"*IN THEIR DAY, AT THIS TIME*": EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN PASSOVER, TISHA B'AV, AND HANUKKAH

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Abstract

Throughout Jewish history, theological and liturgical leaders of Jewish communities consciously constructed Jewish holidays with the intent to memorialize key moments in Jewish history and make meaning out of those events for their own time. The holiday cycle evokes calculated feelings and emotions at the individual and communal levels. In this thesis, I investigate the ways in which Jewish holidays demonstrate different approaches to the preservation and persistence of memory as related to the initial event commemorated in each holiday. By focusing specifically on the operation of memory, I demonstrate the value that the fields of cultural and memory studies provide for a contemporary Jew's understanding of the meaning and goals of the holiday cycle.

I use three Jewish holidays – Passover, Tisha B'Av, and Hanukkah – as case studies to understand Jewish memory better and focus on a specific aspect of memory as it relates to each holiday. In Chapter One I explore the dynamics of individual re-enactment and collective commemoration in the Passover seder. Chapter Two explores the Tisha B'Av liturgy of 19th century reformer David Einhorn, who re-purposes the traditional Jewish approach to the traumas of the destructions of the First and Second Temples and re-positions that destruction as a turning point in Jewish history that allowed Judaism and the Jewish people to go out into the world and flourish. Finally, in Chapter Three I examine the rabbinic tension between history and memory as demonstrated in their re-shaping of the historical accounts of Hanukkah and its re-presentation with a new focal point in the miracle of the oil. As I demonstrate, Jews shape memory to fit their contemporary needs and make Judaism relevant for their generation. In doing so, they preserve a strong identification with the past and shepherd Judaism from their generation to the next.

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Introduction

> As time goes on, we repeat a story to ourselves and think of it as our memory. It is the norm rather than the exception to be unable to distinguish between what happened, what you feel about what happened, and what others may have said about what happened.[1]
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> -Susan Engel, from *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory*

Every day, I put on a small, gold mezuzah necklace. Growing up, my parents told me that my grandmother pinned the mezuzah to my blanket on the day I was born. While I cannot "remember" the moment that she gave me that mezuzah, placing it around my neck each morning evokes a string of memories – of my grandmother, my family, my Jewish home past and present – all the way back to that initial story of my grandmother's pinning it to my blanket. This is not a firsthand "memory" but it has become part of my story and deeply ingrained in my sense of self and in my memory.

My own experiences and the stories my family told me over the years simultaneously comprise what I call my memories. Looking at those memories more critically, I develop a distinction between those events I experienced personally and those recounted to me by others. There is a similar dynamic at work within Judaism as well.

Throughout Jewish history, the religious and social leaders of the Jewish community consciously constructed and reconstructed Jewish holidays, each designed to memorialize key moments in Jewish history. In particular, the holidays of Passover, Tisha B'Av, and Hanukkah each evoke carefully calculated feelings and emotions at the individual and communal level. Donald Borchert defines memory as the medium through which both individuals (Jews) and groups (Judaism) have the ability to travel mentally and spiritually

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[1] Susan Engel, *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1999), 16.

into the past.[2] I will use Borchert's definition of memory to demonstrate that a very specific set of memories exists at the core of each holiday but that the function of memory operates within each of these holidays in unique and complex ways. In this thesis, I will investigate the ways in which each of these holidays demonstrates a different approach to the preservation and persistence of memory as it relates to the initial "marking event" commemorated in each holiday.[3] By focusing specifically on the operation of memory within each of these holidays I intend to demonstrate the value that the fields of cultural and memory studies provide for a contemporary Jew's understanding of the meaning and goals of these three holidays.

On the surface, Jewish stories and holidays attempt to instill a sense of collective memory through deeply personal, individual experiences.[4] One of the central messages of the Exodus narrative in the Torah, for example, states, "You shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what God did *for me* when *I* went free from Egypt.'"[5] In the Passover haggadah this biblical statement becomes the response to the prodding questions of the "wicked" child, dubbed as such for his attempt to withdraw himself from the story. In many ways, this statement and its multiple uses provide a summation of the complexities of memory at play within Judaism in the context of the Bible and the use of biblical material by

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[2] Donald M. Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Second Edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2006), s.v. "Memory."

[3] These three criteria for the evaluation of memory appear in Paul Ricoeur, "Memory and Imagination," in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 14.

[4] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory,* trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Y. Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 32. Halbwachs offers an in-depth theory of the interplay between collective and individual memory, arguing that all memories are essentially collective.

[5] Exodus 13:8. Italics added for emphasis. Translation from *TANAKH: A New Translation of The Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985). Electronic version 2.0. In future notes as "JPS translation."

the medieval authors of the haggadah. The declaration demonstrates an attempt to take an event that is essentially part of the historical narrative of a people and transform that historical event into personal memory.[6] The events of the Exodus happened to a particular group of people at a particular moment in time, not to the individuals sitting around the seder table. But the ritual enactment requires the employment of re-enacted memory. Jewish stories and holidays want to be *memory* not history. In fact, Yosef Yerushalmi calls the Jewish people the "fathers of meaning in history"; they are a people committed to shaping a sense of collective and individual memories through the use of historical narrative.[7] He writes that the rabbis of the first and second centuries CE were "engrossed in an ongoing exploration of the meaning of the history bequeathed to them, striving to interpret it in living terms for their own and later generations."[8]

According to Walter Benjamin, holidays are essentially images frozen in time of the major historical moments of a group or movement.[9] With this suggestion in mind, I have chosen to use three Jewish holidays – Passover, Tisha B'Av, and Hanukkah – as case studies to understand "Jewish" memory better. As constructions and reconstructions of memory these three holidays generate intentionally manipulated snapshots and reenactments of three

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[6] A myriad of questions surround the actual "historicity" of the events of the Exodus but I am less concerned here with whether these events actually "happened" than I am with the way later Jewish tradition, particularly the medieval rabbinic authors of the Haggadah, understand them as part of a national history.

[7] Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 8. While the term "fathers" may point to the predominantly male rabbinic leadership, it does not take into account the multi-vocality of the Jewish community or the significant role of women in shaping Jewish life in many aspects of communal and home practice. Looking specifically at the Passover seder, for example, the presence and participation of women and children in shaping every aspect of that experience provides an equal, if not greater, impact on the overall experience of that holiday. In many ways, the significant presence of Jews throughout the field of memory and cultural studies demonstrates Yerushalmi's assertion.

[8] Ibid, 18.

[9] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 261.

major Jewish historical and theological moments with the goal of evoking specific feelings, experiences and memories for their participants.

In the fields of memory and cultural studies, there are a number of analyses of the factors and influences that shape and perpetuate memory. Of particular importance for this study Paul Ricouer offers criteria for understanding how various aspects of memory relate to an initial historical event. He asks four important questions that will frame the work of this thesis: "On the one hand, how is [the memory] preserved, how does it persist, whether or not it is recalled? On the other, what meaningful relation does it maintain in relation to the marking event?"[10] These questions offer a starting point for exploring the ways in which these Jewish holidays embody a dynamic and uniquely Jewish approach to the persistence and preservation of memory as it relates to the initial "marking event" commemorated by each. Ricoeur also offers a number of useful tools for problematizing the role of memory, specifically looking at its re-shaping and re-presenting, its re-purposing and re-positioning, and its re-enacting of memory by those who use and receive the memories.[11] French historian Pierre Nora provides another tool for evaluating "sites" of memory (*lieux de memoire*) that he defines as remnants of "commemorative consciousness" that survive in a society.[12]

In using psychoanalysis as described by Sigmund Freud, I will uncover possible unconscious aspects of Jewish memory particularly by using his work in understanding the long-term effects of trauma. Freud asserts that tradition represents the preservation of a

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[10] Paul Ricoeur, "Memory and Imagination," 14.
[11] Ibid, 35, 115.
[12] Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History." *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past:* Volume I, eds. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 6.

culture's "original memory" of events from a distant, "dim" past.[13] As an advocate of the inheritance of culture and tradition, Freud describes memory as something to which modern society is heir; the experiences found in one's ancestors' past directly influence contemporary collective unconscious memory.[14]

The sociological work of Maurice Halbwachs focuses more specifically at the relationship of the individual to collective memory. One of the goals of the Jewish holiday cycle is to create a sense of collective identity and establish a collective memory of Jewish history; Halbwachs provides a frame through which I can explore the role of the individual's experience as it fits into the larger collective goals of Jewish holidays. Halbwachs writes that memory constantly changes and adapts because of the influence of one's membership in different groups, surrounding people, places and politics. His argument that all memories are on some level collective makes note of the fact that individuals are always part of some group (or, more likely, many groups). With each group, individuals have different versions of themselves and different influences on their memories.[15]

Halbwachs also sheds light on an important distinction between "remembering" and "recalling"; he suggests that while remembering is intensely individual recalling relies on the memory of others. While on the surface the Jewish holidays may appear only to "recall" according to Halbwachs' definition I intend to demonstrate how the construction of each holiday creates opportunities for genuine "remembering" on the part of the individual.[16] Because of his emphasis on collective identity Halbwachs' theory is particularly useful in

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[13] Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), 89.
[14] Ibid, 127.
[15] Halbwachs, 32.
[16] Ibid, 69. Halbwachs defines remembrance as a reconstruction of the past using data from the present.

analyzing holidays; he provides a formula that suggests that remembering the past consists of 99% reconstruction (information gleaned from others present for a shared experience) and 1% evocation (what the individual "alone" remembers).[17] Operating within this formula Passover, Tisha B'Av, and Hanukkah show clear elements of attempts both to reconstruct past events as well as to evoke particular feelings and emotions in the present related to these past events. For Halbwachs, history represents something external to the individual, namely, the objective symbols and facts passed through time, as opposed to memory, which is internal and intensely personal.[18]

Using the above criteria as the basis for a developing a theoretical framework, I intend to look at how each holiday addresses the reconstruction of collective memory while affecting individual recollection. The order of the chapters is designed to reflect the rhythm of the Jewish calendar, with the study of Passover first, followed by the summer commemoration of Tisha B'Av, and finally Hanukkah in the winter.

To understand the role of the reconstruction of memory and how the uses of memory affect the evocation of intended experiences and emotions from participants, I will focus on a specific aspect of memory as it relates to each holiday. In my examination of Passover, I will look at the initial rabbinic development of the Passover haggadah in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmud as an intentional construction designed to contain elements of both commemoration and reenactment. For Tisha B'Av, I will explore the ways in which the initial traumas of the destructions of the First and Second Temple evolve and persist in Jewish memory as demonstrated in biblical texts, the Mishnah and Talmud, and later

[17] Ibid, 35.
[18] Ibid, 52.

medieval and contemporary liturgies[19] for the observance of Tisha B'Av.

Hanukkah provides an excellent example of the rabbinic tension between history and memory. In its initial iteration, Hanukkah primarily commemorated a military victory (as illustrated in 1 and 2 Maccabees and the writings of Josephus) but, after the destruction of the Second Temple and the trauma of the failed Bar Kokhba revolt, the rabbinic editors of the Talmud reshape the memory of Hanukkah with an innovation never before present in the Hanukkah narrative that includes the miracle of the oil.[20]

Looking at these holidays using the theories of Halbwachs, Freud, Ricoeur and Nora I will focus on new aspects of each holiday with particular attention to the intentionality of the construction of each holiday. Through the use of other theories on the nature and dynamics of memory the analysis in this study will offer an added layer to the contemporary Jew's understanding of the meaning and significance of Passover, Tisha B'Av, and Hanukkah.

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[19] I will look specifically at the Reform movement's late-nineteenth century approach this holiday, best illustrated by David Einhorn's "Prayer For the Anniversary of the Destruction of Jerusalem," *Olat Tamid, Olat Tamid: Book of Prayers for Jewish Congregations*, trans. Emil G. Hirsch (Chicago: S. Ettlinger, 1896).

[20] Vered Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil: The Metamorphosis of a Legend," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 73 (2002): 226.

Chapter One
Passover: Integrating Individualized Re-Enactment with Collective Commemoration

> In every generation a person is duty-bound to regard him/herself as if he/she personally has left Egypt, as it is said, "And you shall tell your child on that day saying, it is because of that which God did for me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:8). [1]
> – Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:5

The biblical relationship to the initial marking event of the Exodus from Egypt simultaneously conveys collective and individual memories.[2] The biblical text from Exodus establishes the collective memory of the redemption of a people and indicates the necessity that subsequent generations should feel a personal, individual link to that redemption. For centuries, Jews observed the pilgrimage festival of Passover with an annual sacrificial rite at the Temple in Jerusalem, essentially re-enacting the sacrifice of the lamb the night before the Israelites left Egypt. After the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and the Tosefta began to re-conceptualize the Passover rite for a world in which sacrifice was no longer possible. The basic outlines of the two rabbinic seders that emerged from these major works (and later a third iteration in the Talmud) are similar in many ways but also offer valuable insights into the ways different groups (and generations) of the rabbis understood their task.[3] Despite these differences it is clear that

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[1] Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:5. Translation mine.
[2] See note 10 in Introduction.
[3] When discussing Passover, there are a number of terms that can easily be conflated. For the purposes of this thesis, I will define the "seder" (or "rabbinic seder") as the ritualized meal outlined in the Tosefta, Mishnah, and Talmud (distinguishing between the three when necessary). In the Middle Ages, various rabbinic authorities (most notably, Sa'adia Ga'on) expanded the rituals found in the Tosefta, Mishnah, and Talmud and titled their work the Haggadah, referring specifically to the text that guides the seder meal. In using the term "seder," I also wish to distinguish this ritual from the earlier sacrificial rite carried out in the Temple. Exodus 12:2-11 outlines the first Passover meal which took place in Egypt on the eve of the Israelites' departure. While there are some similarities between this meal in Egypt and the "rabbinic" seder (the rabbis did, in fact, use the biblical description as their starting point), scholars argue that this "Egyptian Passover" was a one time occurrence and that the ritual as it appears in Exodus was not performed in exactly the same way ever

there are two important tensions at play throughout the development of what has become the contemporary Passover seder meal fashioned to commemorate the Exodus and its retelling: the extent to which the new rite represented an individual (or family) re-enactment of the Israelite liberation from Egypt and the extent that rite commemorated the central narrative in the collective identity of the Jewish people. The rabbinic construction of memory as it relates to Passover began as a collective endeavor in the Tosefta yet the rabbinic framers of the Mishnah and Talmud understood the necessity of meaningful *individual* experiences. Using the work of memory-studies theorists and experts on the rabbinic development of the Passover seder, this chapter sheds light on the varying elements of that experience from the perspectives of both individual re-enactment and collective commemoration.

A number of memory-studies theorists offer insights into the various dimensions of individual and collective memory that aid in the exploration of both kinds of memory in the Passover seder. Maurice Halbwachs approaches the individual experience through the lens of the collective. Halbwachs describes personal memory as the result of an individual's exposure to his/her collective society. He writes that personal memory constantly changes and adapts because of the influence of one's membership in and interactions with different groups, surrounding people, places and politics. Halbwachs describes the act of remembering as restoring or re-creating a picture that has lost some details over time (and is perhaps still missing some detail even after restoration). As a developmental psychologist, Susan Engel's focus on the individual provides a contrast to Halbwachs. Engel explores the mechanics of individual memory and writes on the intensely personal nature of memory; her work strikes a balance between the pull and draw of individual and collective memories. Jan

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again. See Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 3.

Assmann, heavily influenced by the work of Halbwachs, offers some critique of Halbwachs' theory and extends his notions of collective memory to the construction and function of memory in everyday and cultural communication. A contemporary of Halbwachs' Pierre Nora is a French historian and expert on national commemoration. I will use Nora's work to demonstrate the relationship between collective commemoration and the individual experience.

The Individual's Experience of the Passover Seder

Before entering into a discussion of the individual's experience of the Passover seder which is primarily a feature of the seders of the Mishnah and Talmud I will first explore the seder's earliest iteration in the Tosefta. In a comparison of the seder of the Tosefta to that of the Mishnah, Talmud scholar Judith Hauptman argues that the seder of the Tosefta is the earliest rabbinic attempt to create a Passover evening ritual following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. She explains, "after the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the [Passover] night celebration, if it were to continue to be observed, had to change in both form and substance."[4] In this early rabbinic attempt at creating a "substitute ritual" for the Temple sacrifice, one of the most striking features of the Tosefta seder is the absence of a paschal lamb.[5] Echoing the earlier rituals of the Temple rite, the Tosefta seder also focuses on the recitation of Hallel which consists of psalms with explicit references to the Exodus narrative

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[4] Judith Hauptman, "How Old is the Haggadah?" *Judaism* 51, 1 (2002): 5. Hauptman argues that the Tosefta, seen by some scholars as a companion volume to the Mishnah [cf. Baruch M. Bokser, *Origins of the Seder*, 1984, 67-100], "preserves for us a description of the seder as it was evolving in this interim, undocumented period from 70-200 CE" and that the Tosefta seder predates the seder found in the Mishnah (5). Hauptman bases this argument on the fact that the seder that appears in the Tosefta is less developed than that of the Mishnah.

[5] Ibid, 6. The sacrifice of the paschal lamb was the primary focus of the Temple ritual. In the Tosefta seder participants no longer eat lamb but rather a main course of roasted meat. See *Tosefta, Pischa* 10:9.

and God's redemptive role in liberating the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The basic outline of the Tosefta seder (which is later expanded in the mishnaic seder) does include a festive meal with meat, matzah, and some form of green vegetable dipped in salt water, but lacks any form of discussion or storytelling that become prominent features of the seders of the Mishnah and Talmud. Following the meal, the leader of the seder expounds on the laws and precepts related to Passover.[6] The focus on Hallel and the lack of individual re-enactment in the seder of the Tosefta suggest that the rabbinic authors of the Tosefta were more concerned with conveying the collective memory of the Exodus narrative than developing participants' individual investment in that memory.

In an effort to describe Judaism's relationship to memory, Nora writes,

> In the Jewish tradition, whose history *is* its memory, to be Jewish is to remember being Jewish. If truly internalized, such a memory inexorably asserts its claim over a person's whole being. What kind of memory is this? In a sense, it is memory of memory itself. The psychologization of memory makes each individual feel that his or her salvation ultimately depends on discharging a debt that can never be repaid.[7]

Although I argue that Jewish tradition wants to be history rather than memory, in that the goal of many Jewish holidays (including Passover) is to evoke a personal experience or connection to the otherwise distant events each holiday commemorates, the questions that Nora raises provide a framework for exploring the individual's experience of the Passover seder. In many ways, the seders of the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud understand the importance of creating opportunities for the internalization of a collective narrative through the two main devices of storytelling and symbolic re-enactment. For the purpose of this study, I define re-enactment as playing out events and scenes (i.e., memories) from the past (the collective narrative) in order to develop a personal memory of these events. Before I

[6] See *Tosefta, Pischa* 10:11.
[7] Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," 11.

explore the dynamics of collective commemoration in the rabbinic seder, I will first look at the ways in which the seders in the Mishnah and Talmud understand the need to engage the individual as a primary goal in contrast to the seder of the Tosefta which focuses solely on collective commemoration. In order to do this, I will use Susan Engel's exploration of the operation and development of individual memories.

Looking at the intimate, personal nature of memory, Engel explores the balance between memory as intensely personal and incredibly public. She writes,

> Memories take us from within our own retrospection to the space between two people; from the most private and informal settings...to the most formal and public settings.... Moments of the past can be expressed in ways that are idiosyncratic and transient, such as a conversation, as well as in ways that are permanent and generalized, such as a history book. We constantly revise our own recollections in response to what others think, say, and feel. We also borrow recollections as a way of feeling that we know what has happened in the past. In this sense memory is at once the most deeply personal and private aspect of experience and simultaneously the means by which we extend ourselves beyond our own mental boundaries.[8]

As Engel discusses above, a memory may be as simple as recalling a family vacation or an important event in one's life but is complex enough to encompass the collective experiences of a culture or society. The complexities of memory exist in the ways in which the memory of one event affects one's life and evolves over time. Many possible factors exist that influence these changes but one can begin to make a distinction between the initial marking event and the preservation and persistence of memory as it relates to that event.[9] As something that is both intensely personal and unabashedly public memory can come in many forms and is fluid in nature. From the most complex uses of memory that shape cultures and create public narratives to the simple recollection of a pleasant moment in one's life, memory always exists just below the surface of human thought and action both for individuals and as

[8] Engel, 169.
[9] Ricoeur, "Memory and Imagination," 14.

a part of the collectivity of society.

Engel explores a number of factors influencing the quality and effect of memory. Of particular interest are the following three factors:

> The mood [an individual is] in at the time of recall; uniqueness – [a person is] more likely to recall things that stand out...and will find it difficult to remember events that were one of many; [and] frequency of recall – if [someone has] recalled an event time and again [that person is] more likely to remember it than if [he/she has] never thought or spoken of it.[10]

Applying Engel's categories to the Jewish holidays, I read Passover as an attempt to structure an environment carefully that creates a positive, nurturing experience to share and perpetuate the memories (and history) contained in both the biblical and rabbinic experience of Exodus. Throughout history, both the rabbinic framers of the holidays and lay leaders worked diligently to create holiday experiences that affect individual participants on many levels. Of the careful retelling and perpetuation of memory Engel writes, "the person you are telling it to, and the reasons you are telling it, will have a formative effect on the memory itself."[11] Engel is keenly aware of the importance of remaining attentive to the various roles involved; she distinguishes between the role of the listener, the participants, and the audience in remembering and perpetuating a memory. The expansion of the Passover seder as described in the Talmud provides one example of the rabbinic awareness of the interplay between listener, participants, and audience, particularly with regard to the role of children present at the seder. In a discussion of the participants' need to rejoice on the night of Passover the rabbis note that this requirement includes women and children in addition to the men present; the discussion prompts a deeper exploration of how to engage the children present:

> [Children receive] parched ears of corn and nuts on the eve of Passover, so that they should not fall asleep, and ask [the 'questions']. It was related of R.

[10] Engel, 8.
[11] Ibid, 12.

> Akiba that he used to distribute parched ears and nuts to children on the eve of Passover, so that they might not fall asleep but ask [the 'questions']. It was taught, R. Eliezer said: The *matzot* are eaten hastily on the night of Passover, on account of the children, so that they should not fall asleep.[12]

Here, the Talmud moves beyond the Mishnah's overview of the steps of the seder and focuses on the details of how to carry out each step. The methods here for engaging the audience of children as *participants* in the seder involves not just corn and nuts (and simply remaining awake) but they also play a central role in the seder: they are to ask questions of the leader in order to draw out the story of Passover. Unlike in the seder found in the Tosefta, the seder of the Mishnah (and, later, the Talmud) makes storytelling a central component. To elicit participation and engaging storytelling the "Four Questions" first appear as part of the seder in the Mishnah:

> They mixed for him a second cup of wine. And here the son asks his father [questions]. But if the son has not got the intelligence to do so, the father teaches him [to ask by pointing out:] "How different is this night from all other nights! For on all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread. But this night all of the bread is unleavened. For on all other nights we eat diverse vegetables, but on this night, only bitter herbs. For on all other nights we eat meat which is roasted, stewed, or boiled. But this night all of the meat is roasted. For on all other nights we dip our food one time, but on this night, two times." In accord with the intelligence of the son the father instructs him.[13]

In the storytelling (Hebrew: *maggid*) section of the seder, the child asks the leader questions about the seder foods and the leader uses these symbolic foods to tell the story of the Exodus. Hauptman points out this element of storytelling is one of the cornerstones of the Mishnah's

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[12] Babylonian Talmud *Pesachim* 108b-109a. Soncino translation (Judaica Press, 1990). Electronic edition.

[13] Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:4. Translation from Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), Electronic version 1.8. It is worth noting here that these four questions are not identical to the questions in the contemporary Haggadah as the question on eating roasted meat is no longer asked. The mention of eating roasted meat here may reflect the rabbinic longing for the earlier Temple rite in which pilgrims brought a lamb to the Temple where it was sacrificed by the priest and the remainder was eaten by the pilgrim within 24 hours of the sacrifice.

augmentation of the Tosefta seder. She argues that storytelling is a "better way of transmitting Jewish values to the next generation" as well as a "better way of thanking God for salvation than just reciting the Hallel [prayer of thanksgiving]."[14] Addressing the concept of storytelling and narrative as an effective means for transmitting memory Paul Ricoeur unintentionally supports Hauptman's suggestion. He writes, "On the deepest level, that of symbolic mediation of action, it is through the narrative function that memory is incorporated into the formation of identity."[15] The conversational format of storytelling present in the seder is particularly powerful in that it demands the engagement of both the leader and the participants. The leader re-telling the story must remain invested and active in his/her presentation and encourage questions and participation throughout the experience. In this way, the participants remain engaged and open to the opportunities to interact fully with and relate to the people and events of the Passover story and create lasting memories.

Turning to the process of memory, Engel's identification of three stages of memory is important for understanding some of the measurable means for transferring memory. Of the first stage, input, Engel writes, "When you take in an experience, the form and organization of that input have a strong impact on how, how long, and how well you will recall something."[16] Is the form of "input" frontal or engaging? Is it visually stimulating? Is there a focus on memorization or internalization? As discussed earlier, the seder described by the Mishnah and Talmud is highly concerned with creating an engaging and stimulating experience and has the goal of internalizing the story. The seder plate, which displays all of the symbolic foods of the seder, becomes a tool box for instilling personal experiences and

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[14]Hauptman, 10. Hauptman explains, "the absence of a haggadah [storytelling component] in the Tosefta and its presence in the Mishnah imply that this key feature of the seder took a longer time to appear than is generally thought." (5)

[15] Ricoeur, "The Exercise of Memory: Uses and Abuses," 84.

[16] Engel, 5.

memories. Each food offers a different experience for the palate, the eyes, and the nose, which the Haggadah then connects to particular experiences of the Israelites in Egypt. The symbols provide an opportunity for all present to engage in an interactive re-enactment of different elements of the story.[17] The crisp blandness of matzah recalls the biblical description of the unleavened bread the Israelites carried on their backs as they hastily fled Egypt. The sweet, nutty texture of *haroset* (apple and nut compote) comes to represent the mortar and bricks of the pyramids.[18] Participants dip vegetables in salt water as a taste of the sweat and tears of slavery. They eat *maror* (bitter herbs) that make their noses burn and their eyes water as a reminder of the bitterness of slavery. Each of these symbols become visceral elements of re-enactment. By the end of the Passover meal, participants have tasted the grit and sweat of hard labor, experienced a hint of the physical pain of slavery, and eaten the "bread of affliction" shared by their ancestors (and in one Sephardic custom of using green onions as whips have even experienced the lash of the taskmaster's whip). These personal experiences offer only a hint of the feeling of slavery; but when paired with the Passover narrative they create a lasting impression for each participant.

After input, participants must store the memories. Engel uses the metaphor of pictures placed into a box and describes that the memories that one "uses" more frequently "tend to be recalled better than those to which one rarely refers."[19] Each year, the participants sitting around the seder table may change and mature but the central narrative

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[17] Hauptman, 6.
[18] Because they are less common Hebrew words, I will italicize *maror* (bitter herbs) and *haroset* (apple and nut compote) but words like matzah, seder, and Haggadah as part of colloquial parlance will remain in plain script.
[19] Engel, 5.

and symbols of Passover (and, in some homes, the menu) remain the same.[20] At every seder at my parent's home, I know that I will see the same shank bone journey from the freezer to the seder plate, the same yellow plastic plates my mother sets out so each participant can have his/her own miniature seder plate, and the same china, tablecloth, and silverware. Even though I now lead my family's seder instead of my father, I know that I can still expect a funny question from my uncle and that my mother and, more recently, my wife, and I will sit after the meal and finish the last two cups of wine together.

The final task is the stage of output in which the participant or listener must retrieve the memory. Engel points out that "possible matches between the way material is elicited and the way it might have been encoded in the first place, or stored in the interim" are key elements of retrieval.[21] With its multi-sensory experience of the various symbols and the interactivity of the Four Questions as a vehicle for retelling the Exodus story the seder yields an environment rich in memory retention and association. As I have discussed, the seders in the Mishnah and Talmud encourage participants to interrupt the leader with their questions so that they might remain more deeply engaged throughout the evening. So too, the leader of the seder has the responsibility to remain attentive to the needs of the participants so that they fully understand the entire Passover narrative.

In addition to a close analysis of the role of the participant, Engel also explores the nature of the individual and/or culture that conveys memory. She writes,

> If specific manipulation of the material to be remembered makes people remember more quickly, or more accurately, we can assume that our manipulation in some way matches the internal organization that people are

[20] Broadly, the Jewish calendar, which focuses so heavily on the retelling of stories as a central element of each holiday, reinforces memories through both ritual and annual repetition. As Benjamin suggests, "calendars do not measure time as clocks do; they are monuments of a historical consciousness." "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 262.
[21] Engel, 6.

> using either at the time experiences are encoded or at the time they are retrieved.[22]

Applying this line of reasoning to Passover provides a framework for exploring the dynamics of memory manipulation within rituals and holidays as a means to evoke memory. While the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and Talmud likely did not conduct formal experiments or analyses to determine the most effect means of constructing memorable individual experiences, they do demonstrate a step further than the seder of the Tosefta.[23]

As part of the retrieval of memory, Engel argues that there are specific cues that invoke "all the scattered bits of information" an individual has about a particular event.[24] The seders in the Mishnah and Talmud are in fact full of cues that evoke specific, intentional feelings and emotions by employing a narrative that involves retelling and re-enacting the story of the Exodus from Egypt through stories, symbols and food.[25] Each of these holidays are full of "artifacts" which have the potential for creating an "illusion of memory" that "depends as much on the mental activity of the remember as it does on the quality of the artifact. And the artifact is often only a cue, which can only trigger a fuller image if the

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Hauptman explains that many scholars [cf. Baruch M. Bokser, *Origins of the Seder*, 1984, 67-100] date the seder described in the Mishnah as "no later than 200 CE, the year of publication of the Mishnah," but also offers the perspective of Y.N. Epstein who dates the seder material of the Mishnah to the end of the Second Temple period, at least 130 years earlier. See Y.N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot Lesifrut Hatannaim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1957), 57 as cited in Hauptman, 5. Hauptman argues that the Tosefta's description of the seder is likely an earlier development from an "interim, undocumented period from 70-200 CE." (5).

[24] Engel, 150.

[25] As I explore in the other chapters of this thesis, both Tisha B'Av and Hanukkah evoke similar dynamics of retelling and re-enacting. On Tisha B'Av, Jews sit on the floor as the book of Lamentations is chanted in a trope that is audibly sad. To celebrate Hanukkah, a nine-branched menorah echoes the mythic eight nights of a miracle, dreidel games recalling the great miracle that happened at the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and foods cooked in oil. Hanukkah represents a feast of sights, smells, and tastes to focus the celebration of the holiday on a very specific aspect of the Hanukkah narrative.

person has imagination, information, and an eagerness to revisit past events."[26] One of Engel's main tasks is

> To draw lines of connection between the inner, private experience of personal recollection and the social transactions that shape so much of our everyday uses of memory. Inherent in this effort is an attempt to understand what it means to tell the truth about the past, and how truth criteria differ from one situation to the next.[27]

The seders of the Mishnah and Talmud demonstrate an integration of personal re-enactment through the symbolic foods with sensitivity to keeping participants engaged in the re-telling of the Passover narrative. In contrast, the seder of the Tosefta lacks the central components of storytelling and symbolic re-enactment. This seder focuses only on collective commemoration with little or no consideration for the importance of the individual's experience.

In order to clarify my use of the term "commemoration" a definition is in order. In the context of this thesis and based on the writings of Pierre Nora, who examines commemoration from a national and political perspective, I define commemoration as a group or society's attempt to create a re-occurring embodiment, celebration, and perpetuation of a memory that is central to the group's identity formation (and collective memory). To borrow from the language of Halbwachs, a commemoration is a fixed time for a group's remembrance of an important event in the history of the group.[28] Acknowledging the Passover celebration as a form of commemoration, the seder that appears in the Tosefta illustrates some early rabbinic visioning of the holiday following the destruction of the

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[26] Engel, 151.
[27] Ibid, 22-23.
[28] Halbwachs defines "remembrance" as "in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstructions of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered." See Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Y. Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 69.

Second Temple but it lacks the attention to conveying personal memory present in the Mishnah and Talmud.[29]

In the seder of the Tosefta, there was no accounting for the presence of children or people with different impediments to learning. The central feature of this seder was the recitation of Hallel, which focuses mainly on the commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt, rather than a re-experiencing and re-enacting of the feeling or drama of liberation. In addition to the recitation of Hallel, the Tosefta prescribes a lengthy study session following the meal (as opposed to the Afikoman portion of the mishnaic seder).[30] Studying the laws and precepts surrounding the narrative and observance of Passover is likely not an effective means for the evocation of personal feelings or lasting experiences. This practice may convey a sense of collective memory, but it does not have the personal impact or interactive nature that are developed later in the Mishnah and Talmud. Having explored the ways in which the seder of the Mishnah and Talmud engages the individual, I will now turn to the ways in which it moves that individual experience towards the creation of a collective memory.

Incorporating the Individual Experience into the Collective Memory

In contrast to Engel, who focuses on the internal, individual experience of memory, Halbwachs is more concerned with the larger society and explores how the individual fits into his/her society and its collective memory. Halbwachs spends a great deal of time exploring the role of the individual experience plays in the collective memory. He explains, "If our personal memory is understood to be something that we know only from within,

[29] Hauptman, 5.
[30] Ibid, 6. One of the central features of Hallel is an expression of God's role in redemption from Egypt.

while the collective memory would be known only from without, then the two will surely contrast sharply."[31] Halbwachs offers an example of the tension between personal memory and historical memory. He explains,

> I remember Reims because I lived there a whole year. But I also remember that Joan of Arc consecrated Charles VII there, because I have heard it said or read it. The story of Joan of Arc has been presented so often on the stage, on the movie screen, or elsewhere that I truly have no difficult imagining Joan of Arc at Reims. Meanwhile, I certainly know that I was not a witness to the event itself, that I cannot go beyond these words heard or read by me, that these symbols passed down through time are all that comes to me from that past.[32]

The collective memory of the Exodus narrative is enacted around a family's dinner table just as each individual simultaneously experiences his/her own journey from slavery (eating matzah, bitter herbs and vegetables dipped in salt water) to freedom (reclining as one eats).

According to Halbwachs, in working to remember a specific event or period of one's history an individual must rely heavily on the various groups and networks to which one belongs in order to remember an event more fully. Halbwachs argues that all memories are on some level collective and notes that individuals are always part of some group (or, more likely, many groups). With each group, individuals have different versions of themselves, each of which then asserts different influences on memories.[33] The seders of the Mishnah and Talmud appear to recognize the importance of unifying experience for a number of individuals. Each participant experiences the seder individually through tastes, smells and stories, and these individual experiences are replicated at many seder tables throughout Jewish communities. In his description of the role of the ritual experience in the seder Baruch Bokser explains that ritual allows participants to be open both to "an ideological

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[31] Halbwachs, 52.
[32] Ibid, "Historical Memory and Collective Memory," 52.
[33] Ibid, 32.

message expressed in the ritual" and to a "personal experience" that creates intimate ties to both their fellow participants and the collective narrative of the Exodus. Bokser also notes the importance of the special evening created by the ritual of the seder. He writes, "In the seder, the participants in particular set aside everyday activities, and hence feel appreciative of the past, present, and, by implication, future hope."[34] Essentially, the seder seeks to bring participants out of their daily routine and create a controlled environment for conveying collective memory. An individual Jew rarely experiences the seder alone; he or she is usually surrounded by friends and family who all experience the seder as a group. This small group experience is made more powerful in the fact that it is replicated in Jewish homes throughout the world on the eve of Passover. While each individual seder may vary slightly, the core elements of storytelling and the symbolic foods remain constant. Halbwachs argues that an individual is never alone and, in the context of the Passover seder, one family's experience of the seder is not one isolated experience but part of a much larger collective experience. As Halbwachs suggests, "our most personal feelings and thoughts originate in definite social milieus and circumstances."[35]

Even though Halbwachs argues for the essential collectivity of memory he is careful to point out that collective memory does not imply one single narrative.[36] Within a group or collective, there are many viewpoints; each individual's memory of an event provides a different viewpoint on the collective memory.[37] While different groups of Jews may observe the Passover seder with slightly different customs, the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and Talmud were sure to include certain rituals that were central to the seder experience (and key

[34] Baruch M. Bokser, "Ritualizing the Seder," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56, 3 (1988): 445.
[35] Halbwachs, 33.
[36] Ibid, 49.
[37] Ibid, 48.

elements of the collective memory they were constructing). The Mishnah cites Rabban Gamliel, who teaches that a seder is not complete until the leader and participants discuss the *pesach* (the paschal lamb, recalling the original slaughter of a lamb by the Israelites on the eve of their flight from Egypt as well as the ritual of the Temple sacrifice), *matzah*, and *maror*.[38] Baruch Bokser argues that Gamliel's teaching has a double effect.

> Revising the biblical perspective according to which the *matzah* and *maror* are secondary to the paschal lamb [*pesach*], Gamaliel makes all three equally essential to the celebration. He thereby decreases the sense of physical loss over the inability to bring the Passover offering, since he increases the initial offering by two additional primary objects. Moreover, he asserts the primary significance of discussion of these three central ingredients, which allows the Mishnah to decrease the physical importance of the three elements (especially crucial regarding the paschal lamb which is no longer available).[39]

In this shift of focus from only the paschal lamb to the three symbols of *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror*, Gamliel begins to regulate the symbols used for re-enactment at each seder table. Additionally, his teaching recasts the paschal lamb as an object of symbolic commemoration on the seder plate rather than the sacrifice that was a literal re-enactment of the first sacrifice of the lamb. This shift also allows greater collective participation as compared to the Temple rite in which only priests would have dealt with the *pesach* sacrifice. At the seder *everyone* is required to know and interact with all three ritual symbols. As Bokser explains, "The Mishnah restructures the past and present by the reordering of words and acts; it engineers our response to redemption and thereby shapes the overall experience and the focus of the ritual."[40] Nearly every aspect of the Passover meal (perhaps with the exception of the main course) is highly structured and carefully crafted by the rabbinic authors of the seders of the Mishnah and Talmud. Each cup of wine is paired with a deliberate set of rituals. The first

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[38] Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:5.
[39] Bokser, "Ritualizing the Seder," 449.
[40] Ibid, 449.

cup sanctifies the day, the second cup blesses the retelling of the Passover story using interactive storytelling and symbolic foods, the third cup celebrates the festive meal, and the fourth cup represents thanksgiving for the redemption of the past (in the form of Hallel) and a longing for a future redemption.[41] From beginning to end, the rabbis carefully lay out the entire evening as an interactive experience.

Halbwachs also sheds light on an important distinction between "remembering" and "recalling"; he suggests that remembering is limited to an individual whereas recalling relies on the memory of others.[42] Using Halbwachs to look specifically at the Jewish memory of the Exodus narrative, a great deal of the Passover rituals may appear only as "recall" according to Halbwachs' definition. But the elements of the seders of the Mishnah and Talmud attempt to create opportunities for genuine remembering on the part of the individual rather than a simple recollection of historical events.[43] The fact that the rituals and symbols of these seders remain the same from year to year (and, for some Jews, the group of people with whom they celebrate the seder does so as well) provides an anchor for recalling the details of the Passover narrative. Additionally, the use of storytelling and the encouragement of questions creates a format for the seder in which the retelling can evolve and grow with participants. The Mishnah, in particular, recognizes the importance of asking and answering questions about the Exodus narrative based on the intellectual abilities of the children present.[44] The Talmud, too, discusses the importance of engaging everyone present at the seder, whether by taking away the children's trays of food to pique their interest or through the repetition of certain acts (e.g., dipping twice in the course of the seder) to make sure the

[41] Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:2 (first cup), 10:4 (second cup), and 10:7 (third and fourth cups).
[42] Halbwachs, 33.
[43] Ibid, 69. Halbwachs defines remembrance as a reconstruction of the past using data from the present.
[44] See Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:4.

children present notice.[45] The later innovation of the explanation of the Four Sons also indicates an attempt to engage different types of participants in the collective experience of the seder.

Looking at the balance (or lack thereof) between recollection and remembering, Halbwachs provides a formula in which he suggests that remembering the past consists of 99% reconstruction (information gleaned from others present for a shared experience) and 1% evocation (what the individual alone remembers).[46] Operating within this formula, the elements of storytelling and symbolic re-enactment demonstrate the rabbinic attempt at both reconstruction of past events and the evocation of particular feelings and emotions in the present as related to these past events.

At the core of the Passover seder is an effort to convey the historical narrative of the Exodus in an effective way. In the Mishnah and Talmud, this attempt appears in the form of dynamic storytelling that uses a number of visual and edible aides. For Halbwachs, history represents something external to the individual, namely, the objective symbols and facts as they passed through time; history thus opposes memory which is internal and intensely personal.[47] Examining the Passover symbols through this lens, it is clear that the rabbinic seder found in the Mishnah and Talmud focus intensely on creating opportunities to impact the individual's experience of the seder deeply. Since collective memory is essentially a continuous thought process in which a group "retains from the past only what still lives...in the consciousness of groups keeping memories alive," the seders make concrete that which

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[45] See Babylonian Talmud *Pesachim* 114a-114b (justification for two dippings) and 115b (removal of the trays of food). Soncino translation. The removal of the trays seems to indicate an awareness that children might fall asleep if not occasionally startled with unexpected interruptions.
[46] Halbwachs, 35.
[47] Ibid, 52.

Judaism requires to insure its theological investments.[48] Essentially, a culture only retains the useful aspects of memory. Those events that no longer have any relevance and can no longer offer any instructional value for the present simply fade away. As many contemporary scholars of Passover might argue, the Passover seder provides a structure that offers ample opportunity for the incorporation of contemporary themes of oppression, liberation, or equality.[49]

Passover as an Aid to Culture Formation

Exploring the ways in which collective memory led to the formation of culture, Jan Assmann bases much of his work on the themes of Maurice Halbwachs. In a discussion of "communicative memory," which he describes as "varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications,"[50] Assmann grounds his own theory in Halbwachs' ideas:

> Through this manner of communication, each individual composes a memory which, as Halbwachs has shown, is (a) socially mediated and (b) relates to a group. Every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others. These "others," however, are not just any set of people, rather they are groups who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past.[51]

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[48] Ibid, 80.

[49] Cf. Liora Gubkin, *You Shall Tell Your Children: Holocaust Memory in American Passover Ritual* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007). Gubkin explores the integration of Holocaust themes in contemporary Passover haggadot. See also Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). Walzer uses the Exodus as a model for bringing about political and social change.

[50] Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 126. Assmann defines "everyday communications" as "characterized by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization." (126). There is an organic nature to these communications but the seder table represents a constructed setting for these types of communications to occur.

[51] Ibid, 127.

As I have discussed earlier, one's individual experience at his/her seder table is part of culture formation in that it creates a set of shared experiences and a collective memory that is common to all Jews who celebrate Passover. As the central narrative of the Jewish people, the Exodus narrative commemorated by the holiday of Passover is an excellent example of the model of group unity that Assmann describes. Through the elements of storytelling and symbolic re-enactment, the Jewish people experience a "common image of their past" in the context of the seder conducted in so many Jewish homes.

Exploring cultural memory in greater depth, Assmann writes,

> Just as the communicative memory is characterized by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday. Distance from the everyday (transcendence) marks its temporal horizon. Cultural memory has its fixed point.... These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).[52]

Assmann calls these elements of ritual and recitation "figures of memory" and notes "the entire Jewish calendar is based on figures of memory."[53] The narrative and rituals of the Passover seder focus intensely on the "fateful events of the past" but the symbolic foods used for re-enactment and the larger storytelling component of commemoration remain constant figures of memory even as the span of time between the contemporary Jewish experience and the Israelites' departure from Egypt continues to expand. In these concrete texts and rituals, the memory of the Exodus story remains central to Jewish identity and a core element of Jewish culture.[54]

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[52] Ibid, 129.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Assmann notes that Halbwachs sees the object of religion as "to maintain the remembrance of a time long past through the ages and without allowing it to be corrupted by intervening memories." Halbwachs, *Das Gedächtnis,* 261 as cited by Assmann, 129 (note 16).

Conclusions

Pierre Nora argues that there is no such thing as a spontaneous memory and, as a result, people must create organized opportunities to construct memory.[55] As I have demonstrated, the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and Talmud (and to some extent, the Tosefta) recognized the importance of maintaining an evening in which Jews gather to recall and retell the narrative of the Exodus, a central narrative that informs Jewish identity. After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem sacrifice was no longer possible; the rabbinic communities that compiled the Tosefta and Mishnah responded with two versions of a seder that would come to provide Jewish communities for centuries with an opportunity to engage in the collective commemoration of the Passover narrative. This commemoration was enhanced by the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and, later, the Talmud, with the inclusion of a number of opportunities for individual re-enactment; those opportunities help form personal connections to the potentially unfamiliar and distant experiences of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt.

As Judith Hauptman writes,

> It does not surprise me that the seder and haggadah are post-destruction innovations of the rabbis, in particular the redactor of the Mishnah, since the same can be said for so much else in Judaism as it is practiced today. It was that group of men who preserved Judaism in the wake of catastrophe by changing it, by developing it according to their own evolving sensibilities.[56]

In their development of the Passover seder, specifically, the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah (and later, the Talmud) demonstrate a keen understanding of the need for memorable experiences. In my exploration of the seder through the lens of individual and collective memory, I have illustrated some of the sophistication of this rabbinic community. The basic

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[55] Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," 7.
[56] Hauptman, 13.

form of the seder of the Mishnah, constructed nearly 2,000 years ago and its later expansion in the Talmud, composed about 500 years later, have endured throughout time with only minor changes. The core elements – the asking of questions, storytelling, and ritual re-enactment – have all endured as meaningful contributors to the Jewish collective memory.

Chapter Two
Tisha B'Av: Re-Purposing and Re-Positioning Memory

On Tisha B'Av, Jews attempt to recreate and reconnect to the feeling of mourning and loss that their ancestors experienced upon the final destruction of the Second Temple and the fall of Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago. In the Jewish calendar the months of Tammuz and Av are "the [emotional] low points" of the year and contrast with the majority of the other Jewish holidays that focus on celebratory and uplifting themes of creation, revelation, and redemption.[1] Tisha B'Av culminates the "Three Weeks" which is a period of mourning for both Temples and many other Jewish tragedies that lasts from the 17th of Tammuz until the Ninth of Av.[2]

In this chapter, I will look at the Tisha B'Av liturgy composed by David Einhorn in 1885 for an American Reform Jewish audience which represents a radical departure from the traditional observance of this holiday.[3] In order to understand better the nature of this shift, I will first explore the traditional efforts to construct meaning in the wake of the destruction of the Temples. I will use the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud and the Jewish memory analysis of Yosef Yerushalmi to explore the ways in which different generations of Jewish leaders understood and constructed meaning out of the trauma of Tisha B'Av. To examine the dynamics of memory in Einhorn's liturgy, I will use Pierre Nora's theory of *lieux de*

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[1] Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary* (New York: Harper Collins, 1985), 85. In contrast to the other Jewish holidays (with the exception of Yom HaShoah) the period from the 17th of Tammuz to the Ninth of Av is traditionally a time of communal mourning and sorrow in which Jews are to refrain from joyous practices (e.g., listening to music) and events (e.g., weddings). The majority of the other Jewish holidays are more joyous occasions that focus on agricultural festivals, military victories, or other redemptive themes.

[2] Ibid, 85.

[3] Phillip Cohen, "David Einhorn's Reading for Tisha B'av: Tradition and Transformation," *CCAR Journal* 41, 4 (1994), 55.

memoire ("realms" or "sites" of memory).[4] For Nora, these realms of memory are "created by the interaction between memory and history" and have the ability both to capture a moment of time and to change and evolve over time.[5] These points of interaction are particularly useful for looking at Jewish memory, which constantly struggles to strike a balance between memory and history. At its core, Judaism is a religion and a culture built on the interplay between memory and history. By way of ritual and liturgy, biblical and rabbinic texts, and a calendar rich with commemoration I argue that Tisha B'Av represents one such *lieux de memoire*.

Constructing Meaning Out of Trauma

Before entering into a discussion of the evolution of memory in Tisha B'Av, it is necessary to explore the significance of the trauma that the Jewish people faced in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of each Temple and the ways in which that trauma has been interpreted and made manifest in subsequent generations. Because Sigmund Freud's work in psychoanalysis examines the presence and persistence of trauma as part of the human experience, I will use his trauma theory to assess the ways in which different generations have approached the tragedy of Tisha B'Av positively or negatively.

Freud views memory as an incredibly powerful element of the human psyche (and, by extension, group identity) and asserts that one's memories (and a group's collective memory) and experiences shape his/her identity. For Freud, a person's unconscious memory directly affects and shapes one's personality and affect. Traumatic events that occur early in

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[4] Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," 14. Nora defines *lieux de memoire* as "vestiges, the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it." (Nora, 6)
[5] Ibid, 14-15.

development, when not properly acknowledged or processed in a healthy matter, can lead to neurosis and an unhealthy relationship to the past. The loss of the Second Temple and the considerable trauma in response to this loss completely altered Judaism and Jewish life for the Jews of that generation. As a result, each subsequent generation inherited this deep-rooted trauma and had to contend with it in their own way.

When he expands the scope of his theory from the individual to culture in general, Freud argues that tradition represents the preservation of a culture's "original memory" of events from a distant, "dim" past.[6] As heirs to culture and tradition, modern society inherits memory because the experiences found in its ancestors' past directly influence collective unconscious memory.[7] For Freud, memory (in the sense of early experiences but not consciously remembered events) remains preserved in peoples' traditions.[8] In *Moses and Monotheism*, he posits his own theory for the origins of Jewish monotheism and suggests that original monotheism consisted primarily of belief not action.[9] The need for action and ritual like the kind Judaism has made fundamental, according to Freud, represents a sickness. In ritualizing a repressed memory, an individual or culture actually avoids remembering and working through earlier traumas. Thus, the ritualized memory of the destruction of the Temples has provided each generation – from the prophet Jeremiah to the liturgical poets of the Middle Ages – with the opportunity to construct meaning from that essential loss in a way that is salient for their own time.

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[6] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 89.
[7] Ibid, 127.
[8] Ibid, 87.
[9] Ibid, 80.

Some contemporary scholars also acknowledge that this holiday is "the time when we give voice to our sadness as a people for the calamities which have befallen us."[10] Rather than one trauma, therefore, all Jewish tragedies become conflated with the immediate trauma of the 1st century CE to which the Tannaim were initially responding. In her rabbinic thesis, Karen Schram posits the Jewish response to the trauma of destruction in the loss of the central symbol of Judaism. She writes, "Tisha B'Av is about memories of loss and hope for renewal. Specifically, if the Temple served as the central symbol of the Jewish people, then Tisha B'Av, as a response to the loss of this symbol, also reflects the ongoing yearning for a unifying symbol."[11] Because the loss of that symbol was so instrumental in and to rabbinic Judaism, each generation of Jewish leaders attempted to use the observance of Tisha B'Av to make meaning out of both historical tragedies and the traumatic events of their own day.

According to Freud, such attempts to ignore or confront the effects of a trauma can yield both positive and negative results. He writes that the former are

> Endeavors to revive the trauma, to remember the forgotten experience, or, better still, to make it real – to live through once more a repetition of it...these endeavors are summed up in the terms "fixation to the trauma" and "repetition-compulsion." The effects can be incorporated into the so-called normal Ego and in the form of constant tendencies lend to it immutable character traits, although – or rather because – their real cause, their historical origin, has been forgotten.[12]

For Freud, traumatic events leave a permanent impression on one's psyche and he/she must actively confront trauma in order to "work through" it.[13] While the notion of repeating or

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[10] Washofsky, *Jewish Living*, 131.
[11] Karen Schram, *"Turn Their Mourning into Joy:" Three Major Developments in the Evolution of* Tisha B'Av. Hebrew Union College Rabbinic Thesis, 2003, 4.
[12] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism,* , 95.
[13] See Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (vol. 12), trans. and ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958). Freud defines "working through" as a process in which one "become[s] more conversant with [his/her]

remaining fixated on a trauma may seem like a negative quality, Freud argues that in the recognition of these activities of repetition or fixation, one can begin to understand the ways in which the original trauma is manifest so that it can be addressed and "worked through." A number of these "positive" responses to trauma are present in the traditional ritual observance of Tisha B'Av. In the traditional synagogue observance of the holiday, Jews sit on low stools, lower the lights in the worship space, and read the Book of Lamentations with special cantillation that sounds almost like weeping; the mimicry of mourning reinforces the emotional low of the day. During the "Three Weeks" the mourning is circumscribed; there is a prohibition against celebratory events, particularly weddings. On the day itself, Jews fast, refrain from sexual relations, do not wear leather, and try to maintain a generally somber tone. The two specific types of trauma identified by Freud – "fixation to the trauma" and "repetition-compulsion"[14] – can be processed positively. When the trauma is understood and remembered the need for repetition ceases. He argues that it is highly important to work through past traumas in a conscious, healthy way and in a safe environment.[15] One such safe space is the synagogue as a place of communal gathering and support. When not properly processed or "worked through" these early traumas can lead to neuroses that may not resurface until later in life. The traditional practices of Tisha B'Av demonstrate the aspects

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resistance [to a trauma] with which he has now become acquainted, to *work through* it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it," the work of bringing it from the unconscious level to a new level of consciousness. (155).

[14] Ibid, 95.

[15] Freud's thesis in *Moses and Monotheism* is that Moses was, in fact, an Egyptian who brought an earlier Egyptian form of monotheism to a group of Israelite slaves whom he led out of Egypt in order to impart upon them this monotheistic religion (27). At some point, these slaves rose up and murdered Moses (57-59). According to Freud, the trauma of this murder is deeply embedded in the psyche of the Jewish people. Freud identifies the concept of Jewish guilt as a subsequent manifestation of this early trauma and writes, "It seems that a growing sense of guiltiness had seized the Jewish people...as a precursor of the return of repressed material" (109). For the purpose of my own work, I use Freud's exploration of the manifestation of trauma in general rather than in relation to his assertion of Moses' origin and demise.

of repetition and fixation to trauma identified by Freud, but their persistence over two millennia are an indication that the Jewish community has not yet "worked through" the forgotten experience of the destruction of the Temple.[16] Although Freud's work focuses on trauma and the resulting pain and effect of that trauma, his work offers valuable insight into how to understand better the ways early events impacted the trajectory and subtle nuances at play in memory.

As mentioned above, throughout Jewish history Tisha B'Av has come to commemorate a number of Jewish tragedies. To explore the dynamics of memory in the holiday, it is necessary to identify the many layers of trauma present within the evolution of the holiday. Doing so will allow me to unpack the meaning of the various traumatic events and the power of conflating those events with the Ninth of Av. The Mishnah identifies ten distinct tragedies that occurred during the three weeks framed by the 17th of Tammuz and the Ninth of Av:

> Five misfortunes befell our fathers on the 17th of Tammuz and five on the Ninth of Av. On the 17th of Tammuz the Tablets [of the Covenant] were broken, and the daily sacrifice ceased, and the city [of Jerusalem] was breached, and Apostemos burned the Torah and set up an idol in the Sanctuary. On the Ninth of Av it was decreed that our fathers should not enter the [Promised] Land (Num. 14:23), the Temple was destroyed the first and second time, Betar[17] was captured, and the city [of Jerusalem] was ploughed up (Jer. 26:18) [in the time of the First Temple].[18]

Schram points out that the rabbinic discussion in *Ta'anit*, which connects these biblical events to the Ninth of Av, demonstrates the great efforts of the rabbis and the careful logic

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[16] The repetition of and fixation on this trauma are further demonstrated in the orthodox Jewish longing for the messianic age in which a third Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem and the sacrificial system will be restored. This desire is an indication that the trauma of destruction will remain unprocessed.

[17] Betar was Bar Kokhba's last stronghold in his revolt against Rome in 135 CE.

[18] Mishnah *Ta'anit* 4:6 (Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit* 26a-b). Translation based on Yerushalmi, 128-9 and Schram, 8.

they employed to calculate the correspondence between the exact date of this biblical date and the Ninth of Av.[19] In order to understand the meaning and context of the many layers of trauma present in this rabbinic discussion, I will now focus my analysis on the tragedies assigned to the Ninth of Av.

Biblical Tragedies

In the Talmud, there is much discussion and detailed calculation of biblical events as they correspond to later dates of import for the rabbis. As noted above, on the Ninth of Av, God decreed that the generation of Israelites who left Egypt would not enter the Promised Land. In the biblical account, this decree follows the incident in which the spies sent ahead to scout out the Promised Land return with an unfavorable report and the Israelites, in turn, react with fear and frustration that they will not be able to overcome the current inhabitants of Cana'an. Initially, God threatens to destroy the Israelites but, after Moses pleads with God to pardon the people, God offers the following response:

> (21) ...As I live and as God's Presence fills the whole world, (22) none of the men who have seen My Presence and the signs that I have performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and who have tried Me these many times and have disobeyed Me, (23) shall see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers; none of those who spurn Me shall see it.[20]

Midrash Rabba demonstrates a further connection between the Ninth of Av and God's decree in Numbers. Citing a variation of an otherwise uniform acrostic form in the Book of Lamentations the rabbinic authors of Midrash Rabba elaborate on the reversal of the Hebrew

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[19] Schram, 10. The discussion in *Ta'anit* 29a works through a series of biblical dates that precede God's decree and provide the rationale for various specific dates, including the Ninth of Av.
[20] Num. 14:21-23. JPS translation. It is important to note that in its biblical context, this event does not appear to be as "tragic" as the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the rabbis heighten the tragic nature of this biblical event when they connect it to other "tragedies" in Mishnah *Ta'anit* 4:6.

letters *peh* and *ayin* in chapters two, three, and four of the Book of Lamentations. They suggest that "the letters are reversed because of the spies who spoke with their mouths (*peh*) what they had not seen with their eyes (*ayin*)."[21] In this comment, the midrashic author uses a deviation in form as an opportunity to further emphasize the rabbinic connection between the spies' report and the Ninth of Av. This anachronistic reading demonstrates the midrashic authors' attempt to conflate the tragedies of the destruction of the Temples with earlier moments of tragedy in Jewish history. In reading backwords through history, with the hindsight of the events of the 1st and 2nd centuries, the rabbinic authors are able to envision and construct a chain of "tragedy" that might not otherwise exist. In this conflation, the midrashic rabbis create a framework on which later Jewish communities can then add their own traumatic events to the commemoration of Tisha B'Av.

Describing the rabbinic efforts to connect fast days such as Tisha B'Av to biblical events, Schram cites Evan M. Zuesse, who writes, "It is crucial to realize that the festival cycle is built on the paradigmatic events of the Mosaic generation, which obviously had shaped the self-understanding of Israel during the later centuries in which the festivals were first elaborated and celebrated."[22] Zeusse articulates a key point about the memory-making in which the rabbis are engaged. For the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and Talmud, the biblical cycle of festivals provided a series of events upon which they added theological meaning, rituals and practices to help them cope with a world without a Temple in Jerusalem. Yosef Yerushalmi argues that precisely because of the centrality of the biblical narrative later generations of rabbis faced the challenge of conflating events of a distant past with the

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[21] Lamentations Rabba 2, as cited in Herbert N. Bronstein and Albert H. Friedlander, eds., *The Five Scrolls* (New York: CCAR Press, 1984), 250.
[22] Evan M. Zuesse, "The Jewish Year III: The Spiraling of Time Through the Festival Calendar," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 8 (1994), 164-5, as cited in Schram, 9.

tragedies of their own time. He writes, "Unlike the biblical writers the rabbis seem to play with Time as though with an accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will."[23] Although they may be guilty of conflating events, the rabbis in each generation seem to attempt to make sense out of their own tragedies; their work in constructing meaning often begins with drawing parallels to biblical events they feel had similar traumatic impact. If we look at these efforts through the lens of Freud's model of trauma, this tactic may be explained as an attempt to repeat earlier traumas in order to validate their own experiences in the context of a larger Jewish narrative.

Destruction of the First Temple: Jeremiah and Lamentations

As part of the traditional synagogue observance of Tisha B'Av Jews read the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. These readings, assigned by the rabbinic authors of the Talmud (also known as the Amoraim[24]) focus on the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem and set a mournful tone to the day.[25] I will use these texts to explore the ways in which these rabbis worked to construct the tone and meaning of their own Tisha B'Av observance.

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[23] Yerushalmi, 17.

[24] In H.L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (2nd ed.), trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). The authors divide Jewish history into distinct periods. They explain, "the time of the *Tannaim* (Aram. *tanna*, from Heb. *shanah,* 'to repeat, learn': the masters of teachings transmitted by continual oral repetition, which were later regarded as authoritative) extends from Hillel and Shammai at the beginning of our era (...c. 300 BCE)...to Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi] and his sons, i.e. to the early third century [CE]. They are followed by the *Amoraim*...up to c. 500. The time of the *Saboraim* (*sabar,* 'to think': the editors of the Babylonian Talmud [in the 6th and 7th centuries]) found its continuation in the period of the *Geonim* (*ga'ôn*, 'eminent': the title of the heads of the Babylonian academies), until the eleventh century." (7)

[25] A discussion of the Torah and Haftarah (text from Prophets) readings assigned to Tisha B'Av is found in Babylonian Talmud *Megillat 31b* (Soncino translation): "On the Ninth of Ab itself what is the haftarah? Rab said: [The passage containing], 'How is she become a harlot' (Is. 1:21). What is the section from the Torah? It has been taught: Others say, 'But if ye will not hearken unto me' (Lev. 26:14ff). R. Nathan b. Joseph says, 'How long will this people despise me' (Num. 14:11); and some say, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation' (Num. 14:27) Abaye said: Nowadays the custom has been adopted of reading [from the Torah] 'When thou shalt beget children' (Deut. 4:25)

In the accounts of the attack and destruction of the First Temple in the Book of Jeremiah, the text makes it clear from the outset that, according to the prophet, the destruction was not necessarily inevitable. Ignoring the warnings of Jeremiah King Zedekiah renounced the treaty he made with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (the details of which are outlined in Ezek. 17:13-21; 2 Chron. 36:13).[26] As a result, in early 588 (or 589), Nebuchadnezzar's army arrived, placed Jerusalem under blockade and occupied the rest of the country. Nebuchadnezzar demanded surrender to Babylonia but the King and the residents of Jerusalem (and King Zedekiah) held out.

Throughout his prophecy Jeremiah publicly criticizes Zedekiah's decision and, as the resulting attack from the Babylonians becomes increasingly imminent, he warns that Nebuchadnezzar will be victorious; he cautions that resistance is futile and dying at the hands of the Babylonians is wrong.[27] In *The Prophets*, Abraham Joshua Heschel writes that Jeremiah's call for surrender was "not primarily a plea to accept the foreign yoke as punishment for sins, but rather a call for understanding God's design to turn over the dominion of the entire area to the Babylonian empire, which was to last seventy years (Jer. 24:7 ff; 29:10 ff)."[28] Although the focus of Jeremiah's prophecy as described here by Heschel is accurate, the section of Jeremiah selected by the Amoraim for Tisha B'Av reflects a very different message. In Jeremiah 8:14, the prophet identifies God's punishment for the peoples' sin as the primary reason for the destruction of the Temple. The selection of this

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and for haftarah, 'I will utterly consume them' (Jer. 8:13)." In contemporary practice, the Torah reading is Deut. 4:25-40 and the Haftarah reading is Jer. 8:13-9:23. The connection to the Book of Lamentations appears in Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit 30a* as part of a discussion of what is fit to study on Tisha B'Av.

[26] Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: HarperCollins, 1962), 173.

[27] See Jer. 37:17-21.

[28] Heschel, 174.

text reflects a rabbinic desire not to dwell on politics but rather to construct a theology (thus furthering a chain of sins committed against God).

Of Jeremiah Heschel writes, "The prophet does not see the world from the point of view of a political theory; he is a person who sees the world from the point of view of God; he sees the world through the eyes of God. To Jeremiah, the relationship to Nebuchadnezzar was much less important than the relationship to God."[29] Heschel notes that even after the fall of Jerusalem Jeremiah experienced the trauma of destruction along with the very people he had been chastising: "The prophet who had served as a voice of castigating the people was now, in sorrow, the voice of the people."[30] The Amoraim, however, focus their reading for Tisha B'Av only on Jeremiah's chastisement, perhaps intending it to serve as a warning for future generations. The rabbinic selection of this very specific message has serious implications for how later Jews come to understand the sin of these early exiles. Jeremiah provides one of the few models for these Second Temple refugees for how to be in exile. He helps the Jewish community of his day make Judaism meaningful without a Temple.

Regarding the Book of Lamentations Irving Greenberg writes that it is "an intricate set of dirges and descriptions of Jerusalem under siege and of the destruction of the First Temple. The elegy bewails Jerusalem, once teeming with life and now sitting abandoned like a solitary widow."[31] While Jewish tradition assigns the authorship of this book to Jeremiah, most scholars agree he is not the author as Jeremiah would not have praised King Zedekiah as does the author of Lamentations.[32] Greenberg points out that the text assigns

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[29] Ibid, 176.
[30] Ibid, 175. Heschel cites Jeremiah 10:19-20 as his source for this description of Jeremiah.
[31] Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 297.
[32] Bronstein and Friedlander, 249.

blame to "Jewish immorality and idolatry" as the causes for the destruction.[33] Recounting the scene of a smoldering Jerusalem, circa 586 BCE, the author of Lamentations writes:

> (1) How does the city sit alone, that was full of people, [now] like a widow? She was among the great nations, a princess among the lands, she has become a forced tributary. (2) She weeps intensely in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. She has no comfort from all that love her, all her companions have acted treacherously towards her; they have all become enemies to her. (3) Judah has gone into exile - from affliction and great servitude - she dwells among the nations, she found no rest; all her pursuers overtook her between the narrow places. (4) The roads of Zion are mourning, because none come for pilgrimage, all her gates are desolate; her priests sigh; her young maidens suffer and she is bitter. (5) Her adversaries are at the top, her enemies are at ease, because YHWH causes her to suffer for her many transgressions, her children went in captivity before her adversaries. (6) Gone from Daughter Zion is all her majesty; her leaders are like deer that did not find pasture, and they went without strength before the pursuer.[34]

The trauma, pain, and loss here is palpable. The selection of these laments further indicates the intention of the Amoraim to construct an atmosphere of sorrow and mourning as a central feature of the observance of Tisha B'Av. They convey the raw emotions of a city recently destroyed and a people uncertain of their faith; they assign the punishment to God and not Nebuchadnezzar. On the function of reading the book of Lamentations on Tisha B'Av, Greenberg writes, "No one generation's grief, as central as it was, could be the sole focus of this day. Each generation was better able to empathize with past grief by projections out of its own sorrow."[35] Thus Lamentations provides many generations of Jews with a means to emotionally and spiritually connect to an otherwise distant historical event.

Destruction of the Second Temple: Mishnah, Josephus, and Talmud

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[33] Greenberg, 297.
[34] Lam. 1:1-6. Translation mine.
[35] Greenberg, 298.

An Amoraic discussion in *Ta'anit* 29a recognizes the incongruity of dates between the biblical accounts of the destruction of the First Temple and the rabbinic assertion that this event occurred on the Ninth of Av.[36] The rabbis cite two biblical texts. 2 Kings 25:8-9 states that the attack of Jerusalem led by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian guard, began on the *seventh* of Av and during which he eventually "burned the House of God, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down the house of every notable person."[37] Next, they cite Jeremiah 52:12, which states that on the *tenth* of Av, "Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, came to represent the king of Babylon in Jerusalem."[38] The rabbis ask, "How then are these dates to be reconciled" to which the anonymous commentator responds:

> On the seventh the heathens entered the Temple and ate therein and desecrated it throughout the seventh and eighth [of Av] and towards dusk of the Ninth they set fire to it and it continued to burn the whole of that day, as it is said, 'Woe unto us! for the day declines, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out' (Jer. 6:4). And this is what R. Johanan meant when he said: Had I been alive in that generation I should have fixed [the mourning] for the tenth, because the greater part of the Temple was burnt thereon. How will the Rabbis then [explain the contradiction]? The beginning of any misfortune is of greater moment.[39]

For the Amoraim, there is no difficulty in these apparent contradictions: they remedy the contradiction by understanding the chronology of events and creatively interpreting specific dates mentioned in the biblical accounts. This interpretation also yields an intentional map of how to deal with future tragedy.

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[36] For the Tannaim (rabbinic contributors to the Mishnah), the final destruction of the *Second* Temple on the Ninth of Av was likely a date they knew of from either personal experience or from the stories of one generation prior. The knowledge of this date and the need to deepen its meaning and significance may be a factor in their need to tie it to the destruction of the First Temple.
[37] 2 Kings 25:9. JPS translation.
[38] Jer. 52:12. JPS translation.
[39] Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit* 29a. Soncino translation. This text also establishes an important precedent that (liturgical) time begins when a tragedy starts not when it is completed.

In *Ta'anit* 29a, the anonymous commentator asks, "From where do we know [that the Second Temple was destroyed on the Ninth of Av]?" to which the following reply is offered: "Good things come to pass on an auspicious day, and bad things on an unlucky day."[40] As demonstrated earlier, both the Mishnah and, later, the Talmud, sought to foreshadow the tragedies of the First and Second Temples in other traumatic moments throughout Jewish history. Perhaps because of their distance from the initial destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the Saboraim who edited the Talmud nearly 600 years later may have been psychologically and spiritually more able to dedicate more time to a discussion of the events of the actual destruction as the trauma was more distant from their personal experience. In the mishnaic text of *Ta'anit* 4:6 (*Talmud, Ta'anit 29a-b*), however, it is clear that the trauma of 70 is still fresh and the Tannaim can only discuss the historical significance of the date and the requisite observances (i.e., prohibitions against washing clothes or cutting hair) of the week preceding Tisha B'Av, and those for the day itself (i.e., fasting).[41] The Tannaim intentionally borrowed from two already known rituals marrying the importance (established in the Hebrew Bible) of Yom Kippur with the actions of a mourner thus instituting a (typically) private set of rituals into a communal experience.

Of the sentiments following the destruction of the Second Temple, Irving Greenberg writes, "The exhaustion from all-out sacrifice of lives and fighting in vain was in itself debilitating, but the religious crisis was even worse. God's own sanctuary, restored after the return to Zion in the sixth century BCE, the symbol of the unbroken covenant of Israel and God, was destroyed" and the rabbis were desperate to find reassurance that the covenant remained even if its symbol did not (thus, the newly revived interest in Shabbat as another

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[40] Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit* 29a. Soncino translation.
[41] Mishnah *Ta'anit* 4:7. Neusner translation.

sign of the covenant).[42] Greenberg bases this analysis on a number of citations from Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century CE. Josephus, he writes, describes a scene of famine, carnage, and civil war between Jews.[43]

Like their ancestors following the destruction of the First Temple, the Jewish people struggled to see a clear path forward. Greenberg points out that they responded in many different ways. Assimilation in the form of Hellenism was most common. Some Jews opted to abandon Judaism completely. Others saw the destruction as a sign that cultic Judaism was finished and embraced the growing group of Jewish Christians. The rabbis (Tannaim), led by Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and his followers, urged a different response that viewed the destruction as a tragedy but not a complete tear in the fabric of covenant. Greenberg explains that the Tannaitic interpretation of the destruction of the Second Temple was that "the Jewish people, the passive partners in the biblical covenant, were being urged by their divine counterpart to take a higher level of responsibility for the outcome of the covenantal way. Divine Presence was becoming more hidden so that the Jewish people could become true partners with God."[44] Of this Tannaitic response, I argue that their initial reaction to the trauma of the destruction of the Second Temple was positive by Freud's account in that they constructed a healthy, appropriate initial commemoration that allowed for the active expression of mourning and sorrow. While they did not delve deeply into the processing of the trauma they did not ignore the trauma altogether; they created a system in which they were forced to acknowledge it each year. Essentially, this system remained fixated on the trauma of destruction.

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[42] Greenberg, 284.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, 287.

Looking at the response to tragedy from a liturgical perspective, Irving Greenberg argues that the Tannaim (and then later generations) attempted to diffuse their grief by expressing it:

> Special prayers of mourning were inserted in various liturgies. Special petitions for the restoration of the Temple were added in the daily services. The actual order of the Temple sacrifices was recounted daily. But while grief and mourning prayers were being added, the message was: thus far and no further.[45]

Here, Greenberg describes the balance that the Tannaim attempted to create between mourning the tragedies of the past and continuing their daily lives in the present. Although Greenberg argues that this response to tragedy is positive, I argue that Freud would view this result as a negative reaction to trauma. Despite the positive aspects of repetition of action, these daily rituals allow for fixation on the trauma without providing a framework for working through and moving beyond the initial trauma. Warning of the negative reaction to trauma, Freud wrote, "These negative reactions also contribute considerably to the formation of character...they represent fixations on the trauma no less than do the positive reactions [to trauma], but they follow the opposite tendency" which "create conflicts which the subject cannot as a rule resolve."[46] While the introduction of daily mourning rituals may have helped the Jewish community of the first century cope with their trauma, the Tannaitic ritualization of this trauma has led to its perpetuation throughout Jewish history. Inherent in

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[45] Ibid, 290. Greenberg contrasts the mourning practices instituted by the Tannaim with one group of grieving Jews who proposed to stop normal life altogether. Greenberg cites Babylonian Talmud *Baba Bathra* 60b in which Rabbi Joshua says "Not to mourn at all is impossible because the evil decree [the destruction blow] had fallen. But to mourn too much is also impossible because the majority of the community cannot live this way." (290) In trying to reconcile this tension, the rabbis instituted daily liturgical expressions of mourning and that a glass be broken at every wedding in what Greenberg calls "empathetic grief to the catastrophe" but he notes that weddings and other aspects of normal life were not to be stopped. (ibid.)

[46] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism,* 95-96.

this ritualization is an attempt to construct a lasting memory that will endure throughout history. Yosef Yerushalmi cites a similar tension between memory and history and argues

> What was "remembered" had little or nothing to do with historical knowledge in any sense that we would assign to such a phrase. The Jews who mourned in the synagogue over the loss of the Temple all knew a date of the month, but I doubt if most knew or cared about the exact year when either the First or Second Temples were destroyed, let alone the tactics and weapons employed. They knew that Babylonians and then Romans had been the destroyers, but neither Babylon nor Rome could have been historical realities for them.[47]

The fact that these daily rituals and the holiday of Tisha B'Av still evoke feelings of sorrow and loss in many contemporary Jewish communities demonstrates the lasting effects of one generation's powerful construction of memory and attributing it to the meaning of particular, timeless tragedy. This return to the feelings of trauma are yet another example of what Freud calls "repetition-compulsion" as discussed earlier.

Other Tragedies Added to Tisha B'Av in the Middle Ages

Although the Mishnah was the first Jewish work to layer many tragedies onto the Ninth of Av it was certainly not the last. Throughout Jewish history, Tisha B'Av became synonymous with some of the greatest tragedies to befall Jews in different countries. In the Middle Ages, it came to represent the devastation of Jewish communities during the Crusades, the date the Talmud was set ablaze in Paris in 1242, and was associated with the expulsion from Spain in 1492.[48] As evidence for the dating of the expulsion from Spain in 1492, Yerushalmi cites Isaac Abravanel, who wrote a biblical commentary shortly after his expulsion in the late 15th century. In a comment to the book of Jeremiah Abravanel writes, "And on that very day, all the hosts of God departed from Spain and were left defenseless in

[47] Yerushalmi, 43.
[48] Greenberg, 293.

the face of captivity, murder, plunder, the waves of the sea, and wild beasts – both those who walk on two legs and those who walk on four."[49] In his analysis, Yerushalmi describes some of the creative license that may have been taken with this account, noting, "the last Jews seem to have left Spain by July 31, which was the 7th of Av."[50] For Yerushalmi, this example is yet another of what he identifies as the rabbinic authorities of the Middle Ages' need for "historical symmetry" in which they conflate many tragedies spanning different years and dates into one annual day of commemoration.[51]

In another example of the rabbinic conflation and flattening of history into memory, Yerushalmi offers an analysis of the evolution of a fast day on the 20th of Sivan during the Middle Ages. In a period of over 500 years, the 20th of Sivan went from a day on which the Jewish community of Blois, France experienced a tremendous tragedy in 1171 and privately mourned this loss to a general fast observed by the larger Jewish community throughout Europe.[52] From the evolution of this fast day, Yerushalmi draws a number of inferences applicable to the understanding of Tisha B'Av. First, he points to the sense of longevity of the original fast of Blois, which originated in 12th century France and continued to impact communities in Eastern Europe in the 17th century (and later observed until through World

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[49] Eliyahu Kitov, *The Book of Our Heritage: The Jewish Year and its Days of Significance, Vol. 3* (New York: Feldheim, 1997), 935.

[50] Yerushalmi, 129, citing Y. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia, 1961), 2:439.

[51] Yerushalmi, 41. According to Yerushalmi, Tisha B'Av is but one example of the attempt to collapse and conflate time in order to construct a more powerful day of mourning and reflection on calamity. Yerushalmi identifies the contradiction of the Mishnaic and Talmudic sources linking biblical dates to the Ninth of Av. He references 2 Kings 25:8-9, which places the destruction of the First Temple on the *seventh* day of the fifth month, and Jeremiah 52:12, which gives the date as the *10th* of the month. Furthermore, he cites Josephus, who also references the tenth of Av (*The Jewish War,* 6:4:5). Yerushalmi notes that the Babylonian Talmud also refers to the 10th of Av but that the Ninth of Av became the accepted date for the destruction of both Temples as well as other catastrophes as identified in Mishnah *Ta'anit* 4:6. (Yerushalmi, 128-9). See also Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*, 85.

[52] Yerushalmi, 48-50.

War II). Next, he critiques the "primacy of liturgy and ritual over historical narrative," in which the specific details of the initial tragedy are lost in the evolution of its liturgical development.

Finally, he cites the "power of a commemorative observance" like the fast of the 20th of Sivan (or the Ninth of Av) to "preserve the essential memory of an event, without necessarily preserving its historical details."[53] As with the contemporary community for whom neither Babylon nor Rome are still historical realities the exact details of an even become les relevant liturgically than the fact that the event happened to Jews. For Tisha B'Av, while the discussion that takes place in the Talmud of the events of the destruction of the Temples does provide some details, it is, in fact, Josephus who writes of the crisis the inhabitants of Jerusalem experienced during the siege and the general reality on the ground. Josephus locates his historical accounts outside the walls of the Temple (whereas the Talmud focuses solely on the destruction of the Temple itself). Later liturgical developments also recognize the trauma in terms of a mournful tone or in *kinot* (liturgical poems of lament) describing the feelings of loss, but there is little mention of the Roman armies, the civil war among the Jews, or the famine that was present throughout Jerusalem. For nearly two millennia the commemoration of Tisha B'Av focused intently on the "essential memory" of destruction, sorrow, and loss, conflating the destruction of the Temples and myriad subsequent tragedies throughout Jewish history. This essential memory went largely unchallenged until the leaders of the Reform movement of the late nineteenth century began to re-examine the observance and meaning of this holiday and sought to understand it anew in their own context.

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[53] Ibid, 51.

Transforming Tragedy for a New Time: The Evolution of the Liberal Jewish Approach to Tisha B'Av

David Einhorn's liturgy "For the Anniversary of the Destruction of Jerusalem" is one example of the Reform movement's attempt to re-purpose the meaning of Tisha B'Av. Einhorn re-positions the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem and the ensuing exile as a positive turning point in Jewish history. For Einhorn the Jewish people (and Judaism) were no longer confined to one geographic location but now had the opportunity to spread throughout the globe; they need new opportunities to bring Judaism into the world and to learn from their new neighbors how to expand their own understanding of the meaning Judaism. In the construction of his Tisha B'Av liturgy, Einhorn faced the challenge of authentically interpreting history while trying to re-present the memory of the holiday. Pierre Nora offers some insight into this tension between history and memory; he writes that contemporary society's "perception of history has, with much help from the media, expanded enormously, so that memory, once the legacy of what people knew intimately, has been supplanted by the thin film of current events."[54] Tisha B'Av offers one example of the attempt to bridge the gap between past and present that Nora describes. Although grounded in remembering the past tragedies that befell the Jewish community, Jews observe Tisha B'Av in the present. According to Nora there are serious implications for a profound impact of historical events on the present and vice versa. Einhorn's radical departure from the traditional observance and understanding of Tisha B'Av illustrates how the perception of the events of the destruction and their commemoration are subject to change when applied to one's present circumstances. Einhorn no longer felt bound to the traditional memory of Tisha B'Av and in doing so may have recognized that this memory was subject to change.

[54] Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," 2.

Nora suggests that memory lives and breathes as an organic, ever-changing entity. He writes:

> Memory is life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution, subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of the distortions to which it is subject, vulnerable in various ways to appropriation and manipulation, and capable of lying dormant for long periods only to be suddenly reawakened.[55]

For Nora, memory is embedded in the present as deeply as it is embedded in the past. There is nothing static or stationary about memory; rather memory is a constantly evolving entity. Traditional rituals like sitting on low stools, reading *kinot* (poems of lament), abstaining from sexual relations, not wearing leather, and the general mournful tone of the day represent the mark of enduring trauma. In contrast, David Einhorn's transformation of Tisha B'Av represents the mark of an evolving memory. Einhorn's attempt to construct new meaning out of the Tisha B'Av memory is an interesting and useful example of Tisha B'Av's evolution as it passed through history. He reworks the message of Tisha B'Av from one of despair to one of hope in order to claim that the dispersion into the Diaspora was one of the greatest moments in Jewish history. To demonstrate this shift, as part of his liturgy he includes a newly composed prayer for Tisha B'Av, in which he explains the Jewish people's new charge in the 19th century:

> The old priestly dignity was taken away and the old sacrificial worship ceased, but in their stead the whole community, in accordance with its original distinction, became a priest and was called upon to offer up those sacrifices which are more acceptable in Thy sight than thousands of rivers of oil, the sacrifices of active love to God and man, the sacrifices of pure and pious conduct...the sacrifices of an unparalleled allegiance to God with which the centuries have become vocal.[56]

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[55] Ibid, 3.
[56] Einhorn, *Olat Tamid*, 144.

Empowering each Jew as a priest reflects the ideology of the Reform movement of Einhorn's day; the longing for a return to cultic Judaism is replaced with a new ethical system in which Jews loving God and humanity illustrates pious and religious conduct because both focus faith in God. Einhorn also recasts the termination of the sacrificial rites which were previously limited to an elite priestly class as a welcome development that restored the biblical assertion that *all* Jews are a "kingdom of priests and a holy people."[57]

David Einhorn's service "For the Anniversary of the Destruction of Jerusalem," written in the late nineteenth century, begins with the traditional mournful tone of Tisha B'Av. He frames his service with the text of Psalm 80 with the themes of the anger of God, the hope for a brighter future, and the recollection of other redemptive moments, specifically, the Exodus from Egypt. [58]

His prayer "For the Anniversary of the Destruction of Jerusalem" also echoes the somber tone of the holiday:

> With profound emotion, O Lord, we remember in this hour the dire day of desolation on which the enemy entered Thy stronghold, giving over Thy sanctuary a prey to devouring flames. Then was left disconsolate the populous city, the beauty of all the lands, like a sorrowing widow.[59]

Here, Einhorn's prayer demonstrates many of the themes discussed earlier: the siege of Jerusalem, the Temple devoured by flames, and the sense of a city laid waste and left

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[57] Here, Einhorn echoes God's charge to the Israelites in Exodus 19:6: "you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

[58] Einhorn, "O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?" (128), "May the Lord be unto us a light for ever, that our mourning be over. Then he who is little will be a mighty host, and he who is contemned will grow to be a nation of power" (ibid.), "Turn again, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. And the stock which Thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself. Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" (129).

[59] Ibid, 141.

desolate. In the middle of his prayer, however, Einhorn breaks with mournfulness and he eloquently moves from despair to a new message of hope:

> However deeply and painfully our soul is moved by the recollection of the unutterable grief with which our ancestors went forth from their beloved Zion, their house, to go into the vast wilderness of heathen nations; doomed to tread the thorny path of martyrdom, in all these sore trials we recognize Thy guiding, fatherly hand, means for the fulfillment of Thy inviolable promises and the glorification of Thy name and Thy law before the eyes of all nations. Verily, not as a disinherited son, Thy first-born went out into strange lands, but as Thy messenger to all the families of man. Israel was no longer to dwell in separation from all the rest of Thy children, who were languishing in darkness and folly; he was to spread abroad the stream of his salvation, and become himself the carrier of the refreshing waters of healing powers. The one temple in Jerusalem sank into the dust, in order that countless temples might arise to Thy honor and glory all over the wide surface of the globe.[60]

At first glance, Einhorn's prayer appears comparable to the traditional texts read on Tisha B'Av. Echoing Jeremiah's assertion that God has a plan in place for the Jewish people, Einhorn writes, "in all these sore trials we recognize Thy guiding fatherly hand." But he does not follow the rabbinic argument which insists that the Temple was destroyed because of the sins of the people. Einhorn references the biblical story of the expulsion from Eden not as a negative warning but rather as an example of the way in which humanity thrived after being cast out from the Garden of Eden. In an interesting reference to Israel in the masculine form (perhaps simultaneously referring both to the biblical figure and the nation) Einhorn asserts that with the destruction of Jerusalem "Israel was no longer to dwell in separation from all the rest of Thy children" but instead "he was to spread abroad the stream of his salvation, and become himself the carrier of the refreshing waters of healing powers." The argument that the dispersal from Jerusalem actually came to benefit the world with the spread of Jews and Judaism across the globe changes the traditional lament. In one of his most bold statements, he writes "the one Temple in Jerusalem sank into the dust, in order that

[60] Ibid., 143-144.

countless temples might arise to Thy honor and glory all over the wide surface of the globe." The proliferation of liberal Judaism is recast as the positive outcome of the great tragedy of rabbinic Judaism.

Einhorn's assertion is not so different from the project of the Tannaim and Amoraim in that he argues that destruction was necessary in order for Judaism to continue to develop beyond its nascent form of cultic worship into a meaningful and relevant belief system available to each subsequent generation of Jews. According to Karen Schram, Einhorn's text represents "the culmination of previous years of ideological and liturgical change in the Reform movement and served as a building block for subsequent changes and approaches to *Tisha B'Av*."[61] To apply the terminology of Nora's *lieux de memoire*, Einhorn's prayer demonstrates a completely new "interaction between memory and history," which is a product of the influence of Einhorn's and his contemporaries in the Reform movement.[62]

Although the transition from despair into hope is a theme extant in traditional Tisha B'Av commemoration (particularly in Jeremiah and the Book of Lamentations) the way in which Einhorn carries out this shift represents a significant departure from the traditional liturgy. As Phillip Cohen argues, Einhorn's prayer is "in agreement with traditional rabbinic theology, with the important exception that nowhere does the prayer suggest that sin was the

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[61] Schram, 60.

[62] See note 5. In comparing Einhorn's prayer to the Reform liturgies of Abraham Geiger and Isaac Meyer Wise (both contemporaries of Einhorn), Phillip Cohen notes that Wise's *Minhag Amerika* has a Tisha B'Av service with a mournful tone, including an evening and morning service. According to Cohen, Wise also includes customary readings of mourning in his evening service. Cohen suggests that Wise's service echoes the traditional understanding of Tisha B'Av as a holiday that exists to mourn the destruction of the Temples (57). Citing Jakob Petukowski's analysis of Geiger's Breslau prayer book composed in 1854, Cohen points to an evolving Reform understanding of Jerusalem as a "spiritual idea" more than as "a certain geographical locale connected with a special divine providence for all times" [Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York, 1968), 279 as cited in Cohen, 56]. Cohen argues that throughout the Reform movement, Jerusalem came to represent the original source of an idea (i.e., Judaism) but the source was no longer important. Phillip Cohen, "David Einhorn's Reading for Tisha B'av: Tradition and Transformation," *CCAR Journal* 41, 4 (1994): 56.

reason for Jerusalem's destruction and Israel's exile."[63] In his prayer, Einhorn recasts the destruction of the Temple and the exile from Jerusalem as a positive development for "our ancestors." He writes, "The one Temple in Jerusalem sank into the dust, in order that countless temples might arise to Thy honor and glory all over the wide surface of the globe."[64] For Einhorn, the destruction was a necessary step that allowed for Judaism to go out into the Diaspora and flourish as it was no longer inhibited by the sacrificial system in Jerusalem.

In his discussion of the history of Tisha B'Av in the Reform movement, contemporary scholar and liberal theologian Mark Washosky explains, "Reform theology has not generally looked upon the loss of the Temple and the expulsion of the people of Israel from its land as a catastrophe to be lamented by liberal Jews."[65] Washofsky cites the values expressed in the Reform movement's Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 as a basis for understanding the Reform relationship to Tisha B'Av: "We [the rabbis of the Reform movement speaking about Jews in general] consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and, therefore, expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron."[66] During the late 19th century in the United States, Jews enjoyed religious freedom and participated in the political and intellectual elite of society. To long for a time in which Jews were isolated to one city (Jerusalem) and participated in a grotesque sacrificial system seemed quite irrational. The American Reform rabbinate's opposition to the hierarchical priestly system may also be an indication of the extent to which American democratic values had permeated the ideology of the Reform movement.

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[63] Cohen, 57.
[64] Einhorn, 144.
[65] Washofsky, 131.
[66] Ibid.

Washofsky points out that "some reformers regarded [Tisha B'Av] as the essence of Israel's eternal religious mission" and "they saw the destruction of the Temple and the sacrificial cult as a progressive and positive moment in our history as a people" but Washofsky notes that this point of view "was never a unanimous one."[67] Cohen notes that there are numerous reasons for the liberal Jewish difficulty with Tisha B'Av and he argues that these reasons

> Originate with the belief, harkening back to the origins of Reform Judaism in Germany in the early decades of the nineteenth century, that emancipation includes the opportunity to attach oneself to one's country of birth. Also, with that attachment, mourning the exile, and all that that mourning implies becomes unnecessary.[68]

David Einhorn's prayer demonstrates the height of the Reform Jewish philosophy of his day. As an individual fully attached to his adopted country he offers a new approach to the memory of Tisha B'Av that allowed the Jews in his community to move past the trauma of their ancestors and commemorate Tisha B'Av in a manner fitting for his (and their) time.

Conclusions

When approached from the perspective of a *lieux de memoire*, Tisha B'Av demonstrates what Nora calls a "commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it."[69] Nora, however, argues that this cry for memory comes as a result of a society's banishment of ritual in favor of the preservation of relics from the past.[70] As I have demonstrated in my exploration of the traditional texts establishing Tisha B'Av as a perpetual day for mourning Jewish tragedies, the rabbinic

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Cohen, 55.
[69] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 6.
[70] Ibid.

obsession with conflating time at the service of memory has led to the preservation of a trauma that the Jewish community should have "worked through" long ago. While it is important for the Jewish community to recognize the Ninth of Av as a moment of tragedy in Jewish history that did indeed changed Judaism forever, the enduring practice of trying to re-create that sense of loss and sorrow seems unhealthy for the Jewish psyche when viewed through the lens of Freud. But Freud might also argue that to ignore these traumatic events altogether is equally unhealthy. David Einhorn's transformation of the Reform community's approach to Tisha B'Av may have been expertly crafted for its time, but in light of the 20th century tragedies of the Holocaust, it may be necessary to retain a holiday that gives voice to communal mourning. As Cohen writes in the conclusion of his analysis of Einhorn's liturgy,

> It is doubtful that any contemporary Jew can share in the guarded optimism of [Einhorn's liturgy]. Einhorn, of course, could not know of the [Holocaust], nor of any of the other assaults upon Jews that occurred from the latter decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. As the result of our own historical perspective, we see a certain naiveté permeating the text.... But to dwell entirely on its naiveté is to be anachronistic. For it is also true that this text represents a creative attempt to understand anew the themes of Tisha B'Av in order both to preserve the holiday and to use the day as an opportunity to make certain declarations concerning new theological perspectives.[71]

Although Yom HaShoah currently provides a separate day of commemoration specifically for victims of the Holocaust, I wonder if the rabbinic urge towards the conflation of time will not eventually shift Yom HaShoah into Tisha B'Av. Rather than accumulate many anniversary dates of tragedies that might serve as painful triggers throughout the year, the rabbinic inclination to combine a myriad of tragedies into one day of visceral mourning may, in fact, prove to be a source of strength for the Jewish community.[72]

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[71] Cohen, 63.

[72] In the field of psychotherapy, the term "anniversary reactions" is used to explain a shift in affect tied to specific days associated with past traumas. Freud and Breuer wrote one of the first

descriptions of this phenomenon. See Sigmund Freud and J. Breuer (Brewer), *Studies on Hysteria* (New York: Anou Books, 1893) as cited in Phyllis F. Cohen, "Anniversary Reactions in the Therapy Group," *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 57, 2 (2007): 153.

Chapter Three
Hanukkah: Re-Shaping Memory and Re-Presenting History

Scenario One: After years of oppressive Syrian rule and a recent intensification of anti-Jewish policies, Judah Maccabee and his brothers reached their limit. For years, they watched as their fellow Jews assimilated into the Greek culture brought by the Syrians, visiting bathhouses and attending festivals for Greek gods. But when King Antiochus and his troops took over the Temple in Jerusalem, he had gone too far. In response, Judah Maccabee and his brothers – a small band of rebels (also known as the Hasmoneans) – rose up against Antiochus' army. They fought a difficult, bloody battle that lasted for three years with casualties on both sides (including some of the more assimilated Jews who got in their way) but eventually overcame the forces who had been their oppressors. Finally, despite impossible odds, Judah Maccabee and his men were able to reclaim the Temple and began the process of rededication. They cleaned the Temple inside and out, repaired the damaged altar, and rebuilt the sacred lamps and holy objects necessary for restoring the sacrifices. After the rededication of the Temple, they ushered in a new period of Jewish history and placed their family at the center of Jewish civic and spiritual life as both the priests and rulers of the land.

Scenario Two: Whether there was a battle outside the walls of the Temple or not is unclear. The Syrians had taken over the Temple in Jerusalem and, eventually, the Hasmoneans were able to reclaim it. As the Hasmoneans re-enter the Temple in Jerusalem – the holiest site in Israelite religion – they begin the process of rededication but must stop short of the task of re-sanctifying their sacred altar. The rededication of the Temple seemed impossible for there was no oil with which to rekindle the Temple lamps; then a small cruse

of oil – enough for only one night – was discovered in a dark corner, and, upon lighting the lamps, a miracle occurred: the tiny cruse of oil lasted for eight nights.

Scenario One has it all; it includes an oppressive ruler, dashing heroes, impossible odds and a seemingly miraculous victory. Scenario Two seems to begin where Scenario One ends by focusing on the scene in the Temple. Scenario One is the story of a military victory recorded in the first and second books of Maccabees (which are not included in the Jewish scriptural canon). Scenario Two, on the other hand, focuses on the miracle of the oil; the story first appears many centuries later in the Babylonian Talmud.

Essentially, the accounts of Hanukkah found in the books of Maccabees and, to a certain extent the accounts of Josephus, are records of history; they serve as the closest approximation that contemporary scholars possess to firsthand accounts of the events of the story of Hanukkah. What occurs in the Talmud, however, is a reshaping of that historical record into a new collective memory that forever changes how Jews understand and celebrate this holiday.

In order to understand fully the scope of the rabbinic project, I will first survey the historical and rabbinic accounts of Hanukkah. With that basic framing information, I will then use the theories of Friedrich Nietzsche and Yosef Yerushalmi to demonstrate that the rabbinic endeavor as it relates to Hanukkah was to construct memory in the pursuit of shaping a collective identity (even at the sacrifice of "history") which de-emphasized the former military might of the Jews in order to promote the primacy of God. Nietzsche's writing offers a theory for examining history in general whereas Yerushalmi's work focuses specifically on the nature of Jewish memory.

The Historical Accounts of Hanukkah

In his exploration and analysis of the holiday of Hanukkah, Michael Strassfeld notes that Hanukkah is the most historically documented holiday in Judaism.[1] While these historical sources are not without their own goals and biases when viewed together they do provide a detailed picture of the events of the Maccabean Revolt that occurred around 167-165 BCE.

Offering some context for the historical account of Hanukkah Strassfeld begins in the fourth century BCE with the Greek conquest of the Near East, including Judah, led by Alexander the Great. Following his death around 323 BCE Alexander's empire divided. After a period of unrest, the land of Judah eventually came under the rule of the Seleucid dynasty which controlled the region of ancient Syria. After many years living tensely as a tributary under Greek rule, in 167 BCE Hellenized Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes exacerbated tensions when he attempted to force all the people under his rule to Hellenize. Participation in Greek culture and worship of Greek gods became mandatory. In this new hostile environment, Antiochus banned the public practice of Jewish rituals, including the Temple rites, as well as the celebration of Shabbat, study, and ritual circumcision. In their place, the worship of Greek gods and the sacrifice of pigs took the place of traditional sacrifices in the Temple.[2] In 1 Maccabees, the rise in Jewish assimilation, sacrifice to idols and the profanation of the Sabbath are explicitly mentioned as the precipitating events for the Maccabean Revolt.[3]

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[1] Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*, 162.
[2] Ibid, 161. See also 1 Macc. 1:41ff.
[3] 1 Macc. 1:43.

The earliest accounts of the events later given the name "Hanukkah"[4] exist in First and Second Maccabees which provide a detailed account of the events of the Maccabean Revolt.[5] At its core, the observance of Hanukkah (or the 25th of Kislev rite) as it appears in these texts focuses entirely on the use and rededication of the Temple because of the successful military victory of the Hasmoneans. In First Maccabees, the Hasmoneans celebrate the "dedication of the altar" with "songs and harps and lutes and cymbals" which they "joyfully offered burnt offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving offering."[6] According to some scholars, the rituals described here echo the rituals for the dedication of the Tabernacle in Exodus 29:37.[7] Second Maccabees offers a

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[4] Although it is unclear when the first use of the name "Hanukkah" came to describe the celebrations of the 25th of Kislev, the very name of this holiday "Hanukkah" is itself telling of the earliest understandings of the holiday's focus. "Hanukkah," a shortened form from the term "*hanukkat ha-mizbe-ach*" literally the dedication (or re-dedication) of the Temple altar, appears in the earliest strata of *Megillat Ta'anit* and suggests an emphasis on the process of re-dedication rather than the contemporary (or post-Talmudic) focus on a miracle, oil, or lights. See Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil: The Metamorphosis of a Legend," 208. According to Noam, prior to the association of the name "Hanukkah" with the 25th of Kislev, there were other Hanukkahs in Jewish tradition that celebrated the dedication of the Tabernacle by Moses and the dedication of the Temple by Solomon, but *Megillat Ta'anit* establishes the sole use of "Hanukkah" as a reference to the events surrounding the Maccabean Revolt (208). Noam also notes that Josephus calls this festival "Lights" (ibid.).

[5] Waskow notes that the books that celebrated the Maccabees' victory over Hellenism did not survived in Hebrew texts but only in the Greek language and later in Latin as part of the Catholic Church's apocryphal literature. Waskow writes, "Greek became one of the common tongues of the eastern Mediterranean as Hellenism grew stronger over the next few centuries. And it was the most Hellenized Jews who honored these memorials of resistance to Hellenism. Indeed, the Maccabean books survived into modern times only because some of these Hellenized Jews became recruits to Christianity, and brought with them the assumption that these Books of the Maccabees were holy writings" (90). According to Marc Brettler, the texts of the canon that make up the Hebrew Bible may have been largely stabilized by the second century CE. Although the circumstances of that development are unclear, it is likely that the rabbinic community also responsible for the creation of the Mishnah had some involvement in this stabilization. See Marc Z. Brettler, *How to Read the Bible* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005), 278. Until modernity, then, Jews would not have had access to the texts of 1 & 2 Maccabees and had to rely primarily on the rabbinic accounts of Hanukkah in Babylonian Talmud *Megillat Ta'anit*, and the *Scroll of Antiochus*.

[6] 1 Macc. 4:54-6. Harold W. Attridge, Wayne A. Meeks, and Jouette M. Bassler, eds. *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006).

[7] This connection to the dedication of a new temple was brought to my attention during a lecture in 2009 given by Rabbi Dr. Aaron D. Panken of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. A discussion of the connection to the eight days of dedication is related to the dedication the

different justification for the eight days of Hanukkah. Here, the text explicitly describes the Hasmoneans observing a delayed Sukkot: "eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the festival of booths [Sukkot]."[8]

Echoing the accounts of the books of Maccabees and writing in the latter half of the first century CE, Josephus also describes a celebration led by Judas (or Judah) following a major military victory:

> (12.7.7.323) Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon: but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them, by hymns and psalms. (12.7.7.324) Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival, on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. (12.7.7.325) And from that time to this, we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.[9]

For Josephus, the main reason for the celebration of this festival is "the restoration of their temple worship." If the Temple is the focus of Hanukkah in Josephus' day, it may provide some indication of the level of trauma the Jewish community experienced upon the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE and the inability to celebrate Hanukkah therein. Josephus also points to the underlying feeling of "liberty" as the explanation for the title "Festival of Lights" (although the title "lights" may have more to do with the re-kindling of the lights of the Temple).

Tabernacle by Moses and Aaron (see Lev. 8:33-35) and of Solomon's Temple (see 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Chr. 7:9). See Noam, 206.

[8] 2 Macc. 10:6. HarperCollins translation.

[9] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.7.7.323-325, from William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987). Electronic edition. For dating of Josephus' work, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Electronic version 1.0, 1997, s.v. "Josephus Flavius."

Consistent in each of these historical depictions of Hanukkah, there are four key components: a military victory, the re-dedication of the Temple, an eight-day observance, and joyous celebration. Josephus even mentions Hanukkah as a festival of lights. Only one component is missing: a cruse of oil lasting for eight nights.

The Rabbinic Description of Hanukkah: Shabbat 21b

If the events of Hanukkah described above compose the historical accounts of the Maccabean Revolt, how then does the rabbinic description relate to or depart from history? What is the rabbinic relationship to historical Hanukkah? While there is no mention of Hanukkah (or the events surrounding the Maccabean Revolt) in the Mishnah, the Talmud does address the topic.[10] The discussion of Hanukkah that emerges in *Shabbat* 21b, however, appears tangential at best; it surfaces in the midst of a debate of what kinds of candles may be used for lighting Shabbat candles when one rabbi asks if rules for Hanukkah candles are different.[11]

The Talmudic answer to the question "*Mai Hanukkah* – What is Hanukkah?" does mention the military victory of the Hasmoneans but it de-emphasizes this point in favor of a story of divine intervention in the form of a miraculous cruse of oil that lasts for eight days:

> What is [the reason for] Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah, which are eight, on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean

[10] Waskow, 90. According to Waskow, Hanukkah is "the only one of the traditional festivals that does not have a place in the *Mishnah*...And in the later layer – the *Gemara* – it is treated in a very off-hand way, without the focused attention that is normal for deciding how to observe a holy day (90). Michael Strassfeld offers another possibility, suggesting, "Another speculation attributes the de-emphasis [of the military victory] to the Mishnah's author, Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi. He was of Davidic descent and may have regarded the Hasmonaeans, who were of priestly descent, as usurping the role of the secular ruler, which by tradition was reserved for the Davidic line" (Strassfeld, 163).
[11] Waskow, 90.

> dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.[12]

Strassfeld points out that "*Mai Hanukkah?*" is an odd question for the rabbis of the Talmud to be asking. He suggests that they must have known about the holiday and argues that they ordained it as an eight-day celebration starting on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev.[13] It is also apparent in the use of the citation from *Megillat Ta'anit* ("On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah, which are eight, on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden") that Hanukkah appeared in other sources familiar to the rabbinic authors of this text. Vered Noam identifies *Megillat Ta'anit* as a pre-rabbinic, mostly halakhic (legal) work dated to the Second Temple period prior to 70 CE.[14] The Talmudic reference of this source, then, suggests that the rabbis had access to a version of the Hanukkah story that was largely parallel to the accounts of first and second Maccabees. In her work with *Megillat Ta'anit*, Noam offers an interesting insight into the pre-rabbinic text. She explains that while oil does appear in this older story, it appears to play a secondary role; the Hasmoneans could not afford or did not have time to buy oil fit for use in the Temple and the fact that they found *any* usable oil was miraculous. Still, the oil remains secondary in that it does not provide the basis for the length of the festival.[15] That innovation was uniquely Talmudic. The question that remains, then, is what were the rabbinic compilers of

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[12] Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 21b. Soncino translation.
[13] Strassfeld, 161.
[14] Vered Noam, as quoted in Sacha Stern, "Vered Noam, Megillat Ta'anit. Versions, Interpretation, History," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 57 (2006): 184.
[15] Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil," 214.

the Mishnah and Talmud reacting to (or trying to create) that resulted in the explanation of Hanukkah found in the Talmud?

In the Talmudic text, the Saboraim shift the focus away from the military victory and Temple-based rituals to the miracle of the oil (an act of divine intervention).[16] In this newly formed observance, the rabbis de-emphasize the details of the military victory and the role of the Temple in Hanukkah observance. For these rabbis, the memory of the destruction of the Temple and the pain of the failed Bar Kokhba revolt are deeply engrained in their collective memory. The Temple was gone. The introduction of the miraculous oil moves the focus of Hanukkah away from the Temple-centric observance to a holiday that forges a new collective identity that stays focused on divine intervention, oil, and lights.

In the next section, I will unpack the dynamics of memory in this rabbinic endeavor using theorists who work with Jewish collective memory and identity, the general study of how societies relate to history, and the interplay between memory and history.

The Rabbinic Project: Constructing a New Collective Identity

In *Zakhor,* Yosef Yerushalmi uses Maurice Halbwachs' theory to frame his own analysis of Jewish history as the endeavor to shape a collective Jewish identity. He argues, "Ironically, many of the biblical narratives seem almost calculated to deflate the national pride. For the real danger is not so much that what happened in the past will be forgotten, as the more crucial aspect of *how* it happened."[17] Exploring this notion of how the biblical narrative conveys memory, he presents two channels through which memory flowed: ritual

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[16] See note 24 in Chapter Two. Strack and Stemberger explain that the Saboraim are the editors of the Talmud and are often the authors of anonymous comments, working in the period spanning the 6th century CE to the 11th century.
[17] Yerushalmi, 25.

and recital.[18] Yerushalmi asserts, "the collective memory is transmitted more actively through ritual."[19] Looking at Hanukkah through this lens, the power of ritual becomes immediately apparent:

> True, they also ignored the battles of the Maccabees in favor of the cruse of oil that burned for eight days, but their recognition of this particular miracle should not be passed over lightly. Hanukkah alone, be it noted, was a post-biblical Jewish holiday, and the miracle, unlike others, did not have behind it the weight of biblical authority. The very acceptance of such a miracle was therefore a reaffirmation of faith in the continuing intervention of God in history.[20]

Yerushalmi raises two important points here. First, he identifies the purposeful decision of the rabbis *not* to include the details of the military battles. Second, taking the fact that the story of Hanukkah does not appear as part of the Jewish canonical text, Yerushalmi points out the "rabbinic audacity" of the formulaic blessing for Hanukkah candles. He takes issue with the rabbinic assertion that the observance of this ritual is commanded in some way as is implied by the blessing itself: Blessed be You, Adonai our God...*who has commanded us* to kindle the Hanukkah lights.[21]

This example is either rabbinic boldness or an attempt on the part of the rabbis to construct a sense of deeper memory in their relatively new depiction of Hanukkah. Paul Ricoeur suggests that the very nature of how memory operates may resolve the issue of

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, 15.
[20] Ibid, 25.
[21] Ibid. Yerushalmi cites a discussion in Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 23a as the source for the formulation of this blessing: "What benediction is uttered? This: 'Who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Hanukkah.' And where did He command us? Rabbi Awiya said: [It follows from] *thou shalt not turn aside [from the sentence which he shall show thee]* (Deut. 17:11). Rabbi Nahman quoted: *Ask they father and he shall show thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee* (Deut. 32:7)." He also cites *Midrash Tehillim* 22:10: "R. Benjamin bar Japheth taught in the name of R. Eleazar: 'As the dawn ends the night, so all the miracles ended with Esther.' But what of Hanukkah? We speak, however, only of the miracles which are recorded in Scripture" (p. 125, note 38).

where to point one's focus. Ricoeur describes memory as "grounded in reality and directed towards the past" which places memory in close relationship to history while simultaneously anchoring it in the present.[22] Using this concept of memory offers some insight into the mindset of the rabbinic compilers of the Talmud. Working in the sixth and seventh centuries, in exile in Babylonia, they were trying to reconstruct a past that was very distant from their own experience of the world and to make that distant past relevant for the world in which they lived. As Halbwachs suggests in his writings on collective memory, memory does not exist in a vacuum without any influence from one's environment.[23] Ricoeur also notes that sometimes remembering happens without intentionality because it is triggered by various external events.[24] The lasting effects of these sub-conscious influences reveal significant environmental factors that a holiday like Hanukkah still preserves.

Regardless of the nuanced differences between the rabbinic and historical accounts this holiday is clearly grounded in Temple rituals. Without a Temple, the rabbis faced the challenge of finding a way to observe this festival in a new way. Although the Talmudic rabbis still held the Temple in high esteem and longed for a return to Jerusalem, they were adapting perhaps even thriving in exile in Babylonia. Although the story of Hanukkah represented a military victory – a story of a small band of rebels overpowering the Assyrian armies – the rabbis had been deeply scarred by the crushing defeat of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE.[25]

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[22] Ricoeur, "Memory and Imagination," 6.
[23] Halbwachs, 48.
[24] Ricoeur, "Memory and Imagination," 16. Susan Engel also discusses the various external factors or "cues" that can evoke specific memories (p. 150), as well as the factors that impact the internal processes of remembering, namely mood, uniqueness, and frequency of recall (p. 8).
[25] During this uprising, a small band of rebels, not unlike the Maccabees, attempted a revolt directed towards the Romans. Unlike the Maccabees, however, this militia suffered a painful defeat, the marks of which became engrained on the memory of the rabbis.

The collective memory of the Talmudic rabbis as inheritors of over 500 years of rabbinic tradition may also be heavily influenced by the experiences of their predecessors. Strassfeld offers an interesting rationale for the shift in focus from military victory to oil and suggests that this shift may have been the result of the subsequent history of the Hasmoneans following their victory encapsulated by the Hanukkah story. As time progressed the Hasmonean dynasty Hellenized and, more importantly, some of the leaders opposed and even persecuted the rabbis. According to Strassfeld,

> This dark later history superseded the brief bright period of their beginning. This may explain the Mishnah's silence about Hanukkah. Others speculate that in Mishnaic times, the rabbis, living under Roman rule, may have felt obliged to censor a story of a successful revolt by a small number of Jews against a powerful enemy. The Mishnah was composed after the disastrous revolts of 70 CE (when the second temple was destroyed) and of 135 CE (the Bar Kokhba rebellion). Both to appease the Romans and to discourage Jews from being inspired by the Maccabees, the Mishnah may have minimized the military significance of Hanukkah.[26]

For Strassfeld, the rabbinic compilers of the Mishnah may have been intentionally ignoring the Maccabean Revolt though not out of fear for another uprising or out of trauma over the destruction of the Temple. Rather, the rabbis of the Mishnah may have been reacting to their memory (and, in the case of the Talmud, their predecessors' memories) of these negative associations and interactions with the Hasmoneans. As I have argued previously, the presence of *Megillat Ta'anit* and the ready access the Talmudic authors had to it demonstrates a clear awareness of the historical Hanukkah. What occurs in the Talmud appears to be an intentional re-shaping of collective memory as the result of the rabbis very complex relationship to the Hasmonean history.

Drawing a distinction between history and memory, Walter Benjamin notes the nuanced nature of history and writes, "To articulate the past historically does not mean to

[26] Strassfeld, 163.

recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke)."[27] Memory, according to Benjamin, attempts to conflate past and present. One's memories and experiences (or the inherited collective memories and experiences that are part of a people's narrative) directly influence one's identity and, conversely, the circumstances of the present directly influence how one remembers the past. Memory wants simultaneously to exist in the past and to shape the present.

Now, turning briefly from the rabbinic project of re-shaping collective identity, I believe it is important before proceeding to explore the rabbinic relationship to both the story of Hanukkah and the Hasmoneans. As a lens for examining this relationship, I will use the framework provided by Friedrich Nietzsche who, in 1874, wrote a treatise exploring the ways in which societies approach and understand history and how those different approaches either enhance or hinder the human experience. I use Nietzsche's work to understand better the rabbis' relationship to history and how this relationship affects the rabbis' approach to the Hanukkah narrative.

As part of his work, Nietzsche develops a spectrum for how a society relates to its history. At one pole lies "the animal" who "lives unhistorically" and lives only in the present with no concern for a memory of past or future.[28] At the opposite pole is the person who

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[27] Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der Romanischen und Germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* [History of the Latin and Teutonic Peoples from 1494 to 1514], 7th edition (Duncker und Humblot, 1874) as cited in Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 255. Ranke, like his contemporary Friedrich Nietzsche, articulates the necessity for objectivity when looking at history and recognizes the challenges in doing so. Benjamin argues against Ranke's assertion and points to an important feature of memory – the momentary flash of the past. These "flashbulb memories," represent moments of intensely detailed remembrance that are limited to specific moments, often times devoid of a larger context or meaning, and often influenced by one's present state of mind [Jerome Bruner, "The 'remembered' self," *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative*, eds. Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 45].

[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 9.

strives to remain "superhistorical" through an attempt to avoid making or contributing to history and not taking history too seriously.[29] For Nietzsche, remaining at either pole is unhealthy and he asserts a need for many ways of looking at the past.[30] While some scholars might argue the rabbis had a tendency towards being "unhistorical,"[31] I argue that the rabbis' treatment of Hanukkah actually demonstrates great concern for the past and takes into account not only the historical story of Hanukkah but also the many tragedies endured by the people of Israel in the span between those events and the compilation of the Talmud. Their ancestors had endured the zealous rule of the Hasmoneans. There were two additional uprisings against the Romans, first in 70 CE, which led to the destruction of the Second Temple, then the defeat of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, which crushed their spirits of revolution for the last time. By the sixth and seventh centuries, the Jews living in Babylonia were actually experiencing a period of relative calm. But the rabbis were not "superhistorical"; the means through which they constructed their own narrative of Hanukkah suggests a keen sensitivity for the influential role one type of narrative (namely, the story of a victorious rebellion) might have had on those who heard it.

Throughout his analysis, Nietzsche repeatedly warns that history should not undermine the present; he claims history is a narrative myth not an exacting science. Describing the need for a sensitivity to one's self and one's present circumstances when approaching history, he writes, "Only from the standpoint of the highest strength of the present may you interpret the past: only in the highest exertion of your noblest qualities will

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[29] Ibid, 12.
[30] Ibid, 17.
[31] I am thinking, specifically, of Yerushalmi who argues that throughout the medieval period, rabbinic authorities had very little interest in history and focused mainly on their present circumstances.

you discern what is worthy of being known and preserved, what is great in the past."[32] Nietzsche makes a case here for the importance of remaining self-aware whenever looking at history and reminds his reader that one should recognize the application of the self and the influence of the present in trying to understand the complexities of history. For Nietzsche, history should never undermine the present and one must remain conscious of the distance between past and present.[33] Applying this idea to the early Talmudic writers who were constructing the Hanukkah story, the narrative myth was secondary to meeting the needs of their current predicament in Babylonia. There was both a resentment and deep-seated fear of the Hasmoneans' power not just in its historical sense but in the implications it held for Jews learning this story in Babylonia. The rabbis may have feared that in learning the story of successful revolt under similar circumstances the Jews living in Babylonia might rise up against the Babylonians. For the most part, life in exile had become tolerable; the Jews had a reasonable level of autonomy and were able to run their academies of learning without interference from the Babylonian authorities.[34]

In addition to an examination of how one relates to history, Nietzsche also offers an analysis of three specific approaches to the examination of history: monumental (in which one focuses on the high points of the past without necessarily considering the impact of the low points);[35] antiquarian (which calls for a need to understand history in its own context and values an awareness of perspective);[36] and critical (which attempts to provide an objective

[32] Nietzsche, 37.
[33] Ibid, 21.
[34] Strack and Stemberger, 3.
[35] Nietzsche, 14.
[36] Ibid, 19.

analysis of history). Nietzsche argues that such objectivity is impossible to achieve as one always looks at history through the perspective of one's present circumstances.[37]

Taking into account both the Talmudic construction of Hanukkah and the rationale a pre-existing tension to the Hasmoneans that Strassfeld offers, I believe the rabbis of the Talmud act as critical historians. The fact that in the Talmud the rabbis give mention to the success of the Hasmoneans suggests that they viewed themselves as providing an objective account of the historical events. But in comparison to the accounts in both *Megillat Ta'anit* (which the rabbis had access to) and the books of Maccabees, adequate details about the precipitating circumstances leading up to the revolt, the battles themselves, and the subsequent aftermath are clearly missing. Nietzsche suggests, "Only he who is oppressed by some present misery and wants to throw off the burden at all cost has a need for critical [history], that is judging and condemning history."[38] The rabbis, fearful of disrupting their delicate sense of security in Babylonia and, as Strassfeld suggests earlier, bitter about their ancestors' treatment under Hasmonean rule, take a critical stance towards the history of Hanukkah. As a result, they introduce a story about miraculous oil to construct a new collective identity that is more palatable for maintaining the peace in 6th and 7th century CE Babylonia.

Nietzsche's critique of "antiquarian" history also provides an interesting perspective for examining Jewish history. Of an antiquarian historian, Nietzsche writes, "By tending with loving hands what has long survived [the antiquarian historian] intends to preserve the conditions in which he grew up for those who will come after him – and so he serves life."[39] This self-investment in history provides a useful metaphor for Jewish history; despite the

[37] Ibid, 20.
[38] Ibid, 18-19.
[39] Ibid, 19.

potential for objectivity and a distancing from one's historical past the rabbinic re-telling of Hanukkah preserves and presents specific events in a carefully thought out (and self-serving) manner. As Yerushalmi argues, the rabbis "felt that they had all the history they required."[40] Indeed, the rabbinic project was essentially to preserve a very specific brand of Judaism; rabbinic Judaism no longer required the sacrificial cult or the Temple in Jerusalem but, as Hanukkah demonstrates, focused instead on recognizing the divine in everyday life.

Yerushalmi has a similar theory for the rabbis' complicated relationship to history. He suggests that the Jewish people in general possess a unique fixation with how and why events happened throughout history.[41] Of the rabbinic compilers of the Mishnah and Talmud, more specifically, he writes, "they salvaged what they felt to be relevant to them, and that meant, in effect, what was relevant to the ongoing religious and communal (hence also the 'national') life of the Jewish people."[42] These rabbinic communities, in some measure responding to perceived threats from other factions like the Karaites or the early Christians, saw their brand of Judaism as a continuation and preservation of a Judaism that only they fully understood.

This exploration of how one generation conveys meaning to the next allows Yerushalmi, like Sigmund Freud, to point out the importance of looking carefully at what each generation salvages from the past. The rabbis, he explains, "salvaged what they felt to be relevant to them, and that meant, in effect, what was relevant to the ongoing religious and communal (hence also the national) life of the Jewish people."[43] Yerushalmi's point

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[40] Yerushalmi, 25. It is worth noting that Yerushalmi is speaking specifically about the rabbinic relationship to the historical accounts of the Hanukkah story.
[41] Ibid, 11. Yerushalmi, addressing the apparent passive nature of this approach to memory writes, "Ironically, many of the biblical narratives seem almost calculated to deflate the national pride."
[42] Ibid, 25.
[43] Ibid.

describes what he sees as a rabbinic concern with both the past and future and questions whether the rabbis focus too much on the past and future and not enough on the present.[44]

Conclusions

As I have demonstrated, the rabbinic authorities responsible for the compilation of the Mishnah and Talmud had a very complicated relationship to the historical account of Hanukkah. It is important to keep in mind their level of success in their project of constructing a new collective identity that moved away from a militaristic story to one of divine intervention.[45] The scope of the rabbinic project (and its success) is still seen in the contemporary observance of Hanukkah. We light candles for eight nights, we spin dreidels that remind us that "A Great Miracle Happened There," and we eat foods fried in oil. Perhaps some insight into the goal of the rabbis is demonstrated in the rabbinic assignment of Zechariah 4:1-7 as the special Haftarah reading from the books of the prophets, which includes the verse, "'Not by might and not by power, but by with My spirit,' says Adonai" (Zech. 4:6). As Waskow suggests of this connection, "To the Rabbi, this spiritual enlightenment required a kind of inwardness and contemplation that was contradictory to insurgent politics."[46] While the rabbis were successful in their construction of this new

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Noting the impact of the Babylonian Talmud's account of Hanukkah, Noam argues that this depiction of Hanukkah eventually comes to transform the commentaries to *Megillat Ta'anit*; she cites the evolution of a version of the Parma Scholium (Scholium P) that takes the brief mention of finding oil in an earlier strata and brings in the more developed, crystallized story of the miraculous oil that lasted for eight days.[45] Noam also points out that there are a number of impediments in revealing the "attitude of the Sages" as it relates to Hanukkah in that the Babylonian Talmud's story comes to influence the fluid and dynamic transmission of the *Megillat Ta'anit* text, making it nearly impossible to uncover other earlier traditions. This also represents a shift in the rationale for why the festival lasts for eight days. In the earlier strata of *Megillat Ta'anit*, the hard labor of rebuilding iron lamps and the altar take eight days to complete (225-226).

[46] Waskow, 100.

collective identity that focused on the primacy of God, it is not without a small measure of irony that the holiday is still known as Hanukkah. The name Hanukkah comes from the Hebrew "*hanukkat ha-mizbe'ach,*" "re-dedication of the altar."

Although the rabbis were able to change the focus of the festival of Hanukkah, the Hanukkah narrative, however tempered, remained a source of national pride for Jews throughout history. Even with their focus on the miracle of oil, the rabbis could not remove completely the human role in the reclamation and re-dedication of the Temple. Despite their best efforts to move the focus of this holiday away from the military victory and the hard labor involved in repairing the Temple, they were not able to rename the festival for the miracle of oil perhaps calling it "*hag ha-nes,*" "festival of the miracle." That kernel of the human role in an impossible victory allows religious school students to spin dreidels, light Hanukkah menorahs, and eat latkes and jelly doughnuts long after they learned about the "real" story of Hanukkah. At its core, Hanukkah is a story of finding hope when faced with impossible challenges, of acting on faith in oneself and one's cause, and of bringing light into the darkest of places.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have demonstrated the many ways in which Jewish leaders throughout history felt comfortable with the development of new approaches to old rituals. Jews shape memory to fit their contemporary needs and make Judaism relevant for their own realities. In doing so, they preserve a strong identification with the past and ensure the viability and vibrancy of a Jewish future. So too, the contemporary Jewish community and, particularly the Reform movement, frequently re-examine old rituals and introduce new rituals. With each holiday, I offered a different analysis of the various techniques through which the rabbinic leadership connected ancient rituals to their contemporary practices. At the heart of every rabbinic innovation was a desire to maintain relevance and meaning for the Jews of their day. In the case of the Passover seder such efforts were realized through offering new ways of observing old rituals. In his re-purposing of the memory of Tisha B'Av David Einhorn created affirmed his 19th century community's theology. And in the rabbinic approach to Hanukkah the exilic rabbinic leadership re-shaped the memory of an old narrative to maintain a delicate balance of peace between the Jews and their Babylonian rulers.

Of the evaluation of memory, Ricoeur asks four questions: "On the one hand, how is [the memory] preserved, how does it persist, whether or not it is recalled? On the other, what meaningful relation does it maintain in relation to the marking event?"[1] With each holiday, I have outlined the myriad ways in which the rabbinic communities responsible for the compilation of the central texts in Judaism – the Tosefta, Mishnah, and Talmud – demonstrated a keen awareness of how to preserve the core experiences from their own day (or from earlier generations) as part of a collective Jewish memory. Each generation of

[1] Paul Ricoeur, "Memory and Imagination," 14.

rabbis faced the challenges of constructing meaning while interpreting Jewish history in a manner that was salient for their own time and circumstances.

In their approach to the rituals for the evening of Passover, the rabbinic authors of the seders of the Tosefta, Mishnah, and Talmud understood the need for meaningful personal identification on the part of the participants as a key element in the development of constructing a compelling, authentic collective memory. The rabbinic project of the seder demonstrates the ways in which a distant historical event can be transmitted in a way that affects the individual participant's personal experience (and by extension, his/her personal memory) of an otherwise remote story. Through engaging participants in conversational storytelling and compelling symbols of re-enactment that affect participants' senses of sight, taste, and smell, the rabbinic authors of the Passover seder found a number of methods for connecting the individual to the collective Jewish identity.

As I have shown, the memory of the Exodus narrative persists in the Passover seder of the Mishnah and Talmud. The seder constructed by the rabbinic communities of the Mishnah and Talmud created organized opportunities for the construction of memory. These rabbis understood the power to shape collective identity through gathering to retell the narrative of the Exodus. In this retelling the collective memory of this central Jewish narrative is preserved in each individual's experience of the seder meal and the interactive storytelling. These experiences create a deep, meaningful relationship to the initial marking event of the Exodus through the evocation of a personal connection to key elements of the Exodus narrative. Each year, the memory of this narrative is recalled through food, symbols, and questions all tied into the retelling of a powerful story of the redemption from oppression to liberation.

In a similar construction of collective Jewish experience, the holiday of Tisha B'Av demonstrates the Tannaitic and Amoraic rabbinic communities' decision to root the Jewish community in a sense of collective trauma following the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. In many ways, the preservation and persistence of this trauma has been a unifying factor, uniting Jews in different lands and different ages through a common commemoration of the loss of one of the central symbols of early Judaism. In re-purposing the commemoration of Tisha B'Av, David Einhorn moved away from the negative effects this trauma toward a new unifying symbol. Reminding his contemporaries that the whole Jewish community is a "nation of priests" called upon to offer up new, ethically-based sacrifices more acceptable in God's sight Einhorn departed from the traditional mournful tone of despair to transform the observance of Tisha B'Av into an opportunity to renew its focus on an ethical, prophetic Judaism.[2] However drastic a departure in tone Einhorn's project echoes and mimics the earlier rabbinic efforts to construct meaning for his own time and place.

The trauma of destruction persists in the traditional observance of Tisha B'Av. This trauma is preserved in the mourning rituals in the daily liturgy, the annual observance of Tisha B'Av, and the symbolic ritual of breaking a glass at Jewish weddings. Each year, the destruction of the First and Second Temples is recalled as a fresh trauma despite having occurred nearly 2,000 years ago. In constructing a new relationship to this initial marking event David Einhorn represents it as a moment of liberation for Jews. Through the difficult moment of destruction the Jewish people became free to go out into the world, learn from their new neighbors, and bring the ethical values of Judaism to other nations.

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[2] Einhorn, 144.

The Amoraim and Saboraim who composed the Talmud also struggled to make sense of a history that they felt undermined their present circumstances. As a result, the Saboraim reshaped the Hanukkah narrative to perpetuate their own vision of and priorities for Jewish identity. In doing so, the Saboraim demonstrated that they were not slaves to history and that in their critical approach to the historical Hanukkah narrative, they were able to create a new collective memory of Jewish history. These rabbinic communities did not feel bound to history at its face value but felt the need to change and re-shape history to fit their need to maintain peace between their Jewish community and its Babylonian authorities.

The rabbinic relationship to the initial marking event of the Maccabean Revolt is very complicated. In successfully re-shaping the memory of the historical narrative of Hanukkah the rabbis endowed the holiday with a new focus on divine intervention and the primacy of God. This "new" memory constructed by the rabbis persists in the rabbinic innovations of the lighting of candles on a nine-branched menorah, the symbolic message "A Great Miracle Happened There" on the *dreidel*, and in the many foods fried in oil eaten on Hanukkah. In contemporary Jewish education, the historical accounts of the Maccabean Revolt now share time with the "real" story of Hanukkah for older children in religious school. Despite the initial rabbinic discomfort with this historical narrative, contemporary Jews recall this story in a positive light. The Jewish pioneers in Palestine in the early 20th century returned to the story of the Maccabees as an ancient example of Jewish might and an inspiration for their own efforts to rebuild a Jewish homeland.[3] This historical narrative is also preserved by the contemporary Jew's renewed access to the books of Maccabees and the writings of Josephus. In Jewish practice today, the tension between the historical narrative and the rabbinic representation of the Hanukkah memory continues to fade. In its place is a collective

[3] See Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil," 194.

memory that is preserved in the spiritual implications of bringing light into the darkness of winter and the power of human determination (with the help of God) in overcoming overwhelming obstacles.

It is my hope that in this thesis the rabbinic propensity for innovation and their efforts to root those innovations in their understanding of Jewish tradition have been made clear. While contemporary Jews might read these innovations as a break with tradition, the reader of this thesis will recognize the rabbinic ability to play with memory and make meaning for their communities as one of the core elements of Judaism that has allowed its preservation. Memory is neither concrete nor fully flexible; instead, as an element and component of Judaism, Jewish memory continues to influence and shape practice just as it has since its inception.

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