermes, Jesus the Jew, 62-68. Vermes provides citations for the ascriptions of special abilities alluded to above: Abraham, according to the Genesis Apocryphon 20:16-19; Moses, according to the Hellenist Artapanus (second century BCE) in the Praeparatio evangelica ix.29, 24-5; David, according to Pseudo-Philo in Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 60:1-3; Noah, as mentioned in Jubilees 10:10-15; and Solomon, as in the following quotation from Josephus' Antiquities 8, 44-5: "There was no form of nature with which he was not acquainted or which he passed over without examining ... And God granted him knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of men. He also composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcism with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return." The Josephus

incantations: "God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob" was widely used as a magical formula.[18] Jewish influence also appears in pagan magical papyri of the period.[19]

The Jewish belief in the potential for connection with angels, demons and other occult forces partakes of a phenomenon in the broader Greco-Roman culture of late antiquity: the blurring of distinctions between the human and the divine. Various pagan beliefs reflected an atmosphere in which the dividing line between god and human beings was far from absolute. The Greeks maintained a notion that gods were like men, possessing human virtues but to a superior degree. Pagans also believed that gods were likely to appear in human form, so that various historical figures were believed to have been deities in disguise. The pagan world was populated as well with mythical demigods, born of mortal-divine sexual union. In addition, the society contained human beings who thought they were gods or supernatural beings; this tendency was further complicated by the Greek custom of honoring rulers and public benefactors

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passage also reveals the extent to which exorcism and healing were understood as related functions.

[18]Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 2, p. 23. Baron notes that according to Origen, this formula was used not only by Jews, but by "almost all those who occupy themselves with incantations and magical rites."

[19]Lightstone, Commerce, 38. Cf. C. Bonner, Studies in Magical Amulets, 28; quoted in Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 2, 337, n. 27: "Almost every magical papyrus bears some marks of Judaism here and there, in its idea or in the sacred names involved, and so do scores of magical gems."

with the same kinds of cults that were created for gods. In the realm of philosophy, Plato popularized the notion of the mortal's divine soul imprisoned in a material body, suggesting that subjugation of the body would permit human beings to fulfill their divine potential.[20]

THE HOLY MAN AS DIVINE-HUMAN INTERMEDIARY

In this world of political, social and spiritual flux, the most important function of the holy man was as an intermediary between the human and the divine. In the pagan context, holy men were termed "daemonic men," as Diotima explains to Socrates in Plato's Symposium:

> Everything that is daemonic is intermediate between God and mortal. Interpreting and conveying the wishes of men to gods and the will of gods to men, it stands between the two and fills the gap ... God has no contact with man; only through the daemonic is there intercourse and conversation between men and gods, whether in the waking state or during sleep. And the man who is expert in such intercourse is a daemonic man, compared with whom the experts in arts or handicrafts are but journeymen.[21]

As Celsus' disparaging portrait of the second-century Palestinian and Syrian scene suggests, a number of figures arose in response to the popular need for mediation:

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[20]M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 181-182. Smith also notes among the Greeks a habit preserved in our own day: the application of the term "divine" to indicate a person's superior achievement in a desirable human capacity.

[21]Plato, Symposium, 202 D 13-203 A 6; quoted in Dodds, Pagan and Christian, 37.

> [There are many] who wander about begging both in and outside temples and frequent both cities and camps on the pretense of prophesying. And any one of them is ready and accustomed to say, "I am the god, or "a son of god," or "a divine spirit," and ... "Blessed is he who has worshipped me now. On all others, both in cities and in the countryside, I shall cast eternal fire. And men who do not know the penalties awaiting them will repent in vain and mourn, but those whom I have persuaded I shall save forever."[22]

Despite the presence of pretenders, Dodds asserts that by the second century C.E., definitions such as that expressed by Diotima had come to be "the expression of a truism":

> Virtually everyone, pagan, Jewish, Christian or Gnostic, believed in the existence of these beings and in their function as mediators, whether he called them daemons or angels, or aions or simply "spirits" ... And the "daemonic man," who knew how to establish contact with them, was correspondingly esteemed.[23]

In a world where supernatural beings were believed to exert control over human lives, human beings with influence over the supernatural were eagerly sought.

The needs which the holy man met were not necessarily ethereal; as the emphasis on healing suggests, people sought to enlist the esoteric powers of the holy man for practical purposes. Holy men often performed the same function as oracles: they were called upon to predict the future, to

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[22]Origen, Against Celsus, 7.9; quoted in M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 180. Celsus obviously had his own polemical agenda, and his picture may not be completely accurate. Interestingly, however, as Smith notes, Origen's reply does not attempt to deny the existence of the people whom Celsus portrays; Origen says instead that their powers are not comparable to those of the Old Testament prophets.

[23]Dodds, Pagan and Christian, 38.

read minds or read sealed letters.[24] The questions addressed to oracles and to holy men were also an index of the turmoil and insecurity of the age. Dodds cites a papyrus containing a list of twenty-one inquiries addressed to an oracle in the late third century, including the following: "Am I to become a beggar?" "Shall I be sold up?" "Should I take to flight?" "Shall I get my salary?" "Am I under a spell?"[25] By providing answers to practical questions, insights into the important but difficult matters of the everyday, the holy man was an intermediary who could thereby give people some sense of control and order in an often inscrutable world.

The Jews saw their world, no less than the pagans saw theirs, as populated by an array of good and evil spirits. These secondary powers were not perceived as alien to monotheism; in fact, precisely because of the doctrine of the one God, Jews felt the need for mediating agents between themselves and the divine. Therefore, Jews looked to the Jewish holy man for his influence in the spirit world. Incantations and exorcisms could enlist the support of spirits in accomplishing human will. To this end, the knowledge and manipulation of demonic and divine names was extremely powerful.[26] At another level, the holy man was

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[24]Ibid., 56.

[25]Ibid., 87.

[26]Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 2, 17-20.

esteemed not only for his influence with demons and angels, but for his relationship with God:

> That a distinctive trend of charismatic Judaism existed during the last couple of centuries of the Second Temple is undeniable. These holy men were treated as the willing or unsuspecting heirs to an ancient prophetic tradition. Their supernatural powers were attributed to their immediate relation to God. They were venerated as a link between heaven and earth, independent of any institutional mediation.[27]

Baron notes that Pharisaic Judaism in particular was conducive to this felt need for mediation: its acceptance of angelology, emphasis on human vigilance against evil spirits, devaluing of the Temple cult, and claim that the patriarchs intervene with God on behalf of the people all increased the importance of mediators who might bridge the chasm "between a perfect Creator and an imperfect world."[28] The Jewish need for mediation was not merely a borrowing from pagan culture, but an intrinsic element of first-second century Judaism itself.

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[27]Vermes, Jesus the Jew, 79. Vermes's description contains other important elements to be explored in later chapters: the relationship of the holy man to earlier prophets, and his independence from institutional forms.

[28]Baron, Social and Religious History, vol. 2, 42. Baron identifies the Pharisaic doctrine of resurrection as another attempt to make sensible the relationship between perfect Creator and imperfect creation.

DESTRUCTION AND DECENTRALIZATION

If first-century Judaism was already a rich and fertile source for holy man activity, the destruction of the Temple, and with it the change from a cultic-territorial to an ethnic-religious world-view, created new and greater possibilities for charismatic leadership. The destruction of the Temple made concrete the decentralization which Pharisaism had begun to raise to prominence. The central institution of Jewish life had been destroyed, creating a vacuum to be filled either by a new institutional structure, by non-institutional leadership, or both.

As Neusner demonstrates, the Mishnah emerges as an ordered response to the confusion and uncertainty wrought by the destruction of the Temple:

> In every line the Mishnah both expresses the issue of confusion in the wake of the end of the old mode of ordering life above and below, and also imposes order by sorting out confused matters ... In a moment of deep despair and doubt such as the later first and second centuries, this appeal to the heart and mind of Israel penetrated to the depths of the dilemma.[29]

The power of the Mishnah resided in the congruence between its characteristics as an intellectual system and the social context to which it responded:

> The powerful attraction of problems of confusion and chaos, on the one side, and order and form, on the other -- these form the generative problematic of the Mishnah

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[29]Jacob Neusner, "Max Weber Revisited: Religion and Society in Ancient Judaism" (Oxford: The Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1981), 3.

> as a system because they express in intellectual form the very nature and essential being of Israel in its social condition at that particular moment in Israel's history.[30]

Notably, in the Mishnah, which is concerned deeply with establishing a new institutional order in the face of chaos, holy man stories are almost totally absent. With the exception of the Honi narrative in M. Ta'anit 3.8, the Mishnah contains no mention of charismatic activity by the Tannaim.[31] As the evidence earlier in this chapter suggests, this absence of material can hardly be due to a scarcity of Jewish charismatic activity; instead, it suggests that holy man activity and the systematic approach of the Mishnah may have been distinct or conflicting responses to the same crisis of confusion and chaos brought on by the destruction of the Temple. Corresponding to the Weberian framework, it is quite possible that the institution-makers of the Mishnah considered the charismatic wonder-worker a threat to the nascent rabbinic order.[32]

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[30]Ibid., 11. According to Neusner, the Mishnah establishes order by presenting an image of stasis: "What the Mishnah really wants is for nothing to happen. The Mishnah presents a tableau, a wax museum, a diorama. It portrays a world fully perfected and so wholly at rest ... a world in stasis, perfect and complete, made holy because it is complete and perfect. It is an economy -- again in the classic sense of the word -- awaiting the divine act of sanctification" (ibid., 9-10).

[31]Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 624-625.

[32]The concept of routinization produces an irony here. The rabbis, who portrayed themselves as descendants of the Pharisees, themselves become the protectors of an institutional order, chary of decentralized threats to their

The Amoraic Period in Babylonia

RABBINIC STORIES AND RABBINIC PERSPECTIVE

In many ways, the intellectual and historical context for the final redaction of the stories about Jewish holy men is more important than the context in which the figures supposedly lived, because it is the Talmudic stories about these figures, and not any historically reliable biographical account of their lives, which are open to study. The Amoraic context for the holy man stories is therefore equally if not more important than the Tannaitic context in which the figures supposedly functioned. One must approach Amoraic history cautiously; Neusner makes several historiographical observations about the Amoraic period which serve as helpful qualifications for this study. First, because our primary source of data for understanding the environment in which the rabbis operated is the Talmud itself, we must acknowledge its limitations as an historical resource. As Neusner argues, while it can be a fruitful source for the study of history, "the Babylonian Talmud impedes as much as it advances the historical inquiry." [33] While we lack a reliable historical

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authority.

[33] Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), vol. 3, xviii.

chronicle, we possess legal sayings and stories which can tell us much about reality as the rabbis perceived it:

> The stories people told and the beliefs they held to account for and justify the power relationships they experienced ... What were the beliefs that men referred to in order to shape, understand, and explain reality? What were the fundamental convictions about reality that underlay all their actions?[34]

Ultimately, it matters little to this study whether the events described in holy man accounts actually transpired; more important is the picture the stories provide of the rabbis who included them in the canon, and what the stories can reveal about the rabbinic task of transforming Jewish society.[35] The rabbis were involved not only in crafting stories or recasting memories, but in attempting to reshape the Jewish world as they knew it:

> How did a few men impose their vision and their will on a very old religious community, and so reshape that community to conform to a new interpretation of all that had gone before? For this purpose, religious

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[34]Jacob Neusner, There We Sat Down: Talmudic Judaism in the Making (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 23.

[35]Barth suggests several important caveats and questions for the study of aggadah. He notes that the scholarly task of dating legends is extremely difficult. Moreover, the centrality of redactorial context in shaping and reshaping the meaning of a given story makes the discovery of "original form or of scriptural causes or historical factors ... difficult to impossible." One must formulate careful answers to important questions: "Did the Aggadists intend to deal with events of their time? Against the background of which historical period might an Aggadah have been formed? To which problems might it have been related, and which positions did it seek to communicate?" (Barth, "Recent Studies in Aggadah," 205-208).

> institutions and ideas are more interesting than political and social history.[36]

In order to understand the function of the holy man stories not only as reflections of the rabbinic attitude towards charisma, but as transformative tools, we must explore the world-view of the rabbis who told them.

The Babylonian rabbinate was characterized by an important paradox. On the one hand, as Neusner indicates, the Babylonian rabbi was "on no account a separatist."[37] Academies were not isolated from the cities, and the rabbi's political and administrative roles brought him into continuous contact with the people. The rabbis did not form a caste, nor a discrete economic class, nor an exclusive sacerdotal group -- theoretically, the rabbinate was open to all who qualified, and the rabbis applied the same standards of behavior to the general populace as they did to themselves.[38] For all of this ostensible openness, however, the rabbis were clearly an elite group, distinguished by their learning and by their behavior. This was the central paradox of the rabbinic estate: on the one hand the rabbis

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[36]Neusner, There We Sat Down, 10. Elsewhere, Neusner quotes Reinhard Bendix's formulation of Weber's similar systemic questions: "Weber approached the study of religious ideas ... specially in terms of the social processes whereby the inspirations of a few become the convictions of the many." Reinhard Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), 259; quoted in Neusner, "Max Weber Revisited," 16.

[37]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 3, 102.

[38]Ibid.

regarded themselves as superior; on the other, they claimed to be providing a model for popular, not merely elite, behavior.[39]

THE RABBI AS HOLY MAN

Like their counterparts in relation to the Tannaitic period, both those who lived in the Amoraic period and those who have studied it exhibit difficulties in defining magic objectively. Neusner describes scholarly attempts to distinguish the period's religion from its magic as "more theological than phenomenological."[40] Within Babylonian society itself, magic was a common phenomenon:

> Magic, astrology, medicine and other aspects of the occult are legitimate .... They cannot be ignored as "not normative," especially since most of the leading figures among the elite were believed to possess great powers in these matters ... When, manufactured in the seventh or eighth century, the incantation bowls appear, we come upon substantial evidences regarding Jewish magic, and find the masses of the Jews were using pretty much the same techniques as the Zoroastrians, Christians, Manicheans, Mandaeans, and others.[41]

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[39]Ibid., 98. This paradox is especially important in understanding the attitude of the rabbis towards charismatics. If the charismatic is one who by definition stands outside of the community, endowed with extraordinary powers, how are the rabbis, as communal leaders and popular models, to regard him?

[40]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 116. Cf. Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, Bollingen Series 37 (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1953-1965), vol. 2, 159: "Magic is a term of judgment, not of classification"; quoted in Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 116.

[41]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 3, xix.

While some Jews may have attempted to distinguish Jewish wonder-working on the grounds that it was enabled by the one God rather than by pagan gods and spirits, such a distinction did not produce "a denial of the efficacy of magic, nor did it prevent Jews from using the same magical practices as pagans."[42] Moreover, Saul Lieberman stresses that magic and natural science were closely related in late antiquity. Everyone believed in charms, demons and the power of sorcery; for the rabbis to deny belief in sorcery and incantation formulas would be to reject the "'scientific methods' of their time and place."[43] While such "scientific" activities were widespread and recognized as desirable demonstrations of power, their practitioners never acknowledged them as "magic."[44] Magic was as much a subjective and locative term of disparagement in Amoraic Babylonia as it was in Tannaitic Palestine.[45]

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[42]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 354-355.

[43]Lieberman, Saul, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Feldheim, 1965), 114; quoted in Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 3, 118.

[44]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 361: "So far as magicians were disreputable, no faithful community would regard its holy men as magicians. But so far as magic was an expected and normal trait of religious virtuosi, everyone supposed his community's holy men could produce magic."

[45]Ibid., 354. Neusner cites an unpublished lecture by Morton Smith: "In antiquity, the practice of magic was a criminal offense and the term magician was a term of abuse." Smith notes that the term "magician" connoted social subversion, especially to those whose established authority was threatened by the "magician's" supernatural powers.

The rabbis were considered wonder-working masters. As Lieberman suggests, the rabbis regarded astrology as a valid science, though they did not claim to have mastered it themselves.[46] Talmudic Jewry also possessed its own demonology, with distinctions between classes of demons as well as individual spirits.[47]

For the rabbis, as for their non-Jewish counterparts, the capacity and reputation for charismatic activity was a cultivated source of power:

> The rabbi both presented himself as, and was widely believed to be, a holy man, whose charisma weighed at least as heavily as his learning, and whose learning to begin with encompassed far more than a mere collection of ancient traditions of Scriptural exegesis. What was extraordinary about him was his mastery of a body of theurgical learning, the power of which rendered him exceptionally influential in heaven and earth.[48]

The rabbinic holy man's power was sociopolitical as well as supernatural. Stories about different circles of rabbis indicate that each group arrogated unique abilities to its most outstanding members, and derided the abilities of hostile rabbis. Accounts of supernatural deeds became a

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[46]Ibid., 330-332.

[47]Joshua Trachtenberg, Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion (New York: William Collins and World Publishing Co., Inc., 1961), 25. Neusner describes the rabbinic system of angels and demons as "the technology of the rabbis' theological world-view" (Babylonia, vol. 4, 324).

[48]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 3, 104.

convention in telling stories about any great rabbi.[49] Not only within rabbinic circles, but in the relationship between the rabbinate and the exhilarchate, the rabbi's reputation as a holy man provided power and leverage.[50]

RABBINIC MASTERY OF THE SUPERNATURAL: TALMUDIC EXAMPLES

In striking contrast to the Mishnah, the Talmud contains assorted accounts of the rabbis' supernatural abilities. While the number of these accounts is relatively small in comparison to the bulk of the Talmud's halakhic and aggadic literature, the quantity remains much greater than in the Tannaitic stratum.[51] Examples of rabbinic wonder-working in the Babylonian Talmud include being visited by Elijah,[52] talking to the angel of death,[53] communicating with the

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[49]Ibid., 123. Neusner cites B.T. Sanhedrin 17a, in which R. Yohanan claims that one must be a master of sorcery in order to qualify for a seat in the Sanhedrin.

[50]Ibid., 104.

[51]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 391-392. Neusner claims that it is "clear ... that [the editors of the Babylonian Talmud] did not attempt to suppress such data, and attributes its relative sparseness to "the nature of the literature," i.e., legal rather than hagiographic. Neusner provides a summary table of rabbinic texts related to holy man activity (ibid., 392-400).

[52]B.T. Ketubot 105b-106a, B.T. Baba Mesi'a 114a-b, B.T. Menahot 41a, B.T. Berakhot 29b, B.T. Eruvin 43a. (All subsequent citations in this chapter refer to the Babylonian Talmud unless otherwise noted.)

[53]Mo'ed Qatan 28a, Hagigah 4b-5a.

dead,[54] receiving greetings from the heavenly court,[55] issuing curses,[56] interpreting dreams[57] and creating or restoring life.[58] The rabbis were especially noted for their control over demons and their healing abilities. Belief in demons was widespread in Babylonia, and the ability to control them was an essential characteristic of the rabbinic holy man.[59] The Babylonian Amoraim, like rabbis of previous generations, were learned in medical traditions, and the Talmud contains numerous examples of rabbinic interest and advice in the area of medicine.[60] The rabbis' medical knowledge was sometimes held to be esoteric, and incantations were common in connection with medical remedies.[61]

While pagan and Christian holy men attributed their abilities to other supernatural sources, the rabbis were unique in their claim that their own supernatural abilities

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[54]Mo'ed Qatan 28a, Baba Batra 58a.

[55]Ta'anit 21b-22a.

[56]Baba Batra 22a; Baba Mesia 108a; Baba Qama 80a; Mo'ed Qatan 17a-b, 27b; Nazir 57b; Yevamot 106a.

[57]Berakhot 55a-b, 57a.

[58]Sanhedrin 65b, 67b; Megillah 7b.

[59]Hulin 105b, Horayot 10a.

[60] Avodah Zarah 28b-29a, Berakhot 39a, Sanhedrin 48b.

[61]Shabbat 66b, 129a; Nedarim 49a; Yoma 84a. More naturalistic rabbinic remedies are indicated in the following sources: Avodah Zarah 28a; Eruvin 29b; Ketubot 50a, 77b; Gittin 67b, 69a, 70a.

derived from the Torah.[62] While the rabbis were capable of performing miracles, they were not primarily wonder-workers; their supernatural abilities were derived from and subordinate to their study of Torah:[63]

> [The rabbis] did believe that those whose lives conformed to the image of God, the Torah, participated in God's holiness and also in his power, and this was attested by their ability to create men and resurrect the dead, to control angels and demons, and to perform other spectacular miracles.[64]

Neusner identifies two distinct rabbinic views of the relationship between supernatural abilities and Torah. In what he defines as representative of "normative Judaism," whatever supernatural power a rabbi exhibits is the result of his acting in accordance with the dictates of Written and Oral Law; acts of piety and observance increase his merit, with the hope that his prayers, blessings and curses will be made effective by divine or angelic action.[65] From the second perspective, rabbinic knowledge of Torah is itself a

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[62]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 356.

[63]The rabbinic emphasis on Torah to some extent resolves the paradox of the rabbinic estate. The rabbis identified the Torah, the text which all Jews were commanded to study, as the source for their own esoteric and extraordinary abilities. Note also that the combination of Torah and wonder-working corresponds to a popular aretalogical form: the fusion of "wise man" and "miracle-worker" elements.

[64]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 286. Cf. Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 3, 124: "The rabbi did not study Torah in order to become a magician. The content of his studies did not concern sorcery and witchcraft. He studied a law code and what had been said about it by previous teachers. Everything else was secondary."

[65]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 4, 356.

form of theurgical gnosis, a direct source of supernatural power: "It was 'Torah' that lay at the center of their being, though a 'Torah' which was believed to endow the knower with unusual skill and knowledge."[66] Whether the Torah's power was bestowed indirectly via merit or directly as a result of gnosis, the Talmud contains various examples of Torah study as a source of miraculous power for the rabbis, especially as protection against harm.[67]

AMORAIC VS. TANNAITIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS JEWISH CHARISMATIC ACTIVITY

In summary, in contrast to the Tannaitic tradition, the rabbis after 200 C.E. portray themselves as skilled in the control of demons, exorcism, and supernatural ability; compared to the rabbis before 200, who did not display in the literature any great concern with the world of demons and exorcism, the Amoraim produce a literature, in Lightstone's phrase, in which "demons emerge from the woodwork in

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[66]Neusner, Babylonia, vol. 3, 124. Cf. ibid., 104: "The substance and effects of their gnosis sufficiently impressed other Jews that they were seen, by virtue of what they knew, to have been transformed into extraordinary men." In contrast to Neusner, Green portrays the link between charismatic activity and Torah learning as a rabbinic attempt at domestication, rather than as evidence of the Torah's role as a source of charismatic authority ("Palestinian Holy Men," 646).

[67]Sotah 21a, Mo`ed Qatan 28a, Ta`anit 20b.

veritable battalions."[68] Consistent with the Weberian tension between institutional and charismatic authority, Lightstone attributes this distinction between Tannaitic and Amoraic literature to the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent decentralization of Jewish life.[69] The Temple was an ordered system of sacred space, marked by a system of cleanness and rites of purification.[70] Lightstone suggests that direct access to the Temple cult, or the expectation of such access (as represented by the utopian stasis of the Mishnah) seems to correlate with a relative lack of concern with demons and exorcism. He claims that the Temple system of purificatory rites and the Diaspora system of exorcism each exist to create order by defining social boundaries, the former through "Pentateuchal-cultic patterns of 'world,'" and the latter through a "decentralized 'shamanistic' mediation of the sacred."[71] Thus Rabbinic Judaism after the destruction, and Diaspora Judaism while the Temple was still standing, developed an early and intense interest in supernatural activity: "Diaspora Jews venerated the Torah of the Temple yet remained outside its concentric circles of order, consigned to the regions of uncontrolled confusion of

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[68]Lightstone, Commerce, 51.

[69]Lightstone, "Magicians, Holy Men and Rabbis," 143-145.

[70]Lightstone, Commerce, 53.

[71]Ibid., 159.

social categories."[72] The strong and centralized Temple would not countenance decentralized and varied sources of the sacred (as represented by the "shamanistic" model) distributed throughout the world; thus it is only after the Mishnaic period that rabbis begin to define themselves (and permit themselves to tell stories about others, including biblical figures) as mediating the power of heaven directly, based on knowledge of Torah.

Despite greater Amoraic interest in and tolerance of holy man activity, the rabbinic attitudes revealed by the Talmuds are characterized more by complexity and ambivalence than by either unqualified acceptance or outright rejection. We know that stories about Jewish figures known primarily for their ability to perform supernatural feats appear as part of the Talmudic canon. The task remains to explore the ways in which the rabbis shaped and presented those stories, and to understand how the stories might reflect rabbinic views towards charismatic behavior and towards the rabbinic enterprise of religious leadership.

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[72]Ibid., 53-54. Note that Lightstone does not refer to the two systems as competitive or antagonistic, but instead as serving parallel functions. He refers to priests and exorcists, or Temple and living holy men, as pairs which existed in "apposition, although not in opposition," reflecting "not problems of definition among competing groups" but "the frontiers of meaningful accessibility to the Temple's structured world" (ibid., 56). Cf. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," where the author suggests that ascetic practices might be seen "to complement and supplement the Temple rites" (263). Both of these views represent a modification of the Weberian opposition between charismatic and institutional authority.

CHAPTER THREE

Honi the Circle-Drawer

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RAIN

The main sources of the recorded Honi tradition appear in rabbinic literature which is concerned with issues of rain, drought, and fasting: M. Ta`anit 3:8, Tosefta Ta`anit 2:13, B.T. Ta`anit 23a-b, and P.T. Ta`anit 3:9-10. Drought is cause for fasting and prayer because, as the rabbis emphasize in various statements, rain is vital to the survival of the community. R. Hoshiah claimed that the force of rain is "equal to the whole creation,"[1] while R. Tanhum b. Hiyya compared rainfall to the giving of Torah:

> R. Tanhum b. Hiyya said: "The falling of the rain is greater than the giving of the Torah, for the giving of the Torah is a joy only to Israel, while the falling of the rain is a rejoicing for all the world, including the cattle and the wild beasts and the birds."[2]

In rabbinic texts and with the insertion of "who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall" into the second prayer of the Amidah,[3] the rabbis also linked rainfall to the concept

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[1]Genesis Rabbah 13:4.

[2]Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 117:1.

[3]B.T. Ta`anit 7a, Genesis Rabbah 13:4. Cf. the discussion in A Rabbinic Anthology, ed. C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 369.

of resurrection. Conversely, for the inhabitants both of Palestine and Babylonia, the absence of rain could be catastrophic, and constituted a clear situation of Weberian "distress."[4] The problem was more than meteorological; the community regarded fasting and prayer not primarily as direct instruments for effecting rainfall, but as exercises in penitence. Underlying the liturgical convention is a conviction that the drought (or other natural affliction) is a sign of God's displeasure with the people, resulting from Israel's transgressions: "R. Qattina said, 'Rain is withheld only on account of neglect of Torah.'"[5] A passage from the Palestinian Talmud relates drought to sin, and conversely, rainfall to merit:

> For four sins rain is held back: idolatry, unchastity, bloodshed, and because of those who make a public promise to give charity, and then do not give it. For the merit of three things rain comes down: for the merit of the earth, for the merit of lovingkindness, for the merit of sufferings. All three are indicated in Job 37:13: 'He causes it to come whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.'[6]

From the rabbinic viewpoint, therefore, rainfall is a life-giving force, and a symbol of divine pleasure; conversely, its absence not only threatens all forms of life on earth,

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[4]See discussion above, 5. Cf. Brown's reference to the Christian saint Symeon Stylites: "To ask Symeon Stylites to pray for rain was an object lesson in the ability of one man to render manageable and intelligible the dumb hostility of a Syrian drought" (Brown, "Rise and Function," 144).

[5]B.T. Ta'anit 7b.

[6]P.T. Ta'anit 3:3. Cf. B.T. Sanhedrin 106b, B.T. Berakhot 20a, B.T. Ta'anit 24a-b.

but represents divine dissatisfaction. The individual who can invoke special powers to provoke rainfall is therefore important not only to Israel's daily survival, but to its relationship with God.

M. TA`ANIT 3:8

Chapter three of the Mishnah tractate Ta`anit contains laws concerned with the imposition of public fasts in situations where a mishap, especially the lack of rain, befalls the community. It discusses the quantity and quality of rain which require the sounding of the alarm note which often accompanied or signaled the imposition of a fast. The discussion indicates that the alarm note (blown on the shofar) is also sounded on account of pestilence, the collapse of houses, locusts, wild beasts, and other afflictions. The mishnah which constitutes the core of the Honi tradition declares that the alarm is sounded on account of any calamity which befalls the public, except for excessive rain:

> They sound the shofar for all calamities which might befall the community, except for an excess of rain. Once they said to Honi the Circle-Drawer, "Pray that rain may fall." He said to them: "Go out and bring in the Passover ovens so that they do not melt." He prayed, but it did not rain. What did he do? He drew a circle and stood within it, and said before Him: "Master of the Universe, your children have turned their faces towards me, for I am like a son of the house before you. I swear by your great name that I will not move from here until you have mercy upon your children." The rain began to drip. He said: I did not ask for such (rain), but for

> rain of (a quantity to fill) cisterns, ditches and caves." (The rain) began to fall vehemently. He said: "I did not ask for such (rain), but for rain of benevolence, blessing, and graciousness." The rains fell as he ordered them, until Israel went out from Jerusalem and up to the Temple Mount because of the rain. They came and said to him: "As you have prayed that they (the rains) will fall, so pray that they will depart." He said to them: "Go out and see if the Stone of Strayers has been washed away." Shimon ben Shetah sent (a message) to him: "If you were not Honi, I would have decreed a ban of excommunication against you. But what shall I do with you, for you act petulantly before God and He does your will, like a son who acts petulantly before his father and he (the father) does his will.[7] And of you it is written in Scripture: "Your father and mother will rejoice, and she who bore you will exult"[8] (M. Ta`anit 3:8).

What is the portrait of charismatic activity, and of Honi in particular, presented in M. Ta`anit 3.8? After the first sentence of the mishnah sets the halakhic context for the aggadah, the Honi narrative proper begins with the formulaic ma`aseh she.[9] Immediately, the fact that the people solicit Honi's efforts suggests that he is already recognized for his powers. He emphasizes his status as a recognized figure in his later words to God: "Your children have turned their faces towards me." The story also reveals Honi's sense of confidence; he is so certain that he will be able to cause rain to fall that he instructs the people to bring in the clay ovens used for the Passover sacrifices, lest they melt

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[7]Cf. B.T. Berakhot 19a.

[8]Proverbs 23:25.

[9]Green argues that ma`aseh she is "the standard formula for a precedent" ("Palestinian Holy Men," 628).

during the anticipated rainfall.[10] Immediately after these instructions, however, the narrative undercuts Honi's presumption: "He prayed, but rain did not fall." Importantly, this failed first effort is classified conventionally as an act of prayer,[11] identified by the same word with which the people make their request (hitpallel). The narrative does not describe the content of the prayer.

Honi's next action is far from conventional. Standing within a circle,[12] he addresses God as a familiar. The story creates a tension between the transcendent status of God and

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[10]The presence of the ovens suggests that the story is set near the time of Passover. Green notes that this places the story at the end of what is normally the Palestinian rainy season ("Palestinian Holy Men," 51). The request for rain, therefore, would seem to be all the more urgent.

[11]The failure of a figure's first prayer for rain is a motif in the third chapter of B.T. Ta`anit. See, for example, B.T. Ta`anit 24a.

[12]Green, citing Trachtenberg, notes the significance of the circle as an "ancient and universal magical symbol": "The invocation of demons is a dangerous business, and the magician must take steps to protect himself in the event that his spirit adjutants get out of hand. What simpler or more obvious device than to exclude them from his immediate environment? ... By this magic act [of enclosing oneself in a circle] the ground and atmosphere surrounding the magician become a private, forbidden precinct" (Trachtenberg, Jewish Magic and Superstition, 121; quoted in Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 634-635). Green notes that circles were solar symbols used in the magical rites of Hellenistic mystery cults. He also identifies, citing Patai, a counterpart to Honi's circle in the trench that Elijah digs around the altar on Mt. Carmel during his contest with the prophets of Baal. This last point seems to rely upon a link between the trench dug for the fire contest in I Kings 18:32 and Elijah's subsequent prediction/production of rain in I Kings 18:41-45 (Raphael Patai, "The 'Control of Rain' in Ancient Palestine," Hebrew Union College Annual 14 (1939): 251-286; quoted in Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 634).

the terms in which Ḥoni addresses God. First, to introduce Ḥoni's words, the narrator uses the term "before Him" (lefanayv), a construction often employed in reference to speech addressed to God. Ḥoni then addresses God with the epithet "Master of the Universe," thereby confirming God's status. Even as his speech suggests recognition of God's transcendence, Ḥoni delivers an ultimatum.[13] The arrogance of his request is emphasized by the fact that he mentions himself four times in a nineteen word passage: "to me," "I," "I," "I will not." Ḥoni's speech also emphasizes the transcendent God's personal relationship to Israel, using the term "your children" twice to describe the people, and referring to himself as "like a child of the house before you." In fact, with the term "son of the house," Ḥoni asserts his own favored status before God.[14] The first sentence Ḥoni speaks conflates these elements of

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[13]For the notion of not moving until God responds, see Ḥabbakuk 2:1: "I will stand on my watch, take up my station at the post, and wait to see what He will say to me, what He will reply to my complaint." Cf. B.T. Ta`anit 23a (see discussion below, 81) and Megillat Ta`anit 12. For a midrashic elaboration in which Ḥabbakuk draws a circle and stands within it, cf. Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 7:17 and Ps. 77:1. Cf. Avot de Rabbi Natan chap. 9, in which Moses draws a small circle and stands within it to seek God's mercy on Miriam's behalf.

[14]The ben bayit phrase might be translated as "for I am like an intimate before you." For a different view, see Shmuel Safrai, "Teachings of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," 19. The author, in positing a relationship between this story and the episode of B.T. Berakhot 34b in which Yoḥanan ben Zakkai refers to Ḥanina ben Dosa as a slave before a king, suggests that ben bayit here may mean "domestic slave."

transcendence, human self-assertion and divine-human connection: "Master of the Universe, your children have turned their faces towards me, for I am like a son of the house before you."

Honi's sense of presumption before the divine emerges each time he asks for a revision of the rains; not only does he demonstrate the boldness to express his dissatisfaction unilaterally (his intermediate statements are not prompted by popular request), but he expresses it in terms of his own original statement rather than the people's needs: each complaint begins, "I did not ask for such (rain)."

Just as it reveals Honi's intimacy with the divine, his popular following and his personal rather than legal approach, the story makes ironic use of institutional elements. Note, for example, the function of the term hitpallel, "pray." The word (in varying forms) appears three times, each time as part of the people's request that Honi pray for rain. The first time, Honi obeys and prays, but his prayer is ineffective. The second time the people request prayer (using the term twice),[15] Honi fails to comply, instead responding with his instructions about the Stone of Strayers.

Similarly, the references to the Stone of Strayers and to Passover ovens serve to subvert institutional elements.

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[15]Note that the people seem to regard prayer as the activity which caused the rain: "As you have prayed that they (the rains) will fall, so pray that they will depart."

Both of these terms evoke the Temple: the Stone of Strayers as a type of "lost-and found" on the Temple Mount,[16] and the Passover ovens as instruments of the sacrificial system. Honi, however, ignores their function. In his charismatic context, the Stone of Strayers and the Passover ovens function only as objects that measure or are subject to the rain he demands: "Go out and bring in the Passover ovens so that they do not melt," "Go out and see if the Stone of Strayers has been washed away." Aided by their similar structures, these responses create a narrative frame: Honi's encounter with the people begins and ends with their request for prayer and his subversion of institutional symbols in response.

Success is Honi's most salient charismatic characteristic. For all of its non-institutional elements, Honi's approach works: the rain falls as he ordains. Moreover, as Green suggests, the implicit demands for adjustment of the rainfall that appear between Honi's initial oath ("I swear by your great name ... until you have mercy upon your children") and its resolution ("the rains fell as he ordered them") suggest Honi's ability not only to produce rain, but to control its quality; it may even create the

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[16]B.T. Baba Mesi'a 28b: "Our Rabbis taught: 'There was a Stone of Strayers in Jerusalem: whoever lost an article would go there, and whoever found an article would do the same. The latter would stand and proclaim, and the former would provide marks of identification and receive the lost article back.'"

impression that "Ḥoni, not God, dominates and controls the action."[17]

The mishnaic redaction of Ḥoni's success story ends somewhat abruptly, however; it moves from within the episode (i.e., Ḥoni's response about the Stone of Strayers) to a seemingly exterior comment (the lemma of Shimon ben Shetaḥ.) Shimon ben Shetaḥ's concluding statement reflects the apparent tension in the aggadah as a whole: on the one hand, Shimon censures Ḥoni's willful behavior before God; on the other, he acknowledges the holy man's unique status and effectiveness.

The status of Shimon ben Shetaḥ heightens the drama of his statement. He was a member of one of the five zugot,[18] served as av bet din in the Jerusalem Sanhedrin,[19] and was powerful and strict in his enforcement of the law: he is reputed to have hanged eighty women in a single day who had been convicted of witchcraft.[20] From the outset, Shimon ben Shetaḥ's statement reflects the tension between institutional censure of Ḥoni's behavior and a recognition of his sui generis nature. "If you were not Ḥoni, I would have decreed a ban of excommunication against you"; even as Shimon

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[17]Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 633.

[18]M. Avot 1:1-8.

[19]M. Ḥagigah 2:2.

[20]M. Sanhedrin 6:4.

indicates that Honi deserves to be excommunicated,[21] he recognizes that Honi's unique status changes the circumstances -- the power of the individual takes precedence over legalism. Shimon ben Shetah, an exemplar of institutional authority, can only throw up his hands: "But what shall I do with you?"

Shimon ben Shetah's analogy to the petulant son and capitulating father continues the aggadah's play on the theme of family and familiarity. Honi described himself as a ben bayit before God; now Shimon uses the father-son relationship not only to acknowledge Honi's unique position, but to criticize the charismatic's behavior: "you act petulantly before God and he does your will, like a son who acts petulantly before his father and he (the father) does his will." The Psalms verse underscores the parental image. Here the aggadah's display of rabbinic ambivalence emerges most clearly. On the one hand, the overall effect of Shimon ben Shetah's statement is to criticize Honi's behavior, even while acknowledging his influence. On the other, the verse

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[21]Green argues that nidduy, the technical term for excommunication, is used elsewhere in the Mishnah only to indicate "expulsion from the Pharisaic group on account of transgression of sectarian teachings." He acknowledges, however, scholarly disagreement as to whether the term might also apply to actions taken against those outside of the Pharisaic sect. According to Green's argument, the threatened excommunication of Honi might actually be a subtle attempt to identify him with the Pharisees, and thereby serve as another element by which Honi is "brought into the ranks of early rabbinism" (Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 636-639).

from Psalms seems to lend an unqualified institutional stamp to Ḥoni's activities by linking them with Scripture.

The prism of institutionalization helps to explain certain of these contraries in the composition of the aggadah.[22] The acknowledgement of Ḥoni's unique relationship to God and the critique of his actions, while they appear to be in tension, also have a common function: they limit the potential of the charismatic story as a source for popular emulation. Similarly, both the upbraiding and the association with Torah are elements of institutionalization. Even as the rabbis' articulate a derisive stance towards charismatic activity, by associating Ḥoni with the Psalms verse, they suggest an implicit bond between the power of the individual charismatic and Torah, the rabbis' primary source of traditional authority.

T. TA`ANIT 2:13

A parallel passage in the Tosefta reveals further elements in the rabbinic portrait of Ḥoni:

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[22]What does it mean to "make sense of contraries?" One approach is that of redactorial criticism, as manifested in Green's thorough and helpful work on the "rabbinization" of Ḥoni. Green skillfully separates the various Ḥoni aggadot into diverse strands, arguing that the final redaction of each represents a conflation of disparate elements. No doubt he is correct. This study emphasizes a different question (one which Green does not wholly ignore): what is the effect of the finally redacted portrait, considered as a whole? How can the conflations be not only analyzed, but comprehended (i.e., not only taken apart, but grasped)?

> Once they said to one pious man, "Pray so that rain will fall." He prayed and rain fell. They said to him, "Just as you prayed and they (the rains) fell, pray and they will depart." He said to them: "Go out and see: If a man stands at Qeren Ofel and [can] splash his feet in the Qidron brook, then we will pray that rain should not fall. But we are certain that God will never again bring a flood to the world, as it is written: 'Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.'[23] And it says, 'For this to Me is like the days of Noah: As I swore that the waters of Noah would nevermore flood the earth, so I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you'"[24] (T. Ta'anit 2:13, ed. Lieberman, 334-335, ls. 80-85).

While the protagonist of the Tosefta passage is an unidentified hasid[25], this story and that in M. Ta'anit 3.8 are clearly parallels.[26] At the same time, the Tosefta version adds elements to our understanding of Ḥoni, and

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[23]Genesis 9:11.

[24]Isaiah 54:9.

[25]The question of what hasid means in rabbinic literature, and what it means in application to figures like Ḥoni and Ḥanina ben Dosa, is a matter of debate among scholars. For an extensive examination of the issue, see Safrai, "The Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," and Buchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety. Both provide thoroughgoing refutation of the nineteenth century scholarly attempt to identify the ḥasidim with the Essenes. Safrai differs from Buchler in arguing that the ḥasidim should not be viewed as "completely identical with the generality of the sages." He describes the ḥasidim as men noted for their actions (including attendance to public needs) rather than their rulings, members of a group who possessed their own "highly individual halakhah" which was sometimes "opposed to that generally prevailing." Especially important for this examination of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer and Ḥanina ben Dosa, Safrai (citing M. Sukkot 5:4) sees the terms "ḥasidim" and the "'anshei ma'aseh" as referring to an identical group within society (Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists," 16-20).

[26]Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 632: "We do not have two versions of the same story, one an abbreviation of the other, but two different stories which share a common literary structure that probably derives from another source."

departs from the Mishnah passage in significant ways. The first significant difference is that unlike Honi's, the pious man's attempt at prayer (again identified by the term hitpallel) is successful.[27] Moreover, while this story lacks the details of the different quantities of rain and the intermediate demands they produce in the Mishnaic redaction, it does include the people's request that the rains depart. In contrast to Honi's statement in the Mishnah, "Go out and see if the Stone of Strayers has been washed away," the protagonist in the Tosefta suggests that the people go and see if the waters of the Qidron have risen to such a high level that a person standing atop Qeren Ofel (a high rock) can splash his feet in them.[28] The assignment, like its parallel, is rhetorical. Unlike the Honi of M. Ta`anit 3:8, however, the Tosefta's protagonist tells the people why they have no reason to worry ("We are certain that God will never again bring a flood to the world"), and provides two Biblical citations to underscore the point.

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[27]That success might also be reflected in a shading of emphasis produced by a slight difference in grammatical construction between the two versions of the people's request for the rain to depart. In the Mishnaic version, the phrase is subjunctive: "Just as you prayed that the rains should fall (sheyerdu)," while in the Tosefta passage the phrase is declarative: "Just as you prayed and the rains fell" (veyerdu).

[28]Cf. P.T. Ta`anit 3:9, where R. Eleazar makes the same reference to Qeren Ofel and the Qidron brook in defining when one may pray for rain to depart. He then cites Isaiah 54:9 as assurance that God will never again flood the earth.

The charisma of the protagonist in the Tosefta version is less pronounced -- traces exist in his designation as ḥasid, and in the fact that he is recognized and successful as a figure who brings rain. Those elements are muted by the fact that his act is identified as prayer, and by the absence of any explicit evidence of a personal relationship with the divine. Finally, rather than a petulant attitude towards God, the pious man expresses faith in the security of the divine promises he cites.[29]

B.T. TA`ANIT 22b-23a: PRECEDING THE FIRST AGGADAH

B.T. Ta`anit expands the rabbinic portrait of Ḥoni with three consecutive pericopes; these passages, consisting of two aggadot and one exegesis, both reflect and extend the tensions evident in the Mishnaic redaction. Before the first

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[29]Josephus provides evidence of another early story about Ḥoni. Josephus' protagonist is known as "Onias, who, being a righteous man and dear to God, had once in a rainless period prayed to God to end the drought, and God had heard his prayer and sent rain." Onias is a martyr for peace at the time of the war between the partisans of Hyrcanus and Aristobolus: "This man hid himself when he saw that the civil war continued to rage, but he was taken to the camp of the Jews and was asked to place a curse on Aristobolus and his fellow-rebels, just as he had, by his prayers, put an end to the rainless period. But when in spite of his refusals and excuses he was forced to speak by the mob, he stood up in their midst and said, 'O God, king of the universe, since these men standing beside me are Your people, and those who are besieged are Your priests, I beseech You not to hearken to them against these men nor to bring to pass what these men ask You to do to those others.' And when he prayed in this manner the villains among the Jews who stood round him stoned him to death" (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 14:22-24).

aggadah about Honi, the gemara includes a brief discussion of M. Ta`anit 3:8. At the outset of the discussion in the Babylonian Talmud, R. Yohanan articulates the concept which underlies the Mishnah's injunction not to pray on account of an excess of rain: "Because we may not pray on account of an excess of good."[30] In the rabbis' attempt to define how much rainfall is enough to warrant a prayer for rain to cease, Rami son of R. Yud interprets a phrase from Malachi 3:10 to argue that an excess of good occurs when "one's speech becomes confounded with saying, `Enough.'"[31] In the Babylonian Talmud's discussion, the Tosefta's reference to Qeren Ofel (though without explicit mention of the Qidron) emerges as an explicit criterion for defining excessive rainfall: "How excessive must the rainfall be to warrant prayer for it to cease? He (R. Eleazar) replied: When a man standing on Qeren Ofel is able to splash his feet in the

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[30]B.T. Ta`anit 22b. Cf. P.T. Ta`anit 3:9.

[31]Rami son of R. Yud understands `ad beli day ("boundless") in Malachi 3:10 as `ad shevivlu siftoteikhem milomar day ("until one's speech becomes confounded with saying, `Enough'"). The idiom `ad shevivlu siftoteikhem, which is found in P.T. Ta`anit 3.9 as `ad shevibbalalu siftoteikhem, also appears in Genesis 11:9 in the Tower of Babel narrative: ki sham balal yhvh sefat kol ha'ares ("because there the Lord confounded the speech of the whole earth"). Cf. P.T. Ta`anit 3:9, which provides two interpretations of the Malachi verse: "R. Jonah, Simeon bar Ba in the name of R. Yohanan: `A matter regarding which it is impossible for you to say `Enough,' that is a blessing." R. Berekhiah, R. Helbo, R. Abba bar Ilai in the name of Rav: `Until your speech becomes confounded from saying repeatedly, `Enough blessing! Enough blessing!'"

water."[32] The discussion concludes with examples of "rains in their season."[33] Significantly, an anonymous opinion identifies Shimon ben Shetah with an ideal period in Israel's past when rain fell in perfect quantities as an illustration of God's promise:

> For so it happened in the days of Shimon ben Shetah. Rain fell on the eve of Wednesdays and Sabbaths until the wheat came up as large as kidneys, the barley as olive pits, and the lentils as golden denarii. They stored specimens of them as an example for future generations, to teach them the effects of sin, as it is said, "Your iniquities have diverted these things, your sins have withheld bounty from you"[34] (B.T. Ta`anit 23a).

This association, which immediately precedes the passage in which Shimon ben Shetah censures Honi, elevates Shimon's already considerable status; the Pharisaic master is not only a prestigious judge, but one associated with ideal rains which produce wondrous sustenance.[35]

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[32]B.T. Ta`anit 22b. Cf. the conclusion of P.T. Ta`anit 3:9, where, as in Tosefta Ta`anit 2:13, R. Eleazar fortifies his statement with the text from Isaiah 54:9.

[33]God promises "rains in their season" to the Israelites in Leviticus 26:4.

[34]Jeremiah 5:25. The opinion also cites the days of the rebuilding of the Temple as a period of ideal rain: "Rain fell during the night but in the morning the wind blew and the clouds dispersed and the sun shone so that the people were able to go out to their work, and then they knew that they were engaged in sacred work" (B.T. Ta`anit 23a).

[35]Note the conflation even here: the rain and the produce associated with Shimon, the bearer of institutional authority, themselves smack of the miraculous. As indicated above (52-58), the rabbis see themselves as holy men.

B.T. TA`ANIT 23a: ḤONI DRAWS A CIRCLE AND DEMANDS RAIN

The first of the three passages about Ḥoni appears as part of the gemara's treatment of Mishnah Ta`anit 3.8, and amplifies the mishnaic version of the aggadah:

> Our rabbis have taught: One time most of the month of Adar had passed and rain had not fallen. They sent (a message) to Ḥoni the Circle-drawer: "Pray so that rain will fall." He prayed, but rain did not fall. He drew a circle and stood within it, as the prophet Ḥabbakuk had done, as it is written: "I will stand on my watch, take up my station at the post, and wait to see what He will say to me, what He will reply to my complaint."[36] He said before Him: "Master of the universe, your children have turned their faces to me, for I am like a son of the house before you. I swear by your great name that I will not move from here until you have mercy upon your children." The rain began to drip. His students said to him: "Rabbi, we see you and we will not die. It seems to us that the rain falls only to free you from your vow." He said: I did not ask for such (rain), but for rain of (a quantity to fill) cisterns, ditches and caves." (The rain) fell vehemently, until every drop was the size of the opening of a barrel; the sages estimate that no drop was smaller than a log.[37] His students said to him: "Rabbi, we see you and we will not die. It seems to us that the rain falls only to destroy the world." He said before Him: "I did not ask for such (rain), but for rain of benevolence, blessing, and graciousness." The rains fell as he ordered them, until the whole people went up to the Temple Mount on account of the rain.[38] They said to him, "Rabbi, just as you prayed that they (the rains) should fall, so pray that they will depart." He said to them: "I have received a tradition that one does not pray on account of an excess

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[36]Habbakuk 2:1.

[37]P.T. Ta`anit 3:9 provides a related but distinct description of the rains' vehemence: "Samuel taught: `(It rained as if poured) from the mouth of a wineskin.'"

[38]In order to explain how the Temple provided shelter, P.T. Ta`anit 3:9 adds: "This means that the Temple Mount was roofed over. And so it has been taught: ` There was a colonnade within a colonnade.'"

> of good. Nonetheless, bring me a bullock of thanksgiving."[39] They brought him a bullock of thanksgiving. He placed his two hands upon it, and said before Him: "Master of the Universe, Your people Israel whom you brought out of Egypt can tolerate neither an excess of good nor an excess of retribution. You were angry at them, and they could not tolerate it; you showered goodness upon them, and they could not tolerate it.[40] May it be your will that the rain cease and there be relief in the world." Immediately the wind blew, and the clouds scattered. The sun shone, and the people went out to the field and gathered mushrooms and truffles.[41] Shimon ben Shetah sent (a message) to him: "If you were not Honi, I would have decreed a ban of excommunication upon you. For if these years were like the years of Elijah, in whose hands were the keys of rain,[42] would not the Name of heaven be profaned by you?[43] But what shall I do with you, for you act petulantly before God and he does your will, as a son who acts petulantly before his father and he (the father) does his will. He says to him, `Father, take me to bathe me in warm water, wash me in cold water, give me nuts, almonds, peaches and pomegranates,' and he gives them to him. And of you it is written in Scripture: `Your father and mother will rejoice, and she who bore you will exult'"[44] (B.T. Ta`anit 23a).

As Green argues, this expansion of M. Ta`anit 3:8 adds "distinctly rabbinic elements"[45] to the portrait of Honi; in fact, these added elements, combined with the absence of any

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[39]The term is par hoda'ah, but Rashi's note plays on the similarity between two verb roots and describes the bull as being for the purpose of confession ("lehitvadot alayv").

[40]For a parallel to Honi's characterization of Israel, see B.T. Yevamot 47a-b, where the statement is one of the dissuasions offered to the prospective convert.

[41]Cf. P.T. Ta`anit 3:9.

[42]Cf. B.T. Sanhedrin 113a, B.T. Ta`anit 2a.

[43]Cf. P.T. Mo`ed Qatan 3:1.

[44]Proverbs 23:25.

[45]Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 642.

new charismatic facets, reduce the overall charismatic nature of Ḥoni's character. As we examine the rabbinic accretions, however, it is vital to understand that the establishment of links between Ḥoni and the rabbinic institution do not constitute a one-way street of "rabbinization," as Green would suggest.[46] Instead, as the concept of institutionalization underscores, the assertion of a relationship between charismatic and institutional authority also serves to preserve charismatic elements, albeit in modified form. The fact that the rabbis "draw Ḥoni further into rabbinism"[47] affects not only the portrait of Ḥoni, but the self-portrait of the rabbis who seek to arrogate to their own institutions some of the compelling power of the charismatic.

The first departure from the Mishnaic version of the story is related to timing: while the Mishnaic reference to Passover ovens seems to locate the story near the time of the festival,[48] the Talmud places the incidents of the aggadah in late Adar,[49] and fails to mention the Passover ovens.[50]

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[46]Ibid., 628.

[47]Ibid., 644.

[48]Cf. P.T. Ta'anit 3:9, which places events "on the eve of Passover."

[49]Green claims that by placing events a month earlier, the Talmudic account locates the story in the midst of the rainy season, "thereby diminishing its magical character" ("Palestinian Holy Men, 644). Green's use of "magical," however, is not clear. While placing the events in the rainy season makes the advent of rain more probable, it does not

The Talmudic account next introduces an important connection between Honi and Habbakuk: "He drew a circle and stood within it, as the prophet Habbakuk had done"[51]. The association with Habbakuk lends Honi legitimacy, and the citation provides some precedent for Honi's petulance: the verse and its context suggest the prophet's stubbornness and complaints before God.[52]

This Talmudic account portrays Honi as a rabbi with disciples -- this is as direct an identification of Honi with

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change the charismatic means by which rain is effected throughout the story -- through Honi's unmediated intervention with God.

[50]The Talmudic version of the aggadah lacks references to both the Passover ovens and the Stone of Strayers. It thereby diminishes the sense of Honi's arrogance as projected by his instruction to bring in the ovens, and the sense of subversion implied by his recasting of institutional symbols. In contrast to this diminution of Honi's arrogance, P.T. Ta`anit 3:9 presents the explicit opinion that arrogance was the cause for the failure of Honi's initial prayer: "He prayed but rain did not fall. R. Yose bar R. Bun said: `Because he did not come (before God) in humility.'"

[51]As Buchler and Green indicate, the connection between Habbakuk's "watch" and the drawing of a circle occurs not in Habbakuk 2.1 itself, but in the Targum. Buchler claims that the Targum "probably" relied upon the Mishnah (Buchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety, 246, n. 2; Green, "Palestinian Holy Men," 644, n. 83).

[52]While the reference to a Hebrew prophet affiliates Honi with institutional figures, it also demonstrates that his charismatic activity occurs within culturally acknowledged categories of sanctity: "the interpretation of charisma is always couched in an idiom that has already been established as relating to the sacred" (Keyes, "Charisma," 9). Keyes's argument reaffirms a crucial paradox: institutional elements help constitute the necessary idiom for communicating and preserving charismatic authority. See below (85, n. 57) for the relationship between the Honi material and the Elijah and Elisha traditions.

the rabbinate as appears in any of our texts. The students' statement, "We see you and we will not die," seems to be a statement of exhortation: "We see that God does miracles for you -- now pray (either for more rain in the first instance, or less in the second), that we not die."[53] The students' first statement, that the dripping rain "falls only to release you from your vow,"[54] serves a double purpose: it at once acknowledges that the rain falls for Ḥoni's sake,[55] and implies that this rain is insufficient. Similarly, the statement, "the rain falls only to destroy the world" is an expression of dissatisfaction with the kind of rain Ḥoni has evoked. In fact, the two exchanges with the students recast Honi as a representative of the people than as a unilateral operator. In the mishnaic account, the people only made two requests: both were for prayer, one when there was no rain and one after they had retreated to the Temple Mount; all of the intermediate demands were Ḥoni's alone. Here, Ḥoni's only unsolicited address to God is the ultimatum he issues while standing within the circle. While that statement

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[53]This interpretation follows Rashi on B.T. Ta`anit 23a.

[54]Cf. P.T. Ta`anit 3:9, where no students are mentioned, and the statement seems to be attributed to the people: "They said to him, `these rains come only to release you from your vow.'"

[55]The perception by another that a miracle occurs for the charismatic's sake is an important element of social recognition, and a recurrent aspect in B.T. Ta`anit Chapter Three. See, for example, B.T. Ta`anit 20a and 23b; see discussion below, 133-145.

remains a striking example of the charismatic's individual and personal approach, it is no longer echoed throughout the story as it was in the mishnaic redaction. The students' intervening statements also break the rhythm of intimacy that the Mishnah develops between Ḥoni's requests and God's responses; in M. Ta'anit 3:8, the middle of the aggadah consists almost exclusively of Ḥoni's ultimatum and consecutive complaints to God, punctuated only by concise statements of the rain's quality ("the rain began to drip," "the rain fell vehemently").

Other expansions in the Talmudic text continue to place Ḥoni in a rabbinic context. Not only his students, but the people, address him as rabbi; he is a recipient of the prohibition against praying on account of an excess of good, and shares the tradition with the people when they ask him to pray for the rain to depart -- this is a much more direct response than the cryptic, "Go and see if the Stone of Strayers has washed away," and it clearly relates the aggadah to its halakhic context. Moreover, Ḥoni's use of the bullock places him not merely in a rabbinic framework, but relates his activity to that of the priestly cult. In fact, the prayer over the bullock ("May it be your will that the rain cease and that there be relief in the world") brings a result

not recorded in the Mishnaic version of the story: the cessation of the rain and the bounty the rain produces.[56]

The Babylonian Talmud expands Shimon ben Shetaḥ's message to Ḥoni with two additions: the analogy to the petulant son and his father becomes more explicit, with reference to the son's requests; and Shimon relates his threat of excommunication to the period of Elijah and to profanation of the divine Name. This second characteristic is especially important. By citing profanation of the Name, the gemara provides an explicit reason (absent from M. Ta'anit 3:8) for the threatened excommunication. Ḥoni's self-indulgent attitude towards God is one apparent source of profanation; Shimon's mention of "the years of Elijah" suggests another. His statement seems to be a reference to I Kings 17:1, in which Elijah swears in God's name that "there will be no dew or rain except at my bidding." If Ḥoni were to have issued his petulant challenge before God during the time of Elijah's decree, he would have caused profanation of the Name by creating a situation in which God would either have appeared unable to respond to Ḥoni's prayer, or would have undermined Elijah's oath. The Elijah reference is also significant because Elijah frequently appears in connection with other

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[56]The direct juxtaposition of the wondrous results of the rain with the name of Shimon ben Shetaḥ recalls Shimon's own earlier association with ideal rainfall.

Jewish charismatic activity;[57] by invoking Elijah's name, Shimon ben Shetaḥ underscores the gravity of his own reprimand. In fact, for all of the institutional accretions which the Talmudic version of the aggadah contains, the image of Ḥoni is not so manipulated as to make Shimon's warning unnecessary. The rabbis have not so thoroughly co-opted the charismatic that his power no longer poses a threat. Again, the ultimate index of Ḥoni's charismatic power is the success of his actions, and that success still obtains, even though it is now more closely linked to rabbinic institutions.

B.T. TA'ANIT 23a AND P.T. TA'ANIT 3:10: ḤONI AND THE RABBINIC EXEGESIS OF JOB 22:28-30

B.T. Ta'anit 23a continues with an exegesis of Job 22:28-30:

> Our rabbis have taught: What (message) did the members of the Chamber of Hewn Stone send to Ḥoni the Circle-drawer? "You will decree and it will be fulfilled, and light will shine upon your affairs. When

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[57]Cf. Genesis Rabbah 13:7: "No man has existed comparable to Elijah and Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, causing mankind to serve God." For a treatment of the relationship between the wonder-working feats of prophets such as Elijah and Elisha and the charismatic activities of later holy men, see G.B. Sarfatti, "Pious Men, Men of Deeds, and the Early Prophets," Tarbiz 26, no. 12 (December, 1956): 126-148. Sarfatti examines a number of Biblical stories about the early prophets and Talmudic stories about characters classified as ḥasidim and 'anshei ma'aseh (especially Ḥoni and Ḥanina ben Dosa), and notes numerous features in common among them. Sarfatti concludes that the "men of deeds" are later developments of the earlier prophetic type, though without the prophet's responsibility as messenger of God.

> they cast you down, you will say, 'There is lifting up,' for he saves the humble. He will deliver the guilty. He will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."[58] "You will decree and it will be fulfilled for you": you decreed below, and the Holy One Blessed be He fulfilled your decree from above. "And light will shine upon your affairs": a generation that was in darkness, you have given light by your prayer. "When they cast you down, you shall say `there is lifting up'": a generation that was cast down, you have lifted it up by your prayer. "For He saves the humble": a generation that was humbled by its transgression, you have saved it by your prayer. "He shall deliver the guilty": a generation which was guilty, you have delivered by your prayer. "He will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands": you have delivered it (the generation) by the deed of your clean hands (B.T. Ta`anit 23a).

The rabbis praise Ḥoni by linking him with the different elements of the exegesis. Notably, the praise is issued by the members of the Sanhedrin; it thereby continues to relate Ḥoni's activities to institutional authority. Moreover, the exegesis consistently identifies the source of Ḥoni's merit as "prayer," thereby presenting an obvious transmutation of Ḥoni's more charismatic means of intervention in the natural order. (The previous verse, Job 22:27, also treats the theme of God's responsiveness to prayer: "You will pray to Him, and He will listen to you, and you will fulfill your vows.") Finally, the structure of the pericope itself emphasizes the link between Ḥoni and traditional structures: it virtually embeds Ḥoni's actions in Scripture. Indeed, it integrates references to Ḥoni's charismatic activities into the most characteristic of rabbinic activities -- exegesis of God's revealed word.

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[58]Job 22:28-30.

The parallel passage in P.T. Ta`anit 3.10 makes explicit an important concept only hinted at by "You decreed below, and the Holy one Blessed be He fulfilled your decree from above," i.e., that God annuls divine decrees in order to uphold those of the righteous.[59] The Yerushalmi's exegesis makes the point clearly:

> "You will decree and it will be fulfilled for you." What does Scripture mean by "for you?" Even if He said this and you said that, what you say will be fulfilled, and what He said will not.[60]

In fact, the Yerushalmi passage seems to present a comparison of God's will to Ḥoni's, and an affirmation that Ḥoni's will prevails:

> "When they cast you down, you will say `There is lifting up.'" I planned to cast them down [by withholding rain], but you intended to lift them up. Your intention was fulfilled, and Mine was not.[61]

The Palestinian parallel thereby makes two crucial statements about Ḥoni's character, statements which both confirm and qualify his charismatic nature: it implies that his will can

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[59]This concept has numerous parallels in the Talmud. Cf. B.T. Shabbat 59b, B.T. Shabbat 63a, B.T. Baba Meṣ`ia 85a, B.T. Mo`ed Qatan 16a, B.T. Sotah 12a.

[60]P.T. Ta`anit 3:10.

[61]P.T. Ta`anit 3:10. Earlier in the same passage, Ḥoni uses the concept to respond to Shimon ben Shetaḥ's censure: "Shimon ben Shetaḥ sent (a message) to him: ... For if a decree had been issued as was issued in the days of Elijah, would you not have been found to be leading the public to a profanation of the divine Name? ...' He (Ḥoni) said to him: `Does not the Holy One blessed be He annul his decree on account of the decree of the righteous?'"

prevail over God's, but attributes that power to righteousness.

B.T. TA`ANIT 23a AND P.T. TA`ANIT 3:9: ḤONI AND THE CAROB-PLANTER

The third and final pericope about Ḥoni which appears in the Babylonian Talmud is an aggadah which reflects a common legend, that of the man who sleeps for an extended period of time and awakens to a changed world[62]:

> R. Yoḥanan said: "All his life this same righteous man (Ḥoni) was disturbed by this verse of Scripture:[63] "A Song of Ascents. When the Lord returned the dwellers of Zion we were as dreamers."[64] He said: "Is it possible for a person to sleep and dream for seventy years?" One day, he was out walking on the road, and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He said to him, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" He replied, "Seventy years."[65] He said, "Are you sure that you will live another seventy years?" The man replied, "I found carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me, so I plant these for my children." He (Ḥoni) sat down to eat and fell asleep. (As he slept,) a grotto formed around him concealing him from view, and he slept for seventy years. When he awoke, he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree. He (Ḥoni) said to him: "Are you the man who planted this tree?" The man replied, "I am his grandson." He said, "I must have slept for seventy years!" He saw his ass,

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[62]Sarfatti, 148-153. Sarfatti cites as examples the Diogenes Laertius' story concerning Epimenides, and the story of the king's slave in IV Baruch.

[63]For parallels to this construction, see B.T. Berakhot 61b, B.T. Yoma 19b, B.T. Megillah 24b.

[64]Ps. 126:1.

[65]Cf. B.T. Bekhorot 8a for this and other horticultural calculations by the rabbis.

> which had given birth to several generations of mules. He went to his house, and said to them, "Does the son of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer still live?" They answered, "His son is not alive, but his grandson is still living." He said to them: " I am Ḥoni the Circle-drawer." They did not believe him. He went to the House of Study. He heard the rabbis say: "The law is as clear to us as it was in the years of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, who when he came to the House of Study was able to solve for the rabbis all of their difficulties." He said to them, "I am he," but they did not believe him, nor did they treat him with the respect due to him. He despaired, prayed for mercy, and died. Rava said, "Thus people say, `Either companionship or death'"[66] (B.T. Ta`anit 23a).

The first clues to the story's portrayal of Ḥoni reside in R. Yohanan's statement, which constitutes the first half of the story's rabbinic frame (the story concludes with a statement attributed to Rava). R. Yohanan's statement casts Ḥoni as a sympathetic rabbinic figure: he is a "righteous man" who concerns himself with problems of Scripture. Ḥoni's character develops most clearly through his actions and attitudes in the course of the narrative. The Ḥoni of this story, like the Ḥoni of the core Mishnaic account, is not a patient man. When he hears that the carob tree takes seventy years to bear fruit, his response is to ask whether the man planting it will actually live to see it produce: he seems to assume that one would not perform a task unless he could be assured of receiving commensurate benefit.[67] The man's

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[66]Cf. B.T. Baba Batra 16b for a related statement: "Either a friend like the friends of Job or death."

[67]Fraenkel locates a reflection of Ḥoni's assumption about an immediate relationship between planting and reaping in the word play between "plant" (nata`) and "bear fruit" (ta`ein). Fraenkel notes that the Babylonian Talmud employs the root shtl much more frequently than nt`. The fact that

response, however, indicates an ethic not of reciprocity, but of continuity:[68] "I found carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me, so I plant these for my children."

In response to this moral lesson, Honi eats and falls asleep for seventy years, during which time a grotto grows up around him and conceals him from view. Honi's sleep and concealment are consistent with the story's theme of awareness. While the story reports three instances in which Honi "saw," the narrative relies on the fact that he is literally unseeing and unseen for seventy years; the source of his despair in the second half of the story is that others do not recognize him.

The tone of the Babylonian account is confirmed by contrast to the Palestinian parallel. Notably, the version in P.T. Ta'anit 3.9 contains elements neither despair nor rejection:

> Near the time of the destruction of the Temple, he (Honi)[69] went out to a mountain with his workers. Before he arrived there, rain fell. He went into a cave. When he sat down, he became tired and fell asleep.[70] He

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nt' occurs only ten times in the Babylonian Talmud emphasizes the presence of the word play here. ("Paranomasia," 40).

[68]Ibid., 38.

[69]Immediately preceding the aggadah, the protagonist is identified cryptically by R. Yudan Giria: "This is Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, the grandson of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer."

[70]The root dmk, here employed to mean "he fell asleep," also means "to die," "to lie in the grave" (Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and

> remained immersed in sleep for seventy years, until the Temple was destroyed and built a second time. At the end of seventy years, he awoke from his sleep. He left the cave, and he saw a changed world. A place that once had vineyards now produced olives instead; a place that once produced olives now produced grain instead. He asked the people of the province, "What is new in the world?" They said to him, "And you do not know what is new in the world?" He replied, "No." They said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "Ḥoni the Circle-drawer." They said to him, "We heard that when he would go into the Temple court it would become illuminated.[71] He would go in and illuminate it and read aloud concerning himself: "When the Lord returned the dwellers of Zion, we were as those who dream."[72]

The Palestinian version begins on a note of whimsy: Ḥoni the Circle-drawer has to find shelter in a cave because of a sudden rainfall![73] In this version, when Ḥoni identifies himself, the people recall a story that reflects Ḥoni's positive reputation; far from a note of rejection, the aggadah ends with their glowing recollection.

Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York, Berlin: Verlag Choreb, 1926), 313-314. The word play is suggestive: first, because in both the B.T. and P.T. versions of the story, Ḥoni sleeps in a cave; second, because when he awakens from his seventy year sleep, he is forced to acknowledge the death of others and his own mortality.

[71]The term "illuminate" in the people's praise of Ḥoni has the same root, nhr, as the term "clear" in the rabbi's praise of Ḥoni in the Bavli's version ("The law is as clear to us as it was in the years of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer.")

[72]Psalm 126:1. For a parallel to the full account, see Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 126:12.

[73]For a similar irony, see B.T. Ta`anit 24b, where Ḥanina ben Dosa asks God to halt the rain so that he can travel home. Both accounts underscore the unique status of the holy men: amidst discussions of drought, the Talmuds recount how Ḥoni and Ḥanina ben Dosa sought refuge from abundant rains. See discussion below, 102, n. 14.

Returning to an examination of the Babylonian version, Ḥoni's initial concealment and later failure to be recognized emphasize his progressive isolation through the course of the story. His sleep of seventy years leaves him a generation removed from anyone whom he might know, or who might know him: the person gathering the carobs is the grandson of the man who planted the tree; not Ḥoni's son, but Ḥoni's grandson, remains alive. Nobody at his house believes his assertion of identity; similarly, none of the students at the House of Study believe his statement.[74] With no one to affirm his identity, Ḥoni despairs and dies.

Like Ḥoni's failure to be recognized, the two remaining rabbinic elements of the story qualify and constrict his power. The statement of the rabbis in the House of Study is double-edged; on the one hand, they praise Ḥoni for his erudition in his generation; on the other, they undercut his special status by claiming for themselves precisely his scholarly acumen: "The law is as clear to us as it was in the years of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer." Similarly, Rava's final statement emphasizes Ḥoni's isolation, and its dangers. It also summarizes the story's concern with mortality: our human lives, far from immortal, may not even be memorable. Our hope for continuity lies in understanding what we have

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[74]Understood in the context of the other Ḥoni aggadah, this rejection provides a powerful irony. Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, "like a son of the house" (keyen bayit) before God, meets with rejection both in his own house (beiteih) and in the House of Study (beit hamidrash).

received from past generations, and what we have to offer to future generations. We will no longer be recognized after seventy years have passed. Moreover, in the context of rabbinic control of the charismatic image, Rava's statement is an ideal capstone to the story, and to the rabbinic portrait of Ḥoni. No matter how he may be "rabbinized," Ḥoni remains a charismatic. To the extent that the rabbis can create a relationship between his powers and their own, between the power of the individual wonder-worker and the power of Torah or other institutional symbols, they will; they thereby preserve Honi's power by qualifying it, and add to their own. Yet the rabbis issue a final warning which speaks not of excommunication, but of death: one who stands alone, outside of corporate companionship, outside of routinized norms and stabilizing institutions, does not last. Institutions endure; the individual charismatic, for all of his personal power or intimacy with the divine, perishes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hanina ben Dosa

INTRODUCTION

Compared to the Honi tradition in rabbinic literature, the corpus of texts concerning Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa is large and diverse. It consists not only of accounts of his actions, but of descriptions of his reputation and teachings. He interacts with impressive rabbinic figures like Rabban Gamliel and Yohanan ben Zakkai, he is compared to Moses and to Elijah, and apothegms attributed to him appear in Mishnah Avot. Most important, because the aggadic portrait of Hanina ben Dosa is relatively extensive and detailed, these stories reflect rabbinic views regarding both the manifestations and the source of his charismatic abilities.

RABBINIC STATEMENTS OF HANINA BEN DOSA'S REPUTATION: M. SOTAH 9:15

The most concise elements of the rabbinic portrait of Hanina ben Dosa emerge from those texts which contain rabbinic statements of his reputation. The first of these is Mishnah Sotah 9.15, the beginning of which links the deaths

of various figures to the types or characteristics that perished with them:

> When R. Meir died, makers of parables came to an end. When Ben Azzai died, assiduous students came to an end. When Ben Zoma died, exegetes came to an end. When R. Joshua died, goodness ceased from the world (M. Sotah 9.15).

Hanina ben Dosa's name appears among such prominent rabbinic figures; immediately following the statement, "when Rabbi Aqiba died, the glory of the Torah came to an end," the Mishnah records, "When R. Hanina ben Dosa died, men of deed (*'anshei ma'aseh*) came to an end."[1]

Like the related term *hasid*,[2] the epithet *'anshei ma'aseh* has provoked debate among scholars.[3] Rashi, in his commentary to B.T. Sotah 49a, wrote that the term refers to "one whose piety is certain and who performs wondrous deeds, as

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[1] Cf. T. Sotah 15:5, B.T. Sotah 49a, P.T. Sotah 24c. After lamenting the loss of such great figures and the characteristics they embodied, the Mishnah continues: "Upon whom shall we depend? Upon our Father in heaven." This mishnah thereby expresses ambivalence regarding the relationship between divine and human power. Even as it praises the greatness of the deceased rabbis, it insists upon their mortality, and thereby proclaims that ultimately humanity can depend only upon God.

[2] See above, chap. 3, 73, n. 25.

[3] Buchler (*Types of Jewish Palestinian Piety*, 87) surveys different views on the role of the *'anshei ma'aseh*. These include: "men distinguished by rare virtues to whom on account of that miracles happened frequently" (Levy), "miracle-workers" (Low, Geiger, Brull, Blau, and Kohler), "adherents of some esoteric religious teaching who ... did not devote themselves to contemplation only, but responded also to the practices of life" (Krochmal), "practical men" (Friedlander), and "miracle-working Essenes" (Schorr, Frankel).

described in Ta`anit."[4] Scholars such as Buchler and Safrai, however, have attempted to divorce the term from any sense of miracle; they argue that the term ma`aseh should be understood as "deed," in contrast to rabbinic terms for study such as talmud, midrash, and mishnah.[5] Buchler asserts that righteous acts define the "pious men" and the "men of deeds":

> R. Ḥanina ben Dosa and other men of deed would ... have distinguished themselves by the most conscientious observance of the positive precepts of the Torah, or by devoting themselves particularly to acts of loving-kindness.[6]

Similarly, Safrai claims that the "men of action" were "active in human society ... engaged in attending to public needs and moved among the public."[7] While scholars such as Buchler, Safrai and Sarfatti seem correct in their emphasis

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[4]Rashi refers to Chapter Three of B.T. Ta`anit, a crucial source not only for revealing the rabbinic portrait of Ḥoni and Ḥanina ben Dosa, but for understanding the rabbinic portrayal of charismatic behavior in general. See below, 129-152.

[5]Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," 16, n. 11. Safrai, who translates ma`aseh as "action," cites M.Avot 1:17 as an example of the contrast between rabbinic categories of action and study: "Expounding the law is not most important, but action."

[6]Buchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety, 87.

[7]Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," 16, n. 11. Cf. Sarfatti, "Pious Men, Men of Deeds, and the Early Prophets," iii (English translation): "The principal power of such individuals rests not in halakhic disputation, the relating of aggadic lore, or the composing of ethical maxims, but rather in the purity of their deeds, which were intended to please their Creator and to bring benefits to their fellow men."

upon deeds as characterizing figures like Honi the Circle-drawer and Hanina ben Dosa, and in their argument that the term ma'aseh need not mean "miracle," they overstate the case when asserting that "nowhere in our literature do we find a connection between 'men of action' and 'the deed' -- i.e., miracle."[8] By ignoring what Rashi observed, that many of the deeds of Honi and Hanina as recorded in the rabbinic corpus are in fact "wondrous," these scholars seem to take a defensive rather than an objective stance. As Vermes accurately notes regarding Hanina, and as the following examination of texts reveals, "his (good) 'deeds' are described as charismatic healing and other miraculous acts."[9] The tension in scholarship in fact reflects the tension in the texts: Hanina ben Dosa emerges clearly as one concerned with acts of loving-kindness" and "attending to public needs"; at the same time, the texts present a portrait in which those characteristics somehow relate to Hanina's extraordinary abilities. In fact, the nature of that relationship emerges as a crucial issue in the study of the texts concerning Hanina ben Dosa.

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[8]Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," 16, n. 11.

[9]Vermes, "Hanina ben Dosa," 188. Vermes goes on to describe Hanina as "the most celebrated miracle-worker in Rabbinic Judaism," and to claim that the "most suitable parallels" to the descriptions of his activities are found in the New Testament rather than in the Talmud.

RABBINIC STATEMENTS OF HANINA BEN DOSA'S REPUTATION: THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

The Babylonian Talmud contains further rabbinic tributes to Ḥanina ben Dosa. In B.T. Ḥagigah 14a, as part of a rabbinic exegesis of Isaiah 3:1-4, Ḥanina is identified with the term "honorable man" (nesu fanim):

> "And the honorable man": This is one on whose account favor is shown to his entire generation: by heaven, like R. Ḥanina b. Dosa, or by Caesar's court on earth, like R. Abbahu (B.T. Ḥagigah 14a).

As the beginning of the Isaiah passage reveals, this exegesis and the statements of M. Sotah 9.15 exhibit a common characteristic: both refer to the death or defeat of valued figures: "For behold, the Lord, Lord of hosts, will remove from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff ... the honorable man ... the eloquent orator." The exegesis itself represents Ḥanina as one whose merit is so great that it benefits not only himself, but his entire generation; moreover, the favor he evokes comes from heaven, not from earth -- it thereby bears the stamp of divine authority. Notably, however, the text does not indicate the reason for Ḥanina's merit; it merely describes its magnitude.

Two statements by Rav assert that Ḥanina's merit benefits not only his generation, but this world and the world to come. Like the statement in B.T. Ḥagigah 14a, the statement attributed to Rav in B.T. Ta`anit 24b invests Ḥanina's merit with heavenly authority:

> R. Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Everyday a heavenly voice declares: "The whole world is sustained by the merit of my son Ḥanina, and my son Ḥanina suffices himself with a kav of carobs from the eve of one Shabbat to the eve of the next"[10] (B.T. Ta`anit 24b).

The text indicates intimacy between Ḥanina and the heavenly realm not only by noting the daily endorsement of the Heavenly Voice, but also by the double mention of the phrase "my son Ḥanina." Rav's statement begins to suggest poverty as a factor involved in Ḥanina's righteousness or merit. While the text does juxtapose Ḥoni's poverty with his merit, it does not establish a causal relationship between them.[11] In another statement, Rav claims that the world to come exists for Ḥanina's sake:

> Rava said: The world was created only for the totally wicked or the totally righteous." Rava said: "Let a man know of himself whether he is totally righteous or not." Rav said: The world was created only for Ahab the son of Omri and for R. Ḥanina ben Dosa: for Ahab the son of Omri, this world; for R. Ḥanina ben Dosa, the world to come (B.T. Berakhot 61b).

By association with Rava's opening statement, Rav's statement classifies Ḥanina as "totally righteous" (saddiq gamur). Furthermore, by opposing Ḥanina to Ahab, Elijah's opponent, the text hints at an implicit identity between Ḥanina and the prophet Elijah himself. Note again, however, that the

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[10]Cf. B.T. Ḥulin 86a; and B.T. Berakhot 17a, where the voice goes forth from Mt. Ḥoreb. See also B.T. Yoma 9a and T. Sotah 13.2 on the function of the bat kol as the means by which Israel receives messages since the death of the last prophets.

[11]The reference to the kav of carobs may itself suggest the miraculous: Ḥanina is able to subsist on next to nothing.

statement of reputation suggests no clear basis for Hanina's merit.[12]

STORIES OF HANINA BEN DOSA'S ABILITIES AND RIGHTEOUSNESS: B.T. TA`ANIT 24b-25a

A fuller portrait of Ḥanina ben Dosa lies in the aggadot which record his activities; while the Ḥanina stories are widely dispersed throughout the Talmud, six of them appear consecutively in B.T. Ta`anit 24b-25a. Like Ḥoni the Circle-drawer and others in the third chapter of B.T. Ta`anit, Ḥanina ben Dosa is credited with the ability to control rain:

> R. Ḥanina ben Dosa was traveling on the road when it began to rain. He said before Him: "Master of the Universe, all of the world is in comfort while Ḥanina is in distress?" The rain ceased. When he arrived at his house, he said before Him, "Master of the Universe, all of the world is in distress and Ḥanina is in comfort?" It began to rain. R. Yosef said: "Of what use is the prayer of the High Priest compared with that of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa?"[13] (B.T. Ta`anit 24b).

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[12]As B.T. Shabbat 112b indicates, Ḥanina's reputation extends even to his animals: "R. Zeira and Rava bar Zimuna said: If the ancients were angels, we are men. If they were men, we are like asses. Not like the ass of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa or of R. Pinḥas b. Yair, but like the rest of the asses." Cf. B.T. Ḥulin 7a. The statement probably refers to a story about Ḥanina's donkey recorded in Avot de Rebbe Natan A chap. 8 (Schechter, p. 38). In that story, robbers steal Ḥanina's donkey, but it will not eat while in their possession, so they let it go. It keeps walking until it reaches home, where Ḥanina and his son feed it. The story concludes with the statement: "As the ancient just men were pious, so their beasts were pious." Cf. the tale of R. Yosei of Yukrat's donkey, B.T. Ta`anit 24a.

[13]Cf. B.T. Yoma 53b.

The aggadah provides a clear image of Ḥanina's power. He makes two relatively direct requests to God as "Master of the Universe," first for a cessation of rain, and then for its resumption, and both are fulfilled summarily.[14] Moreover, his first request is only for his sake, and still it is fulfilled. Like Ḥoni's ability to control the quality and quantity of the rain he demands, the fact that Ḥanina can both stop and start rain at will suggests unbounded power. The story, like most of those in the series found in Ta`anit 24b-25a, concludes with a rabbinic statement (in this case a rhetorical question). R. Yosef's words are especially compelling because they compare Ḥanina's power favorably to that of the High Priest himself; in a sense, the rhetorical question represents an outright recognition of charismatic power. Even while asserting Ḥanina's distinctiveness and superiority in relation to the paradigmatic representative of Jewish institutionalism, however, R. Yosef implies that Ḥanina and the High Priest are engaged in the same activity, identified here by the word "prayer." The closing question sets Ḥanina off as unique, but retains a connection between his power and the central rabbinic endeavor of tefilah.

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[14]The request for the rain to stop is striking because it appears in the midst of a number of stories in B.T. Ta`anit Chapter Three in which various figures pray unsuccessfully for rain. In the midst of all of those failures to bring rain, along comes Ḥanina ben Dosa and asks for rain to cease!

The next story in B.T. Ta'anit 24b immediately follows the statement by the Heavenly Voice regarding Ḥanina's subsistence on a kav of carobs, and again hints at a connection between Ḥanina's merit and his poverty:

> [Ḥanina's] wife used to light the oven every Friday evening and throw something that produces smoke into it because she was ashamed (at not having bread to bake). She had a wicked neighbor who said (to herself), "I know that these people have nothing, so what is this?" She went and knocked on the door, but Ḥanina's wife was ashamed and went into an alcove. A miracle happened before her (the neighbor), and she saw the oven filled with bread and the kneading basin filled with dough. She said to her, "You, you! Bring a shovel, your bread is getting charred!" She replied, "That is why I went upstairs." It has been taught: she did in fact go to get the shovel because she was accustomed to miracles (B.T. Ta'anit 24b-25a).

While Ḥanina ben Dosa does not appear in this passage, it probably reflects his merit, and possibly that of his wife.[15] The story makes reference to a ritual context; it takes place on Shabbat evening, and Ḥanina's wife is likely embarrassed not simply that she does not have food, but that she does not have bread for Shabbat. Notably, the provision of bread is referred to as a "miracle" by the narrator, and the concluding rabbinic statement uses the same term in suggesting that Ḥanina's wife was accustomed to such wondrous

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[15]While neither this nor the succeeding stories which mention Ḥanina's wife make any statement about her own merit, an aggadah in B.T. Baba Batra 74a-b indicates her righteous activity. In that account, R. Yoḥanan tells of sailing on a ship and seeing a box covered with precious stones and pearls. When a diver has difficulty obtaining the box, a Heavenly Voice proclaims, "What do you want with this box of the wife of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa? In the future she will place in it the blue wool for the righteous in the world to come."

events.[16] Especially given its placement immediately following the statement about the kav of carobs, the overriding message of the story is that while Ḥanina is poor, he is favored by heaven. No request has to be made, whether addressed to God or as an oath; in danger of embarrassment for not appropriately honoring the Shabbat, Ḥanina's wife is visited by a miracle which not only saves face, but puts food in her oven.[17]

The subsequent story also focuses upon the poverty of Ḥanina and his wife, and on her dissatisfaction:

> His wife said to him: "For how long shall we go on suffering so much? He said to her: "What shall we do?" (She said): "Pray that you be given something." He prayed, and something like the image of a hand appeared and gave him one leg of a golden table. He saw in a dream that in the future the righteous would eat at a three-legged golden table, but he would eat at a two-legged table. He said to her:[18] "Are you satisfied that everyone will eat at complete tables and we will eat at a deficient one?" She said to him: "What shall we do?

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[16]On the concept of being accustomed to miracles, cf. B.T. Ta'anit 21a. The texts in B.T. Ta'anit Chapter Three are ambiguous about whether one should rely upon miracles. On the one hand, Nahum ish Gimzo, in B.T. Ta'anit 21a, is sought out for a task because he is regarded as "one to whom miracles customarily happen," and he acts with such expectation; on the other, in Ta'anit 20b, R. Adda bar Ahaba endorses the statement of R. Yannai: "One should never stand in a place of danger and declare, "'A miracle will happen to me,' because perhaps a miracle will not happen to him. And if a miracle does befall him, his merit is reduced."

[17]It is interesting to note that the story portrays Ḥanina's wife's embarrassment as the cause for supernatural intervention; her embarrassment may reflect a pious concern for Shabbat observance.

[18]The text is corrupt here, especially regarding who says what to whom.

> Pray that it be taken away from you." He prayed and it was taken away. It has been taught: "The second miracle was greater than the first, for we have a tradition that once a thing is given, it is not taken away"[19] (B.T. Ta`anit 25a).

The story links Hanina's poverty in this world to his reward in the world to come. While he has the power to relieve his material difficulties, i.e., to summon one of the golden table legs, such relief would impair his status in the next world. By choosing to return the table leg, therefore, he opts symbolically to refrain from using his powers for his own (and his wife's) material relief. This may be a crucial source of merit: not only his poverty itself, but the fact that he has the ability to alleviate his poverty, and chooses not to do so for the sake of a place in the world to come.[20] The emphasis on the world to come places Hanina's miraculous circumstances in a rabbinic context, and the concluding rabbinic statement uses a rabbinic tradition to affirm rather than undercut the significance of the miracle: "The second miracle was greater than the first, for we have a tradition that once a thing is given, it is not taken away."

The subsequent aggadah in B.T. Ta`anit 25a continues to describe the miraculous events which happen to Hanina ben

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[19]Cf. Exodus Rabbah 52:3 and Ruth Rabbah 3:4 for similar stories about how gifts in the present world detract from reward in the world to come. See also B.T. Hulin 60a for a parallel to the final proverb.

[20]Note the ascetic strain here.

Dosa, again places them in the context of Shabbat observance, and again relates them to the relief of others:

> One Friday at twilight he noticed that his daughter was sad. He said to her, "My daughter, why are you sad?" She said to him, " I confused the vinegar jar for the oil jar, and I kindled the Sabbath light from it. He said to her, "My daughter, why should it bother you? The One who commanded the oil to burn will also command the vinegar to burn." It has been taught: It continued to burn for the whole day, until they took from it light for Havdalah (B.T. Ta'anit 25a).

Here we have a variation on the story of Hanina's wife and the oven. The daughter describes a situation in which the observance of Shabbat is put at risk. In this story, the relief is not immediate; first comes Hanina's statement of faith and assurance that God will insure that the vinegar burns. Hanina's statement, while it does imply a reliance upon miracle, communicates piety rather than arrogance, because he does not suggest that God will provide the miracle especially for him or his family; he presents his statement as an affirmation of faith rather than a demand. Once again, the concluding rabbinic statement affirms Hanina's righteousness by magnifying the quality of the miracle, and parenthetically invokes an additional ritual context: the vinegar not only burned for Shabbat eve, but even through Havdalah.

The next aggadah also turns upon Hanina's confidence in the just resolution to a problem:

> Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa owned goats. They (the people) said to him, "They are causing damage." He said: "If they are causing damage, may bears eat them; and if they are not, may each one bring home a bear on its horns

> at evening. At evening, each one brought home a bear on its horns (B.T. Ta`anit 25a).

Hanina expresses confidence not only in the rectitude of his position, but in the fact that his rectitude will be recognized or rewarded. This is hardly, however, a story of noble faith in the ability of a Shabbat lamp to burn; the aggadah contains no address to God, and the context is hardly one of ritual observance. To the contrary, the issue (the damages that one's animals might do) is quite mundane; the resolution, in which goats carry bears on their horns, smacks more of the occult than the sacred. This story also lacks a concluding rabbinic lemma. Ḥanina's merit is not stated directly, but the accuracy of his prediction implies that he is innocent of the charge. Moreover, this story is placed among a group of stories which have begun to build an image of Ḥanina's poverty and righteousness, and its context thereby implies that Ḥanina somehow merits this miracle.[21]

The sixth story about Ḥanina ben Dosa in B.T. Ta`anit 24b-25a treats the mundane affair of building a house:

> He (Ḥanina ben Dosa) had a woman neighbor who was building a house, but its joists did not join. She went to him and said: "I have built a house but the joists do not join." He said to her, " What is your name?" She answered, "'iku." He said, "'iku, may your joists be joined together." It is taught: They reached, and projected one cubit on either side. And some say: They added new joints to them. It is taught: Pelimo said, "I

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[21]A comment in B.T. Baba Meṣ`ia 106a-b asserts Ḥanina's merit more directly: "Had you been worthy that a miracle should happen on your behalf, a miracle would have happened to you, as it did for R. Ḥanina ben Dosa, whose goats brought home bears on their horns."

> have seen that house, and its joists projected one cubit on either side. And they said to me, `This is the house whose joists R. Ḥanina ben Dosa joined through his prayer'" (Ta`anit 25a).

Certain familiar characteristics re-emerge here. First, a member of the community seeks Ḥanina's help; this indicates not only that people recognize Ḥanina's powers, but that they perceive that his powers can be enlisted for the affairs of the day-to-day.[22] The story also demonstrates Ḥanina's responsiveness and skill. The text itself relies upon a pun: the word 'iku, which is the woman's name, is also "an Aramaic optative particle,"[23] yielding a translation for the whole sentence: "Oh, that your joists might be joined together!"[24] The word play calls attention to the fact that Ḥanina's words resemble an incantation more than a prayer. Again, Ḥanina's merit is not stated explicitly, but is perhaps indicated by his willingness to help the woman. Interestingly, concluding rabbinic statements again come to boost the image of the protagonist even further. Similar to the lemma in the story of the golden table leg, the first rabbinic statement amplifies the result of the miracle: "It is taught: they reached, and projected one cubit on either side." The next statement further extends the effect of the miracle. The final statement, attributed to Pelimo, not only confirms that

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[22]Note the correspondence to Brown's model of the holy man as "good patron." See above, 29.

[23]Vermes, "Ḥanina ben Dosa," 189.

[24]For a similar usage, see B.T. Sanhedrin 107a.

such a house exists, but classifies Ḥanina's action as "prayer." The rabbis thereby not only inflate the event, but give it a rabbinic cast.

The final story of the series in B.T. Ta`anit 24b-25a contains no magical elements, but explicitly affirms Ḥanina's righteousness. It begins with a question raised by the story of the goats and the bears:

> Where did R. Ḥanina ben Dosa get goats, since he was poor? And further, did not the Sages say: "One does not rear small cattle in Palestine"?[25] R. Pinḥas said, "Once a man passed by his house and left his hens there, and the wife of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa found them. He said to her, "Do not eat their eggs." But the eggs and the hens increased, and they were troubling them. He sold them, and bought goats with the money from the sale. One time the same man who had lost the hens passed by and said to his companion, "This is where I left my hens." R. Ḥanina heard and said to him: "Do you have a mark on them?" He said to him, "Yes." He described the sign and took the goats, and these are the goats which brought bears on their horns (B.T. Ta`anit 25a).

Notably, the story creates an expectation of the miraculous that it does not fulfill. No doubt, many readers of this aggadah expect the hens to be transmuted magically into goats. Instead, Ḥanina simply sells them because they take up too much room. The story is the only one of the seven in Ta`anit 24b-25a in which nothing miraculous transpires. Instead, as the last story of the series, it leaves a distinct impression of Ḥanina's fairness:[26] first he

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[25]Cf. M. Baba Qama 7:1.

[26]Another epithet applied to Ḥanina, "man of truth," reflects the characteristic of fairness represented in this story. Cf. Mekhilta de Rebbe Ishmael, Amalek 4:67-68 (Lauterbach, p. 183.) Ḥanina is mentioned in the context of

prohibits his wife from eating the eggs of hens which she does not own, and then he restores the goats to the man who owned the original hens. The final story thereby helps to identify the source of the charismatic's merit: while the Ḥanina portrayed by these stories neither restricts his wonder-working to ritual contexts nor directs all of his invocations towards God, he is a pious human being. The kind of arrogance and presumption which Ḥoni displayed is notably absent here, even from the aggadot in which Ḥanina displays self-interest (e.g., the stories of the rain and of the goats' horns). Moreover, Ḥanina's favored status is reflected not only in the success of his endeavors, but in the positive light shed on them by the rabbinic statements which conclude these stories. While rarely making explicit the link between Ḥanina's behavior and his extraordinary powers, this series of seven stories creates an image of a man who is scrupulous, generous, and faithful -- and who whose righteousness seems to earn him extraordinary powers.

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an exegesis of Exodus 18:21, in which Moses describes those whom he will select as judges as "Men of truth who spurn ill-begotten gain": "'Men of truth': for example, R. Ḥanina ben Dosa and his companions. 'Who spurn ill-begotten gain': Those who disdain their own property. For if they disdain their own property, so much the more so the property of others."

HANINA BEN DOSA'S OBEDIENCE TO INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE: P.T. DEMAI 1.1 AND ECCLESIASTES RABBAH 1.1

Rabbinic literature contains other miracle stories about Hanina ben Dosa which either underscore or supplement elements present in B.T. Ta'anit 24b-25a. For example, an aggadah in P.T. Demai 1.1 describes a miracle which takes place in the context of Shabbat, and emphasizes the value of honesty and obedience to institutional practice:

> R. Hanina ben Dosa was sitting down to eat on Sabbath night when his table collapsed. They said to him, "What happened?" She (his wife) said to him, "I borrowed spices from my neighbor, but I did not tithe them. He mentioned it a second time, and the table rose (P.T. Demai 1.1).

Here, in another story about a table, a mishap occurs not only because Hanina's wife has failed to fulfill a particular responsibility to the Temple. When she and her husband acknowledge that responsibility, the table is restored. Another aggadah focuses more explicitly upon the fulfillment of obligations to the Temple cult:

> Once R. Hanina ben Dosa saw the inhabitants of his city taking votive offerings and free-will offerings to Jerusalem. He said, "Everyone is taking votive offerings and free-will offerings up to Jerusalem, and I take nothing." What did he do? He went to the outskirts of his city, and saw there a stone which he cut, chiselled and polished. He then said, "Behold, it is my responsibility to get this to Jerusalem." He sought to hire laborers, and five men came to him. He asked them, "Will you carry this stone to Jerusalem for me?" They replied, "Give us fifty sela'im and we will carry it to Jerusalem." He wanted to give them the money, but he did not have any with him then. They left him and went. The Holy One, blessed be He, arranged for five angels resembling men (to appear to him.) He said to them,

> "Will you carry this stone for me?" They replied, "Give us five sela`im and we will carry your stone to Jerusalem for you, but only if you place your hand and fingers with ours.[27] He placed his hand and fingers with theirs and they found themselves standing in Jerusalem. He wanted to pay them their wage, but he could not find them. He entered the Chamber of the Hewn Stone and inquired after them. They said to him: "It seems that ministering angels carried your stone to Jerusalem." They applied to him this verse from Scripture: "See a man skilled at his work -- he shall stand before kings (melakhim)";[28] read instead "He shall stand before angels (mal'akhim)"[29] (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:1).

Like the story of the oven, this story recounts neither prayer nor invocation on Hanina's part; like other stories, it places him in miraculous circumstances, emphasizes his poverty and righteousness, and reveals his concern for institutional obligations. Though poor, he realizes that he can make an offering of a stone, so he works to fashion the stone into a beautiful object.[30] Then, though he has little money, he attempts to hire laborers. Finally, upon being transported to Jerusalem, he remembers his obligation to pay those who helped him with the stone. Most important, the

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[27]The significance of this phrase is unclear. It may signify that he helped them to carry the stone, or it may be a formulaic symbol for agreement.

[28]Psalm 22:29.

[29]Psalm 22:29 itself contains another word play, between "his work" (mel'akhto) and "kings" (melakhim). A similar word play appears in a miracle story in B.T. Ta`anit 24b, where R. Mari sees angels (mal'akhei) in the guise of sailors (mallahei).

[30]Hanina's gift of the stone is underscored by another word play in the passage: the workers and the angels insist that Hanina give them sela`im, "currency," but the term also means "rocks," thereby creating a play on the `even, or stone, which Hanina crafts.

story makes prominent use of the institutional categories of votive and free-will offerings, focuses upon a pilgrimage to the Temple, and ends not only with Hanina's presence in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, but with a rabbinic exegesis which explains the story. The miracle which befalls Hanina serves as a reward for his righteous devotion, and the reward is confirmed and explained by the bearers of institutional legal authority, the members of the Sanhedrin.[31]

HANINA BEN DOSA AND THE DOMESTICATION OF CHAOS: THE SNAKE STORIES, AND THE TALE OF AGRAT DAUGHTER OF MAHALAT

Hanina's relationship to institutional elments is more ambiguous in the story of his encounter with the poisonous snake, an aggadah which is central to his image. The basis for this aggadah (with one version in the Palestinian Talmud and one in the Babylonian) appears in Mishnah Berakhot 5:1, which discusses the importance of concentration in reciting the Amidah:

> The original pious ones used to wait an hour before praying in order to direct their hearts towards God. Even if the king greets one, he may not return the greeting. And even if a snake (nahash) curls around his heel, he does not interrupt (his prayer) (M. Berakhot 5:1).

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[31]For an even further endorsement of institutional elements, see the parallel in Canticles Rabbah 1:1, where Hanina gives the sages the money he had planned to give to the angels.

P.T. Berakhot 5:1 employs an aggadah about Ḥanina ben Dosa to illustrate the Mishnah's statement:

> They say of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa that when he stood and prayed a lizard (havarbar) came and bit him but he did not interrupt his prayer. They went and found the lizard lying dead at the mouth of its hole. They said, "Woe to the man who is bitten by a lizard, but woe to the lizard that bites R. Ḥanina ben Dosa" (P.T. Berakhot 5:1).

In relationship to M. Berakhot 5:1, Ḥanina's survival emerges as reward for his concentration in prayer, or perhaps as a result of his concentration in prayer. Ḥanina adds later in the account that he did not even feel the snake bite:

> His students said to him, "Rabbi, did you not feel anything?" He said to them, "May evil befall if I even felt it, for my heart was concentrated in prayer (P.T. Berakhot 5:1).

The conclusion of the passage, however, provides another explanation for Ḥanina's survival:

> "If the man reaches water first, the lizard dies, but if the lizard reaches water first, the man dies ... R. Yitzḥak ben Eliezer said: "God created a spring for him under his feet to fulfill what is written:[32] 'He fulfills the wishes of those who fear Him, He hears their cry and delivers them'"[33] (P.T. Berakhot 5:1).

By providing a "scientific" explanation for the outcome, and by inserting God into the story, the editors undercut the

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[32]Psalm 145:19.

[33]Cf. T. Berakhot 3.20, where the word for reptile is ʿarvad. Cf. B.T. Hulin 127a, which defines ʿarvad as a cross between a naḥash and a ṣav. Jastrow, Dictionary, defines naḥash as "serpent," and ḥavarbar, ʿarvad, and ṣav each as "a species of lizard."

possibility of Ḥanina's own miraculous capacities. Nonetheless, even as these statements threaten to deflate notions of Ḥanina's charismatic power, the statement "woe to the man who is bitten by a lizard, but woe to the lizard which bites Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa" implies that Ḥanina has unique stature and capacities, perhaps even among the "ancient pious ones" whom he represents in the story.

While the versions of the story which appear in P.T. Berakhot 5:1 and in T. Berakhot 3:20 each describe Ḥanina as engaged in prayer when the snake bites him, the story in the Babylonian Talmud presents an image of a much more activist Ḥanina:

> Our rabbis taught: Once in a certain place there was a lizard (arvad) that would injure people. They came and told R. Ḥanina ben Dosa. He said to them: "Show me its hole." They showed him its hole, and when he put his heel over the mouth of the hole, the snake came out and bit him and died. He put it over his shoulder and brought it to the House of Study. He said to them: "See, my children, it is not the snake that kills but the sin."[34] At the same time they said: "'Woe to the man who is encountered by a snake, but woe to the snake that encounters R. Ḥanina ben Dosa" (B.T. Berakhot 34b).

In this version, Ḥanina functions as a charismatic who operates at the social margins. The people come to him to solicit his help in overcoming a threat to the common

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[34]For a reference to this statement and this story, see Exodus Rabbah 3:16, where the text comments upon Moses's flight from before the snake in Exodus 4:3: "'And Moses fled from before it.' Why did he flee? Because he had sinned in his words. If he had not sinned, he would not have fled, for it is not the snake that kills, but the sin, as it is told in the story of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa."

welfare. The threat, an unclean reptile, clearly resides beyond the bounds of social contact. He seeks out the threat aggressively and conquers it. The Ḥanina of this story is not the passive survivor of an accidental encounter, but a combative and extraordinary conqueror. The story's final image is strikingly iconoclastic: Ḥanina carries the carcass of his deadly prey over his shoulder back to the House of Study, in what appears to be a violation of the laws of ritual purity.[35] The alien threat has been domesticated by the pure and extraordinary power of the charismatic.[36]

Unlike the Palestinian versions,[37] the Babylonian version removes the story from any ritual context: neither God nor

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[35]Vermes, "Ḥanina ben Dosa," 186. For a somewhat equivocal illustration of Ḥanina's relationship to ritual law, cf. Genesis Rabbah 10:8, where he is reported by two ass-drivers to have started Shabbat early in his town.

[36]Interesting parallels appear in the Pythagoras miracle traditions: Pythagoras is reported to have bitten a poisonous snake and killed it; in a more rationalized account, he drives a snake from a village. J.Z. Smith describes these episodes as "commonly recurring motifs" in the miracles of Pythagoras ("Good News is No News, 32).

[37]A thorough examination of the relative emphasis on miraculous elements in the Palestinian as opposed to the Babylonian Talmud remains to be accomplished. In the case of Ḥanina ben Dosa, the stories in the Babylonian Talmud far outnumber those in the Palestinian. While any attempt to explain the discrepancy seems speculative, Vermes offers the following possibility: "It seems that the transmitters of the Ḥanina traditions may have felt embarrassed by the similarities between his charismatic activities and those attributed to Jesus and his Jewish followers .. Fear of blurring the distinction between Judaism and Judeo-Christianity was probably the main contributing factor, in third century Galilee, to the dissolution of the legend surrounding the figure of Ḥanina ben Dosa" (Vermes, p. 213).

prayer is mentioned. Nonetheless, like the other versions, it expresses a tension between Ḥanina as sui generis holy man, and the possibility that his behavior might be emulated. In the Babylonian version, Ḥanina himself suggests the basis for his power: "It is not the snake that kills, but the sin." This statement roots Ḥanina's power in piety, and converts what might be a unique episode into a rabbinic object lesson. Nonetheless, as in the other versions, any attempt to explain or generalize the incident must stand in tension with the assertion of Ḥanina's uniqueness: "Woe to the man who is encountered by a snake, but woe to the snake that encounters R. Ḥanina ben Dosa." This statement assures that the image of Ḥanina itself cannot be fully domesticated, tossed over a rabbinic shoulder and brought back to the House of Study. Instead, along with its important links to rabbinic thinking (such as the emphasis on piety), the portrait of Ḥanina ben Dosa retains vital charismatic elements: the response to and reliance upon social recognition, the ability to domesticate forces of chaos, and success through extraordinary deeds.

Ḥanina domesticates chaos again in the story of his encounter with the demon Agrat and her angels of destruction. The story appears in B.T. Pesaḥim 112b as an elaboration on R. Yosi's statement in the name of R. Yehuda and Rabbi, "Do not go out alone at night":

> It has been taught: Do not go out alone at night on Wednesday nights, nor on Sabbath nights, because Agrat

> the daughter of Mahalat and eighteen myriads of her angels of destruction are out, and each one of them has the power to destroy. Originally she was found every day. One time, she met R. Ḥanina ben Dosa. She said to him: "If they had not decreed in heaven, 'Be careful of Hanina and his Torah,' I would have harmed you." He said to her, "If I am esteemed in heaven, I decree that you shall never pass near an inhabited place." She replied, "Please permit me for a small interval." He permitted her Sabbath nights and Wednesday nights[38] (B.T. Pesaḥim 112b).

Since the world of the rabbis was populated with demons, the ability to dominate as powerful a demon as Agrat daughter of Mahalat presents Ḥanina as a charismatic of extraordinary power. In a sense, this story provides a complement to accounts of the social recognition that Ḥanina receives--here, as Agrat's statement indicates, Ḥanina's power is recognized and deferred to not only on earth, but in heaven. Interestingly, however, the demon mentions not only Ḥanina, the man of deeds, but his "Torah"; consonant with the rabbinic perspective, not only the man, but his teaching, provides transcendent power.

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[38]Cf. parallel in Berakhot 43b, and a similar story about Abaye in B.T. Pesaḥim 112b. The general explanation for Ḥanina's selection of Wednesday and Saturday nights is that those were nights when people were not out traveling. As to why people were not out on those nights, one apparent explanation relates to a text examined in the previous chapter: those were the nights, as in the days of Shimon ben Shetaḥ, on which it would rain. Traditional commentators also offer various opinions. Rav Shem Tov ben Shaprut, for example, suggests that those were the nights of the malign influence of the planet Mars.

ḤANINA BEN DOSA: STORIES OF RESCUE AND HEALING

The final group of Ḥanina material reflects another category prominent in accounts of charismatic behavior: rescue and healing. In B.T. Yevamot 121b, the story of Neḥunya's daughter occurs as part of an attempt to determine when women may remarry, including a consideration of the instance in which the woman's husband falls into a cistern. In the Mishnah, R. Meir relates that a man once fell into a large cistern and rose to the surface after three days; the response in the gemara serves as a reminder of the function of miracle in halakhic discussions: "Miracles cannot be brought as proof."[39] As part of the discussion of ways in which a person could survive such an accident, the gemara includes the story of Neḥunya's daughter:

> Our rabbis taught: Once the daughter of Neḥunya the well-digger fell into a large hole. They came and told R. Ḥanina ben Dosa. After the first hour he said to them, "Peace." After the second hour he said to them, "Peace." After the third hour, he sad to them, "She has come up." They said to her, "My daughter, who brought you up (from the well)?" She said, "A ram joined me, with an old man leading it." They said to him (Ḥanina ben Dosa), "Are you a prophet?" He said to them, "I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's disciple,[40] but should the work with which a righteous man busies himself[41]

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[39]Cf. B.T. Berakhot 60a and B.T. Ḥulin 43a.

[40]Amos 7:14. Cf. B.T. Berakhot 34b and B.T. Eruvin 63a.

[41]Neḥunya dug wells to provide for the needs of the pilgrims who came up to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festivals. Cf. B.T. Ta`anit 19b-20a for the story of Naqdimon ben Guryon, who borrows water for the pilgrims from a gentile lord; see discussion below, 133-139.

> cause his offspring to perish?"[42] R. Aha said: "Nonetheless, his daughter died of thirst. As it is written, 'And round about Him it storms (nis'arah) mightily'[43] -- this teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, deals strictly with those who surround him even to a hair's breadth (hot hasa'arah)." R. Ḥanina said: "(We may derive this) from here:[44] 'A God greatly dreaded in the council of holy beings, and held in awe by all around Him'"[45] (B.T. Baba Qama 50b).

Again, people seek Ḥanina ben Dosa's aid in times of crisis. Here, however, he does not go to the scene of the accident, but instead remains at a distance; in fact, it is unclear whether his efforts actually rescue Neḥunya's daughter, or whether he simply predicts her survival. (Whatever his action, the text nowhere describes it as prayer.) The response of Neḥunya's daughter, that she was brought out of the well by an old man leading a ram, seems to invoke the binding of Isaac and its salvific themes; it is also unclear, however, whether these images serve to fortify the miraculous nature of Ḥanina's abilities, or to undercut it by suggesting

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[42]Cf. B.T. Megillah 16a and B.T. Niddah 52a.

[43]Psalm 50:3.

[44]Psalm 89:8.

[45]For parallels to the story as a whole, cf. B.T. Yevamot 121b and P.T. Sheqalim 5:1. The different versions evince slight variations. In B.T. Yevamot 121b, the concluding statement, made by R. Abba, indicates that Neḥunya's son died of thirst. In P.T. Sheqalim 5:1, the protagonist is Pinḥas ben Yair rather than Ḥanina. This is one of a number of instances of overlap between the Pinḥas ben Yair and the Ḥanina ben Dosa traditions. Pinḥas ben Yair is also credited with his own charismatic acts. See, for example, P.T. Demai 1.1 and B.T. Ḥulin 7a. An examination of the texts describing Pinḥas ben Yair and their relationship to the Ḥanina ben Dosa traditions would serve as fruitful ground for further study.

that it was not Ḥanina who effected the rescue. Ḥanina's response to the people's question is also open to interpretation: on the one hand, it seems to be a modest response; on the other, he chooses to respond by using the words of the prophet Amos. The second half of his statement reflects a recurrent theme in the Ḥanina narratives: the connection between righteousness and reward. R. Aḥa's statement, however, refutes this principle, along with any suggestion of Ḥanina's influence or effectiveness. Whatever one's understanding of Ḥanina's role in the story, R. Aḥa's statement about the fate of Neḥunya's daughter, along with the typical rabbinic exegesis he employs, diminishes any sense of wonder which the story might have produced. Even as Ḥanina's powers were considerable enough to cause the people to ask him whether he were a prophet, R. Aḥa's simple statement of fact effectively limits the reader's impression of Ḥanina's capacities.

The two stories which link Ḥanina ben Dosa to the healing of the sick both serve as elaborations of M. Berakhot 5:5, which refers to Ḥanina's prayers for the sick in the context of discussing the consequences for erring in the recitation of a fixed prayer:

> They said of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa: When he would pray for the sick, he would say, "This one will live and this one will die." They said to him, "How do you know?" He said to them, "If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, then I

> know that it is accepted; if not, I know that it is rejected"[46] (M. Berakhot 5:5).

The gemara expands upon M. Berakhot 5:5 by recounting the illness of Rabban Gamliel's son:

> Our rabbis taught: The son of Rabban Gamliel once became ill. He sent two scholars to R. Ḥanina ben Dosa (to ask him) to pray for him. When he saw them he went to an upper room and he prayed for him.[47] When he came down, he said to them: "Go, for the fever has broken." They said to him, "Are you a prophet?" He replied, "I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's disciple, but so have I learned[48] --if my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that it is accepted; if not, I know that it is rejected." They sat and wrote and noted the exact hour. When they came to the house of Rabban Gamliel, he said to them, "By the Temple service! The hour you have recorded is not too small nor too great, but precisely as it happened: at that exact hour the fever left him and he requested water[49] (B.T. Berakhot 34b).

As in the story of Neḥunya's daughter, people express recognition of Ḥanina's abilities by coming to seek his help; in fact, in this story, no one less than Rabban Gamliel himself requests Ḥanina's assistance. Once again, Ḥanina performs his task from a distance, thereby increasing its

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[46]Vermes translates: "then I know that he (the sick person) is favored; if not, I know that (his disease) is fatal" ("Ḥanina ben Dosa," 179).

[47]For the pattern of sending scholars to ask a holy man to pray, cf. B.T. Ta'anit 23a, where the rabbis send two scholars to Abba Ḥilqiyah, grandson of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, to ask him to pray for rain. This aggadah contains another parallel to the Ḥanina story: Abba Ḥilqiyah goes up to the roof to pray without being asked by the messengers. (See discussion below, 139-144.)

[48]Vermes translates: "But this is how I am favored" ("Ḥanina ben Dosa," 180).

[49]Cf. P.T. Berakhot 5:5.

miraculous nature.[50] The story also classifies Ḥanina's action as prayer (in this case, the text uses the idiom levaqqesh alayv raḥamim). In fact, while the nature of Ḥanina's activity was unclear in the story of Neḥunya's daughter, in this case Ḥanina acts in response to an explicit request to "pray for him," and his prayer is instrumental in the boy's recovery. Here, Ḥanina supplements his response to the question, "Are you a prophet," with a characteristic rabbinic statement, "but so have I learned,"[51] and then rehearses the statement recorded in M. Berakhot 5:5. The students, who seem to be skeptical, note the time of Ḥanina's assurance, and his statement proves to be accurate; not only did the story begin with a request for help originating from Rabban Gamliel, but it concludes with his confirmation of Ḥanina's abilities: "At that exact hour the fever left him and he requested water."

The story of Ḥanina ben Dosa and the son of R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai follows immediately in B.T. Berakhot 34b:

> On another occasion, R. Ḥanina ben Dosa went to study Torah with R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai's son became ill. He said to him, "Ḥanina, my son, pray for him that he might live." He rested his head between his knees and prayed for him, and he lived.

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[50]Cf. P.T. Berakhot 5.5, which adds that the two students went to visit Ḥanina ben Dosa "in his town," thereby suggesting that Ḥanina recites his prayer from a distance.

[51]"So have I learned" here is kah meqqubelani, thereby echoing his statement in the Mishnah, "I know that it is accepted" (yode'a 'ani shehu meqqubal). The word play conflates the traditional rabbinic and confident charismatic elements of Hanina's image.

> R. Yohanan ben Zakkai said: "If ben Zakkai had rested his head between his knees all day, he would not have been paid notice." His wife said to him, "Is Hanina greater than you?" He said to her, "No, for he is like a slave before God, while I am like a prince before the king" (B.T. Berakhot 34b).

This healing story is similar to the previous one. The first line of the story places Hanina firmly within the rabbinic establishment: he is not merely a marginal figure sent to for emergency help; instead, he studies Torah in the house of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai himself.[52] In fact, the juxtaposition of "Yohanan ben Zakkai's son" and "Hanina, my son" suggests a close relationship between Hanina and Yohanan. Nonetheless, even as Hanina is presented as a part of the institutional structure, and even as his successful action is again defined as prayer, his physical position evokes the prayer of Elijah, the prototypical Jewish charismatic figure.[53]

The most distinctive element of the story is the exchange between Yohanan and his wife. Yohanan's acknowledgement of Hanina's powers prompts his wife's question; in response, he vigorously re-asserts the institutional hierarchy: "He is like a slave before God, while I am like a prince before the king." Hanina demonstrates a close relationship and unquestionable access to God; Yohanan's statement, however, distinguishes between access to God (in which Hanina is

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[52]In this case, Hanina does not offer his prayer from afar.

[53]Cf. I Kings 18:42.

superior) and status before God (in which Yohanan asserts his own preeminence). Hanina, like the slave, may be able to enter the king's quarters at all times, but Yohanan has the status of a prince before the king, and can thereby exert influence on matters more important than those for which the slave approaches his master. Yohanan's statement is notable as an attempt to assert traditional hierarchy in the face of Hanina's non-traditional power. His message, however, aside from being somewhat cryptic, is compromised by the fact that Hanina's healing of Yohanan's son can hardly be described as the trivial affair of a slave. Yohanan's concluding statement, therefore, is not as powerful as the action by Hanina which prompted it, nor is it as effective as the similar statement by Shimon ben Shetah, or by R. Aha in the Nehunya story. Ultimately, Hanina's power remains unassailable, though it also appears comfortably and willingly linked to an explicitly rabbinic context.

HANINA BEN DOSA'S TEACHINGS

In addition to his reputation and the aggadot which relate his deeds, Hanina's own teachings also contribute to his portrait. Mishnah Avot contains three statements by Hanina ben Dosa. In M. Avot 3:9, Hanina emphasizes that deeds and fear of sin are necessary to the preservation of wisdom:

> R. Ḥanina ben Dosa said: "Anyone whose fear of sin takes precedence over his wisdom, his wisdom endures; but anyone whose wisdom takes precedence over his fear of sin, his wisdom does not endure."
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> He used to say: "Anyone whose deeds are greater than his wisdom, his wisdom endures; and anyone whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, his wisdom does not endure" (M. Avot 3:9).

These statements reflect Ḥanina's pietistic orientation: deeds and spirit take precedence over learning. Moreover, they confirm what the stories have already shown: that the "man of deed" is characterized by his actions rather than by his intellectual attainments. The Ḥanina statement included in M. Avot 3:10 reflects another pietistic notion:

> He used to say: "Anyone in whom humanity takes pleasure, God takes pleasure in him; but anyone in whom mankind does not take pleasure, God does not take pleasure in him."

The statement reflects the <u>ḥasid</u>'s emphasis on involvement in the community, and links human acceptance to divine acceptance. The doctrine is an interesting variation on the central charismatic concept of social recognition -- the charismatic's status as one in whom God takes pleasure depends upon his success among the people.

Unlike the rabbinic image of Ḥoni, which reveals certain transparent attempts to "rabbinize" the character, the portrait of Ḥanina ben Dosa which emerges from these texts presents a figure who both exhibits important charismatic abilities, and seems comfortably rooted in institutional structures. In other words, Ḥanina presents a modification of Weber's absolute opposition between charisma and

institution.[54] As with Honi, the blurring of the distinction works in two directions: it reduces the potential threat of the charismatic, but at the same time preserves charismatic properties by associating them with the institutional rabbinate. R. Yohanan ben Zakkai's exchange with his wife may best sum up the rabbinic view of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa: it combines an explicit recognition of Hanina's wondrous abilities with an institution-bound, if not always effective, assertion of traditional hierarchies and categories.

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[54]Weber himself noted that the priest may combine both institutional routine and charismatic mission: "For Weber, charisma and its routinization were omnipresent possibilities in all phases of history and had to be examined anew in each case" (Bendix, Max Weber, p. 328).

CHAPTER FIVE

Selected Accounts of Charismatic Behavior in the Third Chapter of B.T. Ta'anit

INTRODUCTION

The third chapter of B.T. Ta`anit (B.T. Ta`anit III, hereafter) is a rich source not only for the Ḥoni and Ḥanina ben Dosa traditions, but also for other aggadot which reveal rabbinic attitudes towards charismatic activity. This chapter will explore those stories included in B.T. Ta`anit III that shed light on the rabbinic portraits of Ḥoni and Ḥanina ben Dosa, and on rabbinic views of charismatic activity in general.

B.T. Ta`anit, like the Mishnah chapter upon which it elaborates, concerns itself with fasting as the prescribed response to the absence of rain. B.T. Ta`anit III consists mostly of aggadot rather than halakhic discussion, and of the approximately sixty aggadot which constitute the chapter, almost half describe individuals who through some means are capable of causing rain to fall. In some instances, the method is merely adherence to prescribed ritual; in others, like the Ḥoni stories, such adherence is presented as insufficient, and the stories suggest that other methods or causes bring success. Other aggadot describe different means of human intervention in the natural order; these include

preventing dilapidated buildings from collapsing,[1] protecting cities from plagues,[2] causing trees to bear fruit,[3] and cursing other human beings effectively.[4] From these various aggadot, a diversified image emerges of figures who are capable of affecting the natural order. In most cases, these figures are portrayed as neither pristinely obedient to institutional norms, nor as completely iconoclastic. Instead, like the image of Hanina ben Dosa, their portraits contain both institutional and charismatic elements. Many of the figures display typical charismatic characteristics: they receive social recognition; they achieve their goals through personal rather than legal means; they perform miracles, but the miracles are perceived as evidence of other merits. On the other hand, these figures also bear a distinctly rabbinic stamp: humility before God emerges as a frequent prerequisite to their effectiveness, and the merit identified as underlying many of their feats is defined according to rabbinic notions of righteousness.

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[1]B.T. Ta`anit 20b, 21a.

[2]B.T. Ta`anit 21b.

[3]B.T. Ta`anít 24a.

[4]B.T. Ta`anit 23b.

R. ZERIKA'S COMPARISON: B.T. TA'ANIT 23b

In B.T. Ta'anit 23b, the juxtaposition of two approaches to rain-making reflects the complex rabbinic attitude towards figures capable of affecting the natural order. R. Zerika compares the "mighty ones of the land of Israel" to the "pious ones of Babylon":[5]

> R. Zerika said to R. Safra: Come and note the difference between the mighty ones of Palestine and the pious ones of Babylon. When the world was in need of rain, the pious ones of Babylon, R. Ḥuna and R. Ḥisda, said: "Let us gather together and pray, and perhaps the Holy One Blessed be He will be appeased and send rain. But the mighty ones of Palestine: when the world was in need of rain, R. Jonah the father of R. Mani, for example, would go into his house and say, "Give me my haversack, and I will go and get grain for a zuz." When he went outside, he would go and stand in a low-lying place, as it is written, "Out of the depths I have called to you, oh Lord." And standing in a secret place, covered with sackcloth, he would pray, and rain would come. When he returned to his house they would say to him: "Did you bring grain?" He would say to them: "Now that the rain has come, the world will feel relieved" (B.T. Ta'anit 23b).

R. Zerika, a fourth century Palestinian Amora, does not indicate any explicit value judgment towards the two methods he describes; he does, however, present the reader with two distinct models of rabbinic behavior in the face of drought. The actions of the third-century Babylonian masters, Ḥuna and Ḥisda, represent part of a prescribed institutional response

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[5]The rest of the chapter fails to confirm the geographical element of R. Zerika's description; his statement is more important as a comparison of disparate means of effecting rainfall than as a comparison of regional patterns.

to drought: communal prayer. With appropriate humility, the two rabbis do not express any undue confidence that their prayers will be efficacious; they state that the rainfall will depend on God's being appeased, suggesting an assumption that the drought is a result of some sin which requires God's appeasement.[6] Like Ḥuna and Ḥisda, R. Jonah acts on his own initiative. (Unlike many of the figures in Ta anit III who are credited with extraordinary abilities, his actions are not prompted by any popular request.) Contrary to the two Babylonian rabbis, however, he acts as an individual, and he goes to a secret place to utter his prayer. Moreover, the description of his actions contains no qualifying humility; in fact, it concludes with a statement of assurance: "Now that the rain has come, the world will feel relieved."

R. Jonah's actions, however, are not iconoclastic throughout. His activities reflect obedience to certain institutional norms: his action is described explicitly as prayer with the formulaic "uva'ei raḥamei," he puts on sackcloth, and even his selection of a hidden place is linked to a Biblical verse, Psalm 130:1.[7] Therefore, while R. Jonah seems to display definite charismatic characteristics at

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[6]See above, 63.

[7]R. Jonah is standing in a "low-lying place" (bedukhta 'amiqta), and thus the connection to Psalm 130:1: "Mima'amaqim qeratikha yhyh." Note that while the aggadah does not indicate to whom R. Jonah addresses his prayer, the prooftext does present an explicit and appropriate object of prayer, "Lord."

first, the story employs institutional elements to modify and modulate his image. R. Zerika's comparison also suggests subtly that R. Jonah may be more effective than his Babylonian counterparts: R. Zerika never reports whether R. Huna and R. Hisda's prayers were successful, but his account reveals and repeats the favorable resolution to R. Jonah's efforts: "rain came" (the formulaic "ve'atei mitra") and "the world will feel relieved." In R. Jonah, the rabbis thereby present a successful alternative to the institutional behavior of R. Huna and R. Hisda. Notably, however, R. Jonah's model, while distinctive, is not diametrically opposed to that of R. Huna and R. Hisda. Instead, as the portrait of R. Hanina ben Dosa suggests, the rabbinic alternative to purely institutional behavior is partially institutional behavior: i.e., charismatic behavior modified by institutional elements.

NAQDIMON BEN GURYON: B.T. TA`ANIT 19b-20a

In the first aggadah of the chapter, and one of the most significant for understanding the portrait of Honi the Circle-drawer, Naqdimon ben Guryon takes it upon himself to elicit rain, but his behavior is qualified by explicit institutional elements:

> Our rabbis have taught: Once all of Israel came on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but there was no water for them to drink. Naqdimon ben Guryon went to a certain gentile lord and said to him: "Lend me twelve wells of water for

the pilgrims, and I will return twelve wells of water to you. If I do not repay the water to you, I will give you twelve talents of silver." He fixed a time for repayment. When the time arrived and it had not rained, the lord sent a message to him in the morning: "Send me either the water or the compensation that you owe me." Naqdimon responded: "I still have time; the whole day is mine." At midday the lord sent a message to Naqdimon: "Send me either the water or the compensation that you owe me." Naqdimon responded: "I still have time today." In the afternoon the lord sent a message to Naqdimon: "Send me the water or the compensation which you owe me." Naqdimon responded: "I still have time today." The lord sneered at him and said: "It has not rained all year, and now it will rain?" The lord then entered the bathhouse happily. While the lord went happily to the baths, Naqdimon entered the Temple sadly. He wrapped himself and stood in prayer, and said before Him: "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before you that not for my own honor nor for the honor of my father's house, but for your honor have I done this, that there might be water available to the pilgrims." Immediately the sky became covered with clouds, and enough rain fell to fill twelve wells, and then some. When the lord emerged from the bathhouse, Naqdimon ben Guryon came out of the Temple. When they saw each other, Naqdimon said to the lord, "Give me compensation for the excess water that you have received." The lord said: "I know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not disturb His world other than for your sake. But I still have a claim against you to extract my compensation, because the sun had already set, and therefore the rain fell in my domain." Naqdimon returned to the Temple, wrapped himself and stood in prayer, and said before Him: "Master of the Universe, make it known that you have beloved ones in Your world." Immediately the clouds scattered and the sun shone through. The lord then said to him: "If the sun had not broken through, I would have a claim against you to extract my compensation." It has been taught: His name was not Naqdimon, but Boni. And why was he called Naqdimon? Because the sun broke through [niqdera] for his sake. The rabbis have taught: The sun broke through [niqdema] for the sake of three people: Moses, Joshua and Naqdimon ben Guryon (B.T. Ta'anit 19b-20a).[8]

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[8]See parallels: Avot de Rabbi Natan, chapter 6; B.T. Avodah Zarah 25a; B.T. Gittin 56a.

In the progression of B.T. Ta`anit III, the Naqdimon story (19b-20a) appears between the Mishnah's account of Ḥoni (19a) and the elaboration of the Ḥoni story in the gemara (23a). Not only its placement in the chapter but its content provokes comparison between the Naqdimon story and the story in which Ḥoni draws the circle and calls for rain. Both protagonists address God as individuals, pray for rain for the people's sake, and succeed in soliciting considerable results: for Ḥoni, "the rain fell vehemently," and for Naqdimon, "enough rain fell to fill twelve wells, and then some." Neither figure is satisfied to make only one request of God, and for both, the fulfillment of multiple requests indicates their considerable power: after his prayer fails, Ḥoni makes three different successful requests for rain; Naqdimon asks once for rain, and once for the sun to reemerge in order to prolong the day, and God grants both requests.[9] In both stories, the charismatic is regarded as having the personal power to elicit rain for his own sake: Ḥoni's students complain, "The rain falls only to free you from your vow," and the gentile lord says to Naqdimon, "I know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not disturb his world other

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[9]As discussed in the previous chapter, the first Ḥanina ben Dosa story in B.T. Ta`anit 24b also suggests the power signified by the fulfillment of multiple requests: Ḥanina asks first for the rain to stop, and then for it to start again, and both requests are granted.

than for your sake."[10] Like Ḥoni, Naqdimon seems to have an extraordinary personal relationship with God -- he confidently borrows the water from the gentile lord, and makes direct supplication to God to meet his needs. He has tremendous power -- not only are all of his efforts successful (a better record than Ḥoni's), but his ability to both cause the clouds to cover the sky (i.e., make it rain) and to make the sun return (i.e., to reverse the onset of evening) suggests the same all-encompassing power as indicated by Ḥanina ben Dosa's ability to both stop and start the rainfall -- Naqdimon influences nothing less than the sun's coming and going.

While Naqdimon and Ḥoni thereby demonstrate similar characteristics, the pronounced institutional elements of the Naqdimon story ultimately present the protagonist's behavior as a foil to Ḥoni's purer form of charisma. In fact, despite its own charismatic elements, the Naqdimon story,

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[10]This remark by the gentile lord exhibits elements which appear in other stories in B.T. Ta'anit III. The first is that despite a disclaimer by the wonder-worker himself, others regard him as the cause of the miracle; thus, the lord's statement that the rain fell "bishvilkha" ("for your sake") stands in direct contrast to Naqdimon's disclaimer, "lo likhvodi ... ela likhvodkha" ("not for my own honor ... but for your honor"). As discussed below (139-146), this contrast between the charismatic's disclaimer and the credit given him by the people also occurs in the stories of Abba Hilqiyah (B.T. Ta'anit 23a-b) and Ḥanan Haneḥba (B.T. Ta'anit 23b). In each of these examples, the contrast suggests not only that social recognition is important to the charismatic's authority, but that social recognition may create such authority even when the charismatic does not seek it.

like the reconstituted Ḥoni narrative which follows soon after it in the gemara, seems to serve as a corrective to the unqualifiedly charismatic core of the Ḥoni narrative which appears in M. Ta`anit 3:8.

Instead of presenting the image of a petulant child who importunes his God, the Naqdimon story combines charismatic and institutional elements to reflect a typically complex rabbinic portrait of charismatic activity. In contrast to the Mishnah's version of the Ḥoni narrative, the Naqdimon story evinces strong institutional elements. Whereas Ḥoni mentions Temple-related objects like the Passover ovens and the Stone of Strayers only in a subversive sense, Naqdimon requests water for the sake of pilgrims,[11] and goes to the Temple and wraps himself in a prayer shawl before offering his prayer. Like Ḥoni, Naqdimon addresses God using certain formulaic elements ("Master of the Universe," and "[it is] revealed and known before You"), but in contrast to Ḥoni's arrogant stance before the Creator, Naqdimon states explicitly that he seeks to assert the honor of God, not of himself or his family.[12] Moreover, Naqdimon seems an exemplary man of faith -- he literally banks on the fact that

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[11]Note the similarity to the function of the righteous Neḥunya the Well-digger.

[12]Naqdimon's requests are more subtle than Ḥoni's. Naqdimon never states exactly what he wants: in the first instance, when he wants rain, he refers only to God's honor for which "I have done this"; in the second, when he wants the sun to re-emerge, he asks God vaguely to "make it known that You have beloved ones in Your world."

God will send rain in time. In fact, unlike Ḥoni, who is uninhibited in asking God to reyise the rains, Naqdimon seeks intervention in the natural order only after the gentile lord has demanded his water three times.[13] While neither the Ḥoni nor Naqdimon accounts define the protagonist's merit explicitly, all of these institutional elements combine to suggest themselves as the source for Naqdimon's powers. Moreover, while both the Ḥoni and the Naqdimon stories end with praise for the protagonist, Shimon ben Shetaḥ's analogy to the father and his petulant son qualifies drastically the Proverbs citation about rejoicing parents. In contrast, the praise for Naqdimon is unambiguous: at its conclusion, the aggadah associates Naqdimon with the likes of Moses and Joshua.

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[13]While the weight of the rabbinic portrayal is positive, Naqdimon may not be such an uncomplicated altruist. While his motives seem to be pure, his indirect petitions have a double-edge. He emerges as a loyal partisan, asking that God preserve the Divine reputation rather than cede victory to a gentile. His requests, however, seem self-serving: by the time Naqdimon prays for rain, the pilgrims already have their water; he requests rain only in order to repay his personal debt to the lord. Indeed, he is not beyond an attempt to garner personal gain from God's response to his prayer: "Give me compensation for the excess water that you have received." His second petition might also reflect self-interest -- it is again intended to acquit him of his debts. Ultimately, however, Naqdimon emerges in a positive light -- his apparent presumption is mitigated by the fact that his opponent is a sneering non-Jew, and the debts he incurs and seeks to elude result from his faith in God. Most important, the fact that God fulfills Naqdimon's personal requests, even to the extent of reversing the course of the sun, confirms the wonder-worker's consummate power.

By thereby presenting Naqdimon as a more institutionally-oriented model of charismatic success than Ḥoni, the rabbis begin to qualify the Mishnah's Ḥoni story even before they present its expansion in B.T. Ta'anit 23a. Like the rabbinic modifications of the Ḥoni story which emerge in the gemara, the story of Naqdimon ben Guryon underscores the possibility and value of institutional allegiance even for the charismatic, and thereby suggests the hybrid but necessary link between institutional norms and charismatic power.

ABBA ḤILQIYAH: B.T. TA'ANIT 23a-b

Like the account of Naqdimon ben Guryon, the story of Abba Ḥilqiyah, who is described as "Ḥoni's grandson," is important because of its juxtaposition to the Ḥoni narrative, and because of its related content. This aggadah of "Ḥoni's grandson" follows immediately upon the story of Ḥoni's death:

> Abba Ḥilqiyah was the grandson of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer, and whenever the world was in need of rain, the sages sent a message to him, he prayed, and it would rain. One time the world was in need of rain, and the sages sent a pair of sages [to ask him] to pray for rain. They went to his house but they did not find him. They went out to the field and found him hoeing. They greeted him but he did not acknowledge them. When night fell, he gathered wood, and he put the wood and the hoe on one shoulder, and his cloak on the other shoulder. Throughout the journey home he did not put on his shoes, but when he came to water he put on his shoes. When he came to prickly shrubs and thorns, he lifted up his clothes. When he reached the city his wife, adorned, came out to meet him. When he came to his house, his wife entered first, then he himself, and then the rabbis. He sat down to eat, but he did not say to the rabbis, "Come and eat." He divided the bread among his children,

giving one portion to the elder son and two to the younger. He said to his wife: "I know that the sages have come to ask for rain. Let us go up to the roof and pray, and perhaps God will be appeased and rain will come, and credit for it will not be given to us." They went up to the roof. He stood in one corner and she in the other. The clouds first gathered in his wife's corner. When he came back down, he said to them: "Why have you come here, sages?" They said to him: "The rabbis sent us to you, sir, [to ask you] to pray for rain." He said to them: "Blessed is God, who did not cause you to be dependent on Abba Hilqiyah." They said to him: "We know that the rain comes on account of you, sir, but explain to us, sir, those acts which astonish us. Why when we greeted you did you not acknowledge us?" He replied: "I was a day-worker, and I resolved not to take time away from my work." And why did you, sir, carry the wood and the hoe on one shoulder, and the cloak on the other? He said to them: "It was a borrowed cloak, and I borrowed it for this purpose [to wear] and not for that [to place wood upon it]. And why, sir, did you not put on your shoes for the whole journey, but when you came to water you put on your shoes? He said to them: "For the whole journey I could see, but I could not see in the water." Why did you raise up your garments when you came to prickly shrubs and thorns? He said to them: "This [the body] heals, but this [the clothes] does not." Why when you came to the city did your wife come out to meet you adorned? He said to them: "So that I would not look at other women." Why did she enter first, and then you afterwards, and then we? He answered: "Because you are unknown to me." Why when you sat down to eat did you not say to us "Come and eat"? Because there was not enough food, and I resolved not to be given undue credit. Why did you give one portion of bread to the elder son and two to the younger? He said to them: "This one [the elder] is in the house, but this one [the younger] studies at the synagogue." And why did the clouds first gather in the corner where your wife stood and then in your corner? Because a wife stays home and gives bread to the poor, which gives them immediate pleasure, but I give them money, which does not give immediate pleasure. Or perhaps because when there were some outlaws in our neighborhood, I prayed for them to die, and she prayed for them to repent -- and they repented (B.T. Taanit 23a-b).

The story of Abba Ḥilqiyah bears a more direct connection to the Ḥoni narrative than the Naqdimon story does: the Abba Hilqiyah story appears immediately after the Ḥoni stories,

and describes Abba Ḥilqiyah as Ḥoni's grandson.[14] Like the story of Naqdimon ben Guryon, the story of Abba Ḥilqiyah presents an alternative to Ḥoni's pure charisma, and thereby serves as an indirect but crucial commentary upon the Ḥoni stories themselves.

In certain ways, Abba Ḥilqiyah's brand of charismatic behavior is more similar to Ḥoni's than to Naqdimon's. The fact that the people send for him in times of drought suggests that, like Ḥoni, Abba Ḥilqiyah has a reputation as one capable of bringing rain. Moreover, his "acts which astonish" mark him as unique, and puzzle the messengers who come to solicit his help. When he finally does go up to the roof, he does so, like Ḥanina ben Dosa,[15] without ever having engaged in conversation with the messengers. His activity on the roof, though he defines it in advance as prayer with the formulaic phrase niva'ei raḥamei, hardly reflects Naqdimon's trip to the Temple and use of the prayer shawl: Abba

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[14]The description of Abba Ḥilqiyah as bar berei ("grandson") dehoni hame'aggel also echoes the language of the previous aggadah, in which the term bar berei occurs twice: once in reference to the grandson of the planter, and once in reference to Ḥoni's grandson: bar berei 'ita. Cf. the parallel to the Abba Ḥilqiyah story in P.T. Ta'anit 1:4, which identifies the protagonist as a "pious man from Kefar Imi," rather than as Ḥoni's grandson. Safrai regards the Bavli's assertion of a relationship between Ḥoni and Abba Ḥilqiyah as evidence of a pattern: "the tendency, so common in the Babylonian Talmud, of connecting prominent, historical personalities by family ties" ("Tales of the Sages," 229).

[15]B.T. Berakhot 34b. Cf. above, 122, n. 47.

Ḥilqiyah elicits rain when he and his wife ascend to their roof and position themselves in separate corners.

Once again, these extraordinary characteristics exist in tension with, and in this case, are subdued by, more traditional rabbinic concerns. Like Ḥanina ben Dosa, Abba Ḥilqiyah is sent for not simply by the people, but by the sages, thereby implying institutional recognition of his powers. Furthermore, from the outset of the aggadah, Abba Ḥilqiyah's successful reputation relies upon activity which is identified as prayer: "The sages sent a message to him, he prayed, and it would rain." Moreover, like Naqdimon, Abba Ḥilqiyah does not display Ḥoni's characteristic arrogance.[16] He identifies the potential onset of rain not as accession to his own request, but as evidence of God's appeasement, and he makes explicit his desire that "credit not be given to us."[17] This humility, marked by a clear identification of God as the cause of the rains, emerges again in the protagonist's

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[16]Ḥoni's remarkable presumption is one element of the story in M. Ta'anit 3:8 which is not removed or altered in B.T. Ta'anit 23a. For all of the other elements of "rabbinization," the Babylonian version of the Ḥoni rain story leaves Ḥoni's ultimatum intact, and expands upon Shimon ben Shetaḥ's analogy to the petulant child.

[17]As in the Naqdimon account, the story juxtaposes Abba Ḥilqiyah's own modest disclaimer with a statement which seeks to give him credit for the rains. The juxtaposition is all the more powerful here, for the deferential attribution of credit comes not from a gentile lord, but from the rabbinic messengers: "We know that the rain comes on account of you, sir."

statement to the sages: "Blessed be God, who did not cause you to be dependent on Abba Ḥilqiyah."

Most important, Abba Ḥilqiyah's presumably successful prayer for rain serves as neither the climax nor the conclusion of the story. The narrative seems to mute the result of Abba Ḥilqiyah's efforts: no objective narrative voice declares the protagonist's success explicitly, as in the Ḥoni and Naqdimon stories ("the rain fell vehemently," "enough rain fell to fill twelve wells"). Instead, the story indicates the rainfall only indirectly, through character speech: Abba Ḥilqiyah's assured statement to the messengers, "Blessed be God who did not cause you to be dependent on Abba Ḥilqiyah," and the messengers' response, "We know that the rain comes on account of you, sir." In the story's structure, the trip to the roof stands at the midpoint, separating the mysterious behaviors of the protagonist from his explanation of them to the rabbinic messengers. The trip to the roof and its implied result are important because they suggest that Abba Ḥilqiyah's efforts are successful; nonetheless, the empirical weight of the story resides in the riddle of Abba Ḥilqiyah's strange actions and in the riddle's resolution, as presented in Abba Ḥilqiyah's detailed explanation. While some of his reasons reflect wisdom (e.g., wearing his shoes in the water because he cannot see what lies at the bottom), most of Abba Ḥilqiyah's explanations reveal him to be an exemplar of rabbinic notions of

righteousness: he refuses to take time away from his work when he is being paid by the hour, he takes scrupulous care of borrowed goods, he protects himself from lechery, he protects his wife from the potential lechery of others, and he recognizes the merit of giving directly to the poor. Abba Ḥilqiyah's explanations thereby suggest righteous behavior as the merit which undergirds his charismatic success. Unlike the Ḥoni narrative, which focuses exclusively upon a charismatic act (bringing rain) and its charismatic basis (the protagonist's close relationship with God), this story relates, and perhaps subordinates, the charismatic act (bringing rain) to an institutionally acceptable and accessible rationale: righteous behavior. The protagonist, while exhibiting unusual powers, is not quite sui generis; his remarkable powers rely upon his righteousness, which while remarkable itself, both conforms to and epitomizes rabbinic standards for worthy behavior.

ḤANAN ḤANEḤBA: B.T. TA'ANIT 23b

In the subsequent story in B.T. Ta'anit III, the humility of another of Ḥoni's descendants provides a contrast to Ḥoni's presumptuous behavior before God:

> Ḥanan Ḥaneḥba was the son of the daughter of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer. Whenever the world was in need of rain, the sages sent school children to him. They would grasp the hem of his cloak and say to him, "Father, father, give us rain." He would say to the Holy One, Blessed be He: "Master of the Universe, act for the sake

> of those who do not recognize the difference between the father who brings rain and the father who does not bring rain." And why was he called Hanan Hanehba? Because he would hide (mahbi) himself in the privy [out of modesty]. (B.T. Ta'anit 23b)

The story shares important characteristics with the Abba Hilqiyah episode: the rabbis seek the protagonist's services in a time of drought, thereby suggesting not only social but institutional recognition of his powers; and the protagonist demonstrates appropriate recognition that God, not he, is the source of the rain: "Act for the sake of those who do not recognize the difference between the father who brings rain and the father who does not bring rain." The statement not only asserts Hanan's humility, but offers subtle criticism of those who would confuse the one who elicits rain with the One who provides it: while the rabbis may seek the efficacy of the charismatic's prayer, they identify those who put too much stock in his personal power as "school children." Like the Abba Hilqiyah account, the Hanan Hanehba story lacks an explicit confirmation of the rainfall; instead, it concludes with concludes with an attestation of the protagonist's modesty: "And why was he called Hanan Hanehba? Because he would hide himself in the privy." While the power of the protagonist to effect rainfall is assumed, the story emphasizes the humility which emerges as an institutionally

appropriate and accessible basis for his extraordinary ability.[18]

THE CRITIQUE OF ARROGANCE: B.T. TA'ANIT 24a-b

Just as the stories of charismatic activity in B.T. Ta'anit III often endorse humility, they also criticize the presumption implied in charismatic activities. In some instances, the criticism is indirect, as in R. Aha's reminder that the daughter of Nehunya died eventually despite Hanina ben Dosa's efforts; in others, the censure is explicit, as in the case of Shimon ben Shetah's upbraiding of Honi the Circle-drawer. In certain cases, as in the instance of the gentile lord's statement to Naqdimon, the charismatic figure is described as "disturbing the world." In the story of R. Yosei of Yukrat's fig tree, such activity is the basis for the harsh decree which R. Yosei invokes against his son:

> One day R. Yosei had workers in his field. Night came and they were not brought food. They said to R. Yosei's son, "We are hungry!" They were sitting under a fig tree, and R. Yosei's son said: "Fig tree, fig tree, bring forth your fruit so that my father's laborers may eat." It brought forth fruit and they ate. Eventually, his father arrived. He said, "Do not belittle me in your

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[18]In addition to the examples cited above, the correlation between humility and extraordinary abilities occurs frequently in B.T. Ta'anit III. Cf. Nahum ish Gimzo's willingness to punish himself for a mildly insensitive action (21a), Samuel the Little's warning to the people not to presume that rain falls due to their merit (25b), and cases where penitence (sometimes to the point of despair) is a prerequisite to rainfall: the stories of Judah Hanasi (24a), R. Nahman (24a), R. Papa (24b) and R. Eliezer (25b).

> estimation, for I was occupied in performing a commandment until now." The workers said to him, "May God satisfy you just as your son has satisfied us." "What is the meaning of this," he replied. They told him what had occurred. He said to his son, "My son, just as you have troubled your Creator to bring forth the fruits of the fig tree before their time, so may you be gathered in before your time" (B.T. Ta'anit 24a).

Like Shimon b. Shetah, R. Yosei scolds another for disturbing God by seeking to effect change in the natural order. The rabbinic attitude towards R. Yosei of Yukrat's position is ambiguous. On the one hand, R. Yosei bar Avin introduces the story by describing R. Yosei of Yukrat derogatorily as one who "showed no mercy to his son and daughter," and R. Yosei of Yukrat's son displays both compassion and obedience to law by feeding the day-workers at the end of the day. On the other hand, R. Yosei of Yukrat claims that he was late because he was performing a misvah, and seems correct in punishing his son for invoking an oath and disturbing God in order to satisfy the needs of the workers. The workers' statement provides R. Yosei with further reason for concern. Like the messengers who send for Abba Hilqiyah and Hanan Hanehba, and like the gentile lord who speaks to Naqdimon, the workers confuse divine and human power: "May God satisfy you even as your son has satisfied us." Had the workers recognized the divine source of their sustenance, they would have stated, "May God satisfy you as God has satisfied us." Their statement thereby emphasizes a crucial danger: charismatic activity, if not bounded by appropriate institutional considerations, risks blurring the distinction

between human and divine, a distinction upon which humble figures such as Abba Ḥilqiyah and Ḥanan Haneḥba insist consistently.[19]

THE IDENTIFICATION OF MERIT: B.T. TA`ANIT 21b

The positive attitude towards humility, and conversely, the negative view expressed towards arrogance or presumption, partake of a broader trend in B.T. Ta`anit III: the attempt to explain the merit of those figures capable of affecting the natural order through their extraordinary acts.[20] As suggested earlier, the ability to relate the charismatic's power to institutionally approved behavior (especially righteousness) has the effect of drawing the charismatic figure towards the rabbinic mainstream; figures like Ḥoni,

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[19]R. Yosei of Yukrat uses the verb "to trouble" (lehatriah) to describe his sons actions; the same verb appears in the story in which Rava's father appears to him in a dream and scolds him for pressing God to bring rainfall: "'Is there anyone who troubles (demitrah) heaven so much? Change your sleeping place.' Rava changed his place and in the morning he found that his bed had been cut with knives" (B.T. Ta`anit 24b). For a similar warning about the abuse of charismatic power, see the story of R. Judah and Elijah, where R. Judah's removal of one shoe causes rain to fall, but as he is about to remove the other, Elijah appears to him and says: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, says, 'If you take off the other shoe I will destroy the world'" (B.T. Ta`anit 24b; cf. P.T. Ta`anit 1:13).

[20]B.T. Ta`anit 24a-b contains an instance in which the attempt to determine merit is frustrated: Rabbah complains that despite his own generation's superiority in the area of study, R. Judah's fasts were more effective than his in bringing rain.

whose power and intimacy with God remain unexplained (as in M. Ta'anit 3:8), seem to pose the greatest threat. B.T. Ta'anit III contains numerous examples which emphasize the merit or good deeds of given characters; some are brief, while other consist of lengthy lists of characteristics.[21] Among these various examples, a category exists which emphasizes the ability and merit not of prominent rabbis, but of average, and in some cases anonymous, members of the populace:

> There was once a plague in Sura, but it did not affect the community in which Rav lived. They thought that this was due to the great merit of Rav, but they saw in a dream that this was too small a matter for Rav's great merit. Instead, it was because of a certain man who lent his shovel and spade for burials (B.T. Ta'anit 21b).

In the subsequent story as well, the merit which protects a locality resides not in a great rabbi, but in the simple righteous acts of an anonymous person:

> There was a fire in Derokeret, but it did not affect the community in which R. Huna lived. They thought that this was due to the great merit of R. Huna, but they saw in a dream that this was too small a matter for R. Huna's great merit. Instead, it was because of a certain woman who would heat her oven [on Sabbath eve] and lend it to her neighbors (B.T. Ta'anit 21b).

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[21]See, for example, B.T. Ta'anit 20b, which provides long lists of the merits of Adda bar Ahava and R. Huna. In other instances in B.T. Ta'anit III, such as the story of Hanina ben Dosa and the hens (25a), the protagonist's merit is not stated explicitly, but emerges through the narrative itself. For further examples of stories in which the protagonist's merit is demonstrated by the narrative, see the story of Eliezer ben Birtah (24a), and the stories about Nahum ish Gimzo (21a).

Notably, these stories manage to temporarily resolve the paradox of the rabbinic estate. On the one hand, they emphasize a crucial claim of the rabbinate: righteous behavior is accessible to all. On the other, by explaining that the salvation of the community was somehow too small a matter for the rabbi's merit, these two passages manage to assert the merit of their anonymous heroes without threatening the status of rabbinic leaders. In fact, the merit of the heroes in both cases derives from righteous acts related to legally (and therefore institutionally) ordained observance: in the first case, the burial of the dead; in the second, the observance of Shabbat.[22] The stories thereby preserve the stability of the rabbinate on numerous fronts, and present models who, like other figures whose righteousness is emphasized as the basis for their special abilities, reflect rather than challenge rabbinic values.[23]

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[22]Cf. B.T. Ta'anit 24a, in which two service readers are more successful than either Rabbi or Rav in eliciting rain. Each rabbi asks the service reader, "What is your merit?" The first states that he lives in a remote and poor place, but nonetheless obtains wine for Kiddush and Havdalah; the second reveals that he is a dedicated teacher of young children.

[23]Two other stories which demonstrate the merit of ordinary people follow the two stories cited above: the story of Abba the surgeon, who, in contrast to Abaye and Rava, was worthy of receiving greetings from the Heavenly Academy everyday (B.T. Ta'anit 21b); and the story of R. Beroqah of Hoza'ah, who learns from Elijah that a righteous jailer and two peace-making jesters have a share in the world to come (B.T. Ta'anit 22a). The position in B.T. Ta'anit III of this series of stories about the merit of the common person is important. The stories appear between the mishnaic version of the Honi story (19a), which indicates no basis for

FROM DROUGHT TO RAINFALL, FROM FASTING TO CELEBRATION: THE CONCLUSION OF B.T. TA`ANIT III

B.T. Ta`anit III presents the affliction of drought as the context for the wondrous acts performed by figures like Naqdimon ben Guryon, Abba Hilqiyah and Hanan Hanehba; the chapter consists mostly of a consideration of calamities (especially the lack of rain) and the fasts which they require. Like M. Ta`anit III, however, B.T. Ta`anit III concludes not with drought, but with rainfall, and with the more reassuring problem of how to respond if the rain comes in the midst of one's fast:

> Our rabbis have taught: If rain falls while they are fasting, if the rain falls before sunrise they do not need to complete the fast; if it falls after sunrise they must complete it (B.T. Ta`anit 25b).

The final words of the chapter describe a ritual response to the rainfall; not only does one stop fasting, but one celebrates with the recitation of Hallel.[24] Mishnah Ta`anit 3:9 and the gemara which expands upon it thereby communicate a nehemta, or statement of consolation: ultimately, rain will come, fasts will end, and God's praises will be

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[24]M. Ta`anit 3.9, B.T. Ta`anit 25b-26a.

proclaimed. The message is important not only as a reassertion of God's benevolence in the world, but as a reflection on the significance of charismatic activity. Throughout the chapter, the rabbis attempt to both reclaim and redefine human intervention in the natural order. They limit such intervention by direct censure, by associating it with traditional rabbinic values, or by contrasting it with more appropriate patterns of behavior. In the process, figures like Hanina ben Dosa, who combine charismatic power with evidence of institutional allegiance, emerge as more common and more acceptable than more purely charismatic figures like Honi the Circle-drawer. Ultimately, however, the rabbis' struggle to qualify and define the human role concludes not with the celebration of any individual human being, but with Hallel, the celebration of the one God. All human authority, whether institutional, charismatic or both, submits to the authority of the Creator "who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall." B.T. Ta'anit III insists on God's sovereignty even is it affirms the impact of human activity in the world.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored rabbinic ambivalence towards charismatic activity. The rabbis report holy man activity, but then devalue it; they undercut charismatic power, but also attempt to associate it with rabbinic institutions and concepts such as Torah and the merit granted for righteous behavior. As argued throughout, the concept of institutionalization makes sense of these seeming contradictions: both the act of warning against the dangers of holy man activity and the process of "rabbinizing" it serve to assert institutional control over charismatic authority. Importantly, however, the rabbinic process of undercutting or even co-opting charismatic symbols and acts is not necessarily an expression of antagonism; even as the rabbis delimit the potential for charismatic activity in a Jewish context, they sustain it. The powerful irony of the Weberian system is that the process of institutionalization both transforms and preserves charismatic influence.

The rabbis issue their views on charismatic behavior in a number of ways. In the example of Shimon ben Shetah's scolding of Honi, the rabbinic perspective emerges through a direct reprimand of the charismatic (B.T. Ta'anit 3:8;

discussion above, 70-72); the comment of R. Aḥa at the conclusion of the story of Ḥanina ben Dosa and Neḥunya's daughter is indirect, but perhaps even more powerful (B.T. Baba Qama 50b; discussion above, 121). Sometimes the narrative itself provides the rabbinic point of view, as in the story of Abba Ḥilqiyah, in which the structure and emphasis of the story subordinate the miracle to the righteous behavior which seems to serve as its basis (B.T. Ta'anit 23a-b; discussion above, 143-144). As suggested in chapter five, the rabbis also communicate their commentary through juxtaposition of one model of charismatic behavior with another, as in the contrast between the petulance of Ḥoni the Circle-drawer and the humility of his grandson Ḥanan Haneḥba (B.T. Ta'anit 22b-23a; discussion above, 144-146).

The rabbinic portrait of charismatic activity reveals both similarities and contrasts to the theoretical frameworks presented in chapter one. Ḥoni, Ḥanina ben Dosa and other figures in Ta'anit III demonstrate typical charismatic characteristics: they use their extraordinary abilities to domesticate chaos in times of distress (e.g., they bring rain in times of drought and demonstrate curing abilities), their leadership is based on personal rather than legal allegiances, they earn and receive social recognition, they serve as "good patrons" who provide assistance in the day-to-day affairs of the community, their actions often exist in tension with the imperatives of institutional authority,

their extraordinary acts occur within culturally understandable idioms of the sacred (e.g., they recall the actions of the ancient Hebrew prophets), and the portrayal of their charismatic activity reflects the tension between the charismatic figures' sui generis nature and their potential as role models.

The textual evidence indicates that the opposition between charisma and institution is not always as absolute as some of Weber's writings suggest.[1] The portraits of figures like Hanina ben Dosa and Naqdimon ben Guryon create a rabbinic model of charismatic behavior which incorporates both charismatic and institutional elements. Similarly, the rabbis' tendency to both undercut and co-opt charismatic authority suggests that while charisma and institution exist in tension, they do not exclude one another.

The stories proclaim the possibility of charismatic behavior, but within rabbinically defined parameters. The most important of these is recognition of God's omnipotence. The tension between the recognition of extraordinary human capacities and God's ultimate sovereignty is perhaps best expressed in Mishnah Sotah 9:15, which catalogues the notable

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[1]As indicated above (127, n. 54), Weber did not assume that charisma and rationalization were always incompatible. As Bendix observes, "For Weber, charisma and its routinization were omnipresent possibilities in all phases of history and had to be examined anew in each case" (Intellectual Portrait, 328).

characteristics of a number of rabbinic heroes, only to conclude that we must depend upon "our Father in heaven."

The determination of righteous behavior as a basis for charismatic authority is also crucial to the rabbinic viewpoint. The emphasis on righteous acts is important not only because it links charismatic abilities to rabbinic standards for behavior, but because it suggests that the key to human transcendence lies in human immanence: human beings can earn extraordinary powers by acting righteously towards others in day-to-day affairs. For all of the complexity of the rabbinic portrait of charismatic activity, the texts studied here do not record the activities of any figures who renounce worldly affairs: every charismatic act takes place amidst the pressing needs of daily life in society.

While the texts studied here provide a revealing picture of rabbinic attitudes towards charismatic activity, they produce as many new questions as they do answers. This study, with certain notable exceptions, is basically synchronic -- it traces figures like Honi and Hanina ben Dosa through a variety of sources, though not through a variety of epochs. (Even the span from the Tannaitic to the Amoraic periods, noted at various points in the analysis, is relatively limited.) It would be interesting to explore how the portraits of these figures fared in later literature, even ranging as far as the stories of hasidic masters to determine if these early portraits exert influence on later

Jewish developments. Further study might also compare the prominence of charismatic stories in one period as opposed to another: if charismatic activity responds to situations of distress, to what extent do the stories themselves play a role in times of strife? The stories analyzed here also suggest further textual directions. As suggested above (p. 120, n. 45), Pinhas ben Yair is probably worthy of independent study: as a Tanna credited with wonder-working abilities, he bears similarities to Ḥoni and especially to Ḥanina ben Dosa; he also emerges in the Zohar, where he is mentioned as the father-in-law of Shimon bar Yoḥai (other texts describe him as Shimon bar Yoḥai's son-in-law). A comprehensive examination of B.T. Ta`anit III, including attention to individual parallels and overall structure, would no doubt add to the understanding of the rabbinic portrait of charismatic behavior. Finally, a direct comparison of selected Jewish, Christian and pagan charismatic figures and stories would prove fascinating.

By definition, the stories studied here can play a role in every age:

> It is the nature of canon to be contemporized; it is ... a mirror for the identity of the believing community which in any era turns to it to ask who it is and what it is to do, even today.[2]

The mirror of these texts reveals images and implications for Jewish leadership in the modern era. First, the texts remind

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[2]Sanders, Torah and Canon, xv-xvi.

us that the tension between charismatic and institutional authority is endemic to religious life. They suggest further that while the relationship between charisma and institutional routine is often antagonistic, it is ultimately symbiotic: institutions depend upon the dynamism of charismatic behavior for their own growth and evolution, and charismatic activity depends upon institutional stability and support for its survival. As a result of their relationship, neither force is preserved in its pure form, yet the durability of each is enhanced.

This reminder of the bond between charismatic and institutional authority is invaluable, especially as Judaism confronts modernity. The search for meaning in the face of chaos is a perdurable element of the human condition; the search becomes even more urgent in an age endowed with the powerful blessings and frightening challenges of autonomy. Both as individuals and as a movement we often find ourselves seeking mooring and direction. On fronts as varied as liturgical reform and the definition of Jewish identity, and in disputes occurring either within our movement or among movements, our era lends itself both to institutional entrenchment and to charismatic experimentation. The challenge will be not to select one to the exclusion of the other, but to understand that their relationship is one of interdependence as well as opposition.

The textual mirror provides a final insight into the enterprise of religious leadership. The stories emphasize the people's felt need for an intermediary between themselves and God, but at the same time indicate that the most successful holy men are those who respond to the people's call with humility: Ḥanan Ḥanehba recognizes his responsibilities as intercessor, but does not accept the children's inflated estimation of his power: "Master of the Universe, do it for the sake of these who are unable to distinguish between the Father who gives rain and the father who does not."[3] The charismatic's status depends upon his responsiveness to the people: the leader takes his or her place within the community, not apart from or above it. Ultimately, the texts suggest, that earthly work is for the sake of heaven.

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[3]B.T. Ta`anit 23b.

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