

Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law

EDITED BY

Adam Mintz and Lawrence Schiffman

Robert S. Hirt, Series Editor

The Orthodox Forum Series
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THE ORTHODOX FORUM

The Orthodox Forum, convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University, meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, *rashei yeshiva*, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal professionals, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today.

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Series Editor's Preface

We are delighted to introduce the 10th volume in The Orthodox Forum Series, *Divine Law and Human Spirituality*, edited by Dr. Lawrence Schiffman and Rabbi Adam Mintz. The editors of the volume have skillfully guided the formulation and exploration of the spirituality theme across a wide range of disciplines.

The Orthodox Forum Series has become a significant resource for scholars, advanced students and serious laymen seeking clarification of major intellectual and theological questions facing the Jewish people in the modern world.

At a time when Jewish identity and commitment are being challenged by apathy and ignorance of primary sources, it is critical that clear exposition of our classical values be widely disseminated by knowledgeable leaders in a thoughtful and engaging manner.

We are confident that the community will warmly welcome this timely volume.

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(editor's introduction 10-8-03)

Robert S. Hirt

Introduction

Adam Mintz

In 1989, the Orthodox Forum was established by Dr. Norman Lamm, then President of Yeshiva University, to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Academicians, rabbis, *rashei yeshiva*, Jewish educators and communal professionals have been invited each year to come together for an in-depth analysis of one such topic. This group has constituted an Orthodox think tank and has produced a serious and extensive body of literature.

In the spirit of its initial mandate, the Forum has chosen topics that have challenged Jews and Judaism throughout history. One of the themes addressed in this series is the numerous confrontations that have existed, both in past eras and in the present time, between the central principles of Orthodox belief and practice, on the one hand, and the widely-accepted values of the contemporary secular society. In the 1992 Orthodox Forum, which examined the tension between rabbinic authority and personal autonomy, Dr. Moshe Sokol pointed out that this tension between authority and personal autonomy which is a central problem for Western religions gener-

ally “can be a particularly sharp problem for Jews who maintain a commitment to the observance of *halakhah*.”¹

Similarly, spirituality, the topic of the conference held in the year 2000, presents, on first consideration, an apparent clash between spirituality and law and breaches the divide between the subjectivity inherent in the one and the objective requirements of practice and belief essential to *halakhah*. In addition, the seeming New-Age faddishness of spirituality stands starkly against the deep historical roots of the Jewish tradition. In a passage quoted by several of the volume’s contributors, Dr. Lamm formulated the delicate balance between law and spirituality:

The contrast between the two – spirituality and law – is almost self-evident. Spirituality is subjective; the very fact of it inwardness implies a certain degree of anarchy; it is unfettered and self-directed, impulsive and spontaneous. In contrast, law is objective; it requires discipline, structure, obedience, order. Yet both are necessary. Spirituality alone begets antinomianism and chaos; law alone is artificial and insensitive. Without the body of the law, spirituality is a ghost. Without the sweep of the soaring soul, the corpus of the law tends to become a corpse. But how can two such opposites coexist within one personality without producing unwelcome schizoid consequences?²

The risks of producing the “ghost” and the “corpse” and the need for coexistence and integration are issues that have confronted Jews for centuries.

The primary purpose of the conference and this resulting volume has been to demonstrate through a spectrum of diverse views, that spirituality and Orthodox Judaism are actually not hostile to one another, but, to the contrary, complement and enrich one an-

¹ Moshe Sokol, “Preface”, in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, edited by Moshe Sokol (Northvale, NJ, 1992), p. xii

² Norman Lamm, *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 6.

other. The issue is first approached from a historical perspective, in essays dealing with ancient Judaism, the medieval period and the contemporary period. The following essays then consider the interplay between spirituality and traditional Judaism in synagogue art and in prayer. Essays by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein and Dr. Chaim Waxman frame the discussion and present an overview of the wide-ranging philosophical and sociological implications of the topic.

In an attempt to guarantee that our society's current search for spirituality is not overlooked, a colloquium was added to the conference to address the role of spirituality within our synagogues and *yeshivot*. Rabbi Daniel Cohen, Cantor Sherwood Goffin, Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, Dr. David Pelcovitz and Prof. Suzanne Last Stone explored the possibilities for spirituality in our institutions focusing on the "Carlebach phenomenon" and the perceived need for enhanced spirituality in Orthodox institutions. While the intention was not to produce a written record of the colloquium, it served to enhance the conference and helped to maintain the delicate balance required between the theoretical and the practical.

In the first essay of this volume, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein defines both the values and the risks of spirituality and law. He utilizes Maimonides' distinction between law, which relates to the public sphere, and spirituality, which is highly personal, as the basis for his understanding of the terms. According to Rabbi Lichtenstein, while we must abandon neither, we also must achieve the proper balance between the two. Spirituality provides expression for the *halakhah* while *halakhah* prescribes necessary forms and constraints to our spiritual impulses. We have to prevent our commitment to the minutiae of law from robbing our actions of meaning and feeling just as we must be careful not to allow our desire for spirituality to cause us to ignore those laws considered non-spiritual.

Rabbi Lichtenstein concludes his paper with an analysis of the contemporary Jewish scene. He sees the risks inherent in the move toward excess spirituality both in the realm of prayer and Torah study. He writes, "I'm afraid, however, that votaries of current spirituality often tend to erode the status of *yirah* (awe); and, together with it, the status of the very essence of *yahadut*: *kabbalat*

ol malkhut shamayim (acceptance of the yoke of heaven) and *kabbalat ol mitzvot* (acceptance of the yoke of commandments).” Is this fear reasonable or is this critique of contemporary spirituality too harsh? The remaining articles in the volume provide the necessary background to consider this question.

Professors Lawrence Schiffman and Yaakov Elman explore the uses of spirituality in the ancient period, concentrating on the eras of the Bible and second temple and of the Talmudic period. Professor Schiffman focuses on the approach to religion, which centered on the Temple and its service and how this religious expression evolved as people began to move away from the Temple. Professor Elman examines human spirituality as it was construed in the rabbinic era through a study of specific incidences and testimonies of key Talmudic figures.

Professors Brill and Lasker examine spirituality in medieval literature. Professor Brill argues that the study of Kabbalah is crucial in order to add meaning to *mitzvot* and Torah. He takes issue with those who exclude Kabbalah from the canon of Judaism or advocate for finding certain aspects of Kabbalah outside the normative framework of Judaism. Professor Lasker begins his paper by stating that, “Medieval Jewish philosophers did not have a specific concept of human spirituality in its modern usage.” He goes on to present two models of medieval philosophy’s understanding of the soul and its place in establishing a relationship between man and God. The ability to frame spirituality in the world of medieval terminology and thought allows us to begin to formulate a definition of spirituality that is relevant in different historical and cultural settings.

Professors Fine and Mann further expand the scope of the discussion with an exploration of spirituality and the arts. Professor Fine examines the mosaics found within synagogues of the fourth through sixth centuries CE. While the use of mosaics was common in public places during this period, the presence of these mosaics in synagogues and the later opposition to this artistic representation in the synagogue points to a spiritual aesthetic that was both communally and culturally driven. Professor Mann traces the rabbinic attitude towards Jewish ceremonial art. While rabbinic opposition

points to the potential distractions caused by these works of art, certain rabbis were also sensitive to the spiritual value of decorative ceremonial objects especially within the synagogue setting. These surveys broaden our appreciation for the role of spirituality beyond the intellectual world.

Having presented a picture of the historical, intellectual and cultural images of spirituality, the challenge remains how to understand these images and how to transmit them to others. Rabbi Moshe Sokolow and Erica Brown explore the experience of teaching spirituality. Rabbi Sokolow presents a model for the introduction of spirituality in Jewish day schools and yeshiva high schools. Spirituality must play a role in the formulation of the school's vision as well as in its curriculum and teacher's training programs. Ms. Brown looks at the field of adult education and points out a unique educational problem – namely that adults tend to be interested in acquiring new information and are not especially interested in seeking the spiritual value of this information. She shares with us her experiences in the field and her strategies for overcoming this obstacle and transmitting this spiritual essence to a class of adults.

The challenge of transmitting spirituality is particularly relevant in the arena of prayer. Professor Hyman explores the Maimonidean position on prayer and concludes that according to Maimonides, spirituality is part of the process of prayer but that ultimately it plays only a minor role in the complex halakhic and philosophic definition of prayer. Professors Bleich and Lowenthal trace the evolution of spirituality and prayer in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Professor Bleich looks at the Reform innovations to the synagogue service and the response of the Orthodox who attempt to maintain the tradition while incorporating the needs of the spiritual. Professor Lowenthal examines the innovations of the Hasidic community in the realm of spirituality as a response to the potential encroachment of the modern world into the Jewish community. His emphasis on the value of spirituality for the youth, especially the girls in the early days of the Bais Yaakov movement and in the Chabad community, provides an important perspective on the relevance and importance of spirituality in pre-war Eastern Europe. Professor Carmy concludes

the discussion on prayer and spirituality by posing the question, “Can thinking about prayer improve the quality of our prayer?” He goes on to examine prayer in the context of the religious and halakhic philosophies of both Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik.

The final essay in the volume by Professor Waxman is entitled “Religion, Spirituality and the Future of American Judaism” and explores the sociology of spirituality in America today. He claims that spirituality is a manifestation of the privatization of religious practice today in which people are moving away from institutions and looking for personal expressions of religious observance. This phenomenon has served to weaken the traditional institutions of Judaism. Waxman argues that what is needed is for our institutions to provide avenues for spirituality thereby enabling the quest for spirituality to be realized within traditional Judaism and not outside of it.

Professor Waxman’s paper provides an appropriate segue from our discussion of the past to the necessity of developing a plan for the future. Contemporary Jewish society has much to gain from an appreciation of this subject as seen through the variety of vantage points presented in this volume. Yet, at the same time, modern culture introduces its own challenges and unique personality that must be addressed by the committed Jew. Rabbi Lichtenstein articulates this challenge at the conclusion of his paper:

This brings us, finally, back to our primary problem: How to attain optimal fusion of divine law and human spirituality, committed to both while eschewing neither. We live by the serene faith that it can be done. We refuse to believe that we are doomed to choose between arid formalism and unbridled sensibility... The apocryphal remark attributed to an anonymous *hasid*, גישט – נישט, חסידים דאווען – אין צייט; מתנגדים דאווען נישט – אין צייט (Misnagdim daven not, but on time; H~~ä~~asidim daven, but not on time) is both facile and tendacious. It is also false. It is our mission to assure that legalists and spiritualists both pray – on time.

The volume has been compiled with the hope that it will contribute to the realization of that mission.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those people who have been instrumental in the completion of this volume. The project has been spearheaded by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University and convener of the Orthodox Forum. My own spiritual development is a product of his many years of leadership and I am honored to participate in this project. Rabbi Robert Hirt, Senior Advisor to the President, Yeshiva University, is deeply committed to the mission of the Forum and the dissemination of its material. Rabbi Hirt has provided guidance and direction for me since my first day at Yeshiva College and his invitation to participate in the Orthodox Forum and to co-edit this volume is just one of the many things for which I am grateful. Mrs. Marcia Schwartz's gracious assistance has made this job significantly easier and I am thankful to the members of the steering committee for their involvement in developing and formalizing this challenging topic. Miriam and Yonatan Kaganoff served as editorial assistants and were instrumental in the preparation of the manuscripts for publication. Finally, it was a pleasure to co-edit this volume with Professor Lawrence Schiffman; his passion, expertise and experience made this process an enjoyable and enlightening one for me.

3

Torah ve-Avodah: Prayer and Torah Study As Competing Values in the Time of H₁azal

Yaakov Elman

The following essay will attempt to examine the way in which two of the major outlets for human spiritual yearnings were construed in the classic rabbinic era of Late Antiquity, as expressed in talmudic literature.¹ More particularly, it attempts – at least in part and as far as the talmudic texts allow us – to reconstruct classic rabbinic

¹ Thus we will exclude extra-talmudic material of all sorts, not limited to texts emanating from both the land of Israel and Babylonia, either from Jewish or non-Jewish sources, including inscriptions, magic bowls and magic texts, *heikhalot* literature, and the like.

spirituality in experiential terms, by examining specific incidents and testimonies about important rabbinic figures.²

This is no easy task. Generally speaking, rabbinic culture carries the general biblical reticence on such matters to a still higher degree. The confessional style which came so easily to Augustine and later Christian mystics finds few counterparts in Jewish writing as a whole (Jeremiah and the Psalmist, R. Yaakov Emden in the eighteenth century and, to an extent, R. Yosef Karo in the sixteenth, are among the few exceptions.) Certainly, this holds true for rabbinic literature. Fortunately, however, two of the greatest of the Babylonian *amoraim* are among those whose personal life is somewhat revealed. Abaye, himself, often speaks of his education (citing his foster-mother) or cases in which he changed his mind on certain existential issues. As for Rava, who occasionally echoes Abaye in this proclivity, all sorts of information about his personal life has been preserved in the *Bavli*, both from his own ruminations and from reports which seem to emanate from his family and/or close associates.³ But even in regard to other, less well-documented talmudic lives, some revealing

² The use of anecdotal material is liable to the danger of shifting attributions (*amri lah, iteima*), variant details and the like (*ika de-amri*), or parallel sources may record these variants; in a number of cases, we have a direct reports of error such as (*ki ata...*, *hadar amar*), in Ula's correction of a report by R. Zeira in regard to R. Yishmael be-R. Yose: "It was not at the side of a palm tree but at the side of a pillar; it was not R. Yishmael be-R. Yose but R. Eleazar be-R. Yose; and it was not the *tefillah* of *Shabbat* on the eve of *Shabbat* but the *tefillah* of the end of the *Shabbat* on the *Shabbat*" (BT *Ber.* 27b). In the following, these matters are confirmed, when possible, by parallels in other rabbinic collections. In any case, an understanding of what the talmudic tradents *could* believe of *tannaim* and *amoraim* is as important in comprehending their view of rabbinic spirituality as is comprehending the reality. Nevertheless, it is our belief that talmudic statements may be used to gain an understanding of *Ḥazaḥal's* views in historical perspective; see Richard Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), and my "How Should a Talmudic Intellectual History Be Written? A Response to David Kraemer's *Responses*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 89 (1999): 361–86. However, not all sources are equal; see R.Y.Y. Weinberg, *Mehkarim ba-Talmud*, (Berlin: Druk N. Kronenberg, 1936), pp. 171–9, and C. Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Nezikin*, [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993], esp. pp. 362–409.

³ Some of this material was collected in my "Rava in Mahoza: Rabbinic Theology

statements and anecdotes about other sages, Rav and R. Yehudah, for example, are scattered through the vast discourse of that literature, and, when combined, provide us with the beginnings of a picture which coheres with later developments.

I will not attempt to proffer my own “definition” of the object of our study, at least at the outset. As James Kugel has said of *midrash*, “since [previous] studies have already not defined *midrash* in ample detail, there is little purpose in not defining it again here.”⁴ Still, it is self-evident that no investigation can be carried out without some working definition of the subject under study, at least for the purposes of the study. And so we will begin with some attempt at one. Let us then begin with the definition offered by the Orthodox Forum’s president, and the President of Yeshiva University, Dr. Norman Lamm, in his recently published *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism*.⁵

By “spirituality” I mean the intention we bring to our religious acts, the focusing of the mind and thoughts on the transcendent, the entire range of mindfulness – whether simple awareness of what we are doing, in contrast to rote performance, or elaborate mystical meditations – that spells a groping for the Source of all existence and the Giver of Torah.

Note that in defining spirituality in terms of the intention brought to “religious acts,” Dr. Lamm has given the term a decidedly normative Jewish (or Muslim) cast, one which has a clear Hebrew referent, *kavvanah*, and refers primarily to the proper attitude and intention which should accompany the performance of *mizvot*, that

and Law in a Cosmopolitan Setting,” Ninth Orthodox Forum, New York, March 29, 1998.

⁴ In his delightful essay, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” originally published in *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 131–55, and reprinted in G. Hartman and S. Budick ed., *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 77–103.

⁵ Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998. The definition appears on p. 6.

is, “religious *acts*.”⁶ Still, it could be argued the even the most ritual-averse religions and sects (say, certain forms of Buddhism, Ethical Culture, or Unitarianism) have defined certain acts as “religious.” The inadequacy of this equation of “spirituality” with *kavvanah* is clear from the next paragraph in which Dr. Lamm contrasts spirituality with law.

Spirituality is subjective; the very fact of its inwardness implies a certain degree of anarchy; it is unfettered and self-directed, impulsive and spontaneous. In contrast, law is objective; it requires discipline, structure, obedience, order.... Spirituality alone begets antinomianism and chaos.... Without the body of the law, spirituality is a ghost.”

The ideal is thus a fruitful symbiosis: “[But] such a simplistic dualism misses the point. The life of the spirit need not be chaotic and undisciplined.... In Judaism, each side – spirit and law – shows understanding for the other; we are not asked to choose one over the other, but to practice a proper balance....”⁷ While admitting that this balance is difficult to achieve, and even more difficult to maintain, he asserts that, at least, in the recitation of the Shema “in its proper manner,” “Judaism has accommodated both spirituality and law within its practice.”⁸

Dr. Lamm’s treatment is thus theological/typological and homiletical, but not particularly historical. How often *was* that “proper manner” of recitation achieved, one wonders? How did that achievement vary in time and place, and from individual to individual in any one time and place? And, most important, how was that manner achieved?

There is yet a broader issue to be addressed (though not necessarily here), and that is the relation of spirituality, here defined as

⁶ This is true by and large even of the chapter by Robert Goldenberg, “Law and Spirit in Talmudic Religion,” in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green, vol. 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 232–52; see n. 9 below.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸ *Idem.*

roughly coterminous with the Hebrew *kavvanah*, with the more generally accepted understandings of the term as used in contemporary discourse. For by equating the two in this way, Jewish writers attempt to domesticate a term whose connotations still retain something of its original antinomian context. Indeed, the tension between the two may clearly be discerned in Dr. Lamm's treatment of it.⁹ The following will however be restricted to the attitudes toward the two major modes of spiritual expression within talmudic sources, without directly considering this broader issue.

Such an approach carries risks and benefits. The risk is that we will miss some important aspect of rabbinic spirituality in not considering (except tangentially) such matters as pertain to the performance of the *mizvot* themselves (e.g., the question of *לשמה*, "for their own sake"). The benefit is that we will focus on those areas of Jewish life which are most congruent with the more general understanding of spirituality.¹⁰

The following outline will proceed in roughly chronological

⁹ Indeed, even as interdenominational an enterprise as the two-volume *Jewish Spirituality: Vol. 1: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages, Vol. II: From the Sixteenth-Century to the Present*, ed. by Arthur Green, (New York: Crossroads, 1986 and 1987), which constitutes Volumes 13 and 14 of the series, "World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest," declines to define the term in any way which would elide the differences between various faiths. The following "definition" was used (Vol. I, p. xii):

The series focuses on that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions "the spirit." This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality. The series explores the discovery of this core, the dynamics of its development, and its journey to the ultimate goal. It deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of the spiritual journey, and the methods of advancement in the spiritual ascent.

¹⁰ The history of Jewish prayer and that of the synagogue has attracted a large body of scholars over the last century, but "prayer" has, in the main, been construed textually, that is, the history of the liturgy, rather than the phenomenology of prayer *per se*. For that one must turn to halakhic, ḥasidic and pietistic works, which approach the subject from a non-historical point of view. They do not recognize any difference between prayer as practiced by *Hazal* and that of later eras. As a consequence, both of these vast literatures will be little cited in the following essay. More recently, archaeologists

order, from R. Ḥanina b. Dosa to R. Akiva, from R. Akiva to R. Shimon b. Yoḥai, his disciple, and to Rabbi Judah the Prince; from Rabbi Judah the Prince to R. Ḥiyya, his disciple; from his nephew, Rav, to R. Yehudah, his disciple, and to R. Hisda and R. Naḥman, who flourished in the next generation; from R. Yoḥanan, of the second generation of Israeli *amoraim* to R. Yizḥak and Ula; in Babylonia to Abaye and Rava in the fourth. As noted, we will concentrate on two areas which embody and facilitate rabbinic spirituality: prayer and Torah study; mystical study, to the extent that the latter is available for study, will not be examined at this juncture.

have had their say. Indeed, some 150 synagogues dating from the fourth and fifth centuries in the Land of Israel have been uncovered.

Among the highlights of this literature are, of course, Y.L. Elbogen's *Ha-Tefillah be-Yisrael be-Hitpathutah ha-Historit*, trans. Y. Amir and edited by Y. Heinemann (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1972); Y. Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah bi-Tekufat ha-Tannaim ve-ha-Amoraim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1966); *idem.*, *Iyyunei Tefillah*, ed. A. Shinan (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981), a collection of essays by Heinemann; S. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and E. Fleischer's studies cited below in n. 13. See however Reif's critique of the views of Heinemann and Fleischer in Reif, pp. 119–20.

On the history of the synagogue in the time of *Ḥazal* ("Late Antiquity"), see *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); *Beit ha-Knesset bi-Tekufat ha-Mishnah ve-ha-Talmud: Leket Maamarim*, ed. Zev Safrai (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1981); *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Philadelphia: The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987); see also the latter's "The Sage and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee," in Lee I. Levine, *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Seminary of America, 1992), pp. 201–22; *idem.*, "The Nature and Origin of the Palestinian Synagogue Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1966): 425–48, and his *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), pp. 139–79; Dan Urman, "The House of Assembly and the House of Study: Are They One and the Same?," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993): 236–57; and F. Huettenmeister, "Bet ha-Knesset u-Veit Midrash ve-ha-Zikkah Beineihem," *Kathedra* 18 (1981): 38–44.

A comprehensive bibliography may be found in the supplement to *Kiryat Sefer* 64 (1992–1993), *Reshimat Maamarim be-Inyenei Tefillah u-Mo'adim*, by Y. Tabory; the latter is also the editor of a recent collection of essays on prayer, *Mi-Kumran 'ad Kahir: Mehkarim be-Toledot ha-Tefillah* (Jerusalem: Orḥot, 1999).

I

Those who say that the commandment to pray is only rabbinic [in origin] have never seen the light. For while the text of the prayers and the requirement that they be recited thrice daily may be rabbinic, the essential concept and content [of the *mizvah* to pray] are the foundation of the whole Torah: to know the Lord; to acknowledge His greatness and glory with perfect and serene knowledge and an understanding heart; to contemplate them to such an extent that the intellective soul is inspired to love the Name of the Lord, to cleave to Him and His Torah, and to crave His *mizvot*.¹¹

R. Shneur Zalman does not mention petitionary prayer directly, though acknowledgment of God's greatness is certainly preparatory to it. This omission is hardly accidental; ḥasidic thinkers often downplay the worth of such prayer, and try to direct the one praying to more God-centered concerns.¹² Indeed, recently Ezra Fleischer has pointed to the communal (or, rather, the nationalist) nature of *the prayer par excellence, Shemoneh Esreih*. Fleischer notes that even those few *berakhot* which seem to sound an individual note (those for sustenance and healing) are expressed in the plural.¹³

Having said all this, the reader will gain more insight into the topic of our essay from the halakhic and pietistic literature alluded to above. I will cite just two, which have accompanied me in one form or another, for much of my life: Alexander Ziskind, *Yesod ve-Shoresh ha-Avodah*, corr. ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon Harry Fischel, 1978), and R. David Abudarham ("the Avudram"), *Abudarham ha-Shalem*, corr. and expanded ed. (Jerusalem: Usha, 1963). The reader will learn more from these works on the nature of Jewish prayer than a bookcase of more historically minded studies – including the following.

¹¹ D.Z. Hillman, *Iggerot Baal ha-Tanya* (Jerusalem: 1953), p. 33f. The letter of R. Shneur Zalman of Liady was sent to R. Alexander Sender of Shklov; the translation is from Norman Lamm, *The Religious Thought of Ḥasidism: Text and Commentary* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1999), p. 185.

¹² See R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, *Peri ha-Arez, Mikhtavim*, p. 57, in Lamm, *Ḥasidism*, p. 187f. "If you serve God in utter truth, you should have no desire or lust for anything except to do His will. How then do you come to pray and seek divine mercy for yourself, or others...?"

¹³ See E. Fleischer, "*Tefillat Shemoneh Esreih – Iyyunim be-Ofyah, Sidrah, Tokhnah*,

This strain of self-abnegation is absent from personal testimonies regarding prayer. Indeed, among the most personal statements preserved in rabbinic literature on prayer are several which emphasize its petitionary aspect. In *M Berakhot* 5:5 and the accompanying *Yerushalmi* (41a) we have the following reports.

מתני' המתפלל וטעה סימן רע לו ואם שליח ציבור הוא סימן רע לשולחיו מפני ששולחו של אדם כמותו. אמרו עליו על רבי חנינא בן דוסא שהיה מתפלל על החולים ואומר זה חי וזה מת. אמרו לו מנין אתה יודע אמר להם אם שגורה תפילתי בפי יודע אני שהוא מקובל ואם לאו יודע אני שהוא מטורף: גמ'...מעשה ברבן גמליאל שחלה בנו ושלה שני תלמידי חכמים אצל רחב"ד בעירו. אמר לון המתינו לי עד שאעלה לעלייה ועלה לעלייה וירד. אמר להו בטוח אני שנינוח בנו של ר"ג מחליו וסיימו באותה שעה תבע מהן מזון. אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אם כוונת את לבך בתפילה תהא מבושר שנשמעה תפילתך ומה טעם תכין לבם תקשיב אזניך אמר ריב"ל אם עשו שפתותיו של אדם תנובה יהא מבושר שנשמע תפילתו מה טעם בורא ניב שפתים שלום לרחוק ולקרוב אמר ה' ורפאתיו:

Mishnah: When one prays and makes a mistake it is a bad omen for him, and if he be the Reader for a congregation it is a bad omen for those who appointed him, because the representative of a person is like to himself. They related of R. Chanina ben Dosa that when he prayed on behalf of sick people he used to say, "This one will live," or "That one will die." They said to him, "Whence dost thou know?" He replied to them, "If my prayer be uttered fluently I know it is granted,

u-Maggamoteha," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): 179–223, esp. pp. 178–88; see also his "Le-Kadmoniyut Tefillot ha-Ḥovah be-Yisrael," *Tarbiz* 59 (1990): 397–441, and Y. Tabory, "Avodat Hashem shel Anshei ha-Maamad," in Y. Tabory, ed., *Mi-Kumran 'ad Kahir*, pp. 145–69.

Much has been written on the date of the composition of the *Shemoneh Esreih*; see most recently S. Safrai, "Ha-Hitkansut be-Vatei ha-Knesset bi-Yemei Mo'ed be-Shabbatot u-vi-Yemot ha-Ḥol," in Zev Safrai, et. al., *Hikrei Erez: Iyyunim be-Toldot Erez Yisrael Mugashim le-Khvod Prof. Yehudah Feliks*, (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1997), pp. 235–45, and the brief bibliographical reference in n. 50; see also U. Erlich, "Le-Ḥeker Nusahah ha-Kadum shel Tefillat Shemoneh Esreih – Birkhat ha-Avodah," in *Mi-Kumran 'ad Kahir*, Y. Tabory, ed., pp. 17–38.

but if not, I know that it is rejected. Gemara: A story regarding Rabban Gamaliel, whose son was ill, and sent two scholars to R. Ḥanina b. Dosa in his city: [When he met them] he said to them: “Wait until I go up to the attic room.” He went up to the attic room and descended. He said to them: “I am certain that [the condition of] the son of Rabban Gamaliel has improved.” [Later] they estimated that at that moment he asked for food from [those attending him]. Said R. Samuel b. Nahmani: If you have [properly] directed your heart in prayer, be assured that your prayer is heard. What reason [= scriptural source] is there for this? “Prepare their heart, let your ears listen” (Ps. 10:17). Said R. Joshua b. Levi: If a person's lips have produced fruit, he will be assured that his prayer will be heard. What reason [= scriptural source] is there for this? “Creator of the utterance of the lips, peace, peace to far and near, says God, and I have healed him” (Is 57:19).

And in M *Berakhot* 4:3:

רבן גמליאל אומר, בכל יום מתפלל אדם שמונה עשרה. רבי יהושע אומר, מעין שמונה עשרה. רבי עקיבה אומר, אם שגורה תפלתו בפיו, יתפלל שמונה עשרה. ואם לאו, מעין שמונה עשרה.

Rabban Gamliel says: A man should pray the Eighteen [Benedictions] every day. Rabbi Joshua says: The substance of the Eighteen. Rabbi Akivah says: If his prayer is fluent in his mouth he should pray the Eighteen, but if not, the substance of the Eighteen.

And, to provide some context for R. Akiva's view, let us not forget the arresting description of his private prayer as recorded in BT *Berakhot* 31a.

תניא אמר רבי יהודה כך היה מנהגו של רבי עקיבא כשהיה מתפלל עם הצבור היה מקצר ועולה מפני טורח צבור וכשהיה מתפלל בינו לבין עצמו אדם מניחו בזוית זו ומוצאו בזוית אחרת וכל כך למה מפני כריעות והשתחויות:

It has been taught: Rabbi Yehudah said: such was the custom of R. Akiva; when he prayed with the congregation, he used to cut it short and finish in order not to inconvenience the congregation, but when he prayed by himself, a man would leave him in one corner and find him later in another, on account of his many genuflections and prostrations.

It is clear that the “balance” of which Dr. Lamm wrote has been a shifting one, and M *Berakhot* 4:3 seems situated at its very cusp, with a range of opinions which proceed from institutionalization to its opposite. It would be jejune to oppose spirituality and the “free-form” type of prayer which R. Akiva evidently both represented and exemplified, and deny it to Rabban Gamaliel’s normative opinion. But Dr. Lamm’s description of the dilemma faced by those who would either legislate the requirements for prayer on the one hand, or leave the fulfillment of the duty to pray to the feelings of the one offering the prayer on the other, reflects not only a legislative dilemma, but a personal one.

R. Akiva’s solution is one which has undoubtedly been adopted by many. In public he restricted himself to what Max Kadushin called “normal mysticism”;¹⁴ in private he allowed his impulses more unfettered play. Note that the reason for this bifurcated approach lay in his responsibility to the community and its communal forms of prayer – a responsibility which took precedence over his own spiritual fulfillment. Unfortunately, R. Yehudah does not describe the circumstances under which R. Akiva prayed privately, or how often, but in describing the practice as “מנהגו” he implies that this was his ordinary course of behavior. Still, his opinion, as recorded in M *Berakhot* 4:3, still leaves a good deal of flexibility in the hands of the one offering prayer. R. Yehudah’s description of R. Akiva’s public behavior as מקצר ועולה (abridge and continue) does not necessarily imply that he would choose the מעין שבע (an abbreviated seven

¹⁴ See Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought* (New York: Bloch Publishing, repr. n.d.), pp. 237–40, and *idem.*, *Worship and Ethics: A Study in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1963), pp. 13–7, 167–8, 203–5.

[blessings]), or that the congregation would. But the opportunities for spontaneity for which his view allowed makes his own public practice – especially as compared to his private behavior – all the more striking.

R. Yehudah's explanation of R. Akiva's private practice, while couched in terms of physical gesture and time expended clearly points to another aspect of R. Akiva's prayer: the emphasis on self-abasement. This is clearly the prayer of the man who spoke of loving God with all one's might as implying that this applied "even if he takes your soul."¹⁵

The reports of R. Ḥanina b. Dosa exemplify a different mode of prayer, perhaps one comparable to R. Akiva's private custom, or perhaps one pertaining only to his petitionary prayers. It would be mistaken, however, to associate his behavior with the חסידים הראשונים (Early Pietists) described in M. *Berakhot* 5:1, which do not seem to relate to petitionary prayer exclusively, or perhaps not at all. One would expect that individual petitionary prayer would not require an admonition for ראש כובד (deep earnestness).

משנה: אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כובד ראש. חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת ומתפללין כדי שיכוונו לבם לאביהם שבשמים אפילו המלך שואל בשלומו לא ישיבנו ואפילו נחש כרוך על עקבו לא יפסיק:

Mishnah: One must not stand up to say the Amidah without deep earnestness. The early pietists used to wait for one hour and then pray in order to direct their minds to God. Should even the king greet one, he may not return the greeting to him. And if even a snake be curled round his heel he must not pause.

Indeed, the reports of R. Ḥanina b. Dosa and R. Akiva, and associated traditions seem to date from a different era, one in which the emphasis was put on unstructured, perhaps ecstatic, prayer. The Mishnah also seems somewhat disproportionately (from our perspective) concerned with laborers fitting their prayers

¹⁵ BT *Ber.* 61b.

into their work environment, once again an instance of fulfilling one's obligatory prayers within a context which does not allow for institutionalized prayer, as in M *Berakhot* 2:4.

האומנים קורין בראש האילן או בראש הנדבך מה שאין רשאים לעשות כן
בתפילה:

Craftsmen may recite the Shema on the top of a tree or on top of a course of stones, which they may not do when they say the *Amidah*.

Indeed, one reading of R. Eliezer's famous dictum regarding one who prays under obligation – אין תפלתו תחנונים – (His prayer is not one of supplication.) – may be read either as pertaining to a context of fixed prayer, as do most commentators, or as a protest against Rabban Gamaliel's insistence of instituting the fixed daily *Shemoneh Esreih*¹⁶ (M *Berakhot* 4:3–4):

רבן גמליאל אומר, בכל יום מתפלל אדם שמונה עשרה. רבי יהושע אומר, מעין שמונה עשרה. רבי עקיבה אומר, אם שגורה תפלתו בפיו, יתפלל שמונה עשרה. ואם לאו, מעין שמונה עשרה. רבי אליעזר אומר, העושה תפלתו קבע, אין תפלתו תחנונים. רבי יהושע אומר, המהלך במקום סכנה, מתפלל תפלה קצרה. אומר, הושע השם את עמך את שארית ישראל, בכל פרשת העבור יהיו צרכיהם לפניך. ברוך אתה ה', שומע תפלה.

Rabban Gamliel says: A man should pray the Eighteen [Benedictions] every day. Rabbi Joshua says: The substance of the Eighteen. Rabbi Akivah says: If his prayer is fluent in his mouth he should pray the Eighteen, but if not, the substance of the Eighteen. Rabbi Eliezer says: He that makes his prayer a fixed task, his prayer is no supplication. Rabbi Joshua says: He that journeys in a place of danger should pray a short prayer saying, "Save O Lord, the remnant of Israel; at their every crossroad let their needs come before thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, that hearest prayer!"

¹⁶ See *Melekheth Shelomo ad loc.*, in the name of R. Yehosef Ashkenazi.

In either case, however, *Hazal* express a very realistic view of the effects of fixed prayer: lack of spontaneity, sincerity and authenticity.¹⁷ Note though that R. Eliezer does not employ the formula אין תפלתו תפלה (His prayer is not a prayer), but rather אין תפלתו תחנונים (His prayer is not one of supplication) – yet another mark of his realistic assessment of humanity’s limited capacity for regular, recurrent, mandated yet heartfelt prayer.¹⁸ Given its context, R. Eliezer’s statement would seem to refer to *Shemoneh Esreih, tefillah par excellence*, and thus primarily to petitionary prayer. It is undeniable, however, that prayer as such must contain this element of תחנונים (supplication), an admission of the petitioner’s creatureliness and need. Prayer without these characteristics is hardly worthy of the name. Or, as we noted above, in R. Shneur Zalman’s formulation,

the essential concept and content [of the *mizvah* to pray] are the foundation of the whole Torah: to know the Lord; to acknowledge His greatness and glory with perfect and serene knowledge and an understanding heart; to contemplate them to such an extent that the intellective soul is inspired to love the Name of the Lord, to cleave to Him and His Torah, and to crave His *mizvot*.¹⁹

It is inconceivable that the cavalier attitude that R. Shimon seems to display towards prayer was not tempered by something of this consideration (see p. 77 below). It may well be that he considered

¹⁷ Note *Tiferet Israel*’s definition of want of תחנונים (supplication): ר"ל: תחנונים: "שחוטפה או שאינו אומרה להכנעה או שאינו מחדש בו דבר או שאינו מתפלל בנץ החמה" that is to say, that he 'snatches' it [= says it too quickly for proper intention], or does not recite it with proper submission, or he does not add something of his own, or he does not pray with the sunrise."

¹⁸ In this respect, of course, institutionalized prayer is only one victim of the general problem of habituation. Humans are so constituted as to crave novelty and to adjust to almost any situation, good or bad. Human sensibility tends toward a status of mediocrity, which requires constant attention to resist.

¹⁹ See above, pp. 6–7.

his Torah study as fulfilling some of the same purposes and yielding the same results. We will explore this further below.

As far as the matter of personalized petitionary prayer goes, it is clear from the very structure and formulation of one of the earliest of rabbinic prayers, *Shemoneh Esreih* (as indeed from the Book of Psalms), that personal petitionary prayer was perfectly acceptable to *Ḥazal*. So long as one expressed his or her dependency on God in prayer, it seems to have been perfectly acceptable to make both personal and communal requests for mundane needs – primarily health and sustenance. Nevertheless, the pronounced emphasis on national (the messianic redemption and associated events, protection from slanderers) and religious (repentance and forgiveness) needs is undeniable.

The personal aspect of prayer is perhaps most clearly expressed in the voluntary prayers offered by a number of (mostly) *amoraim*, and gathered together in BT *Ber.* 16b–17a and JT *Ber.* 33a.²⁰ Among them are several attributed to R. Yoḥanan, the great second-generation Israeli *amora*, and head of the Tiberian school, in both Talmuds.

רבי יוחנן בתר דמסיים צלותיה אמר הכי יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו
שתציץ בבשתנו ותביט ברעתנו ותתלבש ברחמיך ותתכסה בעוזך ותתעטף
בחסידותך ותתאזר בחנינותך ותבא לפניך מדת טובך וענותנותך.
רבי יוחנן כי הוה מסיים ספרא דאיוב אמר הכי סוף אדם למות וסוף
בהמה לשחיטה והכל למיתה הם עומדים. אשרי מי שגדל בתורה ועמלו
בתורה ועושה נחת רוח ליוצרו וגדל בשם טוב ונפטר בשם טוב מן העולם
ועליו אמר שלמה טוב שם משמן טוב ויום המות מיום הולדו.
ר' יוחנן הוה מצלי יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהי ואלהי אבותי שתשכן
בפוריינו אהבה ואחווה שלום וריעות ותצליח סופינו אחרית ותקוה ותרבה
גבולנו בתלמידים ונשיש בחלקינו בג"ע ותקנינו לב טוב וחבר טוב ונשכים
ונמצא ייחול לבבינו ותבא לפניך קורת נפשינו לטובה:

R. Yoḥanan on concluding his prayer added the following:
“May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to look upon our shame,

²⁰ See Y. Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah bi-Tekufat ha-Tannaim ve-ha-Amoraim*, pp. 108–20.

and behold our evil plight, and clothe Thyself in Thy mercies, and cover Thyself in Thy strength, and wrap Thyself in Thy lovingkindness, and gird Thyself with Thy graciousness, and may the attribute of Thy kindness and gentleness come before Thee!”

When R. Yoḥanan finished the Book of Job, he used to say the following: “The end of man is to die, and the end of a beast is to be slaughtered, and all are doomed to die. Happy he who was brought up in the Torah and whose labour was in the Torah and who has given pleasure to his Creator and who grew up with a good name and departed the world with a good name; and of him Solomon said: A good name is better than precious oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.”²¹

R. Yoḥanan would pray [as follows]: “May it be [Your] will in Your Presence, O Lord my God, and God of my fathers, that You cause love and brotherhood, peace and friendship in our forums, that You provide purpose and hope for our end, You enlarge our boundary with disciples [that] we rejoice in our portion in the next world [lit., the Garden of Eden], and cause us to acquire a good heart, a good companion, that we rise early and find our heart's hope, and that our souls come before You for good.”²²

The personal and penitential nature of the additions transmitted by the *Bavli* is unmistakable, and go beyond the sentiments expressed by any version of the standard *Shemoneh Esreih* prayer for forgiveness.

²¹ BT *Ber.* 16b.

²² JT *Ber.* 33a; all references in this paper will refer to the standard Vilna edition of the *Yerushalmi* rather than the *editio princeps*. In the *Bavli* (BT *Ber.* 16b), the latter – with a few minor variations – is attributed to R. Eleazar, R. Yoḥanan's Babylonian disciple and successor.

רבי אלעזר בתר דמסיים צלותיה אמר הכי יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו שתשכן בפורינו אהבה ואחווה ושלום וריעות ותרבה גבולנו בתלמידים ותצליח סופנו אחרית ותקוה ותשים חלקנו בגן עדן ותקננו בחבר טוב ויצר טוב בעולמך ונשכים ונמצא יחול לבבנו ליראה את שמך ותבא לפניך קורת נפשנו לטובה.

The even darker note sounded by the prayer R. Yoḥanan composed on the occasion of completing the book of Job is entirely appropriate to that occasion. However, the prayer found in the *Yerushalmi* (which in the *Bavli* is attributed to R. Eleazar; see n. 23), expresses much broader and more personal sentiments, feelings which are mostly unexpressed in the standard versions – a request for household peace, personal and professional success, and the appropriate reward in the World to Come.

These occasional prayers may provide a hint of what R. Yoḥanan had in mind when he expressed the wish, recorded in both Talmuds, that “would that a man pray all the day long” (BT *Ber.* 21a = JT *Ber.* 1b, 34b and JT *Ber.* 8a–b = JT *Shab.* 7a–b = JT *Hor.* 18a–b). In each of the *Yerushalmi*’s quotes, however, an additional comment is appended: למה שאין תפילה מפסדת (Why? Because no prayer causes loss).²³

This is a curious wish for R. Yoḥanan to express. After all, he sacrificed all his possessions in order to study Torah,²⁴ and indeed achieved great heights in Torah study. He is the most frequently-cited *amora* in both Talmuds – so much so that Maimonides in his introduction to the *Mishneh Torah* credited him with the redaction of the *Yerushalmi*. What would have become of his Torah scholarship

R. Eleazar on concluding his prayer used to say the following: “May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to cause to dwell in our lot love and brotherhood and peace and friendship, and mayest Thou make our borders rich in disciples and prosper our latter end with good prospect and hope, and set our portion in Paradise, and confirm us with a good companion and a good impulse in Thy world, and may we rise early and obtain the yearning of our heart to fear Thy name, and mayest Thou be pleased to grant the satisfaction of our desires!”

Since the *Bavli* attributes a different prayer to R. Yoḥanan, it is unlikely that this one was shared by both *amoraim*; it seems more likely that the *Bavli*’s tradition confused the teacher and his disciple.

²³ See Rashi in BT *Pes.* 54b s.v. ותרה משום ברכה ואין בתפלה יתרה משום ברכה. R. Yoḥanan say: in Tractate *Berakhot*, that excessive prayer does not [violate the prohibition] of a blessing [recited] in vain.”

²⁴ See *Leviticus Rabbah* 30:1, ed. Margulies, pp. 688–90, and see his note on pp. 689–90.

had he spent his entire life in prayer? The context of this remark in JT *Ber.* 8a–b (= JT *Shab.* 7a–b and JT *Hor.* 18a) may provide a clue.

רבי יוחנן בשם רבי שמעון בן יוחי כגון אנו שעוסקים בתלמוד תורה אפילו לקרית שמע אין אנו מפסיקין. רבי יוחנן אמרה על גרמיה כגון אנו שאין אנו עסוקים בתלמוד תורה אפילו לתפלה אנו מפסיקין. דין כדעתיה ודין כדעתיה רבי יוחנן כדעתיה דאמר רבי יוחנן ולואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום למה שאין תפילה מפסדת רבי שמעון בן יוחאי כדעתיה דרשב"י אמר אלו הוינא קאים על טורא דסיני בשעתא דאתיהיבת תורה לישראל הוינא מתבעי קומי רחמנא דיתברי לבר נשא תרין פומין חד דהוי לעי באוריתא וחד דעבד ליה כל צורכיה. חזר ומר ומה אין חד הוא לית עלמא יכיל קאים ביה מן דילטוריא דיליה אילו הוו תרין עאכ"ו.

א"ר יוסי קומי רבי ירמיה אתיא דרבי יוחנן כרבי חנינא בן עקביא אומר כשם שמפסיקין לק"ש כך מפסיקין לתפילה ולתפילין ולשאר כל מצותיה של תורה. ולא מודה רשב"י שמפסיקין לעשות סוכה ולעשות לולב. ולית ליה לרשב"י הלמד על מנת לעשות ולא הלמד שלא לעשות שהלמד שלא לעשות נוח לו שלא נברא. וא"ר יוחנן הלמד שלא לעשות נוח לו אילו נהפכה שילייתו על פניו ולא יצא לעולם.

טעמיה דרשב"י [ח/ב] זה שינון וזה שינון ואין מבטל שינון מפני

שינון.

והא תנינן הקורא מכאן ואילך לא הפסיד כאדם שהוא קורא בתורה.

הא בעונתה חביבה מד"ת. היא היא.

א"ר יודן רשב"י ע"י שהיה תדיר בד"ת לפיכך אינה חביבה יותר

מד"ת.

אמר רבי אבא מרי לא תנינן אלא כאדם שהוא קורא בתורה הא

בעונתה כמשנה היא רשב"י כדעתיה דרשב"י אמר העוסק במקרא מידה ואינה מידה ורבנן עבדי מקרא כמשנה:

[...If they began, they do not interrupt, [but] they interrupt for the recitation of the *Shema* but do not interrupt for *Tefillah* (= *Shemoneh Esreih*)....] R. Yoḥanan said in the name of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai: [Those] such as we, who are occupied with Torah study [exclusively], we do not interrupt even for the recitation of the *Shema*. R. Yoḥanan said regarding himself: [Those] such as we who are not occupied with the study of Torah [as were previous generations] – we interrupt even

for *Tefillah* (= *Shemoneh Esreih*). Each one follows his own view. R. Yoḥanan [follows] his own view, for R. Yoḥanan said: Would that a person would pray all day long. Why? Because no prayer causes lost.

R. Shimon b. Yoḥai [follows] his own view, for R. Shimon b. Yoḥai said: If I had stood at Mount Sinai at the time that the Torah was given to Israel, I would have requested of God that these people have two mouths created for them, one with which to study Torah and one with which he would perform all his [physical] needs. He [later] changed his mind, [and said]: Since with only one [mouth] the world can scarcely exist because of the informers, all the more so if there were two [mouths]!

Said R. Yosa before R. Jeremiah: [The view of R. Yoḥanan] is according to [that] of R. Ḥananiah b. Akiva, for it was taught: The writers of [Torah] scrolls, *tefillin* and *mezuzot* interrupt for the recitation of the *Shema* but not for *Tefillah*. R. Ḥananiah b. Akiva says: Just as they interrupt for the recitation of the *Shema*, so do they interrupt for *Tefillah*, [donning] *tefillin* and the other *mizvot* of the Torah.

[But] does R. Shimon b. Yoḥai not admit that they interrupt in order to build a *sukkah* and do [the *mizvah*] of *lulav*? And does R. Shimon b. Yoḥai not hold that one should study [in order to] perform [the *mizvot*] and that one who studies not in order to do [the *mizvot*] – it were better for him that he had not been created!

Said R. Yoḥanan: One who studies not in order to perform [the *mizvot*], it were better for him that his afterbirth be turned over his face, and that he not be born! [However, in this case] the reason of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai is that each one (= Torah study and prayer) is [called] ‘recitation’ [in the Torah], and we do not cancel one recitation for the other recitation.

But have we not learned: One who reads [the *Shema*] from here onward (= the time of recitation) has not lost

[thereby], [but has received his reward] as one who reads in the Torah [that is, as Torah study even if not as prayer]. Thus, in its [proper] time [as prayer] it is more beloved than words of Torah!

Said R. Yudan: [As to] R. Shimon b. Yoḥai, since he was steadily [engaged] in words of Torah, therefore [recitation as prayer] is not more beloved to him than words of Torah.

R. [A]bba Mari said: We learnt [this] only of one who reads [words of] Torah [not in its proper time], but [in its proper] time [prayer is] like Mishnah [study].

[While] R. Shimon b. Yoḥai [goes] according to his own view. For R. Shimon b. Yoḥai says: [As to] one who occupies himself with Scripture – it is a trait which is not [the best] trait – but the Rabbis consider Scripture like Mishnah.

This *sugya*, only part of which we have excerpted, is richly laden with the themes which will occupy us for much of the following discussion: the question of whether prayer or Torah study ranks higher in Judaism's scale of values, how both relate to the practical observance of *mizvot*, and how these relations change with respect to person and condition.

At base is R. Yoḥanan's drawing a radical distinction between his time and that of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai's.²⁵ While R. Yoḥanan may

²⁵ The same view is attributed to R. Yoḥanan in the *Bavli* as well; see BT *Shab.* 11a:

מפסיקין לקריאת שמע: הא תנא ליה רישא אין מפסיקין סיפא אתאן לדברי תורה דתניא חברים שהיו עוסקין בתורה מפסיקין לקריאת שמע ואין מפסיקין לתפלה אמר רבי יוחנן לא שנו אלא כגון רבי שמעון בן יוחי וחביריו שתורתן אומנותן אבל כגון אנו מפסיקין לקריאת שמע ולתפלה והתניא כשם שאין מפסיקין לתפלה כך אין מפסיקין לקריאת שמע כי תני ההיא בעיבור שנה דאמר רב אדא בר אהבה וכן תנו סבי דהגרוניא אמר רבי אלעזר בר צדוק כשהיינו עוסקין בעיבור השנה ביבנה לא היינו מפסיקין לא לקריאת שמע ולא לתפלה:

Yet if they began, they need not break off. One must break off for the reading of the *Shema* [but not for prayer]. But the first clause teaches, "They need not break off?" The second clause refers to study. For it was taught: If companions [scholars] are engaged in studying, they must break off for the reading of the *Shema*, but not for prayer. R.

have been viewed by his disciples²⁶ as the epitome of a life totally devoted to Torah,²⁷ he seems to have viewed himself in a different light, at least in comparison with R. Shimon b. Yoḥai.²⁸ R. Shimon b. Yoḥai represented the epitome of devotion to Torah learning to him, and only to such scholars was permission to continue their study through the time of the recitation of *Shema* granted; his own generation must interrupt their study even for *Shemoneh Esreih*.

But this is also linked to R. Shimon b. Yoḥai's view of the recitation of *Shema* as representing שִׁנוּן, or *Talmud Torah*. Since it is (only) on a par with the general miṣvah of *Talmud Torah*, it is not necessary to interrupt one's study for the recital of the *Shema*. Since the *Shema* is clearly superior to *Shemoneh Esreih* in terms of obligation (the reasons given in the *Yerushalmi* are various; see JT *Ber.* 18a), that too is deferred. For R. Yoḥanan, however, his generation's deficiency in pursuing *Talmud Torah* is such that he and his contemporaries must interrupt their studies even for *Shemoneh Esreih*.

Yoḥanan said: This was taught only of such as R. Shimon b. Yoḥai and his companions, whose study was their profession, but we must break off both for the reading of the *Shema* and for prayer. But it was taught: "Just as they do not break off for the service, so do they not break off for the reading of the *Shema*?" – That was taught in reference to the intercalation of the year. For R. Adda b. Ahabah said, and the Elders of Hagronia recited likewise: R. Eleazar b. Zadok said: When we were engaged in intercalating the year at Yavneh, we made no break for the reading of the *Shema* or prayer.

However, the *Bavli* does not specifically attribute the contrary view to R. Shimon b. Yoḥai, but merely cites him as an exemplary case.

²⁶ It should be recalled that, despite his well-known antipathy to Babylonians, his academy included a good number of them, thus testifying to his reputation in both the Land of Israel and in Babylonia.

²⁷ He is the most frequently cited *amora* in both *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*; see *Leviticus Rabbah* 30:1 on his reflections on having sold his patrimony in order to devote himself to Torah study.

²⁸ R. Yoḥanan's views on the subject of "the devolution of the species" may have something to do with this. Many of the famous and oft-quoted statements relating

רבי יוחנן בשם רבי שמעון בן יוחי כגון אנו שעוסקים בתלמוד תורה אפילו לקרית שמע אין אנו מפסיקין. רבי יוחנן אמרה על גרמיה כגון אנו שאין אנו עסוקים בתלמוד תורה אפילו לתפלה אנו מפסיקין. דין כדעתיה ודין כדעתיה רבי יוחנן כדעתיה דאמר רבי יוחנן ולואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום למה שאין תפילה מפסדת.

טעמיה דרשב"י זה שינון וזה שינון ואין מבטל שינון מפני שינון.
והא תנינן הקורא מכאן ואילך לא הפסיד כאדם שהוא קורא בתורה.
הא בעונתה חביבה מד"ת. היא היא.
א"ר יודן רשב"י ע"י שהיה תדיר בד"ת לפיכך אינה חביבה יותר מד"ת.

אמר רבי אבא מרי לא תנינן אלא כאדם שהוא קורא בתורה הא בעונתה כמשנה היא רשב"י כדעתיה דרשב"י אמר העוסק במקרא מידה ואינה מידה ורבנן עבדי מקרא כמשנה:

R. Yoḥanan said in the name of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai: [Those] such as we, who are occupied with Torah study [exclusively], we do not interrupt even for the recitation of the *Shema*. R. Yoḥanan said regarding himself: [Those] such as we who are not occupied with the study of Torah [as were previous generations] – we interrupt even for *Tefillah* (= *Shemoneh Esreih*). Each one follows his own view. R. Yoḥanan [follows] his own view, for R. Yoḥanan said: Would that a person would pray all day long. Why? Because no prayer causes loss.

The reason of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai is that this is learning and that is learning, and one [form of] learning does not nullify another [form] of learning.

But did we not learn: One who recites [the recitation of the *Shema*] from here on does not lose [any merit thereby, but is regarded as] a person who reads [that passage] in the Torah? But then, in its proper time is it more beloved than words of Torah? [No,] it is the same.

Said R. Yudan: [As to] R. Shimon b. Yoḥai, since he was always engaged in words of Torah, [the recitation of the *Shema*] is not more beloved than words of Torah.

Said R. Abba Mari: Have we not learned: "But [rather, he is considered] as a person who reads [the passage] in the Torah – thus in its proper time it is [considered as important]

as Mishnah? That is [the view] of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai but the rabbis [i.e., the majority view] make Bible [study] like Mishnah [study].

Yet another theme seems intertwined with this discussion. Since R. Shimon b. Yoḥai views the obligation to study מקרא (Bible) as clearly inferior to Talmud (JT *Ber.* 7b = JT *Shab.* 8b = JT *Hor.* 18b), even the recitation of *Shema* does not take precedence over Talmud study.

טעמיה דרשב"י [ח/ב] זה שינון וזה שינון ואין מבטל שינון מפני שינון.
והא תנינן הקורא מכאן ואילך לא הפסיד כאדם שהוא קורא בתורה.
הא בעונתה חביבה מד"ת. היא היא.
א"ר יודן רשב"י ע"י שהיה תדיר בד"ת לפיכך אינה חביבה יותר
מד"ת.

אמר רבי אבא מרי לא תנינן אלא כאדם שהוא קורא בתורה הא
בעונתה כמושנה היא רשב"י כדעתיה דרשב"י אמר העוסק במקרא מידה
ואינה מידה ורבנן עבדי מקרא כמושנה:

[However, in this case] the reason of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai is that each one (= Torah study and prayer) is [called] 'recitation' [in the Torah], and we do not cancel one recitation for the other recitation.

But have we not learned: One who reads [the *Shema*] from here onward (= the time of recitation) has not lost [thereby], [but has received his reward] as one who reads in the Torah [that is, as Torah study even if not as prayer]. Thus, in its [proper] time [as prayer] it is more beloved than words of Torah!

Said R. Yudan: [As to] R. Shimon b. Yoḥai, since he was steadily [engaged] in words of Torah, therefore [recitation as prayer] is not more beloved to him than words of Torah.

R. [A]bba Mari said: We learnt [this] only of one who reads [words of] Torah [not in its proper time], but [in its proper] time [prayer is] like Mishnah [study].

The view alluded to here is clearly that expressed more fully in a

baraita cited in JT *Shab.* 79b, and better known (anonymously) in BT *Baba Mezia* 33b.

הדא אמרה שהמשנה קודמת למקרא. ודא מסייעא לההוא דתני ר"ש בן יוחי. דתני ר"ש בן יוחי העוסק במקרא מידה שאינה מידה. העוסק במשנה מידה שנוטלין ממנה שכר. העוסק בתלמוד אין לך מידה גדולה מזו. לעולם הוי רץ אחר המשנה יותר מן התלמוד. א"ר יוסי בי ר' בון הדא דאת אמר עד שלא שיקע בו ר' רוב משניות. אבל מששיקע בו ר' רוב משניות לעולם הוי רץ אחר התלמוד יותר מן המשנה.

They then said that the Mishneh has precedence over *Mikra* (Bible). And this supports that which R. Shimon b. Yoḥai taught. For R. Shimon b. Yoḥai taught, involvement in [the study of] *Mikra* (Bible) is a measure that is not a measure. One who is involved in [the study of] Mishneh, it is measure that they take from it reward. One who is involved in [the study of] Talmud, there is no measure greater than that.

And one should always run after Mishneh more than Talmud.

R. Yosi the son of R. Bun said: Now that which you said applies before Rabbi included most *mishnayot* [in his Mishnah], but that Rabbi has included most *mishnayot* in his Mishnah. One should always run after the Tamud more than the Mishneh.

The redactor of this *sugya* represents R. Shimon's view as a minority one. The "rabbis" give the recitation of *Shema* the status of, at least, the study of Mishnah. R. Shimon b. Yoḥai's view is thus clear. The recitation of *Shema*, and certainly *Shemoneh Esreih*, is not superior to *Talmud Torah* as manifested by "Talmud" study. However, other *mizvot* have a different status, and they must be performed in any case, as the end of the *sugya* in each of its parallels states.

ולא מודה רשב"י שמפסיקין לעשות סוכה ולעשות לולב. ולית ליה לרשב"י הלמד על מנת לעשות ולא הלמד שלא לעשות שהלמד שלא לעשות נוח לו שלא נברא.

וא"ר יוחנן הלמד שלא לעשות נוח לו אילו נהפכה שילייתו על פניו ולא יצא לעולם. טעמיה דרשב"י זה שינון וזה שינון ואין מבטל שינון מפני שינון

[But] does R. Shimon b. Yoḥai not admit that they interrupt in order to build a *sukkah* and do [the *mizvah*] of *lulav*? And does R. Shimon b. Yoḥai not hold that one should study [in order to] perform [the *mizvot*] and that one who studies not in order to do [the *mizvot*], – it were better for him that he had not been created!

Said R. Yoḥanan: One who studies not in order to perform [the *mizvot*], it were better for him that his afterbirth be turned over his face, and that he not be born! [However, in this case] the reason of R. Shimon b., Yoḥai is that each one (= Torah study and prayer) is [called] 'recitation' [in the Torah], and we do not cancel one recitation for the other recitation.

Still, the *sugya* does not clearly ground the view attributed to R. Shimon b. Yoḥai in a statement directly linked to him. The difficulty the redactor had may be gauged from the source he chose to quote.

רבי שמעון בן יוחאי כדעתיה דרשב"י אמר אלו הוינא קאים על טורא דסיני בשעתא דאתיהבת תורה לישראל הוינא מתבעי קומי רחמנא דיתברי לבר נשא תרין פומין חד דהוי לעי באוריתא וחד דעבד ליה כל צורכיה. חזר ומר ומה אין חד הוא לית עלמא יכיל קאים ביה מן דילטוריא דיליה אילו הוו תרין עאכ"ו.

R. Shimon b. Yoḥai [follows] his own view, for R. Shimon b. Yoḥai said: If I had stood at Mount Sinai at the time that the Torah was given to Israel, I would have requested of God that these people have two mouths created for them, one with which to study Torah and one with which he would perform all his [physical] needs. He [later] changed his mind, [and said]: Since with only one [mouth] the world can scarcely exist because of the informers, all the more so if there were two [mouths]!

R. Shimon's initial complaint does not relate to prayer in any direct way unless one assumes that the second mouth which would have been created for כל צורכיה (all of his needs) would have been used for prayer. However, his rueful reconsideration of his original statement – that since even the one mouth we have is used for informing on others, how much more evil would we do with two – relates to prayer even less. Rather, it undoubtedly reflects his experience as a fugitive from the Roman authorities. His reconsideration provides a framework for interpreting his original statement. Indeed, if the later redactional statement regarding the similarity of *Talmud Torah* to the recitation of *Shema* (since both are types of שׁינּוּן) accurately reflects his view, he may have included prayer along with study as the proper use of the “first” mouth, and *not* left it for the “second” mouth. In any case, though, it is remarkable that R. Shimon is hardly represented in the *halakhot* of prayer,²⁹ though, of course, one's creativity or interest in the legal aspects of a particular area may not always correspond to one's personal predilections.³⁰ Indeed, the *Bavli* preserves at least one statement (BT *Berakhot* 7b–8a), attributed by R. Yoḥanan to R. Shimon b. Yoḥai,³¹ which expresses the importance of communal prayer.³²

to this theme are attributed to him; see especially his remarks on R. Oshaya and the stature of earlier generations in BT *Eruv*. 53a.

²⁹ Indeed, in the *Bavli* he is represented by two statements regarding the recitation of *Shema*, as we might well expect in light of the data presented above; see BT *Ber.* 8b and 14b, and one on the importance of praying with the community in BT *Ber.* 7b–8a (see immediately below). The contrast to his many (and striking) statements regarding the importance of Torah study is noteworthy; see BT. *Ber.* 5a, 7b, 35b, *Shab.* 138b, *Baba Kama* 17a, and see *Pes.* 112a.

³⁰ In addition, one could hardly portray R. Shimon as a “dry” legalist; his aggadic contribution is also sizeable. Indeed, this (Christian influenced?) stereotyped image is hardly true to reality. Even *baalei halakhah* may have rich interior lives of meditation and prayer.

³¹ In *Tanḥuma Mikez* 9 this view is attributed to R. Yose b. Halafta. Nevertheless, see *Dikdukei Soferim ad loc.*, n. *kaf*, where R.N.N. Rabinowitz notes that this statement is part of a collection of traditions reported by R. Yoḥanan in the name of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai.

³² Though it may be argued that the wording indicates that the reference is to the

דאמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי [א/ח] מאי דכתיב ואני תפילתי
 לך ה' עת רצון אימתי עת רצון בשעה שהצבור מתפללין

For R. Yoḥanan said in the name of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai:
 What does it mean, “And I will pray to you, God in the time
 of desire.” When is the ‘time of desire’? At the hour that the
 community is praying.

Nevertheless, even if R. Shimon b. Yoḥai’s view was not as lop-sidedly in favor of study over prayer as represented by the redactor of this *sugya*, the view which the redactor expresses regarding the overwhelmingly greater importance of study over prayer clearly had echoes within the rabbinic community, though it is difficult to conceive of non-scholars holding such a view. In the *Bavli*, however, the view contrary to R. Yoḥanan’s is not identified with R. Shimon b. Yoḥai’s, perhaps, as we shall see, because in the *Bavli* (perhaps unlike that of the *Yerushalmi*?)³³ he is one of the proponents of the importance of communal prayer.³⁴

Before turning to R. Yoḥanan and his view, however, we should consider for moment the result of such a policy. For, if prayer represents תחנונים, an expression of human need and dependence on the Creator, to some extent study represents a greater assertion of human reason and even (within certain spheres) the autonomy of human judgment. Can a life without recurrent and regular expression of human needs be conceived? As William James put it, “Prayer in [the wider sense as meaning every type of inward communion or

maintenance of communal *times* of prayer even when praying privately (even if we accept the reading of MS Munich: מתפללין מהצבור שהצבור מתפללין “Prayer is not heard except at the time when the community is praying”), it is clear that R. Yizḥak did not understand the statement this way. The context of his conversation with R. Naḥman was to stress the importance of prayer *with* the community; see below, p. 38.

³³ See N. Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah’s Sake in the Works of Rabbi Ḥayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1989), pp. 159–60.

³⁴ See above, and below in regard to the dialogue in BT *Ber.* 7b–8a between R. Yizḥak and R. Naḥman (p. 38).

conversation with the power recognized as divine] is the very soul and essence of religion.” And, quoting the French theologian Auguste Sabatier, he adds that “prayer is religion in act; that is, prayer is real religion. . . . Religion is nothing if it be not the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws its life. This act is prayer. . . ., the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself into a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence. . . .”³⁵

It is inconceivable that R. Shimon felt that Torah study could replace prayer, unless it partook of prayer’s signal characteristics. The following *midrash*, quoted in R. Shimon’s name in a number of places (Midrash Tehillim 19:17), squarely conjoins the two.

שגיאיות מי יבין. תני ר' שמעון בן יוחי כמה גבורים הן הצדיקים, שהן יודעין לפתות את בוראם, ויודעין היאך לקלס, ראה דוד היאך מקלס את בוראו, התחיל לקלסו בשמים, שנאמר השמים מספרים כבוד אל, אמרו השמים שמא אתה צריך לכלום, מעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע, אמר ליה הרקיע שמא אתה צריך לכלום, היה מזמר והולך, התחיל לקלס בתורה, שנאמר יראת ה' טהורה, אמר לו הקב"ה מה את בעי, אמר לו שגיאיות מי יבין, שגיאיותו דעבדית קמך בעינא דתשרי לי, אמר ליה הא שרי לך והא שביק לך. גם מזדים חשוך עבדך. אלו הזדונות. אל ימשלו בי אז איתם. אלו תוקפי עבירות, כמה דאת אמר איתן מושבך (במדבר כד כא). ונקיתי מפשע רב. מאותו עון רב, אמר ר' לוי אמר דוד רבש"ע אתה אלוה רב, ואנא חוביי רברבין, יאה לאלהא רבא למישבק חובין רברבין, שנאמר למען שמך ה' וסלחת לעוני כי רב הוא (תהלים כה יא). דבר אחר אל ימשלו בי אז איתם.

R. Shimon b. Yoḥai: How powerful are the righteous who know how to persuade their Creator and know how to praise! See how David praises his Creator. He begins by praising Him through His heaven: “The heavens declare God’s glory, the firmament recounts the work of His hands” (Ps 19:2). – Are You then in need of anything? “The firmament recounts the work of His hands” – Are you then in need of anything? He

³⁵ James, p. 464. The quotation from Sabatier is from his *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*, 2nd ed. (1897), pp. 24–6.

would continue to praise, [and] began to praise by the Torah, as Scripture states: “The fear of God is pure” (Ps 19:10) – Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: What do you want?

[David] said to Him: “Who can be aware of errors?” (Ps 19:13) – for the unwitting sins I have committed before You I wish that You forgive me.

He said to him: Behold, it is pardoned and forgiven.

“And from willful sins keep Your servant” (Ps 14) – these are the witting ones.

“Let them not dominate me” (Ps 19:14) – these are the severe sins, as one says: “Your abode is secure” (Num 24:21). “And clear me of great sin” (Ps 19:14) – of that sin [regarding Bathsheba].

R. Yoḥanan’s view is less clear. Does his giving preference to prayer – *Shemoneh Esreih*, and certainly the recitation of *Shema* – stem from the inferior status of his generation in regard to the *mizvah* of *Talmud Torah*, or because of prayer’s intrinsic value (“Would that a person pray all day long”)? If we are to judge from R. Yoḥanan’s own behavior, it would seem to be the former, unless we are to interpret the wish to spend the day in prayer as referring to those who could not spend the day in study, but there is no indication of that.

The redactor who linked R. Yoḥanan’s view regarding interrupting one’s study for the recitation of *Shema* and *Shemoneh Esreih* seems to have taken this statement (“Would that...”) as emphasizing the importance of prayer and indicating that it was not to be delayed by one’s studies, once the hour had arrived (or was about to pass). It was not to be taken literally.

Again, just as in the case of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai, the view attributed to R. Yoḥanan by the redactor does not conform to the statement quoted in his name. For if we are to take it literally, R. Yoḥanan was urging a life of prayer on his interlocuters, rather than a life of study – the course he personally chose for himself and his disciples.

However, “would that a man pray all the day long” need not be

taken as a recommendation. It could have been intended as a rueful remark regarding man's fallen state: we cannot devote ourselves entirely to devotional activities given the pressing needs of material existence. Or, less likely, "prayer" may be understood as a synecdoche for what the *Bavli* calls *מִיָּלֵי דְשִׁמְיָא*, religious concerns. In the final analysis, though, the redactor was correct in not taking R. Yoḥanan's statement at face value, given his own career as head of the Tiberias school and teacher of the largest cohort of all the amoraic authorities of any generation.³⁶

Nevertheless, the redactors of both Talmuds took this statement as arguing for as much prayer as possible, at least in the absence of competing factors. Thus, as we have seen, when one is in doubt as to having prayed, the initial presumption is that R. Yoḥanan would hold that the prayer must be recited again. In *BT Pes. 54b*, where the question of *ne'ilah* on *Tish'ah Be-av* is raised, R. Yoḥanan is initially thought to be in favor, given this predisposition for maximum prayer. In the end, then, in both Talmuds, this apodictic statement of R. Yoḥanan's is interpreted as expressing a general predisposition in favor of a maximum of institutionalized prayer rather than a lifestyle devoted to it entirely – despite its literal meaning.

What might have been the antecedents of such a statement? Could it be that R. Yoḥanan was expressing – or transmitting – a view which he did not share, but which he certainly respected?

There are echoes of something approximating such a view in tannaitic sources. As Shlomo Na'eh has recently pointed out, *M Ber. 5:5* and *4:3* seem to describe an ideal form of ecstatic prayer, where the prayer's efficacy can be judged by its fluency, *אם שגרה בפיו*.³⁷ It is difficult to imagine that such virtuosi of prayer as R. Neḥuniah b. Hakanah or Ḥoni ha-Me'aggel achieved the heights of prayerful intimacy with God without devoting major efforts to the task.

³⁶ Almost all the third-generation *amoraim* in the Land of Israel were his disciples, and that cohort is estimated as numbering 135. No amoraic generation, whether represented in the *Yerushalmi* or in the *Bavli*, comes close to matching this number. See the tables in Lee I. Levine *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1989), pp. 67–8.

³⁷ See Na'eh's article, "Boreh Niv Sefatayim." *Tarbiz* 62 (1994) pp. 185–218

Clearly, their spiritual life was one of prayerful devotion more than Torah study. Could R. Yoḥanan have had them in mind when he made his statement?

Perhaps his model was R. Akiva, who was a great scholar, but of whom it is reported that though when he prayed with a *minyān*, he would deliberately recite his prayers with dispatch

וכשהיה מתפלל בינו לבין עצמו אדם מניחו בזוית זו ומוצאו בזוית אחרת
וכל כך למה מפני כריעות והשתחויות:

When he prayed with the congregation, he used to cut it short and finish in order not to inconvenience the congregation, but when he prayed by himself, a man would leave him in one corner and find him later in another, on account of his many genuflections and prostrations.³⁸

Indeed, were we to speculate further, we might connect R. Yoḥanan's statement with his own personal experience.

אמר רבי יוחנן כל המאריך בתפלתו ומעיין בה סוף בא לידי כאב לב.

If one draws out his prayer and expects therefore its fulfillment, he will in the end suffer vexation of heart.

and while the following statement – *מאי תקנתיה? יעסוק בתורה* (What is the solution? Study Torah.) – is redactional, it may nevertheless also mirror his experience. While we have no certain way of relating R. Yoḥanan's observation here with his wish that *דאמר רבי יוחנן ולואי* *שיתפלל אדם כל היום למה שאין תפילה מפסדת*, discussed above, we may speculate that one of the reasons R. Yoḥanan's statement remained within the realm of desirable practices which could not be realized (“would that they prayed all day”) was simply that the end result of too much introspection was heartache and depression.

It would seem that the *Bavli* recognizes three degrees of in-

³⁸ BT *Ber.* 31a.

volvement in prayer: one is to pray at length (המאריך בתפלתו), another to cultivate the proper intention (כוונה), and, finally, to anticipate that it be answered to the degree of his sincerity and intention (מעיון בה).³⁹ The latter seems to have been the object of mixed emotions, as *Tosafot* note, with some sources promoting it as bringing great rewards in both worlds, and some pointing out its dangers.⁴⁰

The resulting complex and to some extent perplexing evaluation of עבודה שבלב (worship of the heart) cannot be easily attributed to a disagreement on principle, since R. Yoḥanan, for one, is found on both sides of the issue. Given the perverse and contrary nature of humans beings, the psychological consequences of עיון תפלה are not always desirable, despite their spiritual benefits. Indeed, as noted, this may be one of the reasons that R. Yoḥanan's wish that people spend their entire day in prayer remained only that: a wistful sentiment impossible of being carried into practice, even apart from the practical difficulties.⁴¹ Indeed, the *Bavli's* suggestion (BT *Ber.* 32b): מאי תקנתיה? יעסוק בתורה may reflect R. Yoḥanan's own conclusion as carried out in his own choice of lifestyle.

II

If the redactional understanding of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai's view reflects an earlier attitude which had struck roots in the early amoraic period, that is, in the very first amoraic generation, it may help explain an otherwise troubling incident in Rav's life, one which is reported in the *Yerushalmi* though not in the *Bavli* (JT *Yom.* 7b).

³⁹ See Rashi BT *Ber.* 55a (top), s.v. מעין בה: שמתפלל בכונה: מעין בה. However, as R. Yaakov Ibn Ḥabib notes in his עיקב עיון (ad loc., s.v. שלשה דברים), following *Tosafot*, *Ber.* 32b. s.v. כל המאריך, there are other sources which consider עיון תפלה as a positive practice (BT *Shab.* 127a, where according to R. Yoḥanan it brings reward in both worlds, and BT *Baba Batra* 164b, where Rav laments that most people are not innocent of neglecting this aspect of prayer every day). *Tosafot* conclude that there are two types of עיון תפלה, one (the positive one) which is identical with כוונה, and one as defined by Rashi.

⁴⁰ See previous note.

⁴¹ This subject will be examined again below, section III.

אם היה חכם דורש ואם לאו תלמידי חכמים דורשין לפניו אם רגיל לקרות קורא ואם לאו קורין לפניו ובמה קורין לפניו באיוב ובעזרא ובדברי הימים זכריה בן קבוטל אומר פעמים הרבה קריתי לפניו בדניאל: כהנא שאל לרב מה ניתני קבוטר קבוטל והוה קאים מצלי וחוי ליה באצבעתיה צפר קבוטר:

It was taught: [In order to keep him awake, the high priest was read selections from] R. Zakhariah b. Kabutar said: At times I read to him from the book of Daniel, Job, Ezra and Chronicles.

...Kahana asked Rav: What do we learn [= what is the proper form of the patronym]? Kabutar? Kabutal?

[Rav] was standing and praying [*Shemoneh Esreih*] [and could not answer directly. Instead,] he showed him with his finger a *kabutar* bird [= a pigeon or dove].

Rav, founder of the Sura yeshiva and disciple, along with his uncle R. Ḥiyya, uncle of R. Judah the Prince, was standing in prayer and reciting the *Shemoneh Esreih*, and just at that moment his disciple [R.] Kahana was contemplating the *mishnah* in *Yoma* 1:6 in which one Zechariah b. Kabutar or Kabutal reported that he had often read from the book of Daniel on the night of Yom Kippur in order to keep the high priest awake. Kahana was in doubt about Zechariah's patronym: was it Kabutar or Kabutal? For some reason he could not wait for Rav to complete his prayer and asked him as to the correct form of the name. Rav, in turn, did not wait till the end of *Shemoneh Esreih* and indicated that the name was Kabutar.⁴² According to E.S. Rosenthal, the meaning of the last sentence is: "He was standing and praying, and showed him a dove (*kabutar* in Middle Persian) with his

⁴² While the general import of this incident is clear, the commentaries have differed considerably as to Rav's exact reaction. See E.S. Rosenthal, "Talmudica Iranica," in *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, ed. Shaul Shaked, pp. 38–134 (Hebrew section), esp. 48–50 and associated notes and appendix.

finger.” Since both R. Kahana and Rav spoke (or at least understood) Middle Persian, the play on words was clear to both.⁴³

The philological problem is, for us, less of a concern than the religious one. What could have been the status of prayer in the mind of R. Kahana and of Rav if both could interrupt Rav’s prayer in order to clarify the exact pronunciation of Zechariah b. Kabutar’s name?⁴⁴ Certainly this question was peripheral to the proper understanding of the *mishnah*. Were Rav and R. Kahana then of the opinion that the urgency and immediacy of *any* aspect of *Talmud Torah* superseded the sanctity and intention of prayer?

The *Bavli* preserves another story of Rav and R. Kahana which may shed light on the relations between them, and, if read correctly, may point us toward an understanding of Rav’s position (BT *Ber.* 62a–b).

⁴³ It is intriguing to consider that this by-play was preserved in the *Yerushalmi* and not in the *Bavli*.

⁴⁴ See for example the report of Rav’s behavior when visiting Geniva (BT *Ber.* 27a–b):

רב איקלע לבי גניבא וצלי של שבת בערב שבת והוה מצלי רבי ירמיה בר אבא לאחוריה דרב וסיים רב ולא פסקיה לצלותיה דרבי ירמיה. שמע מינה תלת שמע מינה מתפלל אדם של שבת בערב שבת ושמע מינה מתפלל תלמיד אחורי רבו ושמע מינה אסור לעבור כנגד המתפללין. מסייע ליה לרבי יהושע בן לוי דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי אסור לעבור כנגד המתפללין. איני והא רבי אמר רבי אסי חלפי רבי אמר רבי אסי חוץ לארבע אמות הוא דחלפי. ורבי ירמיה היכי עביד הכי והא אמר רב יהודה אמר רב לעולם אל יתפלל אדם לא כנגד רבו ולא אחורי רבו. שאני רבי ירמיה בר אבא דתלמיד חבר הוה.

Rav was once at the house of Geniva and he said the Sabbath *Tefillah* on the eve of Sabbath, and R. Jeremiah b. Abba was praying behind Rav and Rav finished but did not interrupt the prayer of R. Jeremiah. Three things are to be learnt from this. One is that a man may say the Sabbath *Tefillah* on the eve of Sabbath. The second is that a disciple may pray behind his master. The third is that it is forbidden to pass in front of one praying. But is that so? Did not R. Ammi and R. Assi use to pass? R. Ammi and R. Assi used to pass outside a four cubit limit. But how could R. Jeremiah act thus, seeing that Rav Judah has said in the name of Rav: A man should never pray either next to this master or behind his master? R. Jeremiah b. Abba is different, because he was a disciple-colleague.

תניא אמר רבי עקיבא פעם אחת נכנסתי אחר רבי יהושע לבית הכסא ולמדתי ממנו שלשה דברים למדתי שאין נפנין מזרח ומערב אלא צפון ודרום ולמדתי שאין נפרעין מעומד אלא מיושב ולמדתי שאין מקנחין בימין אלא בשמאל. אמר ליה בן עזאי עד כאן העזת פניך ברבך אמר ליה תורה היא וללמוד אני צריך. תניא בן עזאי אומר פעם אחת נכנסתי אחר רבי עקיבא לבית הכסא ולמדתי ממנו שלשה דברים למדתי שאין נפנין מזרח ומערב אלא צפון ודרום ולמדתי שאין נפרעין מעומד אלא מיושב ולמדתי שאין מקנחין בימין אלא בשמאל. אמר לו רבי יהודה עד כאן העזת פניך ברבך אמר לו תורה היא וללמוד אני צריך. רב כהנא על גגא תותיה פורייה דרב. שמעיה דשח ושחק ועשה צרכיו אמר ליה דמי פומיה דאבא כדלא שריף תבשילא אמר ליה כהנא הכא את פוק דלאו אורח ארעא.

It has been taught: R. Akiva said: Once I went in after R. Joshua to a privy, and I learnt from him three things. I learnt that one does not sit east and west but north and south; I learnt that one evacuates not standing but sitting; and I learnt that it is proper to wipe with the left hand and not with the right. Said Ben Azzai to him: Did you dare to take such liberties with your master? He replied: It was a matter of Torah, and I am required to learn. It has been taught: Ben Azzai said: Once I went in after R. Akiva to a privy, and I learnt from him three things. I learnt that one does not evacuate east and west but north and south. I also learnt that one evacuates sitting and not standing. I also learnt it is proper to wipe with the left hand and not with the right. Said R. Judah to him: Did you dare to take such liberties with your master? He replied: It was a matter of Torah, and I am required to learn. R. Kahana once went in and hid under Rav's bed. He heard him chatting [with his wife] and joking and doing what he required. He said to him: One would think that Abba's mouth had never sipped the dish before! He said to him: Kahana, are you here? Go out, because it is inappropriate.

It could, of course, be argued that this want of tact, or even bumptiousness, is typical of R. Kahana. Indeed, it has been suggested that the story of R. Akiva dates from his early days as a rabbinic

disciple.⁴⁵ However, it is worthy of note that while R. Akiva responds (to R. Yehudah, and not, it should be noted, to R. Yehoshua) with a *teshuvah nizahat*, תורה היא וללמוד אני צריך (It is Torah and learn it I must!), Rav has no compunction in ordering R. Kahana out of the room, and telling him in no uncertain terms: לאו אורה ארעא (It is inappropriate)!

It may be that each of the three types of intrusions we have surveyed may prompt a different reaction. Following one's master into the outhouse is not quite the same thing as hiding under his bed under intimate circumstances, and neither is quite the same as interrupting during *Shemoneh Esreih*. Moreover, it may be that R. Akiva remained undetected, and only when he told R. Yehudah of his exploit was the objection raised. Had R. Yehoshua realized that he was not alone in the outhouse, he also would have sent R. Akiva packing.

However, the varied reactions to these intrusions are clearly not the point here; the redactor has gathered these stories together because of their common theme: תורה היא וללמוד אני צריך. One may well wonder why this "Torah" could not be taught descriptively in the schoolroom and not mimetically in the outhouse and the bedroom. The point is clear: neither R. Akiva nor R. Kahana allowed propriety to interfere with their passion for learning Torah. While R. Kahana may well have passed the bounds of proper behavior, Rav responds rather patiently, all things considered.⁴⁶

Why was this? Certainly, part of his reaction must have been due to his fondness for R. Kahana, and his understanding of his underlying good intentions; there was no prurience in his burning desire to master all aspects of a Torah life. But I think that there is yet another factor: Rav's recognition that, indeed, תורה היא וללמוד אני צריך. If that is so, this may also have underlined his reaction to R. Kahana's query during the *Shemoneh Esreih*.

⁴⁵ See L. Finkelstein, *Akiva: Scholar, Saint and Martyr* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 82.

⁴⁶ Note that Rava would not initiate marital relations when even a mosquito remained in the room; see BT *Niddah* 17a.

However, we must also take note of Rav's differing reactions in the two situations. While such comparisons are disagreeable, one must nevertheless ask why Rav sent R. Kahana out of the room in the one case while not forcing him to wait for an answer until he concluded his prayer in the other. Is צנעויות (modesty) then of greater import than קבלת פני השכינה (receiving the divine presence), as the *Midrash* would have it of the comparison between the latter and hospitality in regard to Abraham's running to greet the wandering Arabs while in communion with God in Genesis 18:1-3?⁴⁷ May we say that if the latter argument *a fortiori* is true, then all the more so in regard to *Talmud Torah*?

To do so would violate the distinction between *halakhah* and *aggadah*. Certainly, one may not interrupt his *Shemoneh Esrei* in order to invite guests into his home – even if he thereby loses his opportunity to fulfill the *mizvah* of הכנסת אורחים (hospitality). And so, likewise, one might consider the matter of *Talmud Torah*. תפלה לחוד ותלמוד תורה לחוד (Prayer and the study of Torah are distinct). Each has its own requirements and duties. Indeed, generally speaking, *Talmud Torah* by its inclusive nature must *for that very reason* give way to other *mizvot*, for were that not the case, no other *mizvot* could be performed!⁴⁸

However, this is not to say that prayer was neglected. As we shall see, a momentary lapse in attention to prayer in order to foster *Talmud Torah* was most definitely an exception.

On the other hand, Rav was well aware of the difficulties in maintaining one's concentration in prayer (BT *Baba Batra* 164b).

אמר רב עמרם אמר רב שלש עבירות אין אדם ניצול מהן בכל יום הרהור
עבירה ועיון תפלה ולשון הרע.

⁴⁷ BT *Shev.* 35b, *Midrash Tehillim* 18:29.

⁴⁸ See BT *Meg.* 28b-29a, and the following *sugya*:

ת"ר [כט"ב] מבטלין תלמוד תורה להוצאת המת ולהכנסת הכלה אמרו עליו על רבי
יהודה ברבי אילעאי שהיה מבטל תלמוד תורה להוצאת המת ולהכנסת הכלה.

Our Rabbis taught: We take time from the study of Torah to take out the dead and to accompany a bride. It was said about R. Yehudah bi-Rabbi Illay that he would take time from Torah study to take out the dead and to accompany a bride

...R. Amram said in the name of Rav: [There are] three transgressions which no man escapes for a single day: Sinful thought, calculation on [the results of] prayer, and tale-bearing.

In this appreciation, Rav was at one with both the tradition of his master and of his family (BT *Ber.* 13a–b).

תנו רבנן שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד זו קריאת שמע של רבי יהודה הנשיא. אמר ליה רב לרבי חייה לא חזינא ליה לרבי דמקבל עליה מלכות שמים. אמר ליה בר פחתי בשעה שמעביר ידיו על פניו מקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים. חוזר וגומרה או אינו חוזר וגומרה בר קפרא אומר אינו חוזר וגומרה רבי שמעון ברבי אומר חוזר וגומרה. אמר ליה בר קפרא לרבי שמעון ברבי בשלמא לדידי דאמינא אינו חוזר וגומרה היינו דמהדר רבי אשמעתא דאית בה יציאת מצרים אלא לדידך דאמרת חוזר וגומרה למה ליה לאהדורי כדי להזכיר יציאת מצרים בזמנה.

Our Rabbis taught: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one': this was R. Judah the Prince's recital of the *Shema*. Rav said once to R. Ḥiyya: I do not see Rabbi accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. He replied to him: Son of Princes! In the moment when he passes his hand over his eyes, he accepts upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. Does he finish it afterwards or does he not finish it afterwards? Bar Kappara said: He does not finish it afterwards; R. Shimon son of Rabbi said, He does finish it afterwards. Said Bar Kappara to R. Shimon the son of Rabbi: On my view that he does not finish it afterwards, there is a good reason why Rabbi always is anxious to take a lesson in which there is mention of the exodus from Egypt. But on your view that he does finish it afterwards, why is he anxious to take such a lesson? – So as to mention the going forth from Egypt at the proper time.

This attitude toward *כוונה* seems to have been rooted in a thoroughly realistic assessment of the human power of concentration, at least in their own time. Indeed, some of the greatest of the early

amoraim had no compunction in admitting their own failures in this regard, not excluding R. Ḥiyya, Rav's revered uncle (JT Ber. 17b).

א"ר יוחנן קרא ומצא עצמו בלמען חזקה כוין.
 ר' לא ר' יסא בשם ר' אחא רובא נתפלל ומצא עצמו בשומע תפילה
 חזקה כוין.
 ר' ירמיה בשם ר' אלעזר נתפלל ולא כוין לבו אם יודע שהוא חוזר
 ומכוין את לבו יתפלל ואם לאו אל יתפלל.
 א"ר חייא רובא אנא מן יומי לא כוונית אלא חד זמן בעי מכוונה
 והרהרית בלבי ואמרית מאן עליל קומי מלכא קדמי ארקבסה אי ריש
 גלותא.
 שמואל אמר אנא מנית אפרוחיא.
 רבי בון בר חייא אמר אנא מנית דימוסיא.
 א"ר מתניה אנא מחזק טיבו לראשי דכד הוה מטי מודים הוא כרע
 מגרמיה:

Said R. Yoḥanan: [If] he recited [the Shema] and found himself [in the verse beginning] with *lema'an*, the presumption is that he had [the proper] intention [that is, of reciting it for the sake of a miṣvah, and not merely mouthing secular words].

R. [I]lla, R. Yosa in the name of R. Aḥa Rabba: [If] he prayed and found himself [in the blessing of] *Shome'a Tefillah*, the presumption is that he had had [the proper] intention.

R. Jeremiah in the name of R. Eleazar: [If] he prayed but did not have any intention, and if he is certain that if he repeats [the prayer] he will have [the proper] intention, he should pray [again], but if not, he should not pray [again].

Said R. Ḥiyya the Great: I in all my days have only had proper intention once [when] I tried to have the [proper] intention and I thought in my heart and said [to myself]: Who is coming before me? The King is before me, a high official or the exilarch.

Samuel said: I counted chicks.

R. [A]bun b. Ḥiyya said: I counted bricks.

R. Mattaniah said: I am grateful to my head that when I reach the Modim [benediction] it bows of itself [by habit, without my intention].

Rav's uncle, the esteemed disciple of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, confessed that he had managed to have proper intention in prayer only once in his life, and his colleague Samuel noted that he counted young birds while praying, while R. Abun b. Ḥiyya counted rows of building stones.⁴⁹ However one interprets these statements, however, it is remarkable that R. Kahana interrupted Rav's prayer *ab initio* and quite consciously. In this case, it was not human frailty and lack of ability to maintain one's concentration for the duration of the *Shemoneh Esreih*.

Still, once he did interrupt, Rav responded. Could this have been because Rav's concentration, once impaired, could not easily be restored, as recorded in BT *Eruv*. 65a?

אמר רב חייא בר אשי אמר רב כל שאין דעתו מיושבת עליו אל יתפלל.
משום שנאמר בצר אל יורה. רבי חנינא ביומא דרתח לא מצלי. אמר בצר
אל יורה כתיב.

R. Ḥiyya b. Ashi citing Rav ruled: A person whose mind is not at ease must not pray, since it is said: 'He who is in distress shall give no decisions.' R. Ḥanina did not pray on a day when he was agitated. It is written, he said: 'He who is in distress shall give no decisions.'

Rav's personal predilection may be indicated by an interesting report, again one given quite matter-of-factly in the course of a halakhic discussion, of Rav's behavior during *ne'ilah*. The Yerushalmi preserves another report of Rav's practice of prayer, one which points in a different direction, at least as regards his recitation of *ne'ilah* (JT *Ber.* 31a).

⁴⁹ The *Rishonim* of course could not let this pass without comment. See *Perush mi-Baal ha-Ḥaredim ad loc.*, and *Tosafot R.H.* 16b s.v. ועיין; see also *Tosafot B.B.* 164b s.v. עיין, *Ber.* s.v. כל, *Shab.* 118b s.v. עיין. Among more recent writers, see R. Ṣadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, *Zidkat ha-Zaddik* (Bnei Brak: 1973/4), no. 209, who suggests that R. Ḥiyya's "I never had *kavvanah*" meant "I never had the need for it," since the *halakhah* mandating it was meant for those liable to lose it. "R. Ḥiyya, however, never experienced any other thought except the Presence of God...."

אימתי הוא נעילה רבנן דקיסרין אמרין איתפלגון רב ור' יוחנן רב אמר בנעילת שערי שמים ור"י אמר בנעילת שערי היכל אמר ר' יודן אנתורדיא מתני' מסייע לר"י בג' פרקים הכהנים נושאים את כפיהם ד' פעמים ביום בשחרית ובמוסף ובמנחה ובנעילת שערים בתעניות ובמעמדות וביה"כ אית לך מימר נעילת שערי שמים ביום אחוי דאימא דרב אדא הוה צייר גולתיה דרב בצומא רבא א"ל כד תיחמי שמשא בריש דיקלי תיהב לי גולתי דנצלי נעילת שערים מחלפא שיטתיה דרב תמן הוא אמר בנעילת שערי שמים וכא אמר בנעילת שערי היכל אמר רב מתנה על ידי דרב מאריך בצלותא סגין הוה מגיע לנעילת שערי שמים

When is [the time for] *ne'ilah*? The rabbis of Caesaria say: Rav and R. Yoḥanan disagreed. Rav said: When the gates of heaven are closed, and R. Yoḥanan said: When the gates of the Temple are closed.

Said R. Yudan Antordaya: Our mishnah supports R. Yoḥanan[*'s* view]: Three times the priests recite the Priestly Blessing [and on Yom Kippur] four times during the day: during Shaḥarit, during Musaf, during Minḥah, and during the closing of the gates – during fasts and *ma'amadot* [= when the Israelites recite biblical verses accompanying the priestly service] and Yom Kippur.

[If so] you may say that [that this refers to] the closing of the gates of heaven during the day.

The brother of R. Aḥa's mother would place fringes on Rav's cloak on Yom Kippur.

He said to her: When you see the sun above the palms give me my cloak so that I can pray Neilah.

It would seem that Rav contradicts himself here; there he says: [this refers] to the closing of the gates of heaven, and here he says: the closing of the gates of the Temple?

Said R. Mattaniah: Since Rav prolonged his prayer greatly, he reached the [time of the] closing of the gates of heaven.

Of course, it is entirely possible that this report of his behavior at *ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur does not reflect his practice during the rest of the year. On the other hand, if it does, it may be that R. Kahana,

knowing this, was unwilling to wait for Rav to complete his prayer, and asked him his question when he did.⁵⁰ However, this does not seem likely, given the respect due to his teacher. If he interrupted Rav's prayer, it is likely that he knew that this would not be held against him. Indeed, even his escapade under Rav's bed seems not to have been held against him, given the good relations between them even on the eve of his departure to the Land of Israel.⁵¹ Thus, a line may be traced which links R. Shimon b. Yoḥai to Rabbi to Rav: טע"ז מיה דרשב"י [ח/ב] זה שינון וזה שינון ואין מבטל שינון מפני שינון ([However, in this case] the reason of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai is that each one (= Torah study and prayer) is [called] 'recitation' [in the Torah], and we do not cancel one recitation for the other recitation.)⁵²

Still and all, the picture of Rav's attitude towards prayer would be lacking were we not to consider several other sources which point to his great concern for תפלה, as Y.S. Zuri pointed out in his biography of Rav (BT *Ber.* 12a).⁵³

אמר רבה בר חיננא סבא משמיה דרב כל שלא אמר אמת ויציב שחרית ואמת ואמונה ערבית לא יצא ידי חובתו שנאמר להגיד בבקר חסדך ואמונתך בלילות: ואמר רבה בר חיננא [סבא] משמיה דרב המתפלל כשהוא כורע כורע בברוך וכשהוא זוקף זוקף בשם. אמר שמואל מאי טעמא דרב דכתיב ה' זוקף כפופים. אמר ליה שמואל לחייה בר רב בר אוריין תא ואימא לך מלתא מעלייתא דאמר אבוך הכי אמר אבוך כשהוא ורע כורע בברוך כשהוא זוקף זוקף בשם.

Rava b. Hinena the elder said in the name of Rav: If one omits to say 'True and firm' in the morning and 'True and trustworthy' in the evening, he has not performed his

⁵⁰ R. Kahana's behavior in other situations testifies to his impatience and perhaps impetuosity; see D. Sperber, "The Misfortunes of Rav Kahana: A Passage of Post-Talmudic Polemic," in D. Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1994), pp. 145–64.

⁵¹ See BT *Baba Kama* 117a–b, and D. Sperber's article cited in previous note.

⁵² JT *Ber.* 7b; see above.

⁵³ Y.S. Zuri, *Rav* (Jerusalem: 1985), pp. 258–60, though his description is not free of distortions and exaggerations.

obligation; for it is said, To declare Thy lovingkindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness in the night seasons.

Rava b. Ḥinena the elder also said in the name of Rav: In saying the Tefillah, when one bows, one should bow at [the word] ‘Blessed’ and when returning to the upright position one should return at [the mention of] the Divine Name. Samuel said: What is Rav’s reason for this? – Because it is written: The Lord raiseth up them that are bowed down. An objection was raised from the verse, And was bowed before My name? – Is it written, ‘At My name’? It is written, ‘Before My Name’. Samuel said to Ḥiyya the son of Rav: O, Son of the Law, come and I will tell you a fine saying enunciated by your father. Thus said your father: When one bows, one should bow at ‘Blessed’, and when returning to the upright position, one should return at [the mention of] the Divine Name.

In this we may perhaps see a survival of the ecstatic prayer practiced by R. Akiva in private, as noted above.

Thus, aside from the halakhic aspects of Rav’s response to R. Kahana, we must consider the experiential dimension as well. While both prayer and *Talmud Torah* may be considered activities which involve communion with God, the nature of the interaction is quite different. One is primarily an emotional experience – עבודה שבלב (worship of the heart), the other primarily intellectual. Moreover, in prayer one stands submissively, as a supplicant, as R. Shimon b. Shetaḥ said of Ḥoni ha-Me’aggel, as a “child before his father,” while R. Shimon b. Shetaḥ himself described his own standing as that of a courtier.⁵⁴ Can one experience then be substituted for another? Indeed, R. Shimon b. Yoḥai’s reference to the recitation of *Shema* in terms of שינון may not at all apply to prayer (JT Ber. 8a)!

תמן תנינן מפסיקין לקרית שמע ואין מפסיקין לתפילה.
אמר רבי אחא קרית שמע דבר תורה ותפילה אינה דבר תורה.
אמר רבי בא ק”ש זמנה קבוע ותפילה אין זמנה קבוע.

אמר רבי יוסי ק"ש אינה צריכה כוונה ותפילה צריכה כוונה.
אמר רבי מנא קשייתה קומי רבי יוסי ואפילו תימר קרית שמע
אינה צריכה כוונה שלשה פסוקים הראשונים צריכין כוונה מן גו דאינון
צבחר מיכוון:

There we learned: We interrupt for the recitation of the *Shema* and we do not interrupt for *Tefillah* (= *Shemoneh Esreih*).

Said R. Aḥa: Recitation of the *Shema* is biblically ordained, while *Tefillah* is not biblically ordained.

Said R. [A]bba: The time of the recitation of the *Shema* is set while the time for *Tefillah* is not set [referring to *Maariv*, which at that time was not yet obligatory].

Said R. Yose: The recitation of the *Shema* does not need concentration while *Tefillah* does need such concentration?

Said R. Mana: I asked this question before R. Yose: Even if you say that the recitation of the *Shema* does not require concentration, the first three verses do require concentration? – Since they are limited, he can concentrate.

According to R. Yose, then, the very requirement that prayer requires inward intention relegates it to second place. Because of the stringent requirement of *kavvanah*, we do not require one to interrupt one's meal for its recital, even though one must interrupt it for the recitation of the *Shema*. After all, one may – following Rabbi, or other, more stringent prescriptions – fulfill the *mizvah* of the recitation of *Shema* by concentrating on one verse, or the first paragraph. Prayer requires a much greater measure of *kavvanah*.

The clue to R. Shimon b. Yoḥai's understanding of the relationship between the two modes of spiritual communion may inhere in this fundamental difference: there is no need for the requirement of *kavvanah* for *Talmud Torah*. Without proper attention, *there is no Talmud Torah*. Of course, *kavvanah* has another, less rigorous, meaning, that of intending the act to be for the sake of Heaven, and without that there is no *mizvah*. But that is not the level on which the

⁵⁴ See BT *Ber.* 19a, *Tan.* 19a, 23a.

debate is being carried out in these texts. For it is ineluctably clear that R. Ḥiyya and the others who confessed to a lack of *kavvanah* did not, *ḥas ve-shalom*, intend this second meaning.⁵⁵

III

It is perhaps a combination of these two considerations, the difficulty of *kavvanah* on the one hand, and the supreme value of *Talmud Torah*, on the other, which may account for yet another surprising report, that regarding R. Yehudah in BT *Rosh Ha-Shanah* 35a.

אמר רבי אלעזר לעולם יסדיר אדם תפלתו ואחר כך יתפלל. אמר רבי אבא מסתברא מילתיה דרבי אלעזר בברכות של ראש השנה ושל יום הכפורים ושל פרקים אבל דכל השנה לא. איני והא רב יהודה מסדר צלותיה ומצלי שאני רב יהודה כיון דמתלתין יומין לתלתין יומין הוה מצלי, כפרקים דמי.

...R. Eleazar said: A man should always arrange (= review the wording) his prayer and then recite it. R. Abba said: The dictum of R. Eleazar appears to be well founded in respect of the blessings of New Year and the Day of Atonement and periodical [prayers] but not of the rest of the year. Is that so? Did not Rav Judah use always to prepare himself for his prayer before praying? – Rav Judah was exceptional; since he prayed only every thirty days, it was [to him] like a periodical [prayer].

Since R. Yehudah, founder and head of the Pumbedita yeshiva – and, be it noted, a disciple of Rav – recited *Shemoneh Esreih* only once in thirty days, he treated the ordinary prayer as though it were as unfamiliar as that of the High Holy Days, and thus requiring review before it was recited.

The *Bavli* does not attempt to explain R. Yehudah's practice. Was it his commitment to *Talmud Torah* which led to this relative neglect of prayer? That this may not have been the only consideration

⁵⁵ See N. Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, pp. 141–147. The teaching regarding *לא ימוש* in BT *Men.* 99b is not relevant here.

is indicated by his insistence (albeit in the name of his teacher Shmuel) on the need for *hiddush* in prayer, no less than in study (BT *Ber.* 21a). Institutionalized, mandated prayer is here given a strongly personal cast.

ואמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל התפלל ונכנס לבית הכנסת ומצא צבור
שמתפללין אם יכול לחדש בה דבר יחזור ויתפלל ואם לאו אל יחזור
ויתפלל

Rav Judah further said in the name of Samuel: If a man had already said the *Tefillah* and went into a synagogue and found the congregation saying the *Tefillah*, if he can add something fresh, he should say the *Tefillah* again, but otherwise he should not say it again.

Of course, R. Yehudah does not define the nature or extent of the *hiddush*; however, given the general nature of the rule, which applies to all Jews, articulate or not, the requirement was probably minimal. Nevertheless, this *halakhah* is evidence of his awareness of the problem of maintaining a certain measure of freshness and spontaneity within the parameters of institutionalized prayer.

Again, R. Yehudah accepted his teacher Rav's insistence on the necessity for *עיון תפלה*: עיון תפלה תיתי לי שקיימתי (It comes to me because I fulfilled expectation in prayer; BT *Shab.* 127a). This statement both expresses his appreciation for the importance of concentration, on the one hand, and his acknowledgement of the difficulty of achieving it, on the other. Is it thus any wonder that he prayed only once in thirty days?

Indeed, the Talmud preserves a discussion which expresses the tension involved in balancing the demands of prayer with its dangers. Note that one statement in favor of devoting a large amount of time to prayer is that of R. Yehudah (BT *Ber.* 54b–55a, see also BT *Ber.* 32b).

ואמר רב יהודה שלשה דברים [המאריך בהן] מאריכין ימיו ושנותיו של
אדם המאריך בתפלתו והמאריך על שלחנו והמאריך בבית הכסא. והמאריך
בתפלתו מעליותא היא והאמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן כל המאריך

בתפלתו ומעיין בה סוף בא לידי כאב לב שנאמר תוחלת ממושכה מחלה לב. ואמר רבי יצחק שלשה דברים מזכירים עונותיו של אדם ואלו הן קיר נטוי ועיון תפלה ומוסר דין על חבירו לשמים הא לא קשיא הא דמעין בה הא דלא מעין בה. והיכי עביד דמפיש ברחמי.

Rav Judah said further: There are three things [the drawing out of which] prolongs a man's days and years; the drawing out of prayer, the drawing out of a meal, and the drawing out of [easing in] a privy. But is the drawing out of prayer a merit? Has not R. Ḥiyya b. Abba said in the name of R. Yoḥanan:

If one draws out his prayer and expects therefore its fulfillment, he will in the end suffer vexation of heart, as it says, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. And R. Isaac also said: Three things cause a man's sins to be remembered [on high], namely, [passing under] a shaky wall, expectation of [the fulfillment of] prayer, and calling on heaven to punish his neighbour. – There is no contradiction; one statement speaks of a man who expects the fulfillment of his prayer, the other of one who does not count upon it. What then does he do? – He simply utters many supplications.

Note that these reports all involve the leading scholars, and, one presumes, role models, of their respective generations. Note also that these reports are given in a matter-of-fact way. There is no hint of disapproval or incredulity such as we find among the *Rishonim*. This, of course, does not mean that all their colleagues followed the same practices. Nor should we unthinkingly interpret all these practices as identical. Rav allowed interruptions in prayer, and R. Ḥiyya, Samuel, R. Abun b. Ḥiyya and R. Mana⁵⁶ confessed a certain laxity in maintaining concentration, and R. Yehudah of Pumbedita prayed once in thirty days. While all of these "practices" betoken a less than exemplary attitude to prayer (let alone, we should suppose, communal prayer), they are not alike. However, we may see all these

⁵⁶ Or R. Mataniah or R. Yoḥanan. Note that two of these variants involve leading scholars of their times.

anecdotes as representing a certain trend which harks back to the views of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai.

IV

With the coming of the third generation, the framework of the dispute over the importance of prayer *vis-à-vis* that of Talmud study changes its venue. Now the question is no longer one of prayer versus study, but rather the place of prayer, whether in the *beit ha-midrash* (study hall) or the *beit ha-knesset* (synagogue).

In a plangent anecdote in BT *Ber.* 7b–8a, R. Yiḏḥak reproves R. Naḥman for not coming to synagogue or praying with a *minyān*. It is not altogether clear from the dialogue whether this was his general practice, though it is not impossible that this construction may be put on it. Note that it is R. Shimon b. Yoḥai who here is represented as pressing the importance of praying with a congregation.

...אמר ליה רבי יצחק לרב נחמן מאי טעמא לא אתי מר לבי כנישתא לצלויי
אמר ליה לא יכילנא אמר ליה לכנפי למר עשרה וליצלי אמר ליה טריחא
לי מלתא ולימא ליה מר לשלוחא דצבורא בעידנא דמצלי צבורא ליתי
ולודעיה למר אמר ליה מאי כולי האי אמר ליה דאמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי
שמעון בן יוחי [ח/א] מאי דכתיב ואני תפלתי לך ה' עת רצון אימתי עת
רצון בשעה שהצבור מתפללין

R. Isaac said to R. Naḥman: Why does the Master not come to the synagogue in order to pray? – He said to him: I cannot. He asked him: Let the Master gather ten people and pray with them [in his house]? – He answered: It is too much of a trouble for me. [He then said]: Let the Master ask the messenger of the congregation to inform him of the time when the congregation prays? He answered: Why all this [trouble]? – He said to him: For R. Yoḥanan said in the name of R. Shimon b. Yoḥai:

What is the meaning of the verse: But as for me, let my prayer be made unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time? When is the time acceptable? When the congregation prays.

In another case, the neglect of synagogue attendance is directly linked to teachings brought from the Land of Israel (BT *Ber.* 8a).

...אמר ליה רבא לרפרם בר פפא לימא לן מר מהני מילי מעלייתא דאמרת משמיה דרב חסדא במילי דבי כנישתא אמר ליה הכי אמר רב חסדא מאי דכתיב אוהב ה' שערי ציון מכל משכנות יעקב אוהב ה' שערים המצויינים בהלכה יותר מבתי כנסיות ומבתי מדרשות והיינו דאמר רבי חייה בר אמי משמיה דעולא מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה בלבד ואמר אביי מריש הוה גריסנא בגו ביתא ומצלינא בבי כנישתא כיון דשמענא להא דאמר רבי חייה בר אמי משמיה דעולא מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה בלבד לא הוה מצלינא אלא היכא דגריסנא רבי אמי ורבי אסי אף על גב דהוּו להו תליסר בי כנישתא בטבריא לא מצלו אלא ביני עמודי היכא דהוּו גרסי:....

Rava said to Rafram b. Papa: Let the master please tell us some of those fine things that you said in the name of R. Ḥisda on matters relating to the synagogue! – He replied: Thus said R. Ḥisda: What is the meaning of the verse: The Lord loveth the gates of Zion [*Ziyyon*] more than all the dwellings of Jacob? The Lord loves the gates that are distinguished [*me-zuyyanim*] through *halakhah* more than the synagogues and houses of study. And this conforms with the following saying of R. Ḥiyya b. Ammi in the name of ‘Ulla: Since the day that the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in this world but the four cubits of *halakhah* alone. So said also Abaye: At first I used to study in my house and pray in the synagogue. Since I heard the saying of R. Ḥiyya b. Ammi in the name of ‘Ulla: ‘Since the day that the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in His world but the four cubits of *halakhah* alone,’ I pray only in the place where I study. R. Ammi and R. Assi, though they had thirteen synagogues in Tiberias, prayed only between the pillars where they used to study.

According to Rashi, R. Ḥisda’s בהלכה המצויינים are ואסיפת ציון ואסיפת צבור, presumably referring to halakhic gatherings such as a פרקא or

the like. Thus, such meetings find more favor in God's eyes than בתי מדרשות or כנסיות. Ordinarily, one would expect him to counterpose the latter two, as we find in BT *Meg.* 26b, where the one represents the life of prayer, and the other the life of Torah study.⁵⁷ In this case,

⁵⁷ It may be worthwhile quoting the passage as it appears in both Talmuds. First we will present an excerpt from the *Bavli* (BT *Meg.* 26b–27a), followed by the corresponding *Yerushalmi* (JT *Meg.* 23a).

>ואמר [אמר] רב פפי משמיה דרב [דרבא] מבי כנישתא לבי רבנן שרי מבי רבנן לבי כנישתא אסיר. ורב פפא משמיה דרבא מתני איפכא אמר רב אחא כוותיה דרב פפי מסתברא דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי בית הכנסת מותר לעשותו בית המדרש שמע מינה. דרש בר קפרא מאי דכתיב וישרף את בית ה' ואת בית המלך ואת כל בתי ירושלים ואת כל בית גדול שרף באש. בית ה' זה בית המקדש בית המלך אלו פלטרין של מלך ואת כל בתי ירושלים כמשמען ואת כל בית גדול שרף באש. רבי יוחנן ורבי יהושע בן לוי חד אמר מקום שמגדלין בו תורה וחד אמר מקום שמגדלין בו תפלה. מאן דאמר תורה דכתיב ה' חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה ויאדיר. ומאן דאמר תפלה דכתיב ספרה נא הגדולות אשר עשה אלישע. ואלישע דעבד ברחמי הוא דעבד. תסתיים דרבי יהושע בן לוי הוא דאמר מקום שמגדלין בו תורה דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי בית הכנסת מותר לעשותו בית המדרש שמע מינה:

מהו למכור בית הכנסת וליקח בית המדרש מילתיה דר' יהושע בן לוי אמרה שרי דא"ר יהושע בן לוי וישרף את בית ה' זה בית המקדש ואת בית המלך זה פלטרין של צדקיהו ואת כל בתי ירושלים אלו ד' מאות ושמונים בתי כנסיות שהיו בירושלים דא"ר פינחס בשם ר' הושעיה ארבע מאות ושמונים בתי כנסיות היו בירושלים וכל אחת ואחת היה לה בית ספר ובית תלמוד בית ספר למקרא ובית תלמוד למשנה וכולהם עלה אספסיינוס ואת כל בית הגדול שרף באש זה מדרשו של רבן יוחנן בן זכאי ששם היו מתנין גדולותיו של הקב"ה כגון ספרה נא לי את כל הגדולות אשר עשה אלישע ר' שמואל בר נחמן בשם ר' יונתן הדא דאת אמר בבית הכנסת של יחיד אבל בבית הכנסת של רבים אסור אני אומר אחד מסוף העולם קנוי בו והא תני מעשה בר"א בי ר' צדוק שלקח בית הכנסת של אלכסנדריים ועשה בה צרכיו אלכסנדריים עשו אותה משל עצמן עד כדון כשבנייה לשם בית הכנסת בנייה לשם חצר והקדישה מהו נישמעניה מן הדא קונם לבית הזה שאיני נכנס ונעשה בית הכנסת הדא אמרה בנייה לשם חצר והקדישה קדשה אימתי קדשה מיד או בשעת התשמיש נישמעניה מן הדא העושה תיבה לשם ספר ומטפחות לשם ספר עד שלא נשתמש בהן הספר מותר להשתמש בהן הדיוט משנשתמש בהן הספר אסור להשתמש בהן הדיוט ומה אם אלו שנעשו לשם ספר אינן קדושות אלא בשעת התשמיש זו שבנייה לשם חצר לא כ"ש אלו שעשאן לשם חולין והקדישו מה הן כמה דאת אמר תמן בנייה לשם חצר והקדישה קדשה והכא עשאם לשם חולין והקדישו קדש כלי שרת מאימתי הם קדושין מיד או בשעת התשמיש אין תימר מיד ניחא אין תימר בשעת התשמיש כאחד הם קדושים ומתקדשין ניחא

R. Papi said in the name of Rava: To turn a synagogue into a college is permitted; to turn a college into a synagogue is forbidden. R. Papa, however, also reporting Rava, states the opposite. R. Aḥa said: The statement of R. Papi is the more probable, since R. Joshua b. Levi

however, *both* synagogues and study halls are contrasted – unfavorably – to halakhic gatherings.⁵⁸

This teaching of R. Ḥisda, whose daughter married Rava *en secundas noches*, is presented within a *mise en scène* in which Rava asks one of R. Ḥisda's disciples for a report of one of the latter's teachings on synagogues. One would expect a teaching which would emphasize the *importance* of synagogues. Whether Rava knew of R. Ḥisda's rather dim view of non-halakhic gatherings is not clear. Moreover, his reaction to this surprising view is not recorded here. However, unlike Abaye, who takes to heart a similar (Palestinian) view expressed by 'Ulla, and changes his practice of praying in a synagogue to praying "where I learn," Rava is quoted in BT *Meg.* 29a as preaching on the importance of synagogues and study halls as places in which God dwells, and emphasizing this with a personal recollection, one exactly at odds with Abaye's in BT *Ber.* 8a. At first Rava would study at home and pray in the synagogue, but once he understood the purport of Ps. 90:1 he made a point of studying in the synagogue as well.

said: It is permissible to make a synagogue into a beth ha-midrash. This seems conclusive.

Bar Kappara gave the following exposition: What is the meaning of the verse, 'And he burnt the house of the Lord and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem even every great man's house burnt he with fire?' 'The house of the Lord': this is the Temple. 'The king's house': this is the royal palace. 'All the houses of Jerusalem': literally. 'Even every great man's house burnt he with fire': R. Yoḥanan and R. Joshua b. Levi gave different interpretations of this. One said, it means the place where the Torah is magnified; the other, the place where prayer is magnified. The one who says Torah bases himself on the verse, The Lord was pleased, for his righteousness' sake to make the Torah great and glorious. The one who says prayer bases himself on the verse, Tell me, I pray thee, the great things that Elisha has done; and what Elisha did, he did by means of prayer. It may be presumed that it was R. Joshua b. Levi who said, 'the place where Torah is magnified,' since R. Joshua b. Levi said that a synagogue may be turned into a beth ha-midrash which is a clear indication.

⁵⁸ So most commentators; see Maharsha *ad loc.*, and most commentaries included in *Ein Yaakov*.

דרש רבא מאי דכתיב ה' מעון אתה היית לנו אלו בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות.
אמר אביי מריש הואי גריסנא בביתא ומצלינא בבי כנשתא כיון דשמעית
להא דקאמר דוד ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך הואי גריסנא בבי כנישתא.
Rava gave the following exposition: What is the meaning of
the verse, 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling [*ma'on*] place?'
This refers to synagogues and houses of learning. Abaye said:
Formerly I used to study at home and pray in the synagogue,
but when I noticed the words of David, 'O Lord, I love the
habitation [*me'on*] of thy house,' I began to study also in the
synagogue.

There are several problems, both lower critical and interpretive, that this passage raises, however. First, there is the question of the author of the personal recollection in BT *Meg*. Such recollections on the part of both Rava and Abaye are cited elsewhere in the *Bavli*, though Abaye's are more numerous, and so there is no way to determine the attribution on the basis of personal style. The manuscripts, as well as text witnesses such as *Ein Yaakov* and *Yalkut Shimoni* have the reading "Rava."⁵⁹ The reading of the printed editions is "Abaye," presumably because of the apparent contradiction between Rava's sermon regarding the status of *both* synagogues and study halls as contrasted to the following statement which emphasizes the importance of synagogues alone.

On the other hand, in *Ber.* 8a Abaye is quoted as reflecting that he had originally prayed in the synagogue and studied at home. After hearing the statement of 'Ulla regarding the importance of halakhic study and its venue, he took pains to pray where he studied – presumably at home.⁶⁰ This would contradict the practice reported in *Meg.* 29a.

It is noteworthy that Rava's statement is prefixed with the verb *דרש*, implying here, as elsewhere, that it reflects Rava's public teaching as *mara de-atra* in Mahoza. Could he have been encouraging the Ma-

⁵⁹ See *Dikdukei Soferim ad loc.*, n. *dalet*.

⁶⁰ Note the reading of MS Munich: *בתאי*, "my house." It is clear that Abaye refers to studying and praying at home, and not in the study hall. The question of where study took place in Babylonia in this period, and the size and character of the

hozans to be more attentive to their synagogue prayers? Nevertheless, it is undeniable that here, as in many other areas, Rava's opinion prefigured the direction that future developments would take.⁶¹

Quite apart from these considerations is the question of why Abaye accepted 'Ulla's statement without taking into account other statements which emphasize the importance of synagogue prayer and denigrate the practice of praying privately.⁶²

רבי נתן אומר מגין שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא מואס בתפלתן של רבים שנאמר הן אל כביר ולא ימאס וכתוב פדה בשלום נפשי מקרב לי וגו'. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא כל העוסק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים ומתפלל עם הצבור מעלה אני עליו כאילו פדאני לי ולבני מבין אומות העולם. אמר ריש לקיש כל מי שיש לו בית הכנסת בעירו ואינו נכנס שם להתפלל נקרא שכן רע שנאמר כה אמר ה' על כל שכני הרעים הנוגעים בנחלה אשר הנחלתי את עמי את ישראל ולא עוד אלא שגורם גלות לו ולבניו שנאמר הנני נותשם מעל אדמתם ואת בית יהודה אתוש מתוכם. אמרו ליה לרבי יוחנן איכא סבי בבבל. תמה ואמר למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה כתיב אבל בחוצה לארץ לא כיון דאמרי ליה מקדמי ומחשכי לבי כנישתא אמר היינו דאהני להו. כדאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי לבניה קדימו וחשיכו ועיילו לבי כנישתא כי היכי דתורכו חיי. אמר רבי אחא ברבי חנינא מאי קרא אשרי אדם שומע לי לשקד על דלתותי יום יום לשמור מזוזת פתחי וכתוב בתריה כי מוצאי מצא חיים.

amoraic schools, while a matter of dispute, is gradually becoming resolved in favor of such a reading. For the basic lines of dispute, see David M. Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), and his "Hitpathuyot Ḥadashot be-Ḥeker Yeshivot Bavel," in *Zion* 46 (1981): 15–38; for an alternate view, see Y. Gafni, "'Yeshiva' u-'Metivta,'" *Zion* 43 (1978): 12–37, his "He'erot le-Maamaro shel D. Goodblatt," *Zion* 46 (1981): 52–6, and his *Yehudei Bavel bi-Tekufat ha-Talmud: Ḥayyei ha-Ḥevra ve-ha-Ruah* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1990), esp. pp. 177–236.

Among other relevant articles, see David Goodblatt, "Local Traditions in the Babylonian Talmud," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 48 (1977): 187–217, and Y. Gafni, "Ḥibburim Nestoriyanim ke-Makor le-Toledot Yeshivot Bavel," *Tarbiz* 51 (1982): 567–76, and, most recently, J.L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 21–2, 270–2.

⁶¹ See my "Rava in Mahoza: Rabbinic Theology and Law in a Cosmopolitan Setting," *Ninth Orthodox Forum*, New York, March 29, 1998.

⁶² Indeed, now located on the very same *daf* of the *Bavli*, *Ber.* 8a.

R. Nathan says: How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, does not despise the prayer of the congregation? For it is said: 'Behold, God despiseth not the mighty.' And it is further written: 'He hath redeemed my soul in peace so that none came nigh me, etc.' The Holy One, blessed be He, says: If a man occupies himself with the study of the Torah and with works of charity and prays with the congregation, I account it to him as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world.

Resh Lakish said: Whosoever has a synagogue in his town and does not go there in order to pray, is called an evil neighbor. For it is said: 'Thus saith the Lord, as for all My evil neighbors, that touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit. And more than that, he brings exile upon himself and his children. For it is said: 'Behold, I will pluck them up from off their land, and will pluck up the house of Judah from among them.'

When they told R. Yoḥanan that there were old men in Babylon, he showed astonishment and said: Why, it is written: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, upon the land; but not outside the land [of Israel]! When they told him that they came early to the synagogue and left it late, he said: That is what helps them. Even as R. Joshua b. Levi said to his children: Come early to the synagogue and leave it late that you may live long. R. Aḥa son of R. Ḥanina says: Which verse [may be quoted in support of this]? Happy is the man that hearkeneth to Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors, after which it is written: For whoso findeth me findeth life.

Indeed, on the one hand, R. Natan's statement seems tailor-made for Abay's own life-style, given his reputation for both learning and *gemilut ḥasadim*, and, on the other, Resh Lakish's denigration of those who do not pray in a synagogue, coupled with the threat of exile for his descendants, should, one imagines, have offset 'Ulla's tradition. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these teachings

had not yet reached Babylonia. Additional proof for this contention is to be found in the fact that Rava grounds his own (reverse) decision to return to synagogue prayer not on these teachings, but his own understanding of Ps. 90:1. Still, though he quotes that verse, his position mirrors that of R. Yoḥanan and the sages of the Land of Israel, a phenomenon that has long been noted.⁶³

On the whole, the *Bavli's* statements emphasizing the importance of Torah study far outnumber its statements regarding synagogue prayers, which, on the whole, stem from the Land of Israel, as the citations from *Ber. 8a* (and others not cited here) demonstrate.⁶⁴ Indeed, even when presenting a tradition recommending the latter, it may undercut the teaching in not-so-subtle ways, as in *BT Ber. 6a*.

תניא אבא בנימין אומר אין תפלה של אדם נשמעת אלא בבית הכנסת
שנאמר לשמוע אל הרנה ואל התפלה במקום רנה שם תהא תפלה. אמר
רבין בר רב אדא אמר רבי יצחק מנין שהקדוש ברוך הוא מצוי בבית הכנסת
שנאמר אלהים נצב בעדת אל ומנין לעשרה שמתפללין ששכינה עמהם
שנאמר אלהים נצב בעדת אל ומנין לשלשה שיושבין בדין ששכינה עמהם
שנאמר בקרב אלהים ישפוט ומנין לשנים שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה ששכינה
עמהם שנאמר אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וגו'. מאי ולחושבי
שמו אמר רב אשי חשב אדם לעשות מצוה ונאנס ולא עשאה מעלה עליו
הכתוב כאילו עשאה. ומנין שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה ששכינה
עמו שנאמר בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתך. וכי
מאחר דאפילו חד תרי מבעיא תרי מכתבן מלייהו בספר הזכרונות חד לא
מכתבן מליה בספר הזכרונות. וכי מאחר דאפילו תרי תלתא מבעיא מהו

⁶³ See Zvi Dor, *Torat Erez Yisrael be-Vavel* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1971), and see my “Rava ve-ha-Ḥeker ha-Arezyisreli be-Midrash Halakhah,” in *Ba-Golah u-Vatefuzot*, eds. Y. Gafni and L.H. Schiffman (Jerusalem (forthcoming)) and “*Derashot shel Kefilot Mikra'iyot be-Erez Yisrael u-ve-Vavel*,” *Sidra* (forthcoming).

⁶⁴ Of course, so does 'Ulla's reverse sentiment. Among the other voices from the Land of Israel heard expressing the same view are those of R. Yoḥanan and R. Yose beR. Ḥanina (*BT Ber. 7b–8a*). Whether this difference of viewpoints between the two Torah centers is linked to the different views and practices regarding rabbinic interaction with other classes of society which characterize the rabbinic elites of Babylonia and the Land of Israel is difficult to say at this distance. See Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in*

דתימא דינא שלמא בעלמא הוא ולא אתיא שכינה קמשמע לן דדינא נמי
היינו תורה. וכי מאחר דאפילו תלתא עשרה מבעיא עשרה קדמה שכינה
ואתיא תלתא עד דיתבי:

It has been taught: Abba Benjamin says: A man's prayer is heard [by God] only in the synagogue. For it is said: 'To hear-ken unto the song and to the prayer.' The prayer is to be recited where there is song. Rabin b. R. Adda says in the name of R. Isaac: How do you know that the Holy One, blessed be He, is to be found in the synagogue? For it is said: 'God standeth in the congregation of God.' And how do you know that if ten people pray together the Divine presence is with them? For it is said: 'God standeth in the congregation of God.' And how do you know that if three are sitting as a court of judges the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said: 'In the midst of the judges He judgeth.' And how do you know that if two are sitting and studying the Torah together the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said: 'Then they that feared the Lord spoke one with another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.' (What does it mean: 'And that thought upon His name'? – R. Ashi says: If a man thought to fulfill a commandment and he did not do it, because he was prevented by force or accident, then the Scripture credits it to him as if he had performed it.) And how do you know that even if one man sits and studies the Torah the Divine Presence is with him? For it is said: 'In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee.' Now, since [the Divine presence is] even with one man, why is it necessary to mention two? – The words of two are written down in the book of remembrance, the words of one are not written down in the book of remembrance. Since this is the case with two, why mention three? – I might think [the dispensing of] justice is only for making peace, and the Divine Presence does not come [to participate]. Therefore he teaches us that justice also is Torah. Since it is the case with three, why mention ten? – To

[a gathering of] ten the Divine Presence comes first, to three, it comes only after they sit down.

Note that while Abba Binyamin's statement *limits* efficacious prayer to the synagogue, R. Yizḥak's discourse opens with a proof that the *Shekhinah* dwells in a synagogue⁶⁵ – a somewhat surprising turn of thought. One might have thought that such a fundamental doctrine was not in need of proof. Nevertheless, since the rabbinic tendency to seek Scriptural proof-texts is omnipresent, we may assume that this idea was not really in doubt. However, the exclusivity argued for the synagogue by Abba Binyamin, and the place of the synagogue as the location of the Divine Presence is immediately undermined by the widening circles of R. Yizḥak's teaching. The *Shekhinah* is to be found not only in the synagogue, but also among any ten who gather for prayer. Not only that, but it is present among judges, and even between two who study – or even one who studies alone.⁶⁶

The following *sugya* (BT *Baba Batra* 25a) proceeds along the same lines.

דאריב"ל בואו ונחזיק טובה לאבותינו שהודיעו מקום תפלה דכתיב וצבא השמים לך משתחווים. מתקיף לה רב אחא בר יעקב ודלמא כעבד שנוטל פרס מרבו וחוזר לאחוריו ומשתחוה קשיא. ורבי אושעיא סבר שכינה בכל מקום דאמר רבי אושעיא מאי דכתיב אתה הוא ה' לבדך אתה עשית את השמים וגו' שלוחיך לא כשלוחי בשר ודם שלוחי בשר ודם ממקום שמשתלחים לשם מחזירים שליחותן אבל שלוחיך למקום שמשתלחין משם מחזירין שליחותן שנאמר התשלח ברקים וילכו ויאמרו לך הננו יבואו ויאמרו לא נאמר אלא וילכו ויאמרו מלמד שהשכינה בכל מקום. ואף רבי ישמעאל

Jewish Society of Late Antiquity (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), but the parallel is suggestive.

⁶⁵ It should be noted that R. Yizḥak is reported to have remonstrated with R. Naḥman on the latter's neglect of communal prayer; see p. 38 above.

⁶⁶ What *Ḥazal* in their reticence do not provide us with is a description of being in "the presence of the *Shekhinah*," the experience of "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" (Ps. 27:4). See *Yesod ve-Shores ha-Avodah*, *Shaar* I, chap. 3; note also that by and large the author's sources are biblical and Zoharic.

סבר שכינה בכל מקום דתנא דבי רבי ישמעאל מנין ששכינה בכל מקום שנאמר הנה המלאך הדובר בי יוצא ומלאך אחר יוצא לקראתו אחריו לא נאמר אלא לקראתו מלמד ששכינה בכל מקום. ואף רב ששת סבר שכינה בכל מקום דאמר ליה רב ששת לשמעיה לכל רוחתא אוקמן לבר ממזרח ולא משום דלית ביה שכינה אלא משום דמורו בה מיני. ורבי אבהו אמר שכינה במערב דאמר רבי אבהו מאי אוריה אויר יה.

For so said Joshua b. Levi: Let us be grateful to our ancestors for showing us the place of prayer, as it is written, 'And the host of heaven worshippeth thee.' R. Aḥa bar Jacob strongly demurred to this [interpretation]. Perhaps, he said, [the sun and moon bow down to the east], like a servant who has received a gratuity from his master and retires backwards, bowing as he goes. This [indeed] is a difficulty. R. Oshaia expressed the opinion that the *Shekhinah* is in every place. For R. Oshaia said: What is the meaning of the verse, 'Thou art the Lord, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, etc.'? Thy messengers are not like the messengers of flesh and blood. Messengers of flesh and blood report themselves [after performing their office] to the place from which they have been sent, but thy messengers report themselves to the place to which they are sent, as it says. 'Canst thou send forth lightnings that they may go and say to thee, here we are.' It does not say, 'that they may come and say,' but 'that they may go and say,' which shows that the *Shekhinah* is in all places. R. Ishmael also held that the *Shekhinah* is in all places, since R. Ishmael taught: From where do we know that the *Shekhinah* is in all places? – Because it says. 'And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him.' It does not say, 'went out after him,' but 'went out to meet him.' This shows that the *Shekhinah* is in all places. R. Shesheth also held that the *Shekhinah* is in all places, because [when desiring to pray] he used to say to his attendant: Set me facing any way except the east. And this was not because the *Shekhinah* is not there, but because the Minim prescribe turning to the east. R. Abbahu, however, said that the *Shekhinah* is in the west; for so said R. Abbahu:

What is the meaning of ‘*Uryah*’? It is equivalent to *avir Yah* [air of God].

Contrast the following (from BT *Sotah* 49a and BT *Tamid* 32b, respectively) to Abba Binyamin’s teaching.

אמר רבי יהודה בריה דרבי חייא כל ת"ח העוסק בתורה מתוך הדחק תפלתו נשמעת שנאמר כי עם בציון ישב בירושלים בכה לא תבכה חנון יחנך לקול זעקך כשמעתו ענך וכתביב בתריה ונתן ה' לכם לחם צר ומים לחץ. רבי אבהו אומר משביעין אותו מזיו שכינה שנאמר "והיו עיניך רואות את מורידך. רבי אחא בר חנינא אמר אף אין הפרגוד ננעל בפניו שנאמר "ולא יכנף עוד מורידך:

תנא רבי חייא כל העוסק בתורה בלילה שכינה כנגדו שנאמר קומי רוני בלילה לראש אשמורות שפכי כמים לבך נכח פני ה'.

R. Judah, son of R. Ḥiyya said: Any disciple of the Sages who occupies himself with Torah in poverty will have his prayer heard; as it is stated: ‘For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; He will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear, He will answer thee,’ and it continues, ‘And the Lord will give you bread in adversity and water in affliction.’ R. Abbahu said: They also satisfy him from the lustre of the *Shekhinah*, as it is stated: ‘Thine eyes shall see thy Teacher.’ R. Aḥa b. Ḥanina said: Neither is the veil drawn before him, as it is said: ‘Thy teacher shall no more be hidden.’

R. Ḥiyya taught: If one studies the Torah at night, the Divine presence faces him, as it says, ‘Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord.’

Indeed, in most cases rabbinic teachings regarding the presence or absence of the *Shekhinah* are closely linked to the performance of *mizvot* other than תפילה. While many passages may be cited, the following, classic statement of the doctrine of *imitatio Dei* may serve to represent them all (BT *Sot.* 14a).

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא מאי דכתיב אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה והלא כבר נאמר כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלה הוא אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מה הוא מלביש ערומים דכתיב ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם אף אתה הלבש ערומים הקדוש ברוך הוא ביקר חולים דכתיב וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא אף אתה בקר חולים הקדוש ברוך הוא ניחם אבלים דכתיב ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך אלהים את יצחק בנו אף אתה נחם אבלים הקדוש ברוך הוא קבר מתים דכתיב ויקבר אותו בגיא אף אתה קבור מתים:

R. Ḥama son of R. Ḥanina further said: What means the text: 'Ye shall walk after the Lord your God?' Is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after the *Shekhinah*; for has it not been said: 'For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire?' But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He. As He clothes the naked, for it is written: 'And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them, so do thou also clothe the naked.' The Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick, for it is written: 'And the Lord appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre,' so do thou also visit the sick. The Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners, for it is written: 'And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son,' so do thou also comfort mourners. The Holy one, blessed be He, buried the dead, for it is written: 'And He buried him in the valley,' so do thou also bury the dead.

In the end, of course, the logical conclusion was drawn: God too prays (BT *Ber.* 7a) and God too dons *tefillin* (BT *Ber.* 6a–b):

אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי יוסי מגין שהקדוש ברוך הוא מתפלל שנאמר והביאותים אל הר קדשי ושמחתים בבית תפילתי תפלתם לא נאמר אלא תפילתי מכאן שהקדוש ברוך הוא מתפלל. מאי מצלי אמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב יהי רצון מלפני שיכבשו רחמי את כעסי ויגולו רחמי על מדותי ואתנהג עם בני במדת רחמים ואכנס להם לפנים משורת הדין. אמר רבי אבין בר רב אדא אמר רבי יצחק מגין שהקדוש ברוך הוא מניח תפילין שנאמר נשבע ה' בימינו ובזרוע עוון בימינו זו תורה שנאמר מימינו אש דת למו ובזרוע עזו אלו תפילין שנאמר ה' עזו לעמו יתן. אמר

ליה רב נחמן בר יצחק לרב חייא בר אבין הני תפילין דמרי עלמא מה כתיב בהו אמר ליה ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ. ומי משתבח קודשא בריך הוא בשבחייהו דישאל אין דכתיב את ה' האמרת היום <וכתיב> וה' האמירך היום. אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת בעולם ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת בעולם שנאמר שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד. ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם שנאמר ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ. אמר ליה רב אחא בריה דרבא לרב אשי תינח בחד ביתא בשאר בתי מאי אמר ליה כי מי גוי גדול ומי גוי גדול אשריך ישראל או הנסה אלהים ולתתך עליון. אי הכי נפישו להו טובי בתי אלא כי מי גוי גדול ומי גוי גדול דדמיין להדדי בחד ביתא אשריך ישראל ומי כעמך ישראל בחד ביתא או הנסה אלהים בחד ביתא ולתתך עליון בחד ביתא וכולהו כתיבי באדרעיה:

R. Yohanan says in the name of R. Jose: How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, says prayers? Because it says: 'Even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer.' It is not said, 'their prayer,' but 'My prayer'; hence [you learn] that the Holy One, blessed be He, says prayers. What does He pray? – R. Zutra b. Tobi said in the name of Rav: 'May it be My will that My mercy may suppress My anger, and that My mercy may prevail over My [other] attributes, so that I may deal with My children in the attribute of mercy and, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice.'

R. Abin son of R. Ada in the name of R. Isaac says [further]: How do you know that the Holy One, blessed be He, puts on tefillin? For it is said: 'The Lord hath sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength.' 'By His right hand:' this is the Torah; for it is said: 'At His right hand was a fiery law unto them. 'And by the arm of his strength:' this is the tefillin; as it is said: 'The Lord will give strength unto His people.' And how do you know that the tefillin are a strength to Israel? For it is written: 'And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon thee, and they shall be afraid of thee,' and it has been taught: R. Eliezer the Great says: This refers to the tefillin of the head.

R. Naḥman b. Isaac said to R. Hiyya b. Abin: What is written in the tefillin of the Lord of the Universe? – He replied to him: ‘And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth?’ Does, then, the Holy One, blessed be He, sing the praises of Israel? – Yes, for it is written: ‘Thou hast avouched the Lord this day...and the Lord hath avouched thee this day. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: You have made me a unique entity in the world, and I shall make you a unique entity in the world.’ ‘You have made me a unique entity in the world,’ as it is said: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ ‘And I shall make you a unique entity in the world,’ as it is said: ‘And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth.’ R. Aha b. Rava said to R. Ashi: This accounts for one case, what about the other compartments [of the tefillin]? – He replied to him: [They contain the following verses]: ‘For what great nation is there, etc.; And what great nation is there, etc.; Happy art thou, O Israel, etc.; Or hath God assayed, etc.; and To make thee high above all nations. ‘If so, there would be too many compartments? – Hence [you must say]:’ For what great nation is there, and And what great nation is there, which are similar, are in one case; ‘Happy art thou, O Israel,’ and ‘Who is like Thy people, in one case; ‘Or hath God assayed,’ in one case; and ‘To make thee high,’ in one case. And all these verses are written on [the tefillin of] His arm.⁶⁷

It is of course hardly surprising that halakhic literature should in general emphasize the overwhelming importance of Torah study, and that masters of *halakhah* should be pictured in their primary social role rather than in their personal experiences of standing before their Maker. However, some inkling of the attitude with

⁶⁷ See Maharal, *Be'ér ha-Golah*, *Be'ér Revi'i*, for the theological problem that this prayer raises; see however R. Ṣadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, *Ṣidkat ha-Ṣaddik*, no. 212. This doctrine was applied across the board; see R. Yonatan Eibeshuetz, *Tiferet Yehonatan ad Lev. 1:1*, p. 79, s.v. *adam*.

which they stood in prayer may be garnered from the discussion in BT *Ber.* 30b.

משנה אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כבוד ראש חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת ומתפללין כדי שיכוונו לבם לאביהם שבשמים אפילו המלך שואל בשלמו לא ישיבנו ואפילו נחש כרוך על עקבו לא יפסיק;
 גמרא מנא הני מילי אמר רבי אלעזר דאמר קרא והיא מרת נפש ממאי דילמא חנה שאני דהות מרירא לבא טובא אלא אמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא מהכא ואני ברב חסדך אבא ביתך אשתחווה אל היכל קדשך ביראתך ממאי דילמא דוד שאני דהוה מצער נפשיה ברחמי טובא אלא אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי מהכא השתחוו לה' בהדרת קדש אל תקרי בהדרת אלא בחרדת ממאי דילמא לעולם אימא לך הדרת ממש כי הא דרב יהודה הוה מציינן נפשיה והדר מצלי אלא אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק מהכא עבדו את ה' ביראה וגילו ברעדה מאי וגילו ברעדה אמר רב אדא בר מתנא אמר רבה במקום גילה שם תהא רעדה....

Mishnah: One should not stand up to say tefillah save in a reverent frame of mind. The pious men of old men of used to wait an hour before praying in order that they might concentrate their thoughts upon their father in heaven. Even if a king greets him [while praying] he should not answer him. Even if a snake is wound round his heel he should not break off.

Gemara: What is the [Scriptural] source of this rule? – R. Eleazar said: Scripture says, 'And she was in bitterness of soul.' But how can you learn from this? Perhaps Hannah was different because she was exceptionally bitter at heart! Rather, said R. Jose son of R. Ḥanina: We learn it from here: 'But as for me, in the abundance of Thy lovingkindness will I come into Thy house, I will bow down toward Thy holy temple in the fear of Thee.' But how can we learn from this? Perhaps David was different, because he was exceptionally self-tormenting in prayer! Rather, said R. Joshua b. Levi, it is from here: 'Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.' Read not ḥadrath [beauty] but ḥerdath [trembling]. But how can you learn from here? Perhaps I can after all say that the word 'ḥadrath' is to be taken literally, after the manner of Rav Judah,

who used to dress himself up before he prayed! Rather, said R. Nahman b. Isaac: We learn it from here: 'Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.' What is meant by 'rejoice with trembling'? – R. Adda b. Mattena said in the name of Rav: In the place where there is rejoicing there should also be trembling.

Nevertheless, even here, this verse is employed elsewhere in the *Bavli* to describe the experience of *mattan Torah* (BT *Yom. 4a–b* and *Zeb. 116a*).

וישכן כבוד ה' מראש חודש ויכסהו הענן להר ויקרא אל משה רבי מתיא בן חרש אומר לא בא הכתוב אלא לאיים עליו כדי שתהא תורה ניתנת באימה ברתת ובזיע שנאמר עבדו את ה' ביראה וגילו ברעדה. מאי וגילו ברעדה אמר רב אדא בר מתנה אמר רב במקום גילה שם תהא רעדה. ר"א המודעי אומר מתן תורה שמע [ובא] שכשניתנה תורה לישראל היה קולו הולך מסוף העולם ועד סופו וכל [מלכי] עובדי כוכבים אחזתן רעדה בהיכליהן ואמרו שירה שנאמר ובהיכלו כולו אומר כבוד.

'And the glory of the Lord abode' from the beginning of the [third] month, and the cloud *va-yekasehu* [covered it], i.e., the mountain, then 'He called unto Moses on the seventh day.' Moses and all Israel were standing there, but the purpose of Scripture was to honor Moses. R. Nathan says: The purpose of Scripture was that he [Moses] might be purged of all food and drink in his bowels so as to make him equal to the ministering angels. R. Mattiah b. Heresh says, The purpose of Scripture here was to inspire him with awe, so that the Torah be given with awe, with dread, with trembling, as it is said: 'Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.' What is the meaning of 'And rejoice with trembling'? – R. Adda b. Mattena says in the name of Rav: Where there will be joy, there shall be trembling.

R. Eleazar of Modim said: He heard of the giving of the Torah and came. For when the Torah was given to Israel the sound thereof travelled from one end of the earth to the other, and all the heathen kings were seized with trembling

in their palaces, and they uttered song, as it is said, 'And in his place all say: "Glory".'

We can but conclude that the masters of *halakhah* saw in Torah study and prayer a seamless web of devotion to God. In the end one's submission to God's *halakhah* converts an intellectual activity into an emotional and spiritual one – and also a joyous one. Note that the same verse, גילו ברעדה (rejoice in trembling), and the *memra* of R. Ada b. Mattanah in the name of Rav, is employed both in connection with the experience of prayer *and* that of *mattan Torah*. Whatever the original context of Rav's statement, whether intended in relation to prayer or learning, the redactors of the *sugyot* in BT *Ber.* 30b, *Yom.* 4a–b, and *Zeb.* 116a, taken in the aggregate, yield the result just noted: the same dictum is employed to describe both experiences.

Or, as we noted above, in the name of R. Natan:

רבי נתן אומר אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא כל העוסק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים ומתפלל עם הצבור מעלה אני עליו כאילו פדאני לי ולבני מבין אומות העולם.

Rabbi Nathan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, says: 'If a man occupies himself with the study of the Torah and with works of charity and prays with the congregation, I account it to him as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world.'

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that our examination of the sources has not succeeded in penetrating to the experience behind the halakhic descriptions; rabbinic reticence, coupled perhaps with the intrinsic difficulty in describing the ineffable experience itself have, in the end, left us with a paucity of material. The combination of joy and trembling, alluded to in the sources just cited, must be intuited, reconstructed and reenacted in the life of each one of us in his or her life of learning and prayer, and on that note our historical survey is concluded.