Judaea-Palaestina, Babylon and Rome: Jews in Antiquity

Edited by
BENJAMIN ISAAC and
YUVAL SHAHAR

Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
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Benjamin Isaac and Yuval Shahar

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Preface

In December of 2009 Tel Aviv University hosted an international conference in honour of Aharon Oppenheimer, Sir Isaac Wolfson Professor of Jewish History, on the occasion of his retirement. The present volume publishes most of the papers read during the conference and it is dedicated to him by his friends and colleagues in recognition of many years of a broad range of activities: teaching, research, and administration, all of them carried out with wisdom, unselfishly and honestly.

The editors wish to thank those who made the event possible, those who participated in it and those who worked hard to make it a success. First, we gratefully acknowledge the generous financial contributions made by various persons and institutions: the President of Tel Aviv University, the Rector, Vice-President for Research and Development, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, the School of Jewish Studies, the Goldstein-Goren Center for Diaspora Research and its Director, Dr Simha Goldin, the Fred Lessing Institute for European History and Civilization and Ms Joan Lessing, and the Mortimer and Raymond Sackler Institute of Advanced Studies.

Special mention should be made of invaluable assistance rendered by Sara Appel and Ora Azta of the Goldstein-Goren Center who took care of all practical arrangements in preparing the event. Their labours were instrumental in achieving a conference virtually without practical flaws.

Susan Weingarten helped improving the style of part of the contributions. We are very grateful for her generous assistance. Finally, cordial thanks are due to Nili Oppenheimer for the preparation of the list of Aharon Oppenheimer's publications at the end of this book.

Benjamin Isaac & Yuval Shahar Tel Aviv University, September 2011

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Introduction

Benjamin Isaac and Yuval Shahar

This volume contains most of the papers read at a conference held in honour of Aharon Oppenheimer in December of 2009. For decades Oppenheimer has studied and taught Jewish history "in the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud," as it is called at Tel Aviv University. He has done so with much energy, great learning, intellectual honesty and a fine sense of humour. His published achievements are listed at the end of this volume. His contribution as a teacher, a colleague, and editor of journals and academic publications is less easily measured, although obvious to all who know him. When organizing the conference it was our aim to invite a number of friends and colleagues who represent the wide range of his publications in the field of Jewish history in antiquity. Pride of place among these goes to the Jews in Judaea in antiquity, subject of the articles by Albert Baumgarten, Joshua Schwartz, Yoram Tsafrir, Günter Stemberger, and Vered Noam. To some extent Peter Schäfer's paper also belongs in this category. Then there are specific subjects concerning the Jews under Roman rule, discussed by Martin Goodman, Tessa Rajak and Yuval Shahar, with the addition of a paper in the sphere of culinary culture by Susan Weingarten, one of the results of a project headed by Aharon Oppenheimer and Werner Eck. From there we move to the diaspora. Aharon Oppenheimer is the author of a major work on Jewish Babylonia, a subject revisited here by David Goodblatt. The relationship and cultural differences between Palestinian and Babylonian Jews is the subject of Richard Kalmin's contribution. Aharon Oppenheimer has published as well on Jewish burial in the diaspora and in Israel and on urban development. Hence we include a paper by Jonathan Price on Jewish epitaphs in Jaffa and Beth Shearim. Shaye Cohen focuses on a Christian text from fourth-century Syria about the Jewish Shabbat. Youval Rotman examined the attitude and practice of both Jews and Christians toward the issue of redeeming captives. Central in the work of any historian of the Jewish people in this period is an assessment of the role of the rabbis, or rather, the sages, as some prefer to call them. This is the subject of Isaiah Gafni's paper. Aharon Oppenheimer's personal pre-history goes back to Germany, where he has spent several years teaching and studying. It is only fitting that Werner Eck's contribution should consider the presence of Jews in Cologne in antiquity, a city where Aharon himself has found extended hospitality.

Albert Baumgarten's paper takes up the theme of missionary activity, focusing on the Pharisees in the pre-70 years against the social reality of contemporary society. In the early to mid-1990s, a series of studies argued against the then widely prevalent view that the ancient Pharisees were engaged in a major campaign to convert as many people as possible to Judaism in general and to the Pharisaic way of life in particular. Those who reacted against this view argued that the missionary activity of Jews/Pharisees was directed internally, towards those Jews whose attachment to the ancestral traditions seemed in need of reinforcement, not towards outsiders. Baumgarten's declared aim is to free the study of the ancient Pharisees from the distortions of theological evaluation. The Pharisees still are frequently the subject of fierce disagreement between Christian and Jewish scholars, and among Jews as well. The paper aims to inject clarity by analyzing three passages in the gospel of Luke: 14:1–9; 7:36–9; 11:37–41. It is here argued that these intended to show fundamental flaws in the Pharisaic claim of moderation, flexibility, and outreach to the larger world. This part of the discussion therefore deals with early Christian attitudes toward Jews, one of two in the volume to do so. It goes on with an attempt to sketch the realities behind this criticism.

In this paper thus one of the themes of the book is represented: Jews and others. It is an attempt to describe how a significant movement in the first century attempted to make its mark internally rather than extend influence among non-Jews. This, again, is an important chapter in the evolving image of first century Judaism as projected in the early Christian sources and modern scholarship.

Shaye Cohen's paper is the second that focuses on Christian attitudes toward Jews. He uses patristic literature, a passage of pseudo-Ignatius (Syria, second half of the fourth century), as evidence for the Jewish observance of the Sabbath, one of the traditional points of friction between non-Jews and Jews. As described in the text, Jews observe the Sabbath rejoicing in idleness, in the relaxation of the body, eating day-old foods, drinking lukewarm drinks, walking measured distances, and dancing and clapping. For Christians, the source asserts, the spiritual observance of the Sabbath consisted of a) rejoicing in meditation on laws and b) marvelling at the creative work of God. This demonstrates a contrast between carnal Jews and spiritual Christians, a topos in Christian literature beginning with Paul. Cohen concludes that the assertions regarding the actual behaviour of Jews on the Sabbath presumably reflect reality. Food and drinking are important to Jews celebrating the Sabbath. However, dancing and clapping is less obvious as a custom, although it is attested in a few other sources: Augustine and the Bavli. Christian sources take this a step further: good Christians actually observe the Sabbath every day, while the Jewish Sabbath is one day out of seven.

With Joshua Schwartz's paper we pass on to the general theme of the attitude of Jews toward non-Jews in antiquity, for it considers the highly sensitive and controversial topic of Jewish identity in the first century as well as Jewish at-

titudes toward the early Christians. What was the character of Judaism? It was a religion, says Schwartz, namely a religion of law and of halakhah, stressing praxis and works. There was not as much diversity as sometimes claimed, but the early Christians were not necessarily excluded from the Jewish community.

Like that of Schwartz, Günter Stemberger's contribution discusses the attitudes of Jews toward non-Jews. He renews the discussion of the birkat haminim. The interpretation of this text is essential for an understanding of Jewish attitudes toward non-Jews in the late first and early second centuries. A common conclusion is that the text was formulated in the late first century by Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh with the explicit purpose of excluding Christians or Jewish-Christians from participation in synagogue services. It would thus have been a formal act separating Christians from Jews. Two questions are elementary: the dating and the precise meaning of the term 'minim.' Stemberger accepts the usual date, but concludes that it is not quite clear how widespread was the application of restrictions mentioned in the text, nor is it obvious that 'minim' in this period always refers to Christians. Rabban Gamaliel's special status may not have been so obvious at the time and the institution of the synagogue was not yet universal. The birkat ha-minim would then not be evidence of a radical, formal break with Christians in this period and the text will not have played more than a minimal role in the separation of Christians and Jews.

Vered Noam offers a fascinating analysis of the question of gentile impurity in Talmudic sources with particular attention to issues of corpse impurity. She has used this as evidence for the self-image of Jews and their views of non-Jews with particular focus on the impurity of non-Jews. The assumption is that the impurity ascribed to non-Jews may be used as a source of information on the general rabbinic portrait of the non-Jews and Jews. The question asked is whether non-Jews are intrinsically impure, or only when they have been polluted by corpses; furthermore, can they be purified or not? The Tannaitic answer to this question is that only a captive who became a proselyte in the full sense of the law as defined by the rabbis could contract corpse impurity and require purification like an Israelite. A gentile, on the other hand, neither contracts nor conveys corpse impurity. Like the domestic animal and the eight-month child he fails to meet the definition of a human being, and is perceived as fundamentally different from a Jew. Accordingly he is treated in categories of nature, in contradistinction to culture and jurisprudence. By contrast, Israel was regarded as an advanced society, governed by the law, i.e. Torah. This represents, to a certain extent, a paradox: members of the community are liable to impurity, outsiders are not. An extreme consequence of this was formulated by R. Shimon ben Yohai: even graves of non-Jews do not cause impurity, for gentiles are not included within the term אדם, human being, in the verse אדם כי ימות באהל, "When a person dies in a tent" (Numbers 19:14).

Richard Kalmin deals with a topic that most scholars would look at askance: the evil eye in Talmudic sources. He shows it may serve as a valuable source

of information about the Jewish self-image as presented in Palestinian and Babylonian sources, the views the Jews held of each other and of their non-Jewish environment. Remarkable is the pronounced difference between these two groups of sources. The Palestinian ones regard the evil eye as a weapon belonging to others, not to Jews. The earlier, Tannaitic sources recognize only its non-magic form. Post-tannaitic sources also accept the existence of the magic version, and find that the Roman Empire is to blame for its existence. Babylonian sources have an entirely different view: the evil eye can be Jewish or not. It is not restricted to others, to non-Jews and it is used by Jews among each other, even by lesser Rabbis. The Bavli recognizes means to neutralize it as a weapon. Another distinction: the Yerushalmi attempts to brand the evil eye as a Babylonian problem, not a Palestinian one. The Bavli does not attempt to do the reverse. These conclusions then say as much about contemporary views of the supernatural as about attitudes toward others and themselves amongst the two communities.

With Peter Schäfer's article we focus on later Jewish views of Christianity, notably the reports on Jesus' origins as reflected in Jewish sources, with particular emphasis on the Toledot Yeshu, a group of mediaeval Jewish texts on Jesus (Yeshu). The impression it gives of the image of Jesus among Jews in this period is noteworthy. The central issue is not Jesus as blasphemer and false messiah who pretended to be the son of god. Miriam, his mother,is depicted without hostility, the victim of rape and not to blame for what happened. There was no virgin birth, of course, and Jesus remains a bastard, but his mother is innocent. Jesus himself is depicted rather as a bad Torah student, guilty of arrogant behaviour toward his teachers. This is a remarkabe Jewish response to Christianity, although, admittedly, the source belongs to a period considerably later than the one which is the subject of this volume.

The subject of Martin Goodman's study is the small number of elite Jews who witnessed the destruction of the sanctuary not as defenders of Jerusalem, nor from a safe distance in the diaspora, but from within (or close to) the headquarters of the Roman general. Of these Jews one, the historian Josephus, played a role in Titus' dynastic ambitions as the prophet alleged to have predicted already in 67 CE that Vespasian would become emperor. Three others – Agrippa II, his sister Berenice, and Tiberius Julius Alexander were close associates of Titus. While Tiberius Alexander had in fact abandoned Judaism, Josephus never distanced himself from the Jewish people, whatever his role during the war. The paper discusses Agrippa and Berenice in particular: they are not mentioned in Talmudic sources, but that is not significant in itself, for, important though they were, they were irrelevant to the central topics of these sources. Their father, Agrippa I, is well known for his devotion to the Temple and Jewish religion. He and his children were part of the eastern aristocracy who, at the same time, played a role in Roman society, social and political. Goodman's paper shows

how they combined their role in Roman society with an active commitment to their religion, the Temple cult and Judaean affairs. As such they form a rare and vivid example of the manner in which eastern aristocracy maintained its local ties and identity and, at the same time, was integrated in the imperial elite.

Tessa Rajak contributes a thoughtful reconsideration of a highly sensitive and complex subject: Jewish resistance and martyrdom under Roman rule. While the title might suggest that the discussion is limited to Josephus, the point is rather that a proper interpretation of the evidence from Josephus has broader implications for our views of martyrdom as a significant factor in the Jewish resistance against Rome in the first and second centuries. To some extent this has implications also for the interaction between Jews and Christians and thus fits the topics of the papers concerned with these relations. At the same time it is a salutary reminder that the interpretation of Josephus' work is never simple.

Yuval Shahar deals with the siqariqon ruling (Mishnah Gittin v, 6) and the conditions which allow a Jew in Eretz Israel to buy a field that was confiscated earlier from another Jew because of anti-Roman activities. The paper deals with a specific question that has not been asked before: why a quarter must be given to the original owner. The 'quarter' plays no role in any connection with the laws concerning sale, inheritance and the like, neither in biblical Law nor in the post-biblical halakhah that developed until the redaction of the Mishnah. On the other hand three historical phases in the course of the development of the Roman law of succession show the quarter as an important element. The last stage, in the time of Antoninus Pius, is connected with the Law of Trusts (Fideicommissa) and extended the 'quarter' even to the succession to intestates. This phase in Roman law is roughly contemporaneous with the period of Ushah and Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel, who enjoined that a quarter should be given to the original owner. Many scholars have commented on the role of Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi in the later phase of the historical process of the ruling, as one of many indications of his policy of encouraging new positive relationships between Judaea and Rome. In the case of the siqariqon, this policy is marked by recognition of the Roman confiscation and an intention to reduce the difference between Jewish halakhah and Roman law. Shahar's analysis identifies an earlier, first step, taken in this direction, probably by his father, much closer to the disastrous consequences of Ben-Kosba war.

Susan Weingarten is in this book the sole representative of those who study the history of food. Her topic is haroset, one of the traditional dishes served during the Seder at Passover. On the basis of Talmudic sources and material from the Cairo Genizah she concludes that haroset probably owes its origins to the Graeco-Roman dipping sauces whose functions were to counteract the bitterness and/or ill-effects of lettuce and endives. If this is the case, then we have a concrete example of the interaction of Jewish and Greco-Roman customs even at one of the most important festivals of the year.

Jonathan Price considers the information to be derived from a comparison of the Jewish epitaphs of the Roman period from Beth Shearim on the one hand and from Jaffa, where the Jews were no more than a substantial minority, on the other. We gain information about social and economic Jewish life in the period. At Jaffa the inscriptions represent a group of people with modest professions, including some immigrants with a relatively large component identifying their origin as Egypt. At Beth Shearim those buried represent a broader range of economic status, with some very wealthy tombs. Many of them were brought there from a variety of locations in the Near East. This paper does not so much focus on Jews and non-Jews – non-Jews were not buried at Beth Shearim and their tombs have not been discovered in large numbers at Jaffa. It does, however, give a lively impression of the mobility of Jews in the Near East under Roman rule.

Youval Rotman traces the remarkable differences between various communities in their attitude toward ransoming captives, as was usual in classical Greece and in the Hellenistic period. Common property was used for the purpose. Prisoners of war were exchanged by states, including the Hasmonaeans. Rome, however, ceased to ransom captives after Cannae (216 BCE). By that time it was regarded as shameful, for in battle one is victorious or dies. Roman captives were reduced to the status of slaves, also according to Roman law. Jewish norms were different: here individual ransoming and private initiatives are attested, and it was even a moral and legal obligation to ransom relatives. Talmudic sources, attaching increasing importance to the issue, contain discussions how much money, including public funds, may or should be earmarked for the purpose. Christians too ransomed members of their community. The custom was closely associated with the development of charity and almsgiving and is well attested in papyrological material. The ideological background for the Jewish practice was that members of their community were captured by non-Jews, while for Christians it was that they had fallen into the hands of religious enemies, situations comparable to a large extent. As observed by Rotman, the development of the practice of redeeming captives by the Christian Empire developed out of the state of war between the Empire and its enemies from the fourth to the sixth century (Sassanian attacks; Goths). The church often took responsibility.

Werner Eck discusses the limited evidence for a Jewish presence in Cologne in the Roman period. They are firmly attested there in a legal source of 321 which determines that they can act as decuriones. This in itself shows that there must have been a considerable number of Jews of means in the city at the time. However, there is no further documentation or evidence of any kind until the eighth or ninth century when the existence of a synagogue is attested. All that can be said is that the city existed from the fifth until the eighth century and that there were Christians there in the earlier part of this period.

David Goodblatt's contribution is salutary, but depressing: it argues that we know far less about the Jews in the Parthian Empire than was thought not so

long ago. There is hardly any reliable information about the Jews in Media, Elam and Parthia under Parthian rule. For Mesopotamia / Babylonia, the situation is not much better. The Greek and Latin sources contain little reliable information, nor are Talmudic sources helpful for this period, according to Goodblatt. This, of course, is an issue that has been debated frequently by modern scholars.

Yoram Tsafrir's paper deals with quite a different topic, a matter of lively, even fierce controversy, namely the identification of skeletons found in caves 2001 and 2002 at Masada. It represents an interesting case of modern polemics, fed by ideology, about an ancient war. While there were personal elements to this modern conflict, the issue of contention focused on matters of historical interpretation and ideology, that is to say, the case of the Zealots, their role in the resistance to Roman rule and their collective suicide in the face of defeat. At issue were the possible presence of pig bones – very dubious, to say the least – among the skeletons and the identification of those buried in the caves as Jews, Roman soldiers or Byzantine monks or other Christians. Tsafrir shows that the latter suggestions are to be excluded on archaeological grounds. That leaves two possibilities: they could be the remains of Jews who died during the siege and were buried there by other Jews – Tsafrir's original suggestion which he still prefers – or they could have been placed there by Roman soldiers after the fall of Masada, the solution preferred by Yadin.

Isaiah Gafni's contribution is an exercise in the history of modern scholarship, but, again, it is marked by fierce historical and ideological controversy, namely the development of ideas about the position of rabbis, the sages, in antiquity. He traces the widely differing views from the early nineteenth century and how they were affected by the spirit of the time (the Zeitgeist).

This is a collection of papers by individual contributors who were totally free in the choice of their topics. They were not selected on the assumption that there would be a common approach. Even so there are elements of a common approach and joint interest among many of the contributions. Over the past decades subjects like ethnicity, or group identity have received much attention. This has been true for Jewish history in antiquity as well. These particular subjects are not found in the present volume. However, central to many of the papers is a focus on attitudes toward others and collective image: the Jews as seen by others; Jews looking at others and at internal groups. Thus we see contributions about the Pharisees as described in the Gospel of Luke (Baumgarten), early Christian sources on the Shabat (Cohen), Jews on early Christians (Schwartz, Stemberger), the inferiority of gentiles according to Talmudic sources (Noam); the evil eye seen as typically non-Jewish among Jews in Palestine, but not so in Babylonia (Kalmin), and mediaeval Jewish texts about Jesus (Schäfer). Another category of articles are chapters in social and intellectual history with a sensitive and controversial ideology in the background: elite Jews in Judaea and Rome (Goodman); Jewish resistance and martyrdom (Rajak); the *siqariqon* and the status of land

confiscated by the Romans in Judaea (Shahar); the interaction of Jewish and Greco-Roman food (Weingarten); Jewish cemeteries as a social mirror (Price); the ransoming or not of captives by Romans, Jews and Christians (Rotman); the interpretation of early Talmudic sources on Babylonian Jews (Goodblatt); the interpretation of archaeological material from Masada (Tsafrir); and evolving views on ancient rabbis (Gafni). Another example of such a sensitive topic is the question of the Jewish presence in Cologne (Eck).

The conference in honour of Aharon Oppenheimer was a lively event. The editors hope that this collection conveys the mood of thoughtful, engaged scholarship and innovation in the study of Jewish history in antiquity.

The Image of Jews among Non-Jews

The "Outreach" Campaign of the Ancient Pharisees: There is no such thing as a Free Lunch*

Albert I. Baumgarten

Aharon Oppenheimer and I spent the academic year 1992–1993 as Fellows of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Jerusalem. One of my pleasantest memories of that year was the last month or so of our collaborative work, when the members of the group he and Isaiah Gafni had assembled re-assessed the contributions of the giants of the discipline of previous generations. We began this review on a lark, as a way to fill time between the end of our formal collective work and the entry of the next year's selected fellows. It was Lawrence Schiffman, as I recall, who was visiting Israel that summer and joined our discussions, who first helped us recognize the potential merit of what we were doing. Several of these studies were later published,[1] mine included.[2] In the latter paper, as part of the assessment of Marcel Simon's scholarship, I considered the question of whether there was a general Jewish mission to the non-Jewish world in the post-destruction era, in competition with the Christian mission. The current paper takes up and elaborates the theme of missionizing, but focuses instead on the Pharisees in the pre-70 years. Returning to a topic associated – even if a bit indirectly – with our

* The published version of this paper owes much to comments, criticisms, and suggestions for further reading by Steve Mason then of York University, Toronto, now at Kings College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, offered in response to an earlier version. It was a pleasure to be one of Mason's instructors many years ago, when we were both at McMaster University, and a privilege to have the benefit of conversation and consultation with a scholar of such distinction today. As I did not dare ask Mason whether he was convinced by a revised version of the original draft, responsibility for this paper is exclusively mine.

[1] A. Oppenheimer, 'Gedaliah Alon – zwischen der jüdischen Historiographie des 19. Jahrhunderts und der modernen historischen Forschung', in A. Oppenheimer, (Ed.), *Jüdische Geschichte in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit, Wege der Forschung: Vom alten zum neuen Schürer* (Munich 1999), pp. 165–180; *idem,* 'Gedalyahu Alon Fifty Years On', *Zion*, 69 (2004), pp. 459–486 (Hebrew); I. Gafni, 'Talmudic Research in Modern Times: Between Scholarship and Ideology', in A. Oppenheimer, (Ed.), *Jüdische Geschichte* (Munich 1999), pp. 133–148; *idem,* 'Scholarship on the History of the Talmudic Period: A Generation of Achievement and Reconsideration', *Cathedra,* 100 (2001), pp. 199–226 (Hebrew); *idem,* 'On Gedaliahu Alon and his Role in the Study of Rabbinic Historiography', *Jewish Studies,* 41 (2002), pp. 75–83 (Hebrew); M. Goodman,' Jean Juster and the Study of Jews under Roman Rule', in G. Khan (Ed.), *Semitic Studies in Honour of Edward Ullendorff* (Leiden 2005), pp. 309–322.

[2] A. Baumgarten, 'Marcel Simon's *Verus Israel* as a Contribution to Jewish History', *Harvard Theological Review,* 92 (1999), pp. 465–478.

most productive, beneficial, and enjoyable days together, is the best tribute I can pay to a friend and colleague.

I

In the early to mid 1990s, a series of studies argued against the then widely prevalent view that ancient Pharisees were engaged in a world-wide campaign to convert as many people as possible to Judaism and to the Pharisaic way of life. This conclusion rested on a number of foundations in the sources, but perhaps most of all on Matt 23:15 – "woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves."

Against the usual conclusion, and the conventional understanding of Matt 23:15, Will and Orrieux argued that Matt 23:15 represented a specific perspective of members of the early church fighting against the successors of the Pharisees at Yavneh. According to them, this verse was not the opening shot of what would be a long battle, but a rear-guard action of little consequence. There was no Jewish or pharisaic missionary campaign to convert the world. There were converts, but they did not join the Jewish people because of the efforts of missionaries, but because they were in close contact with large communities of native-born Jews. There may have been many reasons this proximity to Jewish communities bore fruit in conversions, but a mission by Jews or the Pharisees to the gentile world was not one of them. At most, according to Will and Orrieux, the missionary activity of Jews / Pharisees was directed internally, towards those Jews whose attachment to the ancestral traditions seemed in need of reinforcement.[3]

Will and Orrieux's analysis generated significant favorable responses. A number of scholars, Shaye J. D. Cohen for example, had argued similar conclusions themselves, so their approval of Will and Orrieux might be discounted somewhat.[4] However, the strongly favorable review by a distinguished "outsider" to the issues under discussion, William Chester Jordan of Princeton, a medievalist, in the *American Historical Review*, was notable.[5]

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[3] E. Will and C. Orrieux, *"Proselytisme juif"?: histoire d'une erreur* (Paris 1992). Their argument was preceded by S. McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis 1991). See, however, S. Mason, 'Review of McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles*', *Ioudaios Review,* 1.001 (July 1991), available on-line at http://listserv.lehigh.edu/lists/ioudaios-review/; J. Sievers, 'Review of McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles*', *AJSReview,* 18 (1993), pp. 300–303.

[4] S. J. D. Cohen, 'Review of Will and Orrieux, *Proselytisme Juif?*', *Jewish Quarterly Review,* 86 (1996), pp. 429–434.

[5] W. C. Jordan, 'Review of Will and Orrieux, *Proselytisme Juif?*', *American Historical Review,* 99 (1994), pp. 867–868.

A few years after the publication of Will and Orrieux, Martin Goodman covered much the same ground and reached many of the same central conclusions. Thus, for example, Goodman understood the Pharisaic missionary activity to which Matt 23:15 was referring as efforts by the Pharisees to convince as many Jews as possible to join their movement.[6]

Since the mid-nineties, however, my sense is that the main focus of scholarly discussion has moved elsewhere. Perhaps the most obvious new centers of debate and interest have been (1) the suggestion to replace Jews / Jewish / Judaism with Judean and its derivatives, to understand identity as ethnic and to abandon "religious" categories as alien to the ancient world,[7] and (2) the focus on the "parting of the ways" between what would be Judaism and Christianity.[8] Despite this move away from the issues concerning Pharisaic or Jewish missionizing, I would like to return to these matters in this paper, although from a different point of view

II

This paper has several goals: first is to present a different way of analyzing the evidence of the Pharisees in a double context – one ancient, the other in the light of modern social science. For lack of a more elegant term, I call this the "double filter" through which I read the sources on the Pharisees.[9] The social scientific aspect of the "double filter" will be discussed in greater detail immediately below (section iii). As for the ancient filter, I refer to the fact that the Pharisees were a group that wanted to achieve authority, status, and stature, despite the fact that they did not begin with any of the obvious resources that would qualify them for the role they wanted to play. For example, they were not necessarily hereditary priests, but were a lay movement, claiming to be the most accurate interpreters of the law, a task usually assumed to be the prerogative of priests (Josephus, AJ

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[6] M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1994), pp. 60–90.

[7] See S. Mason, 'Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History', *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*, 38 (2007), pp. 457–512. Cf. however, D. Schwartz, 'Jews, Judeans and the Epoch that Disappeared: On H. Graetz's Changing View of the Second Temple Period', *Zion,* 70 (2005), pp. 293–310 (Hebrew).

[8] I note two seminal works on the topic: A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed (Eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen 2003); D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia 2004).

[9] For another example of this approach to the ancient Pharisees, see A. Baumgarten, 'Die Pharisäer und die Gräber der Propheten', in A. Bedenbender (Ed.), *Judäo-Christentum. Die gemeinsame Wurzel von rabbinischem Judentum und früher Kirche* (Paderborn / Frankfurt am Main 2012, forthcoming).

20.264–266).[10] Nor did the Pharisees have direct access to the powers of legitimate coercion associated with the government. They had to convince people to take them seriously. As such, they had a number of ancient analogues, from the late first century CE to the early third, running from the topics treated in some of Plutarch's essays, to Celsus' Christians, to Lucian's Peregrinus, Demonax, and Alexander the False Prophet, and culminating in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana. Our sources on many of these analogues are hostile to them, but some are favorable. Sometimes, they describe a one-man movement, sometimes a group. As such, they provide a rich comparative synchronic backdrop against which to view the Pharisees.[11]

This leads to the second goal of this paper: to take advantage of the "double filter" to free the study of the ancient Pharisees from the chains of judgmental theological evaluation. The Pharisees are still all too often a lightning rod for tendentious disagreement between Christians and Jews,[12] and among Jews as well.[13] Any contribution to breaking these chains is welcome.

The third goal is a direct consequence of tendencies in scholarship over the past generation: as methods of analysis have become more sophisticated, old certainties about the past have rightly been called into question. The hallmark of our time, as Steve Mason, noted is "profound historical agnosticism."[14] Yet, this should not mark an end to efforts to know the past. Even agnosticism should have its limits. The historian's métier remains to make connections. As argued by one of the greatest historians of the twentieth century, Christopher Hill (1912–2003), in one of his last books, as an explicit intellectual testament, quoting T. S. Eliot:

'A poet's mind … is constantly amalgamating disparate experience. The ordinary man … falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking: in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.' Without wishing to claim too much for history, still less to distinguish historians from 'ordinary men' and women, I think there is force in Sydney's statement of a familiar trope: 'the best of the historian is subject to the

[10] See the ground-breaking discussion by S. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (Leiden 1991), pp. 89–96. See also A. Baumgarten, 'The Pharisaic Paradosis', *Harvard Theological Review,* 80 (1987), pp. 63–77.

[11] For a significant analysis of these sources, from which I have learned much, see L. Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ *Das Bild des "göttlichen Menschen" in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (Wien 1935); G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist: Holy Men and their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London / New York 1994); A. Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (London 2002).

[12] For the distorted portrait of the Pharisees as drawn by Christians in service of their theological agenda, see the literature that takes its lead from the classic article by G. F. Moore. 'Christian Writers on Judaism', *Harvard Theological Review*, 14 (1921), pp. 197–254.

[13] See, for example, D. R. Schwartz, 'Kingdom of Priests – a Pharisaic Slogan?', *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tübingen 1992), pp. 57–80

[14] S. Mason, 'Chief Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin in Luke-Acts and Josephus', *Josephus, Judea and Christian Origins: Methods and Categories* (Peabody, MA 2009), p. 329.

poet.' … Good – imaginative – history is akin to retrospective poetry. It is about life as lived – as much of it as we can recapture.[15]

Lest this prescription be interpreted as a legitimation of intellectual anarchy, in which any sort of "new whole," based on "amalgamating disparate experience" is equally valid, Hill insisted that a historian's work must be as contextual as possible for the time and place studied:

> The historian should not stay on the surface of events; his interest should not be limited to State Papers, Parliamentary debates, acts and ordinances, decisions of judges and local magistrates, still less to battles and the amours of kings. He should listen – carefully and critically – to ballads, plays, pamphlets, newspapers, tracts, the 'whispering of the people', the cipher diaries and private correspondence of MPs, spiritual autobiographies – to every source that can help him or her to get the feel of how people lived and in what ways their sensitivity differed from ours … The historian must listen to alchemists and astrologers no less than to bishops, to demands of London crowds; and he or she must try to understand the motivation of rioters, whether they are labeled anti-Catholic or anti-enclosure rioters or simply food rioters.[16]

This paper argues that aspects of the account of the Pharisees in Luke – despite its obvious hostility, and blatant attempt to discredit the Pharisees – may teach us something about the historical Pharisees. Read through the first of the "double filters," the analysis of these sources has a solid contextual basis. When combined with the results of reading these sources through the modern social scientific filter, we possess two independent ways of viewing the ancient evidence that reinforce each other. When two independent ways of analysis agree, I propose, this result is worth serious consideration to be the basis for historical conclusions.[17]

III

One of the contributions of social scientific study of the various new religious movements that flourished in recent decades has been a better understanding of the dynamics by which people make choices to change their affiliation. We

[15] C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth 1993), pp. 437–438.

[16] *Ibid,* p. 437. For arguments against the limits of agnosticism specific to Jewish History and in direct dialogue with post-modernist trends, see M. Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History* (Oxford 2007).

[17] Compare Mason's reluctance to draw historical conclusions from the agreement of Luke and Josephus concerning the Pharisees, 'Chief Priests', p. 373. Both these authors used "the Pharisees … as part of the understood scenery of first century Palestine. Far from inflating the Pharisees' influence out of a desire to support them, for example, both authors assume it in order *to complain* about it." Nevertheless, for Mason, the historical hypotheses advanced thus far do not explain the narratives as we have them, and do not offer a comprehensive interpretation of those narratives. For that reason, "paradoxically, nearly two thousand years after … Pharisees … flourished, we await satisfactory explanations of their lives and times."

are no longer dependent on "post-conversion" narratives, in which the convert asserts that his or her life was always missing something until they found the truth that gave their life its fullest meaning. Nor do we demean the convert by categorizing him or her as mad, as having lost their mind, or having been "brain-washed." Converts are no longer regularly understood as unfortunate souls, whose weaknesses have been exploited by ruthless frauds or power-hungry psychopaths. As a result, the understanding of the processes by which people make major changes in their lives is more respectful of that decision and more interesting at the same time.

Perhaps the most important conclusion is that people make these moves in a new direction well before they are completely aware of the consequences. The motivation for change is not learning about or experiencing a new and more meaningful life style, or exposure to a convincing ideology or theology. The change is made well before the convert begins to be aware of the practical or theological consequences of his or her new direction. In a sense, the convert buys a pig in a poke: has he or she acquired a desirable pig or a far less desirable cat? Only time will tell what is in the bag, but the convert makes his or her move before learning the answer and its full implications.

If so, what induces the convert to make the change? Stark and Bainbridge argued that it was social networks. People changed in order to live the same way as their friends. Friendship came first; knowledge, conviction, and theology followed in its wake. In support of their conclusion, based on detailed empirical field work, Stark and Bainbridge turned to the Mormons. Widely known as one of the most successful missionizing religious groups in the contemporary world, growing at the staggering rate of 40 % per generation, the Mormons employed many different missionary strategies. At one point, however, the Mormons decided to study on their own which techniques were most effective, in which direction their investment of resources would yield the best results. As a result of this investigation, much less emphasis is now put on going door to door and preaching the Mormon faith. Instead, missionaries are instructed to come to neighborhoods and first become the friends of some locals. Invite them in, have them to your home first. Only after the friendship is established should the subject of religion be raised. In the aftermath, each convert will help spread the faith to other members of his or her social network, in ever expanding circles.[18]

The truth of the insight offered by Stark and Bainbridge is reflected in the experience and comments of those "professional" missionaries who have neither read Stark and Bainbridge nor engaged in the cost-effective analysis sponsored by the Mormons. The dynamics revealed by Stark and Bainbridge were also in

[18] R. Stark and W. S. Bainbridge, 'Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects', *American Journal of Sociology,* 85 (1980), pp. 1376–1395. Subsequently, Stark applied these ideas to the analysis of the past, R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton 1996).

play in antiquity. For example, in speaking about Abraham, the Rabbis emphasized two aspects of his activity: the numerous converts he brought under the wings of the covenant and his open house, actively searching for guests. In most texts, these two sides of Abraham were not connected with each other, but in at least two places the connection was explicit. First is an anonymous comment in *GenR*, 48 (ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 483): פתח האהל פתח טוב פתחתה לעוברים ושבים [פתח טוב פתחתה] לגרים. Next is a remark in *CantR* 1.3: שהיה אברהם אבינו מכניסן לביתו ומאכילן ומשקן ומאהיבן ומקרבן ומגיירן ומכניסן תחת כנפי השכינה

Among non-Jews, social networks were crucial in spreading the message of Alexander the False Prophet, according to Lucian. Once Alexander had convinced Rutilanus of his powers, the latter – who was a former consul, proconsul of Asia later in his career, and high in the Roman administration – spread the news among his many powerful friends, and they all hastened to Abonoteichus to go and hear something that concerned them. Indeed, the link between Alexander and Rutilanus was sealed by the marriage of Rutilanus, then in his sixties, to Alexander's daughter (Lucian, Alexander, 31 and 35). As a result of this connection, according to Lucian, Alexander "got Italy in hand," and was able to devise even greater projects all over the Roman Empire.

IV

It is from this perspective that I would like to analyze three passages in the gospel of Luke. The connection between these passages has often been noted,[19] but so far as I am aware they have not been understood in the context in which I propose to set them. Jesus has many disputes with Pharisees in the gospels. What makes these Luke passages special was that they presented these disputes as arising when a Pharisee invited Jesus to a meal, or Jesus shared a meal with Pharisees. The extent to which this context of commensality between Jesus and Pharisees was specific to Luke is indicated by a comparison of one of the Luke passages, 7:36, with its parallels in Matt 26:6 and Mark 14:3–9. Many details are different in the version in Matt 26:6: (1) Jesus was at the house of Simon the leper, not a Pharisee; (2) it was not specified that the woman was a sinner, rather the problem was that she poured an expensive ointment on Jesus, "wasting" the money on that luxury; (3) the disciples, not the host, were disturbed by what took place. Much the same is true of the account in Mark 14:3–9. Whether these episodes of commensality with the Pharisees in Luke reflect the historical Jesus or not is not my concern.[20] I believe, however, that Luke can teach us something

[19] See the summary of earlier scholarship, up until 1994, when the original article was written, in Mason, 'Chief Priests', pp. 332–338.

[20] For what it is worth, I note that according to D. Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem 1997), p. 22: "Luke and Matthew together provide the most authentic portrayal of Jesus' life and teachings."

about the Pharisees, and since missionizing is a word with negative connotations in Jewish circles, about their "outreach" campaign, their *kiruv* work, in modern Jewish parlance.

Of the three passages in Luke, I begin with the third, Luke 14:1–9. In this passage, the hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees was already explicit and the point of departure. When Jesus was dining at the house of a Pharisee, they (i.e. the Pharisees) were watching him, hoping to trap him into saying or doing something improper. Jesus, however, turned the tables on them:

[1] One sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him.
[2] And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.
[3] And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?"
[4] But they were silent. Then he took him and healed him, and let him go.
[5] And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a sabbath day?"
[6] And they could not reply to this.
[7] Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,
[8] "When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him;
[9] and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.
[10] But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.
[11] For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."
[12] He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid.
[13] But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,
[14] and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

The significance of this passage for my argument is the explicit recognition that commensality establishes social networks with their hierarchies. The host, especially if he was a "ruler," invited in order to have his place in the social order recognized. When Jesus saw that those who were invited "chose places of honor," Jesus encouraged behavior contrary to the usual patterns – not to seek places of honor at banquets, and not to invite friends, brothers, kinsmen, or rich neighbors when you were the host. These exhortations, however, help determine the regular expectations at events of this sort.[21] Places of honor reflected

[21] Compare Ben Sira's instructions to his students on how to behave at banquets, 31:12–32:13. On the overturning of social norms as the main message of Luke's banquet scenes, as

hierarchies that mattered to both hosts and guests; one usually invited friends, brothers, kinsmen, or rich neighbors in order to confirm one's ties with them, or to establish them in the first place. There was an expectation to give, receive, and reciprocate, which would inaugurate a new relationship or strengthen an already existing one.[22]

This has two implications for my analysis. First, when the Pharisees were accused elsewhere of wanting to be honored at banquets (e.g. Luke 11:43 and parallels), a point to be discussed below, we should wonder how they got invited to banquets in the first place. One obvious answer is that there was an element of reciprocation in the invitations the Pharisees received. They were invited because they had previously invited the hosts – presumably even "rulers" – to their banquets. Examples of the Pharisees extending invitations will also be found in the two earlier passages in Luke that will be analyzed next. The second implication is a suggestion based on Stark and Bainbridge, summarized above: when Pharisees invited people such as Jesus to their banquets it was not an accident or an act of neutral generosity. Nor was their goal just to have rich and powerful friends. As the sub-title of my paper insists, there is no such thing as a free lunch.[23] Rather, the Pharisees were attempting to turn their guests into a friend or kinsman, and as a consequence to have him begin observing the law as Pharisees did. It was an essential part of their "outreach" campaign.

As Mason notes, there is something perplexing in these passages in Luke as a whole: Luke's Jesus is something of a philosophical gadfly; when invited by the Pharisees, he always seems to be criticizing them. But if so, why do they keep inviting him? This is an "odd juxtaposition."[24] I suggest, however, that this apparent paradox can be explained when placed in the context of Pharisaic *kiruv.* Furthermore, establishing that sort of connection with a "ruler," who happened to be a Pharisee, as in our passage, could be especially fruitful, as he could bring many of those he "ruled" into the Pharisaic orbit. Or, in other terms, as a reform-

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part of his overall portrait of Jesus as a travelling benefactor, see W. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (Cambridge 1995), esp. pp. 43–60.

It is no accident that ancient Jewish literature contains a number of stories of feuds with significant political consequences that originated in banquets, from Hyrcanus and the Pharisees in Josephus, to Alexander Jannaeus and the Pharisees in Rabbinic sources, culminating in the Qamtsa / Bar Qamtsa cycle of stories. On the latter see, in particular, P. Mandel, 'Tales on the Destruction of the Temple: Between the Land of Israel and Babylonia', in I. Gafni (Ed.), *Center and Diaspora – The Land of Israel and the Diaspora in the Second Temple, Mishna and Talmud Periods* (Jerusalem 2004), pp. 141–158 (Hebrew).

[22] See the classic discussion of giving, receiving, and reciprocating in M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies,* translated by W. D. Halls (New York / London 1990).

[23] Note the title of the introduction by M. Douglas to Mauss, *The Gift,* p. vii: "No Free Gifts."

[24] Mason, 'Chief Priests', pp. 344–345.