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OUTLINE: THE WORLD VIEW OF THE MISHNAH AND THE WORLD VIEW OF THE BIBLE

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THE WORLD VIEW OF THE MISHNAH AND THE WORLD VIEW OF THE BIBLE

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I. Aim

The purpose of this paper is to open a discussion concerning the world view of the Mishnah and that of the Bible. The thesis is that this type of comparison has not yet been attempted; that there is value in such a comparison; and that if recent studies are validated, the world views of the Mishnah and of the Bible stand in contrast to one another at many points. The value of this study is indicated in the following section.

II. The Importance of Understanding the Worldview of the Mishnah

An explanation will be offered below of just what a world view is, but it is appropriate to begin by stating the importance of the topic at hand.

A. The importance for Jewish missions.

1. Understanding ancient and modern Judaism. Rabbinic and modern Judaism is often not well understood by Christians, and sometimes even by missionaries to the Jewish people. The result is that the work of Jewish missions has not had the edge that it should. Characterizations of rabbinic Judaism as nothing more than graceless legalism, although seldom found among contemporary scholars, is a view sometimes still entertained among Christian lay people and even Jewish believers. Conversely, in some scholarly circles there is a tendency to jump on a bandwagon which decries the New Testament portrayal of the Pharisees as biased[1] and affirms the affinity of Jesus (though not Paul)

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[1] See, e.g., Saldarini, Anthony J., "Reconstructions of Rabbinic Judaism," pp. 437-77 in Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). P. 457: both rabbinic literature presents interpretive difficulties, Josephus is tendentious in his portrayal of the Pharisees, and "the NT is polemical and must be used with extreme caution." Of course, every writer has a bias or is open to being mis-read. But why not then put the burden on the reader? Saldarini could have written, "the NT presents a particular perspective and the reader must seek to understand that perspective lest he mis-read the text."

with rabbinic Judaism.[2] In the extreme, this may correlate with the sentiment that there is no need for Jewish missions. The "two-covenant theory," though not new, is an increasingly widespread variety of this sentiment.[3]

A proper understanding of both ancient and modern Judaism can lay the groundwork for a proper approach to Jewish mission, one based on informed understanding. This understanding can be partly achieved by an analysis of world views.

2. Understanding for methodology of approach. In discovering not only the what of the difference but the why, we can learn governing principles to aid us in the best approach to take in preaching the Gospel. For instance, as we will see below, some scholars see the cataclysmic events of 70 and 135 A.D. as being the catalyst for the formation of the Mishnaic world view: it was a response to disaster. If so, how can we offer the Gospel as an alterative when disaster strikes among our own people? In an era where Jewish leaders speak of a "post-Holocaust theology," how can we best respond? Knowing the what and the why of the Mishnaic world view (and other Judaic world views) will sharpen the edge of our preaching and witness.

Another practical example: consider (as one example out of many) the popular charge that Judaism is concerned with the here-and-

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2 Although there are signs that Paul is again being placed in his Jewish context by non-Jewish scholars. Some important recent works on Paul that deal with his Jewishness from various perspectives include: Maccoby, Hyam, The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986); Segal, Alan F., Paul the Convert: the Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990); Sanders, E. P., Paul and Palestinian Judaism: a Comparison of Patterns of Religion (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); ibid., Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985, © 1983); Räisänen, Heikki, Paul and the Law (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, © 1983); Tomson, Peter J., Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles (v. 1 of Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum: Section 3, Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature; Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Westerholm, Stephen, Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and his Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). The classic text antedating all of these is Davies, W. D., Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

3 On the historical roots of the two-covenant theory, see for example Baumann, Arnulf H., "The Two Ways / Two Covenants Theory," and Glaser, Mitch, "Critique of the Two Covenant Theory," respectively pp. 36-43 and 44-70 in Mishkan 11 (1989).

now, Christianity only with the hereafter. It is true that modern Judaism is indeed concerned with the here-and-now. But if recent understandings of Mishnaic Judaism (to be sketched below) are correct, the case can be argued that Mishnaic Judaism -- the forerunner of all modern varieties of Judaism -- showed little concern with eschatology or the hereafter precisely because of a failure of theological nerve in the face of the events of 70 and 135 C.E. It can further be argued that later Talmudic Judaism recovered the eschatological hope and indeed showed an interest in the "hereafter." One can argue that the popular view of what Judaism is concerned with also represents a modern-day failure of nerve.

B. The importance for the understanding of Biblical theology.

Besides the area of missions, there is value for the area of our understanding of the Bible. One way of learning something is by way of contrast with something different. A valuable way to learn the Biblical viewpoint is by comparing it with a non-Biblical outlook.

One of the most discussed questions in Biblical studies is the question of continuity-discontinuity. This issue has implications in the areas of the unity of biblical theology (is it one or many?); the formulation of theological systems (e.g., dispensationalism, covenant theology); the methods of exegesis we may employ today (depending on whether one sees apostolic exegesis as normative or as culturally or otherwise conditioned).

Scholarly effort has already been expended with a view to ascertaining the continuity or lack of continuity between the Mishnah's hermeneutics and exegesis,[4] between portions of the Old Testament itself,[5] and between the Old and the New Testaments.[6]

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[4] Weingreen, J., From Bible to Mishna: the Continuity of Tradition , Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1976.

[5] Fishbane, Michael A., Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel , Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

[6] For which many books are available. See for instance Baker, D. L., Two Testaments, One Bible : A Study of Some Modern Solutions to the Theological Problem of the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976); Bruce, F. F., The Time is Fulfilled: Five Aspects of the Fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Ellis, E. Earle, Paul's Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book

One might think that when a continuity has been discovered in hermeneutic approach, continuity has also been discovered in overall conceptualizing, in the overall world view. Thus writers who show similarities between the Mishnah's exegesis of the Old Testament and Deuteronomy's "exegesis" of Exodus imply that the Mishnah is so to speak a natural outgrowth of the world and mind of the Old Testament. One finds statements such as, "In general, the rabbinic Judaism of the Mishnah was seen [in past scholarship] as the core of Judaism as it developed from the postexilic period..."[7]

Conversely, writers who deny that the New Testament employs rabbinic techniques of exegesis tend to imply that the mindset of the New Testament is distinct from that of later Judaism.

The truth is that while a similarity in world view may lead to a similarity in exegesis or hermeneutic approach, it may not; and a convergence of exegetical methods may show less an identity of world views than a cosmetic resemblance. Just as a world view is not a theology, it is also not a hermeneutic, although a world view can be reflected in the choice of hermeneutic employed.

The implications of this for biblical studies is that a search for underlying world views may help direct the discussion concerning unity and diversity in biblical theology . It may also aid in the construction of theological systems. Finally, the contrast with other world views will help underline the uniqueness of the biblical message.

III. Previous Studies Comparing Bible and Rabbinic Literature

Scholars have previously compared and contrasted the Bible and rabbinic literature. These studies have been in a number of areas: literary criticism; hermeneutics; and comparative religion or history-of-religions.

House 1981, © 1957); Feinberg, John S., ed., Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988).

[7] Saldarini, p. 439.

A. Literary Criticism: Comparison of Literary Parallels.

In New Testament circles, the most well known compilation of rabbinic parallels to New Testament material is found in Strack-Billerbeck's work. This work, and the use of parallels in general, came in for stringent criticism in Samuel Sandmel's essay "Parallelomania."[8] Sandmel defined "parallelomania" as

> That extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable and predetermined direction.[9]

Such a comment is directed to the misuse of literary parallels particularly in the area of ascriptions of originality among allegedly parallel material (that is, discussions as to which of supposedly parallel documents came first). But Sandmel also has comments on parallels in general. On the one hand, the similarity of milieu among various Jewish sources has the tendency to reduce the significance of parallels:

> Since all this literature is Jewish, it should reasonably reflect Judaism....Accordingly, even true parallels may be of no great significance in themselves.[10]

So parallels may not necessarily portend anything of great moment. But Sandmel goes even even further. He suggests that parallels do not necessarily prove agreement of views and attitudes between sources. In fact, adducing such parallels may disguise underlying differences:

> In the case of Paul and the rabbis, let us assume that at no less than 259 places, Paul's epistles contain acknowledged parallels to passages in the rabbis. Would this hypothetical situation imply that Paul and the rabbis are in thorough agreement? No. Is it conceivable that despite the parallels, Paul and the rabbis present attitudes and conclusions about the Torah that are diametrically opposed? Yes.[11]

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[8] Sandmel, S. "Parallelomania." Journal of Biblical Literature 81 (1962): 1-13.

[9] Ibid., p. 1.

[10] Ibid., p. 3.

[11] Ibid., p. 4.

In general, scholars have become more and more cognizant of the problem of locating true parallels, given the chronological distance between the New Testament and the redacted rabbinic writings. Sandmel goes further by cautioning against drawing hasty conclusions as to the significance of even true parallels. Also, as issues such as those explored in this paper (the larger concerns of world views, etc.) have surfaced in the scholarly community, the mere chronicling of parallels is not seen by scholars to have held the promise that it appeared to in earlier years.

B. Hermeneutics: Comparison of Exegetical Methods.

Another area of comparative study has been that of hermeneutics. Narrowly approached, the studies have often turned on comparison of exegetical "techniques". But more broadly, the issue is that of continuity and discontinuity. Evangelicals have broached this in regard to the relationship between Old and New Testaments. Similar questions have been explored regarding the Old Testament and the Mishnah.

One set of scholars has attempted to trace the roots of the exegesis of rabbinic Judaism to the pages of the Old Testament itself. J. Weingreen, for instance, entitles his book From Bible to Mishna: the Continuity of Tradition. In his preface he states his thesis:

> This book sets out to demonstrate that some of the rabbinic literary and legal processes of exposition which proliferate in the Talmud may be detected, in rudimentary form, in the Pentateuch in particular, but also sporadically in passages throughout other books in the Old Testament... It is claimed, then, that the mishnaic Rabbis, the Tannaim, were not the originators of the expositional process associated with them; they were heirs to an ancient, well-established tradition, traces of which are manifest in the writings of the Hebrew Old Testament.[12]

In a similar vein, Michael A. Fishbane, in Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, writes that his interest is:

> the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and its post-biblical offshoots *from the perspective of the history of exegesis* [emphasis his].[13]

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12 Weingreen, p. ix.

13 Fishbane, p. 3.

And:

> Is it possible that the origins of the Jewish exegetical tradition are native and ancient, that they developed diversely in ancient Israel, in many centres and at many times, and that these many tributaries met in the exile and its aftermath to set a new stage for biblical culture which was redirected, rationalized, and systematized in the lively environment of the Graeco-Roman world? To ask the question this way is *almost* to answer it.[14]

Both Weingreen and Fishbane are concerned with exegetical techniques and approaches, and with showing, from the vantage point of Jewish scholars, lines of continuity in exegetical method. Their concern is with continuity over a period of time. This may be described as a historical or diachronic approach to the continuity-discontinuity question.

On the other hand, comparison has also been made between the New Testament and rabbinic (and non-rabbinic) material in order to demonstrate a continuity of exegetical method within a roughly similar time period.[15] This approach is synchronic since it deals with continuities across communities, not across time. Richard Longenecker, for instance, says:

> "The Jewish roots of Christianity make it *a priori* likely that the exegetical procedures of the New Testament would resemble to some extent those of then contemporary Judaism. This has long been established with regard to the hermeneutics of Paul and the Talmud, and it is becoming increasingly evident with respect to the Qumran texts as well."[16]

Against this view, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., has sought to distance the exegesis of the New Testament from that of (later) rabbinic writings.[17]

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14 Ibid., p. 19.

15 But only "roughly." A good amount of criticism has been levelled against the comparison of the New Testament and (often much later) rabbinic literature without regard for their chronological separation. More recent comparative studies have taken that separation into account.

16 Longenecker, Richard N., Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 205.

17 Cf. Kaiser, Walter C., Jr., The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), s.v. "Rabbinic (or Jewish) exegesis" in the index.

C. Comparative Religion: Comparison of Social and Religious Concepts

This kind of approach moves beyond the comparison of literary parallels and instead seeks to reconstruct a social and religious world. Not sayings or individual customs, but larger entities such as institutions, social types, etc., form the basis for comparison.

In Jesus the Jew, Geza Vermes examines Jesus in relation to what we can learn conceptually from rabbinic literature, particularly later Talmudic rather than Mishnaic literature. So his chapters are for example called, "Jesus the Jew," "Jesus and charismatic Judaism," "Jesus the prophet," "Jesus the Lord," etc. The rabbinic material is drawn upon for general cultural and religious background.

For instance, in a comparison of Jesus and the first-century A.D. Hanina ben Dosa, Vermes examines the texts and concludes that "It is of interest to note that both Hanina and Jesus are said to have sensed the efficacy of their cures" and "The same lack of acquisitiveness [shown by Hanina], indeed the same positive embrace of poverty inspired by absolute reliance on God, is fundamental to Jesus' outlook and practice." Again, "Both Jesus and Hanina, and no doubt the Hasidim in general, showed a complete lack of interest in legal and ritual affairs and a corresponding exclusive concentration on moral questions."[18]

Much of the above work has been done by comparing the New Testament and later Talmudic material. This is the problem mentioned above of the substantial time gap between the two documents. Whereas even the Mishnah (the earliest part of the Talmud) was not compiled until c. 200 A.D., the Gemara (the later part of the Talmud) did not achieve final form until c. 400 A.D. for the Babylonian Talmud and c. 550 A.D. for the Palestinian Talmud.

In spite of all of the work just mentioned, what has not been compared until now is what can be termed the underlying world view of the document closest in time to that of the Bible, the Mishnah. A term like "world view" may seem overly broad, or else it may seem to imply

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18 Vermes, G., Jesus the Jew: a Historian's Reading of the Gospels (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 75-77 *passim*.

little more than "theology" -- and after all, religious concepts and institutions, as well as theology, have already been areas of comparison. Therefore the term "world view" must be defined.

IV. Definition of a World View

What is a "world view"? One definition offered at a popular level by James Sire is "a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic makeup of our world."[19] Sire elaborates that

> a world view is composed of a number of basic presuppositions, more or less self-consistent, generally unquestioned by each person, rarely, if ever mentioned by his friends, and only brought to mind when challenged by a foreigner from another ideological universe.[20]

Furthermore,

> A well-rounded world view includes basic answers to each of the following questions. (1) What is prime reality--the really real?...(2) Who is man?...(3) What happens to man at death?...(4) What is the basis of morality?...(5) What is the meaning of human history?...[21]

Charles Kraft discusses world view more rigorously as an area in the study of cultural anthropology. He gives four aspects of which a world view consists:

> (A) the central assumptions, concepts, premises more or less widely shared by the members of a culture or subculture...
> (B) these assumptions or premises are not reasoned out but assumed to be true without prior proof....
> (C) a people's worldview organizes their life and experiences into an explanatory whole that they seldom (if ever) question, unless, of course, they are forced to question it by...experiences that they find themselves unable to interpret from within their own worldview...or...an alternative set of explanations and assumptions that they cannot either ignore or explain away....

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19 Sire, James W., The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 17.
20 Ibid., p. 18.
21 Ibid.

> (D) there are two basic types of worldview assumptions:... cosmological or existential...ethical or normative...[which latter is the same as] their value system.[22]

This could all be distilled into the following definition and statement of content of a world view:

Definition: A worldview is a set of central assumptions which are shared in a group. It is therefore **foundational**, **unconscious**, and **collective**.

Content: a worldview consists of assumptions regarding God, the universe, and man; and assumptions regarding good and bad: that is, assumptions regarding **what is** and also **what should be**.

Further, Kraft further discusses the functions of a worldview:

Functions: a worldview **explains**, **validates**, **gives support**, **organizes** reality, and **adjusts** to new perceptions.

Most germane for this paper is Kraft's discussion of how worldviews change and the types of change that may be encountered: "A change of worldview will always be accompanied by a crisis situation."[23] The importance of this will become apparent later in this paper.

It should be apparent from these definitions that a world view and a theology are two different things. The former is generally unconscious; the latter is a clearly conscious formulation and systematization of religious beliefs. Theology can be subjected to debate and reformulation; one does not normally debate whether to adhere to a given world view or not.

The examples given by Sire and Kraft as the components of a world view can be addressed either at the conscious level of theology or at the unconscious level of world view. Although a theology can reflect an underlying world view and vice-versa, it is also possible for adherents of one world view to hold different theologies, or for those affirming the same theology to live according to different world views. In seeking to compare the world view of the Mishnah with the world view of the Bible,

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[22] Kraft, Charles, MB 520: Anthropology, class notes [Fuller Theological Seminary], secs. 3:1-2. Additional aspects are actually given, but these are the most germane for this discussion.

[23] Kraft, MB 520 class notes, sec. 27:1.

we will therefore not be looking as much for explicit statements of belief as for indications of underlying, unconscious ways of understanding the world.

Below, the work of Thomas Kuhn is discussed. Kuhn provides another way of understanding a world view in terms of his notion of "paradigms" and particularly the nature of how paradigms change over time. Sire is most concerned with a "latitudinal" analysis of what a world view entails. Kraft is additionally interested in the process of world view change, while Kuhn in particular addresses the nature of paradigms and crises as instrumental in the change of worldviews.

V. Recent Descriptions of the Mishnah's World View

Given the importance of the subject, what have scholars said on the subject? Some have recently made attempts to discover the world view of the Mishnah. They have utilized a variety of scholarly tools such as form criticism and insights from cultural anthropology. They have adopted a perspective which seeks to understand the Mishnah apart from the understandings of much of later rabbinic commentary. We will look at the work of each scholar in turn.

A. The View of Jacob Neusner

Jacob Neusner has been one of the first to approach the question of the Mishnah's world view and he remains the most prolific. His interests originally centered on the dating and sequence of rabbinic attributions and ideas as given in the Mishnah. Using a form-critical approach, Neusner sought to date various strands of Mishnaic material by discovering which ideas were "logically prior to" other ideas.[25] He categorized material according to whether it was supposed to originate from the period before 70 A.D., between 70 and 135 A.D., or post-135. These particular dates were chosen as being the two historical foci around which major historical changes took place: the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, and even more importantly, the making of Jerusalem into a gentile city in 135,

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25 Neusner, J. Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 19.

thereby ending for the foreseeable future any hope of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple.

Having determined a historical sequence for the Mishnaic material, Neusner then focused more closely upon the concepts and world view of what he calls the "philosophers," that is, the compilers, of the Mishnah. More about Neusner's methodology will be said in the next section. Here an outline of five salient features of his understanding of the Mishnaic world view are given:

1. The Mishnah's world view is historically conditioned.

It is a traumatic response to the events of 70 and of 135. The destruction of the Temple in 70 would not have been sufficient in and of itself to lead to the formation of a new world view, but when the rebuilding of the city and of the Temple became all but hopeless after 135 -- when it was realized that the destruction was permanent -- then a new world view was articulated. In this regard, the formation of the Mishnaic world view is similar (in Neusner's thinking) to the formation of the world view of "P" after the events of 586 B.C.[26]

2. The Mishnah's world view is a response of despair.

It is the response of trauma. Indeed, Neusner has drawn parallels between the frame of mind of the "philosophers" of the Mishnah and the frame of mind of modern Jewry, who are said to suffer similarly

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26 Cf. also Mandelbaum, I., A History of the Mishnaic Law of Agriculture: Kilayim (Atlant: Scholars Press, 1982) pp. 3-4: "Both P and Mishnah take shape in the aftermath of historical catastrophes...It is thus noteworthy that both P and Mishnah respond to these similar historical circumstances with an interest in restoring order to a world which to them appears to lie in utter confusion."

The fact that much of the modern Mishnaic research appears to follow critical methods used in biblical studies needs to be taken note of. One might well ask whether Neusner's isolation of three distinct periods of Mishnaic formulation is any more viable than the isolation of documents such as "P" or "J" in the Bible. One answer is that in Biblical studies the delineation of various perspectives may be accurate without the documentary results necessarily being correct. One may detect a "priestly" style or outlook within the Scripture which is not the precipitate of a document "P" but a reflection of one theology within the overall Biblical theology.

from the traumatic events of the Holocaust. Therefore modern Jewry, and for that matter the world at large, has much to learn from the response of the Mishnah. But what kind of response was this? It was a move into a world of "fantasy," a world in which, although the Temple and cult were now gone, the Mishnah could "act as though nothing had changed although everything had changed." It was a world in which external realities were moved into the sphere of the communal mind of Israel. In modern terms, we would describe this as a "mind game." However, as Neusner describes it, it was not a retreat, but a creative means of dealing with the situation at hand, a means which led to the survival and flourishing of the Jewish people.[27]

3. The Mishnah's world view is <u>ahistorical</u>.

Another way to describe this feature is to say that the Mishnah's world view is one of "stasis";[28] E. P. Sanders calls it "semi-Platonic."[29] Whereas in point two above the description of the world view as one of despair and fantasy tells us about the *frame of mind* of the Mishnah's "philosophers" (they were traumatized), point three tells us the specific *form* their "fantasy" took (they abandoned interest in history). Bereft of Temple and cult, the Mishnah refrains from expressing any historical concerns. The external Temple and cult are transferred to the sphere of the mind, in which study of the cult replaces the actual worship and in which the idea of priestly holiness becomes applied to daily home life.

This "semi-Platonism" Sanders aptly describes in this way: "What is important is not the linear line of history, but the vertical line which connects the altar, or the hearth and table which substitute for it, with heaven."[30] The characterization as "semi-Platonic" could also refer to the way the Mishnah, in Neusner's view, considers the physical cult and Temple as less important than -- even as shadows or reflections of -- the

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27 Neusner, <u>Evidence</u>, p. 235.

28 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 27.

29 Sanders, E.P., <u>Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies</u> (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), p. 315.

30 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 312.

"real" cult and Temple within the people of Israel themselves. It might be argued that such a view makes the Mishnah not merely ahistorical but anti-historical,[31] and perhaps to avoid going that far, Sanders designates the view merely as "*semi*-Platonic." The main point for Neusner is that the Mishnah lacks any strong sense of history.

4. The Mishnah's world view is <u>anthropocentric and community oriented</u>.

It is anthropocentric because the *intentions of human beings* in performing a given act become of decisive importance: by intending to use a vessel in a certain way, for example, that vessel may become susceptible to ritual uncleanness, while a different intention with regard to the same vessel does not render it susceptible. It is community-centered because with the absence of Temple and land, the Jewish community as a whole becomes the "place" in which the cult is carried on: the cult internalized as indicated in the point (3).

5. The Mishnah's world view is concerned with <u>sanctification</u>, not salvation.

Because this world view is ahistorical, there is no concern with a Messiah who is to come within history and affect history. Because it is a response of despair, the Messianic hope plays no role. Because the cult was concerned with sanctification and has now become internalized, sanctification becomes a feature of this world view. As Neusner describes it, the concern is not salvation, with its eschatological and historical emphasis, but sanctification, with a focus on the routine, daily acts of behavior that produce sanctity or lack thereof.

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31 Sanders, <u>Jewish Law</u>, p. 313 actually attributes this extreme to Neusner, but in his choice of terminology seems to draw back.

B. Problems with and Objections to Neusner's View

Because of the volume of his writing and the amount of interaction that has taken place, Neusner's view of the Mishnah's world view is more complete and articulated than are the views of others. The question naturally arises as to how Neusner has arrived at his conclusions. Although this is not a full-scale analysis of his methodology, he has come in for severe criticism on several counts, and those criticisms should be noted. **Responses to the criticisms are offered here not as much in defense of Neusner's particular ideas as to validate the continued pursuit of the Mishnah's world view, and to foreclose premature dismissals of his results.** I do not say that I agree with Neusner's final constructions, nor that his critics are wrong.

1. Neusner uses the method of form criticism to trace a history of ideas, which is a dubious procedure.

Neusner demarcates the Mishnah into "units of thought" corresponding to their origin either pre-70, 70-135, or post-135. To achieve this, he utilizes a kind of form criticism in which the Mishnah is broken down into individual units or pericopes based on considerations of form and idea. In particular, Neusner distrusts the historical veracity of the Mishnaic attributions to named (and datable) authorities, and prefers a chronological breakdown based on which ideas are "logically prior" to others.

Shaye J. D. Cohen summarizes this approach:

> Neusner attempts to see whether the law progresses in logical fashion, whether later generations introduce principles which logically are posterior to principles posited by scholars of a previous generation. If it can be shown that the law develops logically, with no gaps or unexpected leaps, Neusner concludes that the ascriptions have thereby been verified, not for the individuals who allegedly made the legal statements involved, but for the generations to which they belonged...Neusner therefore attempts to trace the history of ideas, not the history of texts.[32]

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32 Cohen, Shaye J. D., "Jacob Neusner and Counter-Rabbinics [review of Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah], Conservative Judaism 37 (1983), p. 52.

It has been objected that the evidence for "logical priority" could be the result of redactional activity as much as the result of actual development of ideas,[33] and that Neusner has overlooked other methods of approach such as philological, stylistic, and source analysis.[34] In addition, Neusner's chronological dating of Mishnaic content is said to be tenuous in regard to the anonymous citations of the Mishnah, and in his failure to appreciate the reflection of common Near Eastern law (hence, not easily or narrowly datable) in the laws of the Mishnah.[35]

Yet it may be questioned whether these criticisms invalidate Neusner's general conclusions concerning the Mishnah's world view. If the breakdown of pericopes into the three time periods can be questioned on a one-by-one basis, he is nevertheless also dealing with the final Mishnah as a "canonical" document of Judaism. Just as we seek to ascertain the meaning of Scripture as a whole, canonically, so there is validity to treating the Mishnah this way. In fact, Cohen does affirm that "Neusner has made sense of many of the characteristic thought patterns of the Mishnah just as Mary Douglas has made sense of many of the characteristic thought patterns of Leviticus."[36]

2. Neusner imports his own twentieth-century interests.

Shaye J. D. Cohen claims that Neusner has imported his own concerns into the Mishnah.[37] He argues that the real crisis in Neusner's mind is that of the Holocaust.

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33 Saldarini, p. 444.

34 Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics," pp. 52-53. In addition, on "logical priority" cf. McArthur, Harvey K. and Johnston, Robert M., They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), p. 138: "The matter to be illustrated [in a rabbinic parable] is logically prior to the illustration." In a general way, that would affirm a chronological priority as well, but one could imagine a particular parable text in which the parable predated the particular matter being illustrated.

35 Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics," pp. 52-53.

36 Ibid., p. 55.

37 But if modern hermeneutics teaches us anything, it is that the text and the reader interact. In a sense, we do need to import our concerns while avoiding reading into the text. It is that balance which makes great literature great, and which makes Scripture existentially compelling. And even while we "import our concerns," we need to import God's concerns!

> Neusner himself reads the Mishnah in the light of his own interest...Neusner's interests, in fact, are not those of the second century but those of the twentieth. His Palestinian Jews are archetypes for contemporary American Jews, his "catastrophes" of 70 and 135 are archetypes for the Holocaust, and his Mishnaic theology is an archetype for theology after Auschwitz. Neusner has not read the Mishnah "on its own terms."[38]

But Neusner is concerned to show the relevance of the Mishnah for everyone, whether Jewish or not, just as any great writing is relevant for all. It may be that rather than importing his concerns, Neusner sees a similarity in circumstance between then and now.

In this connection, it is interesting to read Cohen's article "Yavneh Revisited." When the Temple stood, it was "the institutional basis of monism," but after the destruction, "rabbinic Judaism is dominated by pluralism, the ideology which allows the existence of conflicting truths. The truth is many, not one."[39] This sounds like Cohen is importing modern, relativistic ideas about truth into early rabbinic Judaism!

3. Neusner argues from silence and ignores evidence that is there.

According to E. P. Sanders, for Neusner the importance of a given topic is gauged by its presence in a document: "The most important things are those which appear most frequently and which get the most space."[40] For example, Neusner measures the Pharisaic passages in the rabbinic material, finds that 67% of them deal with food laws, and draws the conclusion that food laws were of great concern for the Pharisees.[41] Again, Neusner argues that the presence of material that deals with repeated, perennial acts indicates a concern for stasis and ahistoricity.[42]

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38 Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics," p. 59.

39 Cohen, ""Yavneh Revisited: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," SBL Seminar Papers (1982), p. 57.

40 Sanders Jewish Law, p. 14. And, p. 315: "[To Neusner] topics are everything. What is not a topic is opposed; things that are topics, when added together, are a world view."

41 Ibid., p. 14.

42 See Neusner, Evidence, pp. 139, 169.

Conversely, silence means lack of interest, or "direct opposition." "Neusner assumes that they denied whatever they did not include."[43] Again as an example, the Mishnah is silent on the events of 70 and 135 and "therefore opposed the view -- redemption in history -- which led to them."[44]

Sanders also faults Neusner for his handling of evidence which is there. He is criticized for neglecting a good amount of theological material to be found in the Mishnah, such as liturgy, Tamid 7:4, or the tractate Pirke Avot.[45]

This area of arguing from silence and ignoring evidence is perhaps the most salient criticism against Neusner's methodology. There are certainly several weaknesses of assuming too much from silence: there may be underlying shared assumptions between writer and reader that are taken for granted at the outset of the discussion.[46] Or, "what is not there may be absent simply because it does not fit the genre."[47] (On genre, see the following section.)

But Sanders' complaint that in neglecting such theology-rich passages as Tamid 7:4, "theology disappears entirely" may be adduced in support of the contention above that world view and theology can be thought of as two distinct, though related, entities. Might Neusner not be pointing us to the underlying world-view foundation upon which the theology, not addressed by him, stands?[48]

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43 Sanders, Jewish Law, pp. 317,323.

44 Ibid., p. 323.

45 Ibid., p. 319, 326. See also Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics", p. 59, on "Neusner's persistent refusal to attend to the Mishnah's own explicit data."

46 Sanders, Jewish Law, p. 322.

47 Ibid., p. 322.

48 In fairness it should also be said that the roots of Neusner's methodology in form-critical work may well have led him to focus on matters of structure, numerical frequency, and the like, with undue attention to matters found only in passing or that occur with relative infrequency, such as liturgical portions. If his results are eventually judged to be valid, it may well be in the area of structural matters which are the concern of such fields as cultural anthropology, a field in which at least partial validation of Neusner's results has occurred. See below, section VI. See also Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics," p. 55: "The omissions have to be explained if the Mishnah is to make sense as a whole." And: "In sum, Neusner interprets the Mishnah as a whole, but he does not interpret the whole Mishnah."

4. Neusner makes a genre mistake.

This criticism comes repeatedly from E. P. Sanders. Sanders' chief complaint is that Neusner makes a mistake in genre determination: the Mishnah is not a book of "philosophy," but "a collection of legal debates and opinions."[49] This explains the lack of explicit mention of history as well as the present-tense language of the Mishnah. It also explains the Mishnah's focus on intentionality, since "generically, law presupposes human action."[50] Cohen also remarks that, "Neusner never attempts to identify the genre of the Mishnah."[51]

But Sanders has overstated matters. First, even within legal parameters, it is still debated as to whether the Mishnah is a law code or merely law collection. Second, even legal material has a philosophy that underlies it, both an overall philosophy of law and specific approaches to particular questions. Third, the "what" and the "how" of a legal collection can be revealing. The <u>way</u> any legal collection is put together does in fact reveal something of the underlying world view of its framers, and <u>what is treated</u> -- the topics -- does in fact reveal something of their importance to the authors, or at least to the society in which they lived and moved. When a modern law code treats of the rights of tenants, we may be sure that tenants are important in that society. Finally, Sander's mistake is that although the Mishnah is a law collection, it is a <u>religious</u> law collection and hence presupposes a certain religious world view. As such, one will find, even is obligated to find, the underlying "philosophy," or world view, or theology.

5. Neusner errs in believing that there was a historical crisis.

According to Cohen, the silence of the Mishnah on the subject of the Temple destruction shows that response to that event was not the response of trauma and the consequent structuring of something new, but

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49 Sanders, <u>Jewish Law</u>, pp. 313-17.

50 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 317.

51 Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics," p. 55.

the response of pragmatism, the practical meeting of crisis needs.[52] In fact, he hedges himself by using the term "crisis" but denying the presence of any "air of crisis."[53]

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz also comments that "the Mishnah itself contains only infrequent references to the destruction of the Temple."[54] He cites Neusner's observation that the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch were aware of that event and his extrapolation of that awareness to the compilers of the Mishnah. In the final analysis Eilberg-Schwartz prefers social to historical explanations of change, but grants that his own explanation may complement the historical ones.

Interestingly, both writers argue from silence, the very method that Sanders roundly condemned Neusner for. The truth is that one cannot blindly dismiss or utilize an argument from silence. A full measure of evidence must be considered, of which silence on a topic is one piece.

Silence or not, did the events of 70 and 135 constitute a crisis for the Jewish community? As already suggested, Cohen is ambivalent about the extent to which these events constituted a true crisis. In regard to tannaitic literature, he says, "None of us doubts that these difficulties were sufficiently numerous and severe to constitute a crisis but we must be careful lest we exaggerate. The air of crisis which pervades the apocalypses of Barukh and Ezra is conspicuously absent from tannaitic literature."[55]

Yet if the events were sufficient to create an "air of crisis" in the apocalyptic literature, why not in the rest of the Jewish community? And if the Mishnah was compiled c. 200 A.D., one might not necessarily expect an "air of crisis" to be evident: the crisis would now have been 65 years in the past. As it is Cohen provides a list of what he calls the "difficulties" following 70 and 135: "the cessation of the sacrificial cult, the loss of the sacred center of the cosmos, the removal of the physical symbols of God's presence among the Jews, the public display of the

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52 Ibid., p. 58.

53 Cohen, "Yavneh," p. 45.

54 Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, "Creation and Classification in Judaism: From Priestly to Rabbinic Conceptions," History of Religions 26 (1987), p. 378, n. 34.

55 Cohen, "Yavneh," p. 45.

power of Rome and her Gods [sic] and of the relative powerlessness of Israel and her God, the massacre of over half a million people, the failure of apocalyptic dreams and prophecies, the abolition of the sanhedrin and the cultic functions of the priesthood, and the destruction and confiscation of Judean land and property."[56]

Even on Cohen's accounting, we might reasonably describe these events as a "crisis," and might reasonably suppose that a "response to crisis" followed in their wake.

6. Neusner works in isolation from later documents.

It is well-known that Neusner compartmentalizes "Judaisms" (sic) into different categories.[57] There is the Judaism of the Mishnah, the Judaism of the Tosefta, the Judaism of the Babylonian Gemara, etc. Partly this is a reaction to an earlier kind of scholarship in rabbinic literature. In such classic works as George Foot Moore's Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim, a wide spectrum of Jewish thought was homogenized across space and time into the single entity of "normative Judaism." And so Neusner treats each document of Judaism as reflecting its own watertight system. Cohen remarks, "This procedure has the advantage of boldness and simplicity, but it makes as much sense as a study of the Gospel of Mark which ignores the Gospels of Matthew and Luke..."[58]

This criticism may be a salient one. Once again we are back to an issue broached at the start of this paper, the question of continuity and discontinuity. Not only with regard to Bible and Mishnah or Old Testament and New Testament, but even within Judaism itself this question is being raised. Once again, the balance needs to be found between asserting total discontinuity between the various "Judaisms" and asserting their total continuity or identity. Neusner's approach at least serves as a corrective to earlier, homogenizing approaches.

This concludes the extended review of Neusner's work and of the criticisms that have been brought against it. It has been important to

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56 Ibid.

57 But Samuel Sandmel also speaks of "Judaisms"; the term did not originate with Neusner. See "Parallelomania," pp. 1 ff.

58 Cohen, "Counter-Rabbinics," p. 56?

cover this material because of the extent of Neusner's work in this area. Other scholars however, have also made contributions, and we now look at their work.

C. The View of Howard Eilberg-Schwartz

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz has not discussed the world view of the Mishnah as broadly as has Neusner. He has chosen instead to concentrate on the issue mentioned above as point four of Neusner's conclusions, namely, the issue of intentionality. He has articulated this particularly in The Human Will in Judaism: The Mishnah's Philosophy of Judaism[59] and in various articles.

1. The Mishnah's world view differs from the "priestly" world view by highlighting human intentionality and thought.

By "priestly" Eilberg-Schwartz means that strand of thought found in "P." One need not accept the documentary hypothesis, though, to find a priestly perspective within the larger unified biblical theology. Such a perspective would be found in Leviticus and Ezekiel, for example. For Eilberg-Schwartz, Genesis 1 also falls into this category (that chapter is considered "P" material by documentary critics).

The "priestly" world view, then, is concerned with *classifying things*, with classification schemes. Genesis 1 and Leviticus, with their categories and classifications, are representative of the priestly way of thinking. Here Eilberg-Schwartz follows the research of cultural anthropologists such as Mary Douglas.[60] She concludes that the way kosher food is categorized in Leviticus correlates with the way animals are categorized in the creation account of Genesis 1. In general, the priestly classification is based on *physical*, *created* traits and is therefore *rigid* and *fixed*.

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59 Eilberg-Schwartz, H., The Human Will in Judaism: The Mishnah's Philosophy of Judaism (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

60 Primarily in such books as Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1984).

On the other hand, the Mishnaic system is more flexible and is based on human choices; it is more anthropocentric. The Mishnah discusses "three ways in which humans can affect the classification of things: through their actions (what individuals do with objects), through their intentions (what they intend to do with objects), and through the norms that are spontaneously generated by the community (what Israelites typically do with a given kind of object)."[61]

This represents a revolutionary shift in world view: "The Mishnah pushes in directions that, I believe, are not only unpredictable from the priestly writings but are in tension in fundamental ways with the priestly point of view."[62] Even more strongly: "In making human activity and though a decisive criterion for classification, the Mishnah claims that God's own categorizations are sometimes irrelevant."[63]

2. The Mishnah's world view originates from social rather than historical circumstance.

Eilberg-Schwartz not only follows Mary Douglas. He also bases his conclusions on the work of Emile Durkheim, "who argued that a group's cognitive scheme, especially its theory of classification, ultimately stems from and is rooted in the form or organization of the community."[64]

Priestly literature was written by priests. The Mishnah was written by sages. Where the priests were priests by heredity, "the title of sage was not hereditary but was based on an individual's mastery of Scripture and its interpretive tradition." In a phrase, "status was achieved rather than ascribed." And so, "since in their community a

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61 Eilberg-Schwartz, "Creation," pp. 364-65.

62 Ibid., p. 365.

63 Ibid., p. 369. It is interesting to note that while "innerbiblical exegetes" such as Fishbane affirm continuity in exegetical method, cultural anthropological studies such as those of Douglas and Eilberg-Schwartz suggest *dis*continuity in underlying world view. It may prove helpful to the continuity-discontinuity debate in other fields to be explicit concerning what level the continuity or discontinuity is at: world view, for instance, is more foundational that the use of a particular exegetical technique. The use of a given technique may mean something different if a different world view is adopted.

64 Eilberg-Schwartz, "Creation," p. 375.

person had a great deal of control over his own status, the sages were unwilling to accept a view that gave humans no active role in shaping the character of reality...Just as individuals in this community could to some extent determine their own status, so in their taxonomy [that is, scheme of classification], the status of objects depended to a great extent on what people thought and did."[65].

Both Neusner and Eilberg-Schwartz agree that the Mishnah draws on the priestly interest in systematization and classification. They both see areas of continuity despite a basic underlying discontinuity. Neusner believes the continuity lies in the fact that the framers of the Mishnah faced a similar historical situation as did the priests of 586 B.C. Hence, the compilers of the Mishnah drew on the thinking of the earlier priests, much as he would like 20th century Jews, facing once again a similar situation after the Holocaust, to draw on the thinking of the Mishnah. Eilberg-Schwartz simply says that both the priests and the framers of the Mishnah were intellectuals who shared similar outlooks and interests. His explanation does not appeal to history at all.[66]

As a comment to Eilberg-Schwartz's work, it can be said that it would be a mistake to reduce explanations to social ones as much as it would be to reduce them to historical ones. In this case, it is problematic to invoke sociology apart from history. One wants to ask why the rabbinic community came to differ from the priestly community -- a historical question -- and one would imagine that the explanation has something to do with the destruction of the Temple and disappearance of the priesthood. Second, there is a kind of psychological problem in Eilberg-Schwartz's explanation. Even in Old Testament times, priests co-existed with other groups. Are we to imagine that even as sages of the early rabbinic period "were unwilling to accept" the priestly outlook, so in the Bible non-priestly groups "were unwilling to accept" the outlook of the priests? Or are we to think that a concern to follow God and his laws ("priestly") was incompatible with human drive and initiative ("rabbinic")? It does seem plausible that a shift in emphasis from divine creation to the human intentionality occurred by the time of the Mishnah. However, this conclusion must be nuanced by reference to various outlooks (priestly, non-priestly) within the Old Testament itself.

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65 Ibid., pp. 379-80.

66 Eilberg-Schwartz, Human Will, p. 192, p. 226 n. 10; "Creation", p. 378, n. 34.

D. The View of Shaye J. D. Cohen

Shaye Cohen addresses the question of the Mishnah's world view as part of a larger discussion concerning the nature of rabbinic Judaism after 70 A.D. His points concerning the loss of the Temple as a "focal point" and the ascendancy of "individual", as opposed to "institutional," authority, are more questions of historical development than of world view. However, he does summarize a feature of the post-70 world view in the phrase "from monism to pluralism."[67]

Cohen maintains that as long as the Temple stood, the world view was "monism." This means that "only one holy site, one altar, one cult, and one priesthood can find favor in God's eyes." This "monism" led to the rise of a number of competing sects, each of whom "defined themselves in reference to the temple and therefore arrogated the temple's exclusivistic claims. Only the sect is the true Israel and only the sect correctly fulfills God's wishes. Some of the sects admitted that the temple was still legitimate to one degree or another, but all the sects argued that every variety of Judaism other than its own is illegitimate. This is the monism of the temple transferred to the sect."

But things changed after 70: "With the destruction of the temple in 70, the institutional basis of monism is removed." The existence of disputes within rabbinic literature is then taken as evidence of a new, post-70 world view: "Rabbinic Judaism is dominated by pluralism, the ideology which allows the existence of conflicting truths. The truth is many, not one."[68]

There are several problems with this reconstruction. First,as remarked above, this all sounds as though Cohen is reading modern concepts of relativism back into the Mishnaic period. Second, there are other explanations possible for the existence of the disputes (see below). And third, Cohen does not make clear why, if the Temple was standing as <u>the</u> holy place, it did not function to <u>unify</u> various sects but according to him led to the proliferation of exclusivistic, competing groups. On the

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67 Cohen, "Yavneh," p. 57.

68 <u>Ibid</u>.

whole, the conclusions of Neusner and Eilberg-Schwartz seem more plausible that those of Cohen.

VI. Evidence from outside the Mishnah in favor of the basic thesis that a new world view displaced an older one

Neusner based his conclusions largely on work with the text of the Mishnah itself. Eilberg-Schwartz appealed more broadly to the work of cultural anthropology and sociology. In this section we will look more widely at evidence from outside the Mishnah for the plausibility that a world view change occurred. Further research may or may not validate the individual conclusions of the above scholars, but work in other fields of study strongly suggests that in their basic results they cannot be written off. They must be interacted with and if necessary, supplemented by further scholarship.

The following factors lend plausibility to both the general and the specific features enumerated above as being constituent of the Mishnah's world view.

A. General: Thomas Kuhn's view of history and paradigm in science.

Thomas Kuhn is best known for his landmark book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.[69] His thesis is that in the history of science, progress is not made by the steady accumulation of knowledge building on previous knowledge. Rather, scientific progress is by the accumulation of anomalies, things that do not gibe with the current theory. At some point, and for a variety of reasons, a crisis develops which leads to a shift of "paradigm," a change in the theory or model

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[69] Kuhn, Thomas S., The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: Second Edition, Enlarged (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, ©1962).

previously employed.[70] Kuhn's thesis assumes that "crises are a necessary precondition for the emergence of novel theories."[71] And, "because it demands large-scale paradigm destruction and major shifts in the problems and techniques of normal science, the emergence of new theories is generally preceded by a period of pronounced professional insecurity. As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should. Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones."[72]

No mere anomaly suffices to bring about a new paradigm:

> Sometimes an anomaly will clearly call into question explicit and fundamental generalizations of the paradigm...or...the development of normal science may transform an anomaly that had previously been only a vexation into a source of crisis...presumably there are still other circumstances that can make an anomaly particularly pressing, and ordinarily several of these will combine.[73]

Kuhn's thesis lends plausibility to the idea that a revolution in world view emerged consequent to the events of 70 and 135. If the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.) and still more, the loss of likelihood that the Temple would be rebuilt (135 A.D.) constituted anomalies in the current world view which led to a crisis, then we would anticipate the likelihood of a "paradigm shift" in the world view. Of course, one might ask whether similar historical crises had not occurred before in the history of Israel, and whether they had also led to fundamental "paradigm shifts"; and if not, why not? This question will be explored more fully later. Here, Kuhn's work serves to exemplify the nature of radical change in the history of thought.

In fact, some have suggested that Kuhn's work be applied to areas outside the history of science. David Fischer in his book Historical Fallacies, mentions Kuhn "from whom historians in every field have much to learn." He finds Kuhn's work, with only a mild caveat, to be potentially

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70 The problem in the term "paradigm" is noted by Kuhn. pp. 23ff. and pp. 174ff.

71 Kuhn, p. 77. See also above, n. 23.

72 Ibid., pp. 67-68.

73 Ibid., p. 82.

applicable to the writing and narration of history.[74] Likewise, Vern Poythress utilizes Kuhn to explicate the construction of theological systems.[75] Here, then, it is suggested that Kuhn's work is of value for explicating the nature of foundational world view shifts.[76]

In connection with Kuhn, it is instructive to recall Cohen's view that such phenomena as the existence of disputes within the rabbinic literature suggests the emergence of a new pluralism. Kuhn, however, writes:

> Confronted with anomaly or with crisis, scientists take a different attitude toward existing paradigms, and the nature of their research changes accordingly. The proliferation of competing articulations, the willingness to try anything, the expression of explicit discontent, the recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals, all these are symptoms of a transition from normal to extraordinary research.[77]

"Competing articulations," then, may have little to do with a philosophy of pluralism and much to do with the presence of anomalies or crises. That disputes are present within the rabbinic literature far beyond the time of the Mishnah may indicate that continued Jewish existence in the diaspora and its attendant problems constituted, to one degree or another, an ongoing crisis.[78] (It should be noted that Morton Smith attributes the presence of minority opinions to Hellenistic influence, offering a third explanation for the disputes.)[79]

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74 Fischer, David Hackett, Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 161-62.

75 Poythress, Vern Sheridan, Science and Hermeneutics: Implications of Scientific Method for Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

76 Of course, much more remains to be discussed. Were the events of 70 and 135 perceived as anomalies in either the (unconscious) world view or in the (conscious) theology? Are there parallels elsewhere in history to the proposed resolution of the crisis in a new world view?

77 Kuhn, pp. 90-91.

78 Although cf. above, where I suggested contra Cohen that the reason no "air of crisis" pervades the Mishnah might have been that by 200 A.D. the crises had already been 65 years in the past. But if the presence of disputes does imply crisis, then I suggest the crisis in mind is no longer that of 135 but that of continued diaspora existence, a crisis which may then have led to a resurgence of eschatological interest in the later Gemaras (to follow Neusner). See further on in this paper.

79 "Smith argues that the preserving of minority opinions is a result of Greek influences" (Porton, Gary G., "Diversity in Postbiblical Judaism," pp. 57-80 in Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters, edited by Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg [Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986].)

2. Specific: Convergence of results from several fields and several scholars.

Though there is a certain idiosyncrasy to Neusner's approach, some of his conclusions are validated by other methods of approach.

The Results of Cultural Anthropological Studies. Let us take the example of the notion of intentionality. E. P. Sanders objects that the genre of a law collection presupposes human action and hence there is nothing particularly "stunning" about discovering the notion of intentionality within the Mishnah. However, as discussed above, Eilberg-Schwartz has drawn on the perspectives of cultural anthropologists such as Mary Douglas to discuss the notion of categorization. He concludes that the stress on human intention is indeed a new, Mishnaic development in the act of categorizing reality, replacing the older "priestly" view in which God's creation categories structured reality.

Or consider the notion of ahistoricity. Cultural anthropology often concerns itself with ritual and with the perennially repeated acts in a society. One might argue that Judaism (and Christianity) stresses the historical events of the past while looking to a hopeful conclusion to history, yet in the present appropriation of those events through ritual and symbol one enters a world akin to that of the ahistorical and existential. It is certainly not incompatible for both aspects to exist in one religion. At the very least then, ahistoricity may be one aspect of a society's religious outlook. Those who deny its presence and reduce the explanation for silence in historical matters to one of literary genre, fail to appreciate the reality of ritual and repetition within Judaism.

The Results of Comparative Literary Studies. Again, consider the notion of ahistoricity, or as Sanders calls it, "semi-Platonism." Neusner contends that the absence of explicit historical statements indicates that the "philosophers" of the Mishnah found "nothing of worth from the day of

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The reference is to Smith, Morton, "The Image of God; Notes on the Hellenization of Judaism with Especial Reference to Goodenough's Work on Jewish Symbols," Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library 40 (1957-58): 484, n. 3.

Porton adds (p. 59): "It is within this context of transformation, which was greatly affected by Judaism's encounter with Hellenism, that the varieties of Jews with which we are concerned arose. The continual *rapprochement* between Judaism and Hellenism was both a cause and an effect of this process."

Moses to their own day." He has been criticized for arguing from silence in reaching this conclusion. But "ahistory" or lack of explicit interest in history may be found in other literary documents, according to the work of other scholars.

As an example, from material attributed to 1st and 2nd c. A.D. rabbis -- in the Mekhilta and in Sifre Deuteronomy -- we find allegorical interpretation alongside of literal (or *derash* alongside of *peshat*). One suggestion as to the mindset behind this allegorical interpretation is given by Rimon Kasher:

> "The accounts of the history of Israel in the desert were interpreted allegorically.. These verses, mostly attributed to the *doreshe resumot* (those who interpret metaphorically), may be based on the assumption that the Bible does not aim to describe historical events and that **knowledge of the past is worthless** [my emphasis].[80]

Note the similarity to Neusner's phrase "nothing of worth from the day of Moses to their own day."

Why they found knowledge of the past worthless Kasher does not say. Perhaps it is part of a tendency exemplified by Philo, who is is said by Samuel Sandmel to "liquidate history" and to be characterized by "the substitution of symbol for event and 'existential' response for the legacy of history."[81]

Finally, H. K. McArthur and R. M. Johnston[82] have studied Tannaitic parables. They write that "The parabolic material is so limited in [the Mishnah, compared with other documents] that the evidence is of limited significance."[83] Yet what evidence there is suggests that little historical interest is to be found in the earlier (Mishnaic and Toseftic) parables. The

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80 Kasher, Rimon, "The interpretation of Scripture in rabbinic literature," in Mulder, Martin Jan, ed.; Sysling, Harry, executive ed. Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 564.

81 Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 150.

82 McArthur and Johnston, Rabbinic Parables.

83 Ibid., p. 121.

four parables they extract from the Mishnah are not concerned with history but with legal matters and matters of character and learning.[84]

Even if the larger corpus of rabbinic parables shows a historical concern, it differs from the concern of Jesus' parables:

> It is safe to estimate that half the parables of Jesus were eschatological -- a marked contrast with the small percentage of such parables in Johnston's collection of 325 rabbinic parables. Yet this contrast is understandable, since the rabbinic tradition, particularly after the disasters of 66-73 and 132-135 C.E., was concerned primarily with the faithful appropriation of the inherited tradition, while the message of Jesus focused on the anticipated arrival of the new age.[85]

It could be debated whether even the "historical" concern in the rabbinic parables is concerned with the flow of history, or only with Israel's place in that history, suggesting a more static, ahistorical outlook.

In conclusion, the combination of (1) absence of explicit historical statements in Mishnah and in early Tannaitic parables, and (2) the presence of explicitly allegorical approaches to Israel's history in the halakhic midrashim and in Philo therefore lead to the plausible conclusion that the Mishnah may in fact reflect a stream of Judaism which was not concerned much with the flow of history.

The Results of Historical Studies. One could marshall arguments from the influence of Hellenistic categories on the Judaism of this period to say that at the very least, ahistoricity would not be out of context in the Judaism of that period. In Hellenistic religion, one finds stasis and ahistoricity rather than historical consciousness.

Gary Porton summarizes the results of modern scholarship:

> As many have pointed out, the influence of Hellenism can be found throughout rabbinic Judaism...Smith argues that the preserving of minority opinions is a result of Greek influences....He suggests that some of the concepts the rabbis "found" in the Bible were actually Hellenistic in origin...H. A. Fischel has done considerable work on the *chria* and has shown that this Cynic literary form appears in rabbinic literature. Lieberman draws attention to the rabbis' use of material from the "vast stores of

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84 Ibid., pp. 18-20.

85 Ibid., p. 173.

> popular belief" in order to "attract the people to the world of the Torah." He argues that the rabbis were "familiar with the fashionable style of the civilized world" and that many were "highly educated" in Greek literature...He claims that Greek words are found in "every branch of Jewish life in Palestine insofar as it is recorded in Rabbinic literature of the first four centuries of the common era"...In addition, Lieberman...and D. Daube have demonstrated that the exegetical principles attributed to Hillel find parallels in Hellenistic culture.[86]

In particular, Neusner places the Pharisees into a Hellenistic category and it was they who were the precursors of the rabbis.[87] Helmut Koester goes as far as to make post-70 Judaism a mystery religion![88] We should not be surprised, then, to find ahistoricity as a component of the Mishnaic world view.

The Results of "Perspectival" Studies. This paper follows the results of scholars who grant an underlying ahistoricity to the Mishnaic world view. But even for those who might disagree, a "perspectival" approach such as that suggested by Vern S. Poythress can help us find value in the work of the "ahistoricists." An example of "perspectivalism" in systematic theology may help elucidate its application in Mishnaic studies in the following way.

Most evangelicals will affirm the importance of the category of "history" for our Christian faith. Among the Reformed group, the concept of "covenant" if often found to be the overarching category by which the truths of Scripture are to be viewed. The idea of "covenant" is basically a historical one, since it takes place in redemptive history: it involves the tracing of the divine-human relationship from the beginning of history to its final consummation.

But consider the following. Traditional Reformed thought has located the concept of "covenant" even further back than the sphere of history: it has located the concept within the eternal dimension of the Trinity and of God's counsels. This in turn suggests that rather than subsuming biblical faith under the rubric of history, one might subsume biblical history under the rubric of the eternal. History will come to an

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86 Porton, "Diversity in Post-Biblical Judaism," p. 59.

87 Neusner, J. From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 9.

88 Koester, Helmut. Introduction to the New Testament, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982, Germ. orig. 1980), 1:199.

end, but it will be "followed" by an eternal relationship with the Lord. So rather than the flow of redemptive history being seen as "primary," one could learn something from viewing history as "secondary" to eternity. To be sure, Scripture itself instructs us to see history as a "working framework" in this life, but likewise exhorts us to view all things in light of eternity. The point is that a different "perspective" can teach us valuable truths, even if we are not necessarily to order our daily lives by each different perspective. In the example here, subsuming history under eternity can teach us that even the ups-and-downs of historical existence are under the sovereignty of the eternal God, who directed and foreknew all things to their appointed end before the universe was ever created.

In application to Mishnaic studies, I have tried to suggest that ahistoricity may not be foreign to the Mishnah; it may even be a primary category. But even if it were not, the discussion about ahistoricity should not be foreclosed. Since in a sense ahistoricity exists wherever ritual and perennially repeated rites occur, one could learn from first subsuming the historical, eschatological strands under the ritual, and then the ritual under the historical. One could view the Messianic hope, for example, as the primary category, and then show how ritual and repeated liturgical acts look forward to the coming of the Messiah. Conversely, one could make the ritual and liturgy primary, and show how the hope of redemption is the consummation of presently enjoyed realities.

As implied by Poythress, this is not relativism. In each case, whether with Scripture or with a document such as the Mishnah, there is after all one or more basic grids offered to us through which to view the universe. But sometimes a "perspectival approach" can function as a heuristic device (a teaching tool) to bring out various aspects of the basic grid which we might have overlooked.

The conclusion of this section is that work in other fields and by other scholars lends support to the notion that a new world view came to birth in Judaism after 135 C. E. The existence of several of the "features" postulated of this world view finds support from these other disciplines, particularly the emphases on human intentionality and on ahistoricity.

The criticisms of the recent understandings of the Mishnah's world view, then, need to be tempered.

VII. Features of this world view in detail and a comparison with the biblical world view

Granted the plausibility of a change in world view as stated above, the various features of this world view as delineated by the above scholars, particularly Neusner and Eilberg-Schwartz, will now be considered. (As we will see, not all scholars agree on what constitutes the "features.") A comparison will then be made with the world view of the Bible. All the various features interrelate, but for this analysis we will separate them.

A. The Mishnah's world view is historically conditioned.

1. The Mishnah and historical conditioning. The expression "historically conditioned" means that the genesis of the Mishnaic world view was brought about, at least in part, by historical factors.[89] For Neusner, the pivotal events are those of 70 and 135 A.D. The events of 70 alone would not have sufficed to generate a new world view; although the Temple was destroyed, there remained a hope of rebuilding it. But in 135 A.D., even that hope disappeared as Jerusalem was made into a gentile city.

Eilberg-Schwartz, on the other hand, prefers to see the genesis of the new world view in sociological terms: the world view mirrored the social makeup of its adherents. According to Neusner, the new world view was a response to circumstances; according to Eilberg-Schwartz, it was a reflection of social categories. Who is right? Several points should be made:

a. The importance of the historical element. Even among those scholars who are historically oriented, there is still disagreement. Neusner speaks of a "crisis" while Cohen denies any "air of crisis" after 70. I have already tried to show above how the historical element is

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89 For the problems of attributing events to historical causation, see the chapter "Fallacies of Causation" in Fischer, pp. 164-86.

indeed prominent in the shift of world view. For one thing, the shift from a historical to an ahistorical outlook (see below), if true, makes the most sense as a reaction to historical events. When the events of history become too much to "take," it makes sense that one response is to focus on things outside of history. Second, the very presence of critical historical turning points in the 1st and 2nd c. A.D. demands some attention as to their influence.

b. The historical and the sociological. The sociological cannot be divorced from the historical. It is impossible to reduce reality to categories of either dynamic response (history) or a more static structuralist approach (some forms of sociology and cultural anthropology). Reductionism usually ends up by reducing some important aspects of reality into nonexistence. A sociological approach can highlight the structure and organization of a society. A historical approach, with its teleological foundation, can highlight the moral impetus of a society (since purpose implies morality). In fact, these approaches can make sense respectively of what Charles Kraft has identified as the " two basic types of worldview assumptions:... cosmological or existential...ethical or normative...[which latter is the same as] their value system."[90]

c. The problem of "P." The tendency in recent Mishnaic studies has been to contrast Mishnah/"P" with non-"P." Both the Mishnah and "P" are held to have a common interest in classifying things and to share a common outlook. Neusner adds that the compilers of the Mishnah and of "P" also found themselves in similar historical circumstances. Mandelbaum finds a similarity in their world views.[91] Eilberg-Schwartz also wants to say that the Mishnah was written by sages, not by priests; by those who were achievement-oriented, not heredity-oriented, somewhat contradicting his view of the commonality of Mishnah and "P". But the linking of the Mishnah and "P" appears also to lie in a view of the latter's supposed structural, ahistorical characteristics, just as Mishnah is ahistorical -- even though the genesis of both lies in historical circumstance.

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90 Kraft, Charles, MB 520 class notes, secs. 3:1-2.

91 Cf. n. 26.

Yet both biblical "P" and non-"P" material relate to historical concerns in a way not evident in the Mishnah, as we will see below. In addition, Eilberg-Schwartz's work on intention in the Mishnah (see below) shows the Mishnah to stand apart from the approach of "P" and hence undermines even his own search for affinity among both.

To summarize here, the Mishnah, though silent on history, nevertheless demands attention to historical factors in the emergence of its world view. Such an approach complements, and does not need to compete with, a sociological method. The linkage of the Mishnah with "P" in regard to the historical circumstances at work among both is however a dubious proposition, based on an assumption of alleged affinities and the assumption that "P" was a post-exilic creation.

2. The Bible and historical conditioning. The Bible too, shows how history shapes ideas, history as formed and brought along by God's design. God's revelation has taken place in history, and the great historical events of Scripture have helped shape and form the Biblical world view.

But we can be more concrete than that. It is obvious that law and history writing are two different genres. But they inherently cohere within the pages of the Bible. Jacob Milgrom writes that

> the admixture of these two genres comes as no surprise to anyone conversant with ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties, which open with a recounting of the suzerain's benefactions to his vassal (narrative) and follow with the stipulations imposed upon the vassal (law). The Book of Deuteronomy is a parade example of this literary type: The law code of chapters 12-26 is preceded by a recital of God's salvific acts for Israel in chapters 1-11. The Book of Numbers also operates in the shadow of Sinai: Israel has accepted the suzerainty of its God and is bound to His law, while the narratives continue to manifest divine Providence (and Israel's backsliding).[92]

In other words, in the Bible we find that law and the more "structural" elements within the faith of Israel are integrally related to the historical acts of God the suzerain of Israel. In fact, it is seen that the historical is primary, since it lays the basis for the existence of the

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92 Milgrom, J. Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation (Philadelphia and New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. xvi.

laws and structures in the first place. Law in the Bible is itself historically conditioned.

What then is the difference between the Bible and the Mishnah? It is not that one is historically conditioned and the other is not. Rather, it is that in the Bible there is an organic progression from God's acts in history to the people's response through obeying the law (including obeying the "P" material). **In the Bible, law is response. In the Mishnah, law is reaction.** One is an organic progression; the other, an attempt to retain the past in some way, shape, or form. The genesis of both biblical and Mishnaic world views does lie in the events of history. But how those events are handled differs, which is the subject of the next section.

B. Response of Despair.

Scholars describe the Mishnah's response to 70 and 135 in different ways: it was a response to "crisis," it was "traumatic," it was the response to a loss of "cosmic center" (i.e., the Temple). It was a move into a world of "fantasy" in which people "pretended that nothing had changed while everything had changed." A flight into "fantasy" is not normally considered very healthy, but in this instance Neusner finds it to be a creative response that transformed and sustained Judaism and the Jewish people.

Why is it that the response to <u>this</u> tragedy led to the formation of a new world view, since tragedy is found throughout biblical history? The answer lies in this contrast: if the recent Mishnaic studies are correct, there is a distinction between the <u>motivating</u> historical events that have shaped the corresponding world views.

In the Bible, the negative events are subsumed under the positive. The motivating Biblical events are first and foremost positive: primarily creation, the Exodus, in the New Testament the Resurrection. <u>The negative events are subsumed under the positive</u>. To be sure, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Kings and Chronicles all state exile and disaster to be a result of the sins of the nation. And yet judgment, Exile, dispersion are considered under the rubric of the ongoing covenant relationship with God.

<u>In the Mishnah, the positive is overwhelmed by the negative.</u> The events of 70 and 135 were negative: they involved suffering, destruction,

according to some, judgment. Indeed, after 70 and 135, similar explanations as those of Leviticus and Kings were offered in later rabbinic literature.[93] To be sure, rabbinic theology and liturgy also emphasized the positive motifs of the Exodus, Sinai, and covenant. But two things can be said about this.

First, Neusner believes that the world of the Mishnah differs from the world of later Judaism. These motifs, insofar as they reflect historical concerns, are missing from the ahistorical world of the Mishnah, though found in later rabbinic documents. And insofar as they are employed in the context of eschatological hopes, are not to be found in Mishnaic Judaism, but only in later Talmudic Judaism when eschatology and salvation again became important in response to the salvific claims of Christianity.[94]

The second point about the positive expressions regarding Israel's history in rabbinic literature is this: As pointed out above, a theology is not a world view though it coheres closely with a world view. But world views may change while theological expressions may remain constant, eventually becoming fossilized. The presence of certain motifs, even if they were to be found in earlier rabbinic documents such as the Mishnah, could just as well represent liturgical remnants as much as heartfelt beliefs.

In any event, the response of despair took the form described in the next section as "ahistorical." For whatever complex of reasons -- perhaps the availability of "ahistory" as a Jewish option, especially in the matrix of Hellenism (see below)[95] -- eschatological hopes gave way, in a failure of nerve, to despair. Unable any longer to subsume the negative under the positive, the recourse was to ahistory, the response of desperation. Was it despair that Israel could ever live in a way pleasing

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93 E.g., Yoma 9b, Tosefta Menahot XIII, 22.

94 Neusner, J., Torah Through the Ages (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), pp. 51-65. There is again the problem of theological unity here: we understand that there exists a consistent biblical world view although there are also special emphases of various "strands" of biblical thought. Should the same unity be predicated of "Judaism" or should each document be seen as presenting a separate, self-contained world view?

95 Just as in the Jewish community of today there is an availability of numerous spiritual options -- except for faith in Y'shua!

to God and hence be brought back to the land? Was it a tension that could no longer trust God in spite of suffering? Was the early movement of Jewish Christians, with their eschatological hopes, seen as a foil against which Judaism had to develop its own mentality?[96] Was Hellenism seen as attractive? These questions deserve reflection: the availability and actual appropriation of the option of "ahistory" is our next concern.

To conclude this section, there may be a lesson for us in the fact that for Neusner, there is a parallel between the Mishnah's response to 70 and 135 and modern Jewry's response to the Holocaust. If true, then those of us in Jewish missions should use our comparative study of the Mishnah and the Bible to consider how we can present the Gospel in the modern Jewish situation.

C. Ahistorical and atemporal.

1. The availability of ahistoricity. Within Judaism, there is evidence of what can be termed the "availability" of ahistoricity. Above, evidence was cited from comparative literary studies and historical studies to show just how widespread an ahistorical approach to Scripture and to historical events could be. To briefly recap, we saw that early midrashim such as the Mekhilta and Sifre Deuteronomy presented allegorical interpretations concerning which Rimon Kasher said this:

> The accounts of the history of Israel in the desert were interpreted allegorically.. These verses, mostly attributed to the *doreshe resumot* (those who interpret metaphorically), may be based on the assumption that the Bible does not aim to describe historical events and that **knowledge of the past is worthless** [my emphasis].[97]

As examples, Kasher cites the following interpretations:

> Thus, for example, the word 'water' in Exod 16:22 is interpreted by Rabbi Yehoshua (ben Hananya) כשמועו, 'as it sounds', while the *doreshe reshumot* (those who interpret metaphorically) expounded: 'the words of the Tora which are likened unto water'. The same Tanna explains the war between Israel and Amalek in its literal sense

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96 Here Neusner would say that not until the 4th century did Christianity come to pose a threat to Judaism and hence lead to the resurgence of eschatological and salvific emphases. See below.

97 Kasher, "Interpretation," p. 564.

> (Exod 17:8-16). Among other things, in referring to verse 9 'tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill', Rabbi Yehoshua comments: בשמועו/כמשמעו, 'as it sounds, as is implied', while Rabbi Elazar ha-Modai expands the verse in a metaphorical, midrashic fashion: 'tomorrow we shall declare a fast and be ready, relying on the deeds of the patriarchs. "Top" -- these are the deeds of the patriarchs; "the hill" -- these are the deeds of the matriarchs.[98]

That is, historical concerns were not of great import to these metaphorical interpreters.

Further, we saw that Tannaitic parables show little explicit historical orientation, or at any rate show interest in a history concerned with Israel's <u>place</u> in history rather than with the dynamic <u>flow</u> of history. Though the evidence is not as abundant as one would like to make out a clear case, it is instructive that one of the Mishnaic parables cited by McArthur and Johnston runs like this:

> Elisha b. Abuyah said: He that learns as a child, unto what is he like? He is like ink written on new paper. He that learns as an old man, unto what is he like? He is like ink written on paper that has been blotted out.
>
> R. Jose b. Judah of Kefar ha-Babli said: He that learns from the young, unto what is he like? He is like one that eats unripe grapes and drinks wine from his winepress. And he that learns from the aged, unto what is he like? He is like one that eats ripe grapes and drinks old wine....[99]

This parable is gnomic, with a timeless quality. The other parables cited similarly deal with matters of character and general religious responsibility. In contrast, although later parables also deal with such issues, they also seem to include more historical material. From the Tosefta, edited c. 400 C.E.:

> When the Sanhedrin was abolished, song was abolished from the wedding banquets....And for what was the Sanhedrin profitable to Israel? It was as their eyes, as it is written: "And if the people of the land do at all hide their eyes from that man" (Lev. 20:4). After the Sanhedrin was established, they [malefactors] were destroyed from Israel, but now [that there is no Sanhedrin], they are destroyed from Israel and their families are punished, as it is written: "Then I will set My face against that man and against his family" (v. 5).[100]

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98 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 553.

99 McArthur and Johnston, p. 20.

100 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 21.

Or:

> Five things were said by R. Johanan b. Zakkai in the nature of a principle. Why did Israel go into exile into Babylon rather than into all other lands? Because the home of Abraham was from there...[101]

Reference was also made above to the influences of Hellenism on the Jewish religion. It is now generally accepted that Hellenism was very closely integrated into the Judaism of this time period. It is no longer seen as workable to draw a very sharp distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, though there are some differences.[102] And a kind of ahistoricity or atemporality is certainly characteristic of strands of Hellenistic thought: Sanders refers to the "widespread view in the Hellenistic world that the true is to be identified with the immutable."[103]

In connection with the overall influence of Hellenism upon Judaism, Porton cites scholars who have shown evidence of this Hellenization in the following areas: Temple ritual and architecture (Lieberman); emphasis on tradition and education (Bickerman); preservation of minority opinions (Smith); literary studies (Fischel); linguistic usage (Lieberman); principles of exegesis (Lieberman, Daube).[104] To this list must also be added philosophy and religious thought.

More specifically, Neusner places the Pharisees in a Hellenistic category:

> Thus Palestinian Judaism overall, and the Pharisaic sect in particular, are to be seen as Jewish modes of a common, international cultural "style" known as Hellenism.[105]

Helmut Koester even goes as far as to classify post-70 Judaism with the mystery religions of the ancient Hellenistic world. Though he is quite unconservative in his overall approach, it is helpful to consider what he perceives as the Hellenistic elements in post-70 Judaism:

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101 Ibid., p. 23.

102 Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, p. 23.

103 Ibid., p. 24.

104 Porton, "Diversity," p. 59 with his bibliography. On the last point of exegetical principles see also Hengel, Martin, The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), p. 51.

105 Neusner, J. Politics to Piety, p. 9.

> It was characterized by the cultivation of an oral tradition, the exact determination of moral and ritual rules for all members, an obligation for mutual support, and a sharp delineation over against outsiders -- all typical features of a mystery religion. Thus it is not surprising that initiation rites were emphasized (circumcision, proselyte baptism), through which one pledged allegiance to the community.[106]

And Koester enumerates nine additional items which were part of the general stock of Hellenistic modes of thinking and behaving: making human fate dependent upon fulfillment of a legal code; the existence of "schools"; the establishment of chains of tradition; the cultivation of teacher-student relationships; the designation of instruction as wisdom or as philosophy; the hermeneutical assumption that what was written in olden times was written for present-day validity; individualism; eschatological concepts; and mysticism.[107]

Philo. In other Jewish literature, Philo is said by Samuel Sandmel to "liquidate history" (Philo, p. 150) and to be characterized by "the substitution of symbol for event and 'existential' response for the legacy of history."

In sum, ahistoricity was a live and viable philosophic option for Jews of the centuries following Jesus.

2. The meaningfulness of ahistoricity. Let us return to Eilberg-Schwartz's thesis that the sages and rabbis -- the compilers of the Mishnah -- represented the achievement-oriented social group in contrast to the priests who represented the heredity-oriented one. At first sight one might think that there is a mistake in reasoning, for it should be the priests, the compilers of "P," the categorizers, who would be most likely to formulate an ahistorical world view. That which is static and "given" -- succession by heredity, concern with static

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[106] Koester, 1:199.

[107] Ibid., pp. 242-43.

structure and categorization -- would seem to have priority over the goal-directed and the teleological as far as the priests are concerned.

But on second consideration, the events of 70 and 135 may have shaken the foundations of the older world view precisely because the newly dominant social group was "achievement-oriented." As status was now achieved and not ascribed, all the more so did the denigration of the status of the entire nation in the wake of 70 and 135 lead to a response of desperation. To express Eilberg-Schwartz's thinking in Neusnerian terms, when achievement could no longer be external and Temple-related, it turned inward to the achievements of study (Eilberg-Schwartz) or to the relocation of the "locus" of sanctification within the people themselves (Neusner). But what this amounted to was a loss of historical sense: those belonging to the teleologically-oriented social grouping now saw their goal and aims lost forever. Grasping about in desperation, the availability of ahistoricity, as discussed above, was the decisive factor. The running of achievement-based hopes into a wall was the motivation, the presence of ahistorical systems the catalyst, that combined to form a new world view. That at least is a plausible way of making sense of what took place.

3. Ahistoricity and the Bible.

It is difficult to talk about ahistoricity in the Bible. The "availability" of this option in its later Hellenistic mode did not exist. And in its ancient Near Eastern garb of focusing on the perennial, repeated acts of nature as a religious basis, the Old Testament clearly stands in a antagonistic relationship.

D. Anthropocentric and community oriented.[108]

Because this feature of the Mishnah's world view has been developed by others in depth, we will devote a longer section to it.

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108 The Mishnah anthropocentrizes reality by stressing the role of human intention in categorization and in making the world. Conversely, it divinizes the previous understandings of Scripture. In actuality both moves elevate human motives and understandings to a level not found previously.
On the other hand, Neusner would argue that the Mishnah often shows little interest in Scriptural exegesis.

1. Eilberg-Schwartz on the place of human intention.

While the notion of intentionality has long been recognized as present within rabbinic literature,[109] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz articulated this feature in depth in The Human Will in Judaism: The Mishnah's Philosophy of Judaism. [110] Several aspects of this philosophy are described by Eilberg-Schwartz.

a. Human intention correlates with divine intention because man is made in the image of God.

> "The fact that intention plays such a crucial role in religious law points to one of the basic theological assumptions of the mishnaic system: intention is the human counterpart to the divine will. From the standpoint of the Mishnah, being made in God's image means having the capacity to act like God by thinking, planning, and formulating intentions. This point will emerge more clearly in the second part of this study, where I show that the Mishnah ascribes to human intention powers which are analogous to the ones that the biblical story of creation ascribes to the divine will. This correlation between divine will and human intention helps account for the importance of intention in religion and cultic law. By intentionally violating a law, a person in effect has set the human will against God's, because the Mishnah conceives of the laws as an embodiment of divine will. Consequently, the intentional violation of divine law indicates the actor's failure to recognize the limitation of human will. This person, therefore, justifiably incurs the penalty of a premature death, so that further rejection of the divine will becomes impossible. When people follow God's law, however, they affirm the resemblance between themselves and God, bending their will to divine will."[111]

b. Intentionality and unintentionality are defined in certain specified ways in the Mishnah. Unintentional acts may comprise those initiated by direct divine action or by human negligence.[112] An intentional act is defined more complexly. An act is intentional if the intended action and the resulting action are identical in four areas:[113]

a. Both actions fall into the same category -- someone intended to throw a stone, and actually threw a stone.

b. Both actions invoke the same legal consequences.

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109 Eilberg-Schwartz, Human Will, p. 201, n. 3 and the bibliography cited there.

110 See n. 59.

111 Human Will, pp. 24-25.

112 Ibid., pp. 26-28.

113 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

c. Both actions involve the same type of object -- someone intended to break a window and broke a window.

d. The intended action produced the same results as the actual action.[114]

c. Human intention is the decisive factor only in "religious and cultic" law. Intention is not at issue in torts, physical damage or injury to human beings. In such cases, the results are decisive. But in "religious and cultic" law, it is intention that is "decisive," for it indicates if God's law is being repudiated or not. "The responsibility of human beings to each other differs from their responsibilities towards God."[115]

d. Legal consequences correlate with human intention. This system "insures that an act invokes no legal consequences unless it stems solely from an exercise of the human will."[116] If not, it is devoid of "its normal legal consequences." So "when a person accidentally violates the divine law, God's authority has not been challenged, and therefore the actor incurs only a relatively minor penalty of a sin-offering."[117]

e. But human intention takes on a new, non-biblical emphasis in the Mishnah. Point (a) above may appear to be merely an affirmation of the biblical teaching that man is made in God's image and shares various characteristics with Him. However the Mishnah moves a good deal beyond that basic statement into a new area entirely. This will be elaborated on in the next section.

2. The Mishnah's non-biblical emphasis on human intention.

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[114] Apropos Sanders, the Mishnah may be a law collection, but to have a system of intention such as the one outlined here most definitely calls for philosophizing by someone at some time! The above represents the distillation of a philosophical theory of intention.

[115] Human Will, pp. 45-46.

[116] Ibid., p. 33.

[117] Ibid., p. 21. Eilberg-Schwartz here makes reference to Ker. 1:1-2.

Eilberg-Schwartz writes:

"In making an actor's purpose an important criterion in evaluating human action, the Mishnah reshapes biblical law in two fundamental respects. First, biblical law, esp. the priestly legislation, only takes account of whether an actor has intentionally performed the act in question. But the actor's purpose in performing an act plays little role in determining liability. Second, in biblical law, the actor's intention can only affect the severity of the punishment; it has no role in determining whether the actor has committed a transgression. The Mishnah, by contrast, makes the whole question of culpability dependent on the actor's intention." (p. 87). ~~This doesn't sound right, check this quote.~~

To contrast the Mishnaic and the biblical outlooks, examples are cited from Leviticus in which liability exists regardless of one's intention: Leviticus prohibits the mixing of wool and linen regardless of purpose or intention; and the ritual of animal sacrifice is valid as long as the proper procedure has been followed, again regardless of the intention in offering it.[118] (One might object that according to the prophets, intention is precisely a major issue; but for the writers under discussion the prophetic outlook does not coincide with the priestly: for them there is no one unified biblical theology.)[119]

3. Biblical view of intentionality compared with Mishnaic

In this section, it will be helpful to break the discussion down along the following three lines: (1) Intentionality and sanctification; (2) Intentionality and liability; and (3) Intentionality and reality.

a. Intentionality and sanctification.

Below, under the fifth feature of the Mishnaic world view, sanctification is discussed as it relates to salvation or eschatological hopes. In this section, sanctification is discussed as it relates to intentionality.

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[118] Ibid., p. 187.

[119] Cf. p. 183: Eilberg-Schwartz attempts to link the Mishnah's classification system with the "Yahwist," i.e., as seen in Genesis 2, not Genesis 1 which is "priestly." In Genesis 2, man names the animals, thereby classifying on the basis of human intention, not God's. But this involves disunifying biblical theology.

According to Neusner, the Mishnah's concern with sanctification is closely tied to its ahistorical nature: in despair, without hope of a coming Messiah, how we can live as a sanctified people now becomes of great importance.[120]

This viewpoint is followed by Avery-Peck:

> "A theology unique to Mishnah, in contrast to the ideals of Scripture [here, the Old Testament] develops in the period following the Bar Kokhba revolt. Ushans formulate notions of sanctification that significantly distinguish Mishnah's ideology from that of Scripture. They do this by advancing the theory that Israelites' motivations and intentions determine what is holy and what is secular, what is permitted and what is forbidden. The Ushans thus move far beyond the Yavnean theory -- implicit in Scripture itself -- that powers of holiness devolve upon God in heaven and upon the priests on earth, and that holy and profane, right and wrong are determined by laws external to individual Israelites."[121]

In evaluating the view of intentionality in the Scriptures in regard to sanctification, the following points are salient:

i. Sanctification is closely tied in Scripture to the movement of history and its consummation.

Sanctification is a concern of the priestly material of the Bible. Yet in contradistinction to much of modern scholarship, "priestly" biblical material cannot be as sharply distinguished from "non-priestly" material to the extent frequently done by modern scholars. Alleged "P" material may indeed root its classification system in creation, but that does not imply that structural, static concerns are to be emphasized to the exclusion of historical ones, or synchronic elements to the exclusion of diachronic ones.

The problem is that while one can separate out a "priestly" kind of material by content or style, that does not imply the existence of a separate "P" document stemming from post-exilic times. For one thing, it

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120 There would be a question whether Neusner is importing modern existentialism into this.

121 Avery-Peck, A. J., Mishnah's Division of Agriculture: A History and Theology of Seder Zeraim (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 399.

is in the nature of ancient material to mix laws (some of which would be designated as from "P") with narrative (usually from "J" or "E"). To repeat the words of Jacob Milgrom cited above:

> the admixture of these two genres comes as no surprise to anyone conversant with ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties, which open with a recounting of the suzerain's benefactions to his vassal (narrative) and follow with the stipulations imposed upon the vassal (law). The Book of Deuteronomy is a parade example of this literary type: The law code of chapters 12-26 is preceded by a recital of God's salvific acts for Israel in chapters 1-11. The Book of Numbers also operates in the shadow of Sinai: Israel has accepted the suzerainty of its God and is bound to His law, while the narratives continue to manifest divine Providence (and Israel's backsliding).[122]

But it is not only the constant intertwining of law and narrative that poses a problem for "P" as envisioned in contemporary Mishnaic scholarship. Even classic "P" texts can hardly be understood without reference to history. For example, we find laws relating to festivals and agricultural produce. But what are the festivals if not recollections of God's events in history? And what are the laws of agriculture if not promises that Israel will indeed inherit the land? In fact, the very mixture of law and narrative alluded to above suggests that the laws functioned as both reminders and promises. They looked both to history and to the future.

And Weinfeld has shown, both by internal evidence of Scripture and by comparison with ancient near eastern culture, that the creation account of Genesis 1 is closely related to the building of the tabernacle and the giving of the Law at Sinai:[123] that is to say, creation relates to history -- even though the creation account of Genesis 1 is a chapter used by Eilberg-Schwartz, Mary Douglas, and others as the prime "P" text to support their creation-oriented arguments.

Therefore the "priestly" material in Scripture -- that is, material dealing with priestly concerns of clean and unclean, with matters of sanctification -- is integrally tied to the history of Israel. But the history of Israel is in turn closely tied to the acts of God. Therefore, in distinction from the Mishnah, sanctification in Scripture

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122 See n. 92.

123 Weinfeld, Moshe, "Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the 'Sitz im Leben' of Genesis 1:1-2:3" pp. 501-12 in Melanges bibliques et orientaux, ed. A. Caquot, 1981.

relates both to history and to the God who acts in history. In the Mishnah, sanctification relates to a-history and to the intentions of the individual.

ii. Sanctification originates as an act of God, not in the creative activity of man.

According to Neusner, sanctification in the Mishnah is rooted in man's will:

> "The will of man, expressed through the deed of man, is the active power in the world...Man, through will and deed, is master of this world, the measure of all things. Since when the Mishnah thinks of man, it means the Israelite, who is the subject and actor of its system, the statement is clear. This man is Israel, who can do what he wills. In the aftermath of the two wars, the message of the Mishnah cannot have proved more pertinent--or poignant and tragic."[124]

In the Bible, God is continually portrayed as the sanctifier:

> Exod. 31:13 "Say to the Israelites, `You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.
>
> Lev. 20:8 Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.
>
> Lev. 22:32 Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

Some passages do speak of human beings sanctifying something. For example:

> Deut. 5:12 "Observe the Sabbath day by **keeping it holy**, as the LORD your God has commanded you.

But the difference is this: the Bible speaks of man sanctifying something only because God sanctifies him. As Neusner tells it, the Mishnah's emphasis on man as sanctifier is because in the aftermath of 70 and 135 he is "master of the world." To put it in strong terms, the Mishnah sees God as deistic, uninvolved any more in Israel's place in history, and only man as the chief actor. Man sanctifies, not because God

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[124] Neusner, Evidence,p. 270-71.

has made him holy, but because God is no longer active in the world to sanctify it. That might be an extreme statement of the position, and Eilberg-Schwartz allows God a rather larger role in the system of the Mishnah: as the model for man's actions and as the delimiter who sets boundaries to the way man may act. But compared to Scripture, the active, saving God has taken a back seat in the Mishnah.

b. Intentionality and liability.

According to Eilberg-Schwartz, the priestly view (sometimes he calls it the "biblical" view) differs from the Mishnaic view which considers the purpose of the action. Perhaps the most salient difference is that in religious and cultic matters,[125] Mishnaic law is said to affirm intention as the determinant of whether in fact a transgression was committed, not merely the degree of punishment.[126]

The English word "intention," however, covers two separate Hebrew words, namely כוונה (*kavannah*) and מחשבה (*machshabah*). As Eilberg-Schwartz uses the terms, *machshabah* refers to a mental plan, a "mere" intention when no action has yet been performed. On the other hand, *kavannah* refers to intention as carried out in action, especially intention understood as "purpose," the reason why an action is being carried out.

i. מחשבה (*machshabah*). Bernard Jackson discusses the relationship between liability and "mere intention." First, he discusses the biblical view of liability and intention. He upholds the traditional interpretation of the tenth commandment which sees in it a reference to an inward mental disposition. Jackson then asks where in the Bible liability is imposed for coveting. He compares the tenth commandment with Genesis 6:5 and 1 Kings 8:18 and concludes that divine, not human judgments are in view. That is, the Bible does not prescribe the judgment of human courts for "mere intention," for merely thinking a certain way with no corresponding outward action.

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125 Eilberg-Schwartz, Human Will, pp. 20 ff.

126 Ibid, p. 51. This is also said to differ from the "Yahwist" view of classifying matters, p. 104.

> There is no evidence that liability for mere intention was ever applied in a human court.[127]

Jackson therefore fails to find any principle in the Bible of liability for mere intention except in the limited cases of idolatry and (possibly) harm to parents[128]. With this Eilberg-Schwartz is in agreement[129].

It is rather different in the Mishnah. There, *machshabah*, or what Eilberg-Schwartz calls "plans," help determine the status of an equivocal object. For example, it is unclear whether a cow carcass is food or waste; according to the sages, if the householder intends to sell the cow, it is counted as food and is therefore susceptible to contracting impurity; if he plans to throw it out, it is counted as waste and cannot contract impurity. Neither is one permitted to eat it in that case.

Or take the following example: Scripture forbids eating an animal which has died of natural causes. But if one plans to sell the bird instead of eating it, then it in fact falls into the category of "food" as far as the application of impurity laws is concerned:

> [As regards] a young pigeon that fell into a wine vat [and died] -- if [the owners] planned to remove it [from the vat] for [sale to] a gentile, [the pigeon] is impure. [Since the Israelite intends to sell it for consumption, the pigeon falls into the classification of food, and hence, it becomes subject to the rules governing the purity of good].
>
> [If, by contrast, he intended to remove it from the vat] for a dog, [the pigeon] is insusceptible to impurity [because the Israelite did not intend to use it for human consumption] -- M. Toh. 8:6.[130]

How does all this relate to the notion of liability? It is simply that once the correct category is determined, one might be liable for a given action that would not be a liability if the object fell into a different category. In the example of the cow, if the householder planned to throw it out, it would be counted as waste; if someone then ate it, he would be liable.

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127 Jackson, Bernard S. "Liability for Mere Intention in Early Jewish Law," pp. 202-34 in Essays in Jewish and Comparative Legal History (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975).

128 Jackson, p. 222.

129 Human Will, p. 177.

130 Cited in Human Will, p. 114, with Eilberg-Schwartz's explanations in square brackets.

ii. כוונה (*kavannah*). This second category represents

> the Mishnah's own distinctive contribution. Consequently, it is significant that the Mishnah gives an actor's purpose the decisive role in determining liability. In effect, this means that the Mishnah's sages want to give intention a much greater role than Scripture allowed. Biblical law limited the role of intention to determining the severity of the punishment. The Mishnah, however, makes the actor's intention a key factor in determining whether or not any violation has occurred at all! By drawing attention to an aspect of intention which was not important in Scriptural law, therefore, the Mishnah found a way to give intention a more dramatic role in determining liability.[131]

In this category, Neusner gives the example of a priest who thinks the animal he is given is to be used for a different purpose than designated. Then in certain instances, the sacrifice is invalid:

> The basic point is that if an animal is designated for a given purpose, but the priest prepares the animal with the thought in mind that the beast serves some other sacrificial purpose, then, in some instances, in particular involving a sin offering and a Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan, the sacrifice is ruined. In this matter of preparation of the animal, moreover, are involved the deeds of slaughtering the beast, collecting, conveying, and tossing the blood on the altar, that is, the principal priestly deeds of sacrifice. Again, if the priest has in mind, when doing these deeds to offer up the parts to be offered up on the altar, or to eat the parts to be eaten by the priest, in some location other than the proper one (the altar, the courtyard, respectively), or at some time other than the requisite one (the next few hours), the rite is spoiled, the meat must be thrown out. Now that is the case, even if the priest did not do what he was thinking of doing [but in that case, we appear to be back in the category of מחשבה -- RIR]. Here again we have a testimony to the fundamental importance imputed to what a person is thinking, even over what he actually does, in critical aspects of the holy life (see M. Zeb. 1:1-4:6; M. Men. 1:1-4:5...).[132]

It is instructive to contrast the Scriptural material on guilt and liability. Even in "cultic and religious matters" Scripture remains distinctive in comparison with the Mishnah. Consider these passages:

> Lev. 4:2 "Say to the Israelites: `When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands--

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131 Human Will, p. 54.

132 Neusner, Evidence, pp. 271-72.

> Lev. 4:13 "'If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty.
>
> Lev. 4:22 "'When a leader sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the commands of the LORD his God, he is guilty.
>
> Lev. 4:27 "'If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, he is guilty.

That is, the person is still guilty even in unintentional cases.[133] Note that the required animal to be offered is gauged according to social and economic status, not according to intention! The penalty may differ based on intention (hence the difference between murder and manslaughter, in connection with which the cities of refuge come into play); but not the presence of guilt.

Lack of intention, therefore, does not negate guilt. And wrong intention (Neusner's example) is treated as a moral, not a ritual problem:

> Ps. 40:6 Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.
>
> Hosea 6:6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.
>
> Hebr. 10:8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).

The import of such verses concerns the attitude or intention in which the sacrifices were offered. But the Mishnah carries its ideas beyond those of the Bible when, as Neusner states it, "[the ritual is spoiled] even if the priest did not do what he was thinking of doing." The concern of the Bible is less with the invalidation of a ritual act than with the basic motivation in worship.

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133 Using the term בשגגה or the like. See also Num. 15:22-29; Num. 35:22 ff.; Josh. 20:3; Ezek. 45:20. In Deut. 4:42;19:4; Josh. 20:5 the term for "unintentional" is בלי דעת.

c. Intentionality and reality. The Mishnah's material on intention suggests that a concern of the Mishnah is to deal with cases of ambiguity. An ambiguity may be resolved by appeal to the intention of the user. This kind of intention is discussed by Peter Tomson in the context of Paul's instructions concerning food offered to idols.[134] Tomson proposes that the term συνειδησις in Paul be rendered as "intention," not "conscience." Tomson finds a "dual world view" in Paul:

> Paul asks the rhetorical question: "Do I say then that idol food is something?" (10:19). No, he wants to say, it is nothing; but partaking of it is communicating with demons. Despite his dual world view, Paul allows only one conclusion: idol food should not be eaten.

According to Tomson, what Paul is concerned with is the "intention" of the one faced with food offered to an idol. Tomson attempts to place Pauline thought here within the sphere of rabbinic halakha, and translates "intention" consistently. But if we suppose that the halakha on intention derives from a later period than that of Paul and that it reflects a different world view, we find the following in Romans 8.

On the one hand, "we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one" (Rom. 8:4). This is the objective reality concerning idols. However, "some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their συνειδησις is weak, it is defiled."

Even if "intention" is to be accepted as the translation, Paul's view is hardly that of the Mishnah and can only with due caution be subsumed as a variety of halakhic teaching. For Paul, one's "intention," to grant Tomson's translation, may dictate the behavior of a fellow Christian but certainly does not structure objective reality.

The Mishnah again contrasts with this. Neusner cites the example of Avodah Zarah 4:4-6 and concludes that according to this Mishnah, a piece of wood carved as an idol is not considered to really be an idol until it has been worshipped: the result of the human will. Whereas Tomson makes

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134 Tomson, Peter J., Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 208 ff.

Paul's and the Mishnah's thinking to be practical in nature, Neusner makes them more ontological: according to the Mishnah, reality is formed by human intention! We have the ability to shape our world! This is of a piece with his view that Mishnaic Judaism escaped in "fantasy," the world of the mind. For Mishnaic Judaism, the world of the mind <u>is</u> the real world.

> A piece of wood carved in a form is not deemed an idol until it actually has been worshiped. One belonging to a gentile is deemed prohibited forthwith, since it is assumed to be venerated. But one belonging to an Israelite is forbidden only after the Israelite will have worshiped the object. So the expression of the Israelite's will transforms the inert object into an idol (M. A.Z. 4:4-6).[135]

It may be objected that Neusner overstates things and that we are merely dealing with how objects are to be considered for behavioral purposes, not with ontological realities. But Neusner tends to locate the sphere of reality within the Israelite mind. "Fantasy" replaces the Temple, study replaces the cult. **For Neusner, intentions in the Mishnah shape perceived reality, not merely acted behaviors.** To the extent that Neusner is right, it is therefore correct to contrast Pauline teaching on idol food with that of the Mishnah. For Paul, a weaker brother may perceive an idol as real, but we know that objectively it is not. We may mold our behavior around the perceptions of this individual, but that is done on a <u>case-by-case basis</u>. For the Mishnah, intention shapes reality for <u>one and all</u> within the community of Israel. Intentionality dictates reality.

E. Concerned with sanctification as opposed to salvation.

As stated above, because the world view of the Mishnah is ahistorical, it shows little concern with eschatological hopes, including a Messiah who is to come within <u>history</u> and affect <u>history</u>, just as it shows little concern with the past history of Israel.

Because it is a response of despair, the Messianic <u>hope</u> plays little role. The idea of a coming Messiah, and in general the entire eschatological scenario, entailed by definition a positive outlook toward a future in which God would be victorious and Israel vindicated. But as the

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135 Neusner, <u>Evidence</u>, p. 273.

events of 70 and 135 were seen as anything but a divine vindication of Israel, Messianic hopes lost their prominence. In fact, the contrast is all the more striking when one compares the lack of eschatological emphasis in the Mishnah with the apocalyptic literature of Judaism which could be described as eschatology in hyper-drive.

Because the cult was concerned with sanctification and has now become internalized, sanctification becomes a feature of this world view. As Neusner describes it, the concern is not salvation, which has an eschatological and historical emphasis, but sanctification, where the focus is on the routine, daily acts of behavior that produce sanctity or lack thereof.

In particular, the theme of salvation did not receive sustained emphasis until the fourth century, when it occurred in response to Christianity:

> [The fourth century] is when the sages produced the great works on Genesis, in Genesis Rabbah, and on Leviticus, in Leviticus Rabbah, which answered the questions of salvation, of the meaning and end of Israel's history, that the Mishnah and its continuator-writings did not take up. Why in the fourth century in particular? Because, as I shall explain, the historical crisis precipitated by Christianity's takeover of the Roman Empire and its government demanded answers from Israel's sages.[136]

And:

> What happened was that in 312 the Roman empire, through Emperor Constantine, declared Christianity to be a legal religion, and within the next fifty years Christianity became the religion of the Roman empire. A series of Christian emperors accorded to Christianity political predominance, such as its founders and framers cannot have imagine for themselves. When, moreover, in 361 Emperor Julian reverted to paganism and also permitted the Jews to commence rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, the emperor was killed in a war against Iran and the Christian emperors in the succession thereafter pointed to that fact as proof of God's favor for the Christian state. The Christians were quick to point out to Israel in the land of Israel that this astounding turn of events vindicated their faith and, furthermore, disproved the Jews' claim that salvation, in fulfillment of the promises of the prophets, lay in the future. To the contrary, they said, the salvation for Israel of which the prophets spoke took place long ago, in the time of the return to Zion of Ezra's day, and the sole salvation awaiting Israel lay with conversion to Christianity.[137]

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136 Neusner, J. Torah Through the Ages, p. 53.

137 Ibid., p. 55.

Hence, according to Neusner it was not until Christianity became the state religion that Judaism once again recovered an eschatological orientation. This paper is not concerned with that period of time, but the point is mentioned in order to contrast with the lack of concern in the Mishnah with a final, historical salvation.

Another reason may also be suggested as to why eschatology or "salvation" was so long in coming in the post-70 period. Recall above the discussion on "competing articulations," or disputes, within the rabbinic literature. Shaye J. D. Cohen thought he saw the emergence of "pluralism" evidenced by the existence of such disputes. Drawing on the work of Thomas Kuhn, I suggested that the presence of disputes might signal the continuance of a crisis. What crisis? Not the crisis of 70-and-135. That crisis was already 65 years in the past when the Mishnah was finally set down and compiled. I suggest that the continued existence of Israel in the diaspora constituted an ongoing crisis which demanded attention. But according to Kuhn, such crises may be resolved by the emergence of a new "paradigm." It may well have been that when Christianity became the state religion, this catalyzed the thinking of the sages and led to the formation of still another world view, one involving Messianic hopes and leaving the Hellenistic ahistoricity of the Mishnah behind.[138]

VIII. Conclusion

The above discussion has dealt with the emergence of a new world view after the events of 70 and 135, represented in the Mishnah and standing in contrast at many points to the world view of the Bible. If this is correct, certain implications follow. Two such implications related to Jewish evangelism can be sketched as follows, reiterating what was said above in section II:

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[138] How this relates to ongoing tradition of rabbinic differences of opinion, which extends well into the medieval period and past, is another topic. The phenomenon of disputes may need to be analyzed differently depending upon whether one is discussing halakic decision-making or else an overall world view.

1. When confronted with the charge that Judaism is concerned with the here-and-now (which is presented as a virtue), while Christianity is concerned exclusively with the hereafter (which is presented as a vice), we have an answer. Mishnaic Judaism abandoned concern with eschatology and the Messiah -- that is, with the "hereafter" -- because of a failure of nerve in the face of the events of 70 and 135. Could it be that modern Judaism's pride in being concerned with the here-and-now also reflects a failure of nerve? The difference is that whereas Mishnaic Judaism drew on Hellenistic categories for its "here-and-now" concern, its ahistoricity, modern Judaism has often drawn on existentialist categories for the same. But is a failure of nerve anything to be proud about?

2. Just as the Mishnah was the response to disaster, so is modern "post-Holocaust theology." If we pursue study of the Mishnah's response, and add to that study of evangelism among Jewish people in the post-70 period, we can learn how best to respond with the Gospel for our own generation. The Mishnah represents a new "paradigm" that arose from the presence of anomalies and difficulties in the theology of the day. How is modern Jewish theology a new "paradigm"? Furthermore, how is the presence and existence of Jewish believers today an anomaly in the thinking of the Jewish people, and what kind of new "paradigm" can be expected to develop to deal with this anomaly? How can we present the Gospel as the "paradigm" that resolves the anomalies of modern Jewish existence?

Questions like these should continue to challenge us to wrestle with the Mishnah and to understand it, and hence our own people, in light of the Scriptures.