

Why Did Paul Succeed Where the Rabbis Failed? The Reluctance of the Rabbis to Translate Their Teachings into Greek and Latin and the Split Jewish Diaspora

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Introduction

Jewish population centers and their synagogues served, as is known, as anchors for apostles who traveled to spread the message of Christianity. The travels of Paul, as described in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles, provide us with valuable information about the Jewish Diaspora during this period. In this article, we will try to demonstrate that an essentially different picture of the Jewish Diaspora emerges from the Jewish sources from this and subsequent periods. The Jewish centers that are focal points of the travels of the apostles are practically nonexistent in descriptions of rabbinic travels and the dissemination of their teachings during the same period. This new perception of the period sheds light on many key issues of New Testament methodological approaches.

After dealing with this fascinating fact in its own right, we will attempt to provide insights into its meaning. We will examine the growing estrangement between the rabbinic center in the land of Israel and the Jewish Diaspora spread along the Mediterranean basin, particularly to the west of Israel on the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Apparently, this period was extremely significant in the reformulation of Jewish religion and ritual in the new reality characterized by the lack of the temple. Not only were Jewish religion and ritual developing anew during this period, but also the Jewish canon and the oral law were being formulated into a corpus that would shape Judaism in the coming generations.

In fact, two different corpora were developing during this period in the Holy Land, each with its own character. These primarily addressed two different target populations, both primarily Jewish, a fact that affected their design. The two corpora — the New Testament and the rabbinic corpus — re-

flected two new cultures under development. Both claimed to be the continuation or the natural and correct product of biblical Judaism. Indeed, there is no doubt that both corpora were the product of religious, historical, and social processes acting upon Judaism at the end of the Second Temple period.

The estrangement between the land of Israel and the western Diaspora during such a critical period would likely cause a split in the Jewish world between the east and the west. In fact, the developed centers in the east lost a large portion of the western Jews who apparently assimilated into Christian communities that were spreading throughout the region at that time.

This article attempts to describe the deep schism that developed within the Jewish world in the period under discussion, and to understand its causes.

The Rabbinic Corpus

We will begin with a short description of the rabbinic corpus that stands at the center of our discussion, and that is naturally less familiar to the readers of this book. This rabbinic corpus includes four essential components. Two of them — the Mishnah and the Midrash halakah — are earlier works that crystallized in the first two centuries CE. The other two — the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud — came together at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. Three of these works developed in the land of Israel, while the fourth, the Babylonian Talmud, developed primarily in Babylonia.

The Mishnah is a collection of laws that relate to all areas of life, fashioning the Jewish lifestyle and delineating those things that are permitted and those that are forbidden in individual and communal religious life. It establishes the laws of Shabbat and the other holidays, the laws of prayer, the regulations of civil law, the laws regulating the family, and even laws relating to the temple and its service, in spite of the fact that it had already been destroyed some time previously. The Mishnah includes earlier collections of laws from the time of the temple, but is primarily based on collections that began to be organized after the destruction of the temple in the academies of Yavneh, and subsequently in Galilee. The final editing was done by Rabbi Yehudah (Judah) ha-Nasi at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century. In spite of the fact that the Mishnah was redacted and was sealed as a corpus, it remained an oral text for several centuries. We do not know exactly when or why it was committed to writing, but the impor-

tant point for our purposes is that during the period under discussion in this article, the Mishnah already constituted a set corpus, even though it had not been committed to writing. In reality, the oral nature of the postbiblical Jewish tradition was broken by the sages in two stages. In the first stage, the oral law was canonized into a corpus; and in the second stage, several centuries later, it was committed to writing.

Midrash halakah is also a collection of oral law from the tannaitic period, but here the law is attached to a biblical text and is brought as an exegetical derivation from it. The underlying assumption of the Midrash is that the Torah of Moses, as any legal work, requires authoritative interpretation in order to resolve ambiguities, to fill in lacunas, to resolve contradictions, and to address new matters that arise from real life. Many questions regarding the development of these collections remain open, such as whether the Midrash preceded the law, or vice versa. Nevertheless, we do not need to address these questions for the purpose of our discussion.

The Mishnah and the Midrash are products of the Tannaim, the sages of the land of Israel during the period that concluded at the end of the second century CE. In the subsequent period, the two editions of the Talmud were created — the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The Talmud is organized as an interpretation of the Mishnah, which served as the cornerstone not only for talmudic creativity but also for rabbinic creativity for centuries to come. The two editions of the Talmud, based on tannaitic works, constitute a vast corpus that served as the foundation for Jewish creativity throughout the Middle Ages in all disciplines. Talmudic law was accepted as binding, and served as the foundation for the world of Jewish law throughout the generations. The great codices, such as that of Maimonides, are based entirely on the Talmud. Similarly, talmudic lore served as the basis for all of Jewish philosophy, ethics, and thought during the Middle Ages. It is not surprising that this rabbinic corpus served as the focal point for all traditional Jewish educational institutions.

For our purposes, one of the important facts about both editions of the Talmud is that they preserve a vast treasure of tannaitic sources that were not incorporated in the Mishnah or the organized collections of Midrash halakah. These sources — which were preserved in the rabbinic tradition by transmission from teacher to student and among the students in the academies, but were not ultimately included in the tannaitic corpus — were preserved within the context of the talmudic deliberations. These sources aid us greatly in understanding the process by which the rabbinic corpus was created. Tannaitic sources were all written in the language utilized by the sages in the land of Israel, a Hebrew that was more developed than Biblical He-

brew. In contrast, the talmudic discussion is primarily in Aramaic — an Aramaic of a western or Judean dialect in the Jerusalem Talmud, and an Aramaic of an eastern or Babylonian dialect in the Babylonian Talmud — with a strong connection to Hebrew.

A number of the facts regarding the rabbinic corpus are important for our discussion. First, it is important to note that the rabbinic corpus includes not only laws (*halakah*), but also lore (*haggadah*). Initially, the *haggadot* (legends) were preserved in the tannaitic legal corpus, the *Mishnah*, and subsequently in the amoraic Talmud. They were only organized into separate collections in a later period. The *haggadah* constitutes a continuation of portions of the Bible, including *Chronicles*. It includes rabbinic dictums and ethical exhortations, and deals with the rationale behind the commandments, as well as with Jewish religious, ethical, philosophical, and spiritual life. The *haggadah*, like the *Midrash*, is built upon the narrative portions of the Bible as separate stories and allegories. Although law is certainly central to the rabbinic canon, ultimately, as in the Bible, the law is integrated in one book with a narrative that gives it meaning.¹

Two additional facts of interest are unique to the rabbinic canon and distinguish it from the biblical canon. The first is the phenomenon of controversy that characterizes the rabbinic corpus. In contrast to the biblical canon, which is monolithic in that it presents one correct position, the rabbinic canon is a pluralistic corpus. It preserves many variant opinions and presents controversies on almost every halakic and *haggadic* issue. The *Mishnah* often records multiple opinions, and the Talmud generally conducts a discussion reflecting the range of relevant opinions. As a result, we are familiar with approximately 120 Tannaim from the land of Israel from the mishnaic period, and hundreds of Amoraim from the land of Israel and Babylonia from the talmudic period. As such, each rabbinic collection is a collective work produced by many scholars over a number of generations. The second characteristic that is unique to the rabbinic canon, alluded to above, is that it was preserved and studied as an oral tradition for centuries until it was finally committed to writing, for reasons unknown to us. This distinction between the biblical and rabbinic canons is expressed precisely by the sages of the Talmud: “Those things that are written may not be transmitted orally, and those things that are oral may not be written” (*b. Git.* 60b).

One of the fascinating phenomena regarding the rabbinic canon that significantly impacts our discussion is that it was not translated into Greek or Latin, or any other language. Unlike the Pentateuch, which was translated into Greek already by the third century BCE and was subsequently translated into Aramaic, the rabbinic canon remained accessible for many centuries

only in its original language. Below we will analyze the causes of this surprising phenomenon and its implications.

The Geography of the Rabbinic Corpus

What are the geographical parameters that emerge from the rabbinic corpus described above?

We indicated previously that the pluralistic nature of the corpus enables us to identify hundreds of rabbis whose opinions are expressed in it. It is an astounding fact that the vast majority of sages cited in the Mishnah and other tannaitic literature were from the land of Israel, almost without exception, while the Talmud provides evidence of the eastward spread of the Diaspora toward Babylonia. In all of these corpora, however, there is no mention of sages who lived, studied, or taught in the Jewish Diaspora west of the land of Israel, that is, in the southern or northern Mediterranean basin. The Jerusalem Talmud mentions a few scholars who came from North Africa or Cappadocia. In all of these instances, however, the reference is to very marginal scholars about whom we know nothing, in contrast to the well-known scholars who are central to the work, about whom we have a significant amount of biographical information. Not only that, but it appears from the context that the scholars who hail from these regions, or whose families originated there, actually moved to the land of Israel in order to study Torah.²

In addition, the rabbinic corpus was created in a number of well-known centers in the land of Israel, and subsequently in Babylonia. It is important to note that all of the academies dedicated to the study and fashioning of the oral law, known as *yeshivot*, were in the land of Israel, or in regions to its east. To the west, in contrast, not only are we not familiar with scholars who participated in shaping the rabbinic corpus, we are not aware of any institutions in which it was studied. Did the Mishnah get to Rome, Byzantium, or Asia Minor? Was it studied there? The apparent answer is that it most probably was not.

Indeed, two rabbinic sages from the west are mentioned in the Talmud, Todos “Ish Romi” (the Roman) and Matya b. Heresh. The latter went from the land of Israel to Rome in order to establish a yeshivah. Yet, paradoxically, the references to these two scholars are so minimal that they actually point to the almost complete absence of rabbinic teaching in the west. There is one teaching of Todos in all of rabbinic literature. It is said that he instructed to take a lamb on the night of Passover, and that they told him that he was

“close to feeding people sanctified meat outside of the confines of the temple” (*t. Beṣah* 2:15).³ Similarly, there is only one homiletical teaching in his name in all of rabbinic literature. We really know nothing about this scholar, to the point that scholarly estimations of the time that he lived span two hundred years, ranging from the first century BCE through the first century CE.⁴ How might we explain that we know hardly anything about a well-known scholar in Rome? Is there any other significant Tanna or Amora about whom we do not know the generation in which he taught, his activities, his teachers, and his students? Furthermore, how is it possible that an important scholar has only one law and one homiletical teaching recorded in the Talmud, and these in an offhanded manner? Indeed, it is logical to assume that there was a Jewish religious leader in Rome named Todos, but that he is practically not mentioned in the Talmud itself proves that there was a lack of contact between the sages in Palestine and the Jewish community in Rome.

Similarly, with regard to Rav Matya Ben Heresh, although we are told that he migrated from the land of Israel to Rome to establish a yeshivah (see *b. Sanh.* 32b), it is interesting to note that, in the final analysis, we know nothing about his activity in Rome. We do not know if he succeeded in establishing a yeshivah, and, if so, what was taught there or who studied there. There is also no record in all of rabbinic literature of a new idea that emanated from this yeshivah. This is in contrast to every one of the centers in Israel, and subsequently Babylonia, about which we have a wealth of information from the literature.

Off the Radar Screen

The sages in the *Midrash Sifre* tell the following story:

The government sent two agents and told them to disguise themselves as Jews and observe the nature of their Torah. They went to Rabban Gamliel in Usha and studied the Bible, the *Mishnah*, the *Midrash*, the laws, and the *Aggadah* (lore). When they left, they [the agents] said to them: “All of the Torah is pleasant and praiseworthy except for one thing — that you say that something stolen from a non-Jew is permissible, but not something stolen from a Jew. But we will not inform the government of this.”⁵

According to this rabbinic story, the Roman government wanted to become familiar with the Torah, and therefore sent two spies to Usha, the Torah cen-

ter in Galilee at that time. It would have been natural for the two agents to have gone to a closer, Greek-speaking institution. Clearly, the sages incidentally admit that a person from Rome who wishes to learn Torah must come to the land of Israel. As we will see further on, the sages did have a degree of contact with Rome, which was the most prominent destination in the west to which they traveled. Thus, if it is true that a person in Rome who wished to learn Torah had to travel to Israel to do so, how much more can we assume that the same was true for people from other locations in the west?

The Jewish calendar is a complex calendar that integrates the lunar month and the solar year. During the time of the temple, and even subsequent to its destruction up to 359 CE, the lunar month was declared by the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin would declare the beginning of the month in a quasi-legal process in which they would accept the testimony of witnesses that they had seen the renewal stage of the moon. As soon as the new month was set, it was important to inform the entire Jewish Diaspora, since the beginning of the new month had implications for the setting of the times for the holidays and their associated rituals. Understandably, a unified community requires a uniform calendar, which serves as a fundamental element of its communal identity. The Mishnah tells that at a certain stage, a system of bonfires was established as a message system to inform distant communities of the establishment of the new month:

And from where did they light the flares? From the Mount of Olives to Sarteba, and from Sarteba to Agrippina, and from Agrippina to Havran, and from Havran to Bet Biltin; and from Bet Biltin they did not move, but he waved to and fro and he raised and lowered until he would see the whole of the Diaspora in front of him like a mass of fire. (*m. Roš Haš. 2:4*)⁶

We do not claim that this text represents a historical document regarding the route by which the Diaspora was informed of the establishment of the new month, but it is certainly a source that enables us to see the way in which the editors of the Mishnah perceived the Jewish Diaspora. According to them, the information regarding the establishment of the new month was transmitted only eastward. They were not troubled by the question of how the western Diaspora would receive news of the declaration of the new month.⁷

This claim that the western Diaspora was not on the radar screen of the sages when they set the halakah is supported as well by the following mishnah from tractate *Yadayim*, which discusses a controversy between the sages regarding the giving of tithes (*ma'asrôt*) and priestly gifts (*těrumôt*) in the

Sabbatical Year outside of the borders of the land of Israel. The mishnah assumes that in certain areas east of the land of Israel, Ammon and Moab, the Jewish communities voluntarily accepted upon themselves the obligation of tithes and priestly gifts. The mishnah therefore raises the question as to which tithes are obligatory in these regions in the Sabbatical Year, a year in which there is no obligation to give tithes in the land of Israel because it is prohibited to work the land there. The mishnah describes the discussion of this question in the academy as follows:

On that day they said: "What of Ammon and Moab in the seventh year?" R. Tarfon decreed: "They must give the poor man's tithe." And R. Eleazar Ben Azariah decreed: "They must give the second tithe." . . . R. Tarfon responded: "Egypt is outside the land of Israel, and Ammon and Moab are outside of the land of Israel. Therefore, just as in Egypt the poor man's tithe must be given in the seventh year, so too in Ammon and Moab the poor man's tithe must be given in the seventh year." R. Eleazar Ben Azariah answered: "Babylonia is outside the land of Israel, and Ammon and Moab are outside of the land of Israel. Therefore, just as in Babylonia the second tithe must be given in the seventh year, so too in Ammon and Moab the second tithe must be given in the seventh year." R. Tarfon said: "In Egypt which is close to Israel they performed the poor man's tithe because the poor people of Israel depend on them in the Sabbatical Year, so too in Ammon and Moab which is close to Israel they performed the poor man's tithe because the poor people of Israel depend on them in the Sabbatical Year." . . .

They voted and decided that Ammon and Moab should give the poor man's tithe in the seventh year. And when R. Yosi Ben Dormaskit (Dormaskos) came to R. Eliezer in Lod, he said to him: "What new thing was learned in the house of study today?" He responded: "They voted and decided that Ammon and Moab should give poor man's tithe in the seventh year." R. Eliezer wept and said: "'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.' Go and tell them: 'Be not anxious by reason of your voting, for I have received a tradition from Rabban Yohanan Ben Zakkai, who heard it from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, as a law given to Moses on Sinai that Ammon and Moab should give the poor man's tithe in the seventh year.'" (*m. Yad.* 4:3)

Scholars are divided as to whether this source should be viewed as a reflection of reality or as a "romantic" portrayal of the ideal. Some view it as a historical proof that Diaspora communities were accustomed to sending

tithes and priestly gifts to the land of Israel. Others view the mishnah as a “romantic” expression of the nature of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.⁸ This is not the place to determine which of the opinions is correct. Nevertheless, while the historicity of the mishnah would strengthen our thesis, we believe that if it is only a romantic depiction, our position is strengthened even more. The mishnah mentions each of the eastern Diasporas — Egypt, Ammon, Moab, and Babylonia — while locations in the western Diaspora were apparently not on the halakic “radar screen” of the author of the mishnah, even on a theoretical or romantic level. In other words, even in the imagination of the author of this mishnah, the western Diaspora was not even considered as a potential source of tithes or priestly gifts for the center in Israel.

Traveling Sages

We have clear information regarding the fact that the rabbinic leadership in the land of Israel traveled to Rome for political reasons, such as meetings with the leaders of the empire. A significant tradition regarding these travels exists from the time of Judas Maccabeus, in the second century BCE and onward (1 Macc 8). Rabbinic literature documents the travels of the sages of Yavneh to Rome, even in later periods.⁹

It would be logical to assume that along with these types of visits, the sages would also visit with the Jewish community of Rome. The important and fascinating fact is that even though these visits are documented in rabbinic literature, there is no documentation of a visit to the Jewish community of Rome, or of a Jewish legal question that was addressed by the community to the sages during their visits to Rome. In contrast, the Mishnah does document a question that was addressed to the visiting Jewish sages by the non-Jewish scholars of Rome: “They asked the sages in Rome: If he [God] does not desire idolatry, why does he not do away with it?” (*m. ‘Abod. Zar. 4:7*).¹⁰ Indeed, it is clear from the content of the question that it was addressed by pagan idolaters to Jewish scholars who opposed idolatry.¹¹

Did the rabbinic leadership of the land of Israel travel to communities in the Diaspora to provide spiritual support by disseminating their Torah teachings and the new corpus that was developing? The impression from an initial reading of rabbinic sources is that they traveled frequently, and, as claimed by a number of historians, that the entire Jewish world was under the religious leadership of the sages. Yet a closer reading of these sources reveals that the sages primarily traveled to places in the land of Israel or close

to its borders, such as Kfar Otenai,¹² Achzib,¹³ Ludakia south of Antioch,¹⁴ Zuffrin in Syria,¹⁵ and Gabla on the eastern bank of the Jordan.¹⁶ There are also sources regarding Jewish legal questions that were sent from Diaspora communities to the sages, but here too the vast majority of the questions documented came from communities within the land of Israel or close to its borders (e.g., Tivon, Ginnosar, Sidon, Sippori, and Hamat Gader). In fact, three sources indicate that *Benei Asia* went up to Yavneh in order to ask a Jewish legal question.¹⁷ The questions mentioned, however, deal with issues of purity and impurity that are not relevant in the Diaspora. Gedaliah Alon suggests a reasonable conclusion that the delegation was from Ezion-geber, close to the southern border of Israel, and that the sages imposed upon them the laws of purity and impurity as practiced in Israel.¹⁸

Other talmudic sources also seem to demonstrate a connection between the rabbinic center and the Jewish world located in the western side of the Mediterranean Sea, but they seem to be didactic or haggadic sources and not historical documents. For example, R. Yehudah, a second-century Babylonian Amora, explains a decree of Rabban Gamliel (Gamaliel) of Yavneh that was issued in light of questions that arrived from “overseas (*mēdinôt hayyām*)” (*b. Giṭ. 34*). Some scholars have asserted that the concept *mēdinôt hayyām* refers to cities on the coast of the land of Israel.¹⁹ Yet even if we assume, as was accepted in the past, that the phrase refers to cities that are overseas, we still have no proof that it refers to the Jewish communities under discussion. It is important to note that this source represents a later Babylonian tradition that postdated Rabban Gamliel by several generations. There is no parallel tradition in the literature from Israel or from the time of Rabban Gamliel. It seems certain that this source is not historical, and that the Amora does not even presume to assert that he is recounting a historical event. Rather, his comments represent a didactic explanation of the decree of Rabban Gamliel that is cited in the mishnah under discussion. Similarly, the talmudic descriptions of Rabbi Aqiba’s Mediterranean journeys are classical haggadic tales that cannot be viewed as historical sources. Consider, for example, the story of Rabbi Aqiba seeing a ship ripped apart at sea, and subsequently meeting in Cappadocia the drowned person who tells him, “I was passed from one wave to the next until I reached dry land” (*t. Yebam. 14:5*). It is clear that the story is designed to explain the law under discussion in the Talmud that asserts that one cannot declare the death of a person who has drowned at sea unless his body is found. Thus the story cannot be viewed as a historical source.

In spite of what we have said previously, some rabbinic sources that document the travels of sages appear irrefutable.²⁰ Furthermore, we can assume

that some of the sources that document the travels of the sages that cannot be considered historical can nevertheless be assumed to preserve a valid tradition relating to specific journeys taken by some of the sages.²¹ These sources, however, are in our opinion exceptions that prove the rule, for they testify to the sparseness of the connection between the rabbinic leadership and the western Jewish Diaspora. They discuss isolated incidents that did not leave a significant impression on either side. It is clear that the sparseness of these sources — in comparison to the vast number of sources documenting the travels of the sages to Diaspora locations near Israel, and even more so the ongoing travel between the land of Israel and Babylonia — supports the claim that the rabbinic center in the land of Israel was significantly detached from the western Diaspora.²²

Revolutionary Changes in the Post-Temple Reality

A number of important questions arise at this juncture. First, what were the practical implications of the estrangement from the rabbinic center on the western communities, in contrast to the eastern community? Did the estrangement manifest itself as a lack of cooperation with regard to leadership and religious creativity, or were there perhaps more far-reaching implications? Second, what was the cause that created the detachment? These two questions are clearly interrelated, but we will deal with them initially as separate issues, and only at a later stage will we attempt to derive a more generalized picture that flows from both questions.

First, we will discuss the practical implications of the estrangement. It is clear that any estrangement between a Diaspora community and its spiritual center will have a dramatic impact on the community. Can such a community continue to some degree to be part of the community from which it is estranged, or will it develop in different directions that will prevent it from being perceived as culturally connected to the community from which it emerged? And in general can such a community, detached from its spiritual center, continue to exist as a community that is independent from the larger host community in which it now resides?

These questions, which are relevant for any Diaspora community, are even more critical in the reality that faced the Jewish community after the destruction of the temple. This period was certainly not one of calm within the Jewish community. It was not a period of stability that would allow for an easy reconnection for a community that had temporarily become estranged from its center. On the contrary, even the period just before the destruction

of the temple was characterized by a growing gap in religious practice and law between the community in the land of Israel and the communities in the Diaspora.²³ Nevertheless, in spite of this gap, the temple served as the recognized spiritual and religious center that granted it authority that was universally accepted based on its ancient standing and its physical presence.²⁴ After the destruction, however, the continuation of centralized worship of God with its focus at the temple was obviously impossible. Essentially, the administrative structure of Jewish life crumbled with the destruction of the temple. The rabbinic leadership, which we are discussing in this paper, responded to the destruction with an unprecedented degree of fortitude and creativity. In addition to the creation of the new rabbinic corpus discussed above, the rabbinic leadership during this period essentially created alternative rituals and modes of divine worship. For example, new holiday rituals were instituted that did not revolve around the temple, and the prayers that the sages created served as a substitute for the sacrifices in the temple. In the Judaism fashioned by the rabbis in the post-temple reality, the laws of purity and impurity waned in importance while the standing of the synagogue became stronger. New texts encompassing law, lore, and liturgy that were created obtained a central status in the ritual and in the communal structure. It is our contention that this dramatic revolution in the nature of the Jewish community was not transmitted, or was practically not transmitted, to the Jewish communities of the west.

Let us examine two examples that demonstrate the magnitude of this revolution.

Passover

The holiday of Passover was celebrated during the Second Temple period by sacrificing the paschal offering in Jerusalem. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the public offering of the sacrifice were central events in the celebration of the festival in the time of the temple that the entire people considered important. Clearly, the focal point of the Passover celebration at that time was Jerusalem.²⁵ In addition, they obviously observed the biblical injunctions: the prohibition of having *hametz* (leavened products) in one's possession and the injunction to eat *matzah* (unleavened bread). The paschal offering was slaughtered in the courtyard of the temple, but was eaten in all of Jerusalem, as prescribed in rabbinic sources.²⁶ Also, from the description of the Last Supper in Christian sources, it was a Passover meal:

On the first day of the holiday of Passover, the students of Jesus approached him and asked: “Where do you want us to prepare a place for you to eat the Passover offering?” He answered: “Go wake up a certain person and say to him: So said our teacher, ‘My time is near. I will make the Passover offering by you with my students.’” The students followed the directive of Jesus and prepared the Passover offering. (Mt 26:17-19)

This source also indicates that in addition to the offering, the Passover meal included the recitation of the *Hallel* (a prayer of praise): “After they recited the *Hallel*, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Mt 26:30). Similarly, the book of *Jubilees* describes the Passover meal as a feast that included meat, wine, and the recitation of the *Hallel* (49:6), as does Philo, who describes the celebration as follows: “They did not gather as in other meals to fill themselves with wine and food, but to fulfill the custom of their ancestors with prayer and song” (*Spec.* 2.148). The eating of the sacrifice accompanied by songs of praise is also indicated in tannaitic sources.²⁷ Yet none of these sources mentions a text that was recited on the night of Passover.

The *Passover Haggadah*, which today symbolizes the Jewish celebration of Passover, was created during the first generations of the Tannaim after the destruction of the temple as a substitute for the Passover offering and the celebration surrounding it. The Mishnah, in the tenth chapter of *Pesaḥim*, parallels the haggadah, and all of the Tannaim mentioned there are from the generation of Yavneh (R. Gamliel, R. Aqiba, R. Tarfon, R. Eleazar, R. Zadok).²⁸ Not only was there no organized and structured text related to the celebration of Passover during the time of the temple, but we have no evidence that the commandment of “retelling the story of the exodus from Egypt” (*sîppûr yěšî’at mišrayim*) was part of the Passover ritual.²⁹ This commandment was initiated and formulated by the Tannaim as a substitute for the paschal offering that had been the essence of the ceremony before it was lost. The sages created the haggadah as the text that would be the central element of the newly fashioned holiday.³⁰ It is important to note that the literature of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha from the land of Israel and the western Diaspora make no mention of the haggadah or of the commandment of retelling the story of the exodus on the night of Passover.

How was Passover celebrated in the western Diaspora after the destruction of the temple? Was the new formulation of the celebration by the rabbis as a holiday of text and storytelling transmitted to the west? Was the particular text itself adopted by the western communities? Before we begin to respond to these questions, let us sharpen the question by bringing another example of rabbinic innovation — the formulation of uniform set prayers.

Set Prayer

We do not find the practice of set prayer in biblical sources or in other ancient cultures. Obligatory and set prayer is not mentioned in sources from the time of the temple, in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, in the writings of Philo or Josephus, or in the New Testament.³¹ In the time of the temple, we are aware of prayers that accompanied the sacrifices that were composed of verses from the Bible, primarily from the book of Psalms. The concept of prayer as a form of divine worship in itself was an innovation of the rabbinic leadership in the generations following the destruction of the temple. The magnitude of this innovation was not just in the recognition of the value of prayer independent of the temple ritual, but also in that it became obligatory and structured. The establishment of an obligatory prayer service with set times and a predetermined and closed liturgy was implemented in place of spontaneous prayer that flowed from the emotions of the individual and her or his internal spiritual need to communicate with God.

Research also indicates that ancient synagogues during the time of the temple were not places of worship, but were primarily for the reading of the Torah. Ezra Fleischer demonstrated that the New Testament includes numerous references in which Jesus appears in a synagogue where he teaches, answers questions, and reads from the Torah, but never prays. The same is true of the visits of Paul and the apostles to Diaspora synagogues. Prayer in the New Testament appears in a very individualized and intimate format, rather than in an institutionalized context. The recurring theme is that the synagogue was a place for reading the Torah and for delivering sermons, but not for prayer.³² The new format of set prayers thus represented a significant shift in religious life. The formulation and organization of the prayer service was part of a larger attempt by the rabbis to construct an orderly and structured form of divine worship to replace the temple service. Order was also needed as a means of creating structure for the people. Set ritual helps to create an organized community around it. Just as the worship in the temple was not spontaneous, the new form of worship was similarly designed in a structured format. We have clear information from the generation of Yavneh — the first generation after the destruction of the temple — that the sages worked intently to formulate and establish structured prayer.³³

In an attempt to grant greater validity to the prayer service, the rabbis claimed in a number of sources that the source of the adopted prayer service was ancient, predating the temple period.³⁴ Yet these sources do not prove that they actually existed prior to their time. Just as the history of halakah during the temple period is clouded with uncertainty, so too is the history of

prayer. The one fact that is clear is that a central activity of the sages during the generation of Yavneh was undoubtedly the creation of structured prayer as part of a reformulation of Jewish identity and the fashioning of a new form of divine worship to compensate for the loss of the temple.³⁵ In prayer as in other areas, the powerful innovations of the generation of Yavneh saved Judaism by refashioning its world anew. It is possible that they did not create this world *ex nihilo*. The degree to which the prayers established by the rabbis were based on pre-temple antecedents is a point of controversy in scholarly literature. It seems to us, however, that this very argument was contained in the deliberations in the study halls of Yavneh. The preponderance of evidence that the issue of prayer engaged so much of the attention of the sages indicates that they viewed it as a significant innovation from recognized practice. This is demonstrated, for example, in the following talmudic source regarding the *Amidah* prayer, which represents the heart of the prayer service:

R. Gamliel says, "Each day one should recite the prayer consisting of eighteen [benedictions]." R. Yehoshua says, "[Each day one says] an abbreviation of the eighteen benedictions." R. Aqiba says, "If one's prayer is fluent he says the eighteen benedictions. And if not, [he says] an abbreviation of them." R. Eliezer says, "One who recites his prayers in a routine manner — his prayers are not supplications." (*m. Ber.* 4:3-4)

It appears that Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh is revealed in this source as a strong advocate for the adoption of a newly formulated prayer as a set prayer. His colleagues, R. Yehoshua and R. Aqiba, take a softer and somewhat equivocal stand. On the other hand, R. Eliezer Ben Hyrkanos, who was known to be a conservative Tanna, wished to preserve the ancient tradition of prayer by challenging the very concept of set prayer. R. Eliezer wishes to preserve prayer that constitutes "supplication," an intimate personal prayer that was known from the time of the temple.³⁶ He therefore objects fundamentally to any prayer in which the text is predetermined.³⁷ R. Yehoshua and R. Aqiba take a more compromising position. Yet this fact in itself demonstrates that Rabban Gamliel, the *Nasi*, sought to introduce a fixed structure. From the fact that R. Aqiba raises the issue as to whether he has a fluent knowledge of the prayer, it is clear that he was responding to a set formulation of the prayer proposed by Rabban Gamliel. The following *baraita* supports the contention that this prayer was created during the time of Rabban Gamliel: "Shimon Happakuli in Yavneh laid out the eighteen benedictions before Rabban Gamliel in proper order" (*b. Ber.* 28a).³⁸

Even if we accept the contention of some scholars that the source of the *Amidah* prayer was from the latter part of the temple period, the *baraita* certainly confirms the importance that the sages of Yavneh attributed to its adoption as an obligatory prayer with a set time, a set text, and a set order.³⁹

Language

The second question that we asked above was whether the dramatic innovations of the sages were transmitted to the entire Jewish Diaspora including the western Jewish world. The facts that we established in our initial comments — that the sages did not travel to these places, that hardly any scholars from this region contributed to the new rabbinic corpus, and that we do not know of a Jewish academy in this portion of the Jewish world — support the conclusion that the new Jewish corpus did not reach this part of the Jewish Diaspora. Yet we would like to go one step further and point out an important phenomenon that, in our opinion, supports this contention very clearly. We refer to the issue of language.

Our contention is that the language of the Jews in the western Diaspora was Greek, while the rabbis wrote only in Hebrew and Aramaic. This fact sharpened the estrangement between the two communities, and in practice prevented communication between them. We are basing ourselves on the accepted assumption that the Jews in the west did not know Hebrew or Aramaic, and that their religious lives, including prayer and the reading of the Torah, were conducted in Greek.⁴⁰

Research regarding inscriptions found in synagogues in the land of Israel and in the Greek Diaspora leads to dramatic conclusions about the differences between the Jewish communities of Israel and the Diaspora, differences that derive primarily from the language barrier. Approximately one hundred synagogue inscriptions were found in the western Diaspora. These finds have greatly enriched our knowledge about the Greek Diaspora. All of the inscriptions are in Greek, in contrast to the findings in synagogues in the land of Israel that included inscriptions in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Today, however, we know that these linguistic differences were accompanied by significant differences in the content of the inscriptions. There are ideas that appear only in Greek inscriptions, whether in Israel or in the Diaspora, that do not appear in Hebrew or Aramaic inscriptions.⁴¹

Moreover, we find that Greek concepts were transmitted from the west to the land of Israel, and are found in inscriptions there, but we do not find a parallel movement in the opposite direction. The Greek inscriptions in the

land of Israel reflect motifs from the world of the rabbis, but these influences are not found in Greek inscriptions in the western Diaspora. For example, some Greek inscriptions in the land of Israel state: “He should be remembered for good and for blessing,” which is a direct translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic terminology. In contrast, in the Greek Diaspora, inscriptions utilize the term *eulogia* (blessing), but not in the context that it is used in the land of Israel. In synagogues in the land of Israel, there was a strong influence of the rabbinic worldview, while the western Diaspora was noticeably influenced by Hellenistic culture. We thus see that the synagogue in the land of Israel was actually influenced by both cultures, drawing from both the Hebrew and Greek concepts.⁴² The western synagogue, however, did not draw at all from the Hebrew-speaking synagogue model in the land of Israel.⁴³

Teaching, Prayers, Festivals — in Hebrew, not Greek

The linguistic gap between the eastern Jewish community in the land of Israel and the Jewish community in the west is, from our perspective, of the utmost significance for understanding the development of Judaism during this period.

The profound significance of the innovations of the rabbis in the land of Israel following the destruction of the temple, demonstrated above by the examples of the establishment of set prayer services and the modification of the celebration of Passover, is that they created a new medium through which connectedness to the Judaism could be established. In place of the temple, the rabbis established the text as the new “center,” a center particularly appropriate for the reality of a dispersed community. The sages fashioned the text in a manner that one could define connectedness to the community by virtue of its recitation. If indeed the purpose of the text was, among other things, to serve as an instrument for organizing and crystallizing the community, then anyone unable to decode the text would resultantly be estranged from the community. The Jews of the western Diaspora were familiar with the biblical text in Greek. As we have seen, they read the Torah in their synagogues from the Septuagint. Yet they were unable to decode the new rabbinic texts — the Mishnah, the Midrash, the prayer book, and the haggadah. Thus, ironically, the Greek- and Latin-speaking western Diaspora that was so much in need of connectedness to the Jewish center was estranged from it as the result of the creation of this new medium.⁴⁴

Understandably, we must assume at this point that the rabbinic texts

were not translated into Greek or Latin. This assumption is based, first and foremost, on the lack of any reference or hint that the rabbinic texts were translated at all in the ancient world. Furthermore, as we stated previously, the rabbis were vehemently opposed to committing the oral law to writing. The Mishnah was preserved as an oral text for a long period, apparently for centuries. Is it possible to translate an oral text? It is logical to assume that it would be very difficult, even impossible, to do so. In addition, how can someone who does not know the language remember an oral text? While it is possible to read a text in a language that is not understood, or only partially understood, it is hard to assume that one could memorize a text in a language that is not understood. The Bible was translated into Greek, and read publicly in Greek. Similarly, it was translated into Aramaic, and the rabbis insisted that it be read in the synagogue in its original language and in the Aramaic translation. The Mishnah and other rabbinic texts, however, were never translated into any another language.

The prayers adopted by the rabbis represent the ultimate text in terms of the triumph of the Hebrew language. There is a recognizable Greek influence in rabbinic literature, indicating that the sages were aware of Greek and that some were proficient in the language. Nevertheless, this does not find expression in the prayers, as we find practically no Greek expressions or words in Jewish prayers.⁴⁵ The prayers are essentially part of the oral law in that they were transmitted orally and were not committed to writing until the oral law itself was committed to writing. The first evidence of a written prayer book appears in tractate *Soferim*, which was written in the seventh or eighth century. We also have clear proofs that the sages opposed the publication of the prayers in written form, as reflected in the following tosefta:

If they were written in paint, red ink, gum ink, or calcanthum, they save them and store them away. As to the scrolls containing blessings, even though they include the divine name and many citations from the Torah, they do not save them, but they are allowed to burn where they are. On this basis, they have stated that those who write blessings are as if they burn the Torah. A certain person would write blessings and they told R. Yishmael about him. R. Yishmael went to examine him. When he climbed the ladder, he [the writer] sensed that he was coming. He took the sheaf of blessings and put it in a dish of water. And in accord with the following statement did R. Yishmael address him: "The punishment for the latter deed is harsher than for the former." (*t. Šabb.* 13:4)

The rabbis insisted on the use of pure Hebrew in the prayers, and that

they not be committed to writing and certainly not translated. These facts lead to the unequivocal conclusion that these prayers could not penetrate into the synagogues in the Greek-speaking Diaspora. This means that the dramatic development of the liturgy that took place in the first generations following the destruction of the temple and that became a significant component in the definition of Jewish identity from both a religious and a social perspective was essentially inaccessible to the Jews of the western Diaspora. Apparently, the western Diaspora remained with noninstitutional prayer, and without a clear liturgical structure. The gap between the Diasporas, caused by the deep language barrier, left the western Diaspora beyond the reach of the new prayer structure developed by the rabbis.

Peripherally, it is worth pointing out that we find no reference to the *Amidah* prayer in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature.⁴⁶ The lack of an accepted version of the *Amidah* in the Greek-speaking Diaspora is ironically also supported by the Christian *Apostolic Constitutions* from the fourth century (*Apos. Con.* 7.33-38). It includes a hint that the author was aware of the *Amidah* prayer that was recited on the Sabbath. This work is written in Greek, and scholars have therefore theorized that the *Amidah* was recited in synagogues in Hellenistic communities. Other more recent studies, however, have clarified that the source of these chapters of the *Apostolic Constitutions* emanates from the Syrian church, and that it was originally written in Syriac and translated later into Greek. It is known that the Syrian church had close contacts with Jews in the land of Israel and Syria. We can therefore assume that the prayer that was known to the author was not practiced in Greek-speaking communities, but from Hebrew renditions in communities in the land of Israel. That the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions* mentions only the *Amidah* of the Sabbath relates to the reality that he is writing for a Christian population that meets for prayer only on the Sabbath.⁴⁷

The same is true regarding the holiday of Passover. The silence of the Greek sources regarding the content of the holiday and its new formulation, and the fact that these communities did not speak Hebrew, suggest that they remained with the law as described in the Greek corpus that was known to them — the Septuagint. Since we have no evidence of a change in the manner that Passover was celebrated in the western Diaspora, it is logical to assume that it was celebrated after the destruction in the same way that it was celebrated before — according to the Bible and the Septuagint. It apparently involved a meal in which *matzah* was eaten, and, as indicated by Philo, songs of praise were sung, as was the practice in Jerusalem. If the story of the exodus was recounted, it was told in Greek according to the narrative in the biblical account in the book of Exodus. Philo, in his description of the Passover

celebration, utilizes the term *symposium*, which refers in the apocryphal literature to a meal with wine.

Indeed, we can assume that the haggadah was initially preserved only as an oral tradition, as was the Mishnah. This assumption has contradictory implications. On the one hand, it would indicate that the text of the haggadah, even in contrast to the Mishnah, was less organized and set, as a closed text might be. The tenth chapter of *Pesahim* presents general instructions for conducting the Passover night celebration, without a closed text that includes specific blessing or prayers. Thus the essence of the haggadah as we know it is made up of midrashim on the biblical verses relating to the firstfruits ceremony (Deut 26:5-8). The Mishnah merely indicates that one should “study and interpret (*dôrēš*) from ‘My father was a wandering Aramean,’” and in its initial stages probably allowed for a more free discussion. If so, even a Greek-speaking Jew could perform this ceremony. Furthermore, the midrashim in the final text of the haggadah are composed largely of verses from the book of Exodus that recount the story of the exodus from Egypt.

On the other hand, that the material was transmitted orally could cause greater difficulty for a non-Hebrew-speaking community. Oral transmission forces complete reliance on individuals who know the language, who can remember and transmit the material to others. Even if we assume that there were in the west intelligent scholars who knew Hebrew, the holiday of Passover is not celebrated in the synagogue in a communal forum, as is prayer or the reading of the Torah, but it is rather celebrated in the home, in a family-based forum. It is certain that there was not a Hebrew speaker in each family in the western communities. We must assume, therefore, that the haggadah and the commandment of retelling the story of the exodus were not central components of the Passover celebration in the western Diaspora.

The uniqueness of the text of the haggadah goes well beyond the ritual compensation that it effected — prayer in place of the sacrifice that could no longer be offered. It also compensated for the center that was lost. Prior to its destruction, the temple served as the center for the entire nation. Even those who were not able to physically go to temple fixed their gaze toward Jerusalem where the national events took place. This was the place that defined and directed the community. The liturgy created by the sages sought not only to substitute new rituals, but also to create a new way of defining the community. A person in any location who sat on that day and read that text defined himself as a member of the community. This new method of defining community, and connection to the community, was particularly well

suiting for dispersed communities. Even though there was a Diaspora during the time of the temple, the big change after its destruction was the disappearance of the center. The text was the substitute for the center that had defined the community. It is therefore clear that one who could not read the text could not be part of a community of readers for whom the text was the means of connecting to the community.

The “Beauty of Japheth” or the “Golden Calf”?

We will now attempt to address the question that emerges from what we have said: Why did the rabbis not make an effort to translate their teachings and disseminate them among the Jews of the western Diaspora?

We believe that the following discussion will shed light on the story that we have portrayed, giving historical and theological meaning to the schism in the Jewish world in the first century CE and onward, as well as on the manner in which relations developed between Jews and the Christians in this period.

The midrash *Tanḥuma* records the following ban of Rabbi Yehudah Bar Shalom, a fourth-century sage from the land of Israel, on committing the oral law to writing so that it not be accessible for translation:

Rabbi Yehuda Bar Shalom said: When the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Moses, “Write for you,” Moses asked that the Mishnah be [given] in writing. However, *because God foresaw that the nations of the world would eventually translate the Torah and read it in Greek, saying that they are Israel*, the claims on both sides thus far being equal [lit. “the scales are balanced”], the Holy One, blessed be he, said to the Gentiles: “You say that you are my children? All I know is that those by whom my mysteries reside are my children.” What is that? It is the Mishnah that was given orally.⁴⁸

When we talk about the written Torah, then “the scales are balanced” — there is apparently an equality between the Jews and the nations of the world. In contrast, the oral law is unique to Israel; it is a mystery, a secret between God and Israel. Keeping the secret means preventing its translation to Greek, and the means of preventing the translation is by maintaining it as an oral tradition.

It seems that this midrash is a response to the claim of the church that it is the legitimate heir of Israel. The reality is that the Holy Scriptures, the

Book of Books, is no longer the sole property of the Jews. The Christian world has adopted it. The Mishnah, according to the argument of the midrash, is what distinguishes and separates the Jews from the Christians; it expresses the essence of their being “Israel” by virtue of the secret that God granted to them. It is therefore necessary to make every effort to keep this Torah exclusively in the hands of the Jews so that what happened to the written Torah will not happen to it: that it be adopted by the Gentiles, who will then claim that they are “Israel.”

While the Christians attempted to bolster their holy scriptures by attaching them to older holy scriptures, so they would appear and be distributed together, the Jews tried, in contrast, to bolster their canon by deeming it a “mystery” — a secret that was transmitted to them as a keepsake by God.

The Jerusalem Talmud records the following:

R. Zeira said in the name of R. Elazar: “Though I write for him a majority of My Law, [they are accounted as a stranger’s” (Hosea 8:12). But was a majority of the Torah written? Rather, there are more things that are learned from that which is written than from that which is oral. Is it so? But this must be what is said: The things that are learned orally are more beloved than the many things that are learned in writing. . . . What was the difference between them and the other nations — these issue their books and those issue their books, these distribute their notebooks and those distribute their notebooks? And we only know which are more beloved from what is written: “. . . for based on these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel” (Exodus 34:27), that is to say — the things that were transmitted orally are more beloved. R. Yohanan and R. Yudan Ben Shimon: One said — if you preserve what is transmitted orally and you preserve what is written, then I will make a covenant, and if not I will not make a covenant; the other said — if you preserve what is transmitted orally and you fulfill what is written, you will receive a reward, and if not you will not receive a reward. (*y. Pe’ah* 2:6, 17a)⁴⁹

Various commentators took pains to emphasize the importance and the preferred status of the oral law over the written law, and the fact that it is the oral law that distinguishes Israel from the other nations. In light of the controversy with Christianity, which manifested itself in the domain of the Holy Scriptures, the distinction is clearly expressed: “These publish their books, and these publish their books.”⁵⁰ The midrash *Tanḥuma* that was cited above goes a significant step further. According to the midrash, it is important to refrain from translating the oral law into Greek so that it also not “seep out”

to the other nations. It is the translation into Greek that is likely to lead to its broader exposure, and to breach the uniqueness of the Jews. In other words, the rabbinic teachings were preserved orally precisely in order that they not be translated.

With regard to the written law, talmudic sources indicate that the sages took a positive stance with regard to its translation. The Mishnah states:

There is no difference between the Books [of Scripture] and tefillin and mezuzot, except that the Books may be written in any language, and tefillin and mezuzot are written only in *Ashurit* [Hebrew written in the Assyrian or square script]. Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel says: Even regarding the Books, they permitted that they may be written only in Greek. (*m. Meg.* 1:8)

The Babylonian Talmud explains that they permitted translation into Greek “because of the event that occurred with King Ptolemy” (i.e. the translation of the LXX) (*b. Meg.* 9b). In other words, the Septuagint translation was perceived as a successful, and even miraculous, event. Indeed, that section of the Talmud continues:

And R. Yohanan said: What is the reasoning of Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel? The verse says: “May God beautify Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem” [Gen 9:27] . . . the beauty of Japheth will be in the tents of Shem. (*b. Meg.* 9b)

So, too, it is recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud as follows:

Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel says: Even regarding the Books, they permitted that they may be written only in Greek. They checked and found that the Torah can only be translated completely into Greek. . . . R. Yirmiyah said in the name of Hiya Bar Ba: Akilas the Proselyte translated the Torah in front of R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua and they praised him and said: “You are fairer than the children of men (Ps 45:3).” (*y. Meg.* 1:8, 71a-b)⁵¹

The reason for this concern about translation is based on the inevitable lack of precision that it entails. It is impossible to translate something with exactitude and accuracy. Apparently, however, this concern does not exist in Greek because it “can only be translated completely into Greek.” This is because of the beauty and splendor of Greek — “the beauty of Japheth.” The special relationship of the sages to the Greek language emerges here with

clarity. Although they preferred the translation of Onqelos, the Septuagint was also viewed as worthwhile in their eyes. “The event that occurred with King Ptolemy” was described in the previously cited passage from the Babylonian Talmud as a miracle, and so too, of course, in ancient Jewish Greek sources, such as the *Letter of Aristeas* and Philo, where the translation of the Septuagint is described as a miracle and an important and positive event; Philo recounts that a holiday was established to commemorate the event (*Mos.* 2.25-43).

Nevertheless, some sources present a completely different picture. In *Massekhet Soferim*, a post-talmudic composition from approximately the eighth century, the event of Ptolemy (the translation of the LXX) is described as follows: “That very day was a difficult day for Israel, like the day on which the golden calf had been made, for the Torah had not been able to be translated fully” (1:7). We find similar sentiments expressed in a post-talmudic list of fast days known to us from a number of sources. One of the best-known sources is entitled *Megillat Taanit Batra*, which is integrated in the *Halakot Gedolot* of R. Shimon Kaara from ninth-century Babylonia. This list includes fasts instituted to commemorate a variety of events from the biblical period until just after the destruction of the temple. From this source, the list was copied in a variety of halakic works. We find the following entry in this list: “These are the days on which we fast based on the Torah: . . . On the 8th of Tevet, the Torah was rendered into Greek during the days of King Ptolemy, and darkness descended upon the world for three days.”⁵²

These sources do not delineate why the translation of the Torah into Greek was a tragedy worthy of mourning; it seems the writers consider it self-evident. Shlomit Elitzur, who has recently studied these lists in depth, claims that in light of the adoption of the Septuagint by the Christians, the translation of the Torah into Greek came to be perceived as an inappropriate act that could cause damage to the Jews.⁵³ Elitzur even points out an ancient formulation that reads as follows: “It was only necessary to translate the Torah for the sake of Israel.” This statement is surprisingly similar to the words of the midrash *Tanḥuma* discussed above, that relate to the oral law.⁵⁴

What emerges from this discussion is that the sages understood that by virtue of the translation to Greek, it was lost as their own possession and became universal. The celebration of the restoration of the Torah to the Jews who did not know Hebrew became a century later a cause of mourning for the fact that the Torah ceased to be an exclusive possession of the Jewish people, and allowed the Christians to claim, “We are Israel.” This explains the fierce opposition of the rabbis to translation of the oral law.

With the written Torah having become a universal possession, at least the Jews remained with the preservation of the oral law as a secret — their inheritance. The price that was paid for giving the Jews of Greece access to the Torah was too great to bear, and could not be born a second time. The midrash *Tanḥuma* reaches even more far-reaching conclusions: the Torah was preserved orally in order to prevent its translation.

Epilogue

The above discussion leads us to conclude that within the Judaism of the time two different corpora emerged: the oral rabbinic corpus and the written one that included the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha. These different corpora actually express the development of distinct normative systems — western Judaism based on the written Torah, and eastern Judaism based on the oral law. The Jews of the western Diaspora did not adopt the new rabbinic tradition. Rather, they read the Bible (in Greek and Latin) and fulfilled its laws in the manner that they understood, and according to the traditions that they received. It is clear from both Jewish and non-Jewish sources that they therefore observed the Jewish dietary laws,⁵⁵ an area of Jewish law that is relatively clear in the biblical source.⁵⁶

We believe that the vacuum that ensued in the western Diaspora because of its estrangement from the rabbinic centers was exploited by Paul and the first apostles, and subsequently by the church fathers, in order to disseminate their teachings within the western Jewish communities (alongside the pagan population). It remains a fact that Paul did not turn to the east, and he clearly saw the possibility of his teachings being accepted primarily in the Greek-speaking western Jewish Diaspora. The Jews from these communities, as well as God-fearing people who joined with them, could easily have perceived Paul, who was a student of Gamaliel I, as a rabbi who had come to teach them the oral law (which he did to a certain extent).⁵⁷ The big advantage of Paul, and some of the early apostles, was that they taught and wrote in Greek.

Paul's ability to penetrate into the public Jewish sphere in the synagogues was facilitated by the spiritual estrangement that existed between the western Jewish Diaspora and the centers in the land of Israel and Babylonia, as well as the lack of communication with those centers that functioned in a language that they did not understand. The lack of a structured system of communications in the western Jewish Diaspora that could interface with the communication system of eastern Judaism allowed Paul and early Chris-

tianity to fill the vacuum through the creation of their own organized and structured system of communication. The community that connected itself to that new network was to a large extent made up of Jews who were estranged from their brothers in the east.⁵⁸ Some therefore became Christians and Judeo-Christians, while others remained “biblical Jews” well into the eighth and ninth centuries. Christianity exploited the lack of Jewish leadership in order to disseminate its own religious merchandise. Another lesson learned from the condition of western Judaism brought to a relatively quick shift by the early Christians from orality to the writing down of their lore and teaching. Paul and the other apostles started this process, which was followed by the authors of the Gospels. The spiritual founders of early Christianity understood early on that the dissemination of ideas is not only threatened by a language barrier, but also by keeping the ideas in oral form. Against this background we can perhaps explain the short time span of the oral phase in early Christianity — first and foremost between Paul’s preaching and the publication of his letters, and, second, between the teachings and deeds of Jesus and the act of putting them in writing after 70 CE. The latter issue deserves further exploration, as it has a significant impact on the methodological approaches to New Testament research.

This article is a revised version of two articles that we recently published: Arye Edrei and Doron Mendels, "A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences," *JSP* 16.2 (2007): 91-137; idem, "A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences II," *JSP* 17.3 (2008): 163-87. For a comprehensive discussion, see now Doron Mendels and Arye Edrei, *Zweierlei Diaspora: Zur Spaltung der antiken jüdischen Welt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

1. See Robert Cover, "Nomos and Narrative," in *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover* (ed. M. Monow et al.; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 95-172.

2. R. Abba the Carthaginian (apparently from Carthage in North Africa), a third-generation Palestinian Amora, is mentioned approximately ten times in the Jerusalem Talmud. Similarly, in three or four places we find reference to another third-generation Palestinian Amora named R. Shmuel of Cappadocia. We also find several references to R. Yudan the Cappadocian who studied under R. Yossi. In addition, a number of such scholars were mentioned once in the Jerusalem Talmud. In the Jewish Diaspora of Egypt, because of its proximity to the land of Israel, we can detect some occasional rabbinic influence. However, no knowledge and adherence to the rabbinic lore as a whole can be traced there (for a more detailed discussion of Egypt and other loci in the Jewish western Diaspora see Mendels and Edrei, *Zweierlei Diaspora*, passim).

3. This law is connected to the opposition of some of the rabbis to the custom of eating a roasted lamb on Passover night, because it might appear as if it is a sacrifice, even though it is done outside the confines of the temple. Saul Lieberman, in his interpretation of the *Tosefta* (*Tosefta Ki-Feshutah* [New York: Louis Rabinowitz Research Institute in Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955-1988]), claims that those who roasted a lamb in the land of Israel on Passover eve did not call it a paschal lamb because they made a distinction between a sacrifice and plain meat, while in Rome they did not make that distinction and referred to the roasted lamb as the paschal lamb. In other words, the rabbis vigorously opposed the practice because they viewed it as the paschal lamb. More than teaching us about a particular scholar in Rome, this example demonstrates how estranged the Roman community was from rabbinic opinion. See also B. Bokser, "Todos and Rabbinic Authority in Rome," in *Religion, Literature, and Society in Ancient Israel, Formative Christianity, and Judaism: Formative Judaism* (ed. J. Neusner et al.; 1987; repr., *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* 1; BJS 206; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 117-30.

4. The Babylonian Talmud wonders who this man was: "They asked him, 'Was Todos the Roman a great man or a sycophant?'" (*b. Pesah* 53b). The Jerusalem Talmud also raises the question: "What is Todos?" meaning, "Who is Todos?" (*y. Pesah* 7:1). In both editions of the Talmud, the response is that he supported scholars: "Who is Todos? R. Hananya said, 'He sent support to the scholars'" (*y. Pesah* 7:1; AHL ed. [Jerusalem, 2001], col. 536). And in the Babylonian Talmud: "R. Yosi Bar Avin said, 'He filled up the pockets of the scholars'" (*b. Pesah* 53b). The contention that he supported scholars is not cited in either Talmud as a historical assertion, but rather as an explanation of his name. Nevertheless, that each Talmud asks about his name indirectly implies that they did not know much about him or his activities.

5. *Sifre Dev.* 344 (Louis Finkelstein ed.: *Sifre on Deuteronomy* [New York: Ktav, 1969], pp. 400-401). See C. Hezser, *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin* (TSAJ 37; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), pp. 15-24.

6. See also *t. Roš Haš.* 1:17. In this context see also *t. Pe'ah* 4:6: "There are two practices

in the land of Israel that are the exclusive domain of the priests — giving the priestly blessing [lit. “raising of the hands”] and dividing the granary, and in Syria up to the place that the emissaries reach — giving the priestly blessing, but not dividing the granary. And Babylonia is like Syria. R. Shimon Ben Lazar, initially it was so even in Alexandria when there was a court there.” We clearly see again that the notification of the sanctification of the new month went eastward only. Saul Lieberman, in his commentary to the Tosefta (*Tosefta Ki-Feshutah, Rosh Hashanah*, part 5, pp. 1028-30), raises the question as to why only the Jews of Babylonia were informed about the sanctification of the new month, but he leaves it unresolved. Yet he agrees that all of the sources support this reality. See also J. Tabor, *Jewish Festivals in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), pp. 30-33, which includes a map of the bonfires. In another context, the Tosefta tells about a letter that was sent from Jerusalem to the Diaspora dealing, among other things, with the intercalation of the calendar. In this letter, it is also clear that the western Diaspora is not included. Furthermore, that the letter is in Aramaic indicates that it was directed to the east. See *t. Sanh.* 2:6.

7. We find in a number of places in talmudic literature documentation of tensions between the center in the land of Israel and the center in Babylonia regarding the authority of the Babylonian center to deal with the sanctification of the new month and the ordination of sages (e.g., *b. Ber.* 63a). A similar tension with any Jewish center in the west, however, is never mentioned. In fact, in *t. Meg.* 2:5 we find R. Meir going to Asia to intercalate the calendar. Scholars have already noted, however, that “Asia” in this context is not referring to Asia Minor, but to Ezion-geber, which is located just south of the land of Israel. This identification is based on Eusebius. See G. Alon, *History of the Jews in the Land of Israel during the Period of the Mishnah and Talmud* [Hebrew] (2 vols.; Tel Aviv: Ha-Qibuš ha-Me’uḥad, 1952-1955), 1:145, 152-53. A. Wasserstein has shown that in Sicily the Jews did not adhere to the calendar of the sages in “Calendaric Implications of a Fourth-Century Jewish Inscription from Sicily,” *SCI* 11 (1991-1992): 162-65.

8. Shmuel Safrai derived historical lessons from the Mishnah. See S. Safrai, *Be-Shilhei Ha-Bayit Ha-Sheni Ube-Tekufat Ha-Mishnah: Perakim Be-Toldot Ha-Hevra Veha-Tarbut* (Jerusalem: Misrad Ha-Chinuch, 1983), p. 44; idem, *Bi-Ymei Ha-Bayit Ubi-Ymei Ha-Mishnah*, vol. 2: *Mehkarim Be-Toldot Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994), p. 632. Sanders disagrees with him, demonstrating in detail that this thesis has no basis. Sanders agrees that perhaps in the Sabbatical Year Jews sent more donations to the land of Israel in order to support the farmers that could not work the land. However, it is logical to assume that this Mishnah presents only a romantic description of the nature of the relationship with the Diaspora. See E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1990), p. 301.

9. See *m. 'Erub.* 4:1; *t. Sukkah* 2:11; *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 4:7; etc. See S. Safrai, “Bikureihem Shel Hakhmei Yavneh Be-Roma,” in *Bi-Ymei Ha-Bayit*, 2:365; see also Hugo Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), and the sources that he cites. In his article, Safrai deals with the travels of the sages of Yavneh to Rome, but it is clear that in later generations the sages also traveled to Rome for political purposes; see, e.g., *b. Me'il.* 17b. It should be noted that in some of the sources that mention Rome, the reference is to the village of Rome (or Ruma) in Galilee, which is mentioned by Josephus (*J.W.* 3:233).

10. It appears in a parallel source as follows: “The philosophers asked the elders (*zēqēnīm*) in Rome” (*t. 'Abod. Zar.* 6:7; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 54b).

11. Tal Ilan suggested that it is referring to elders in Rome, i.e., Jewish scholars who lived and worked in Rome; see “Die Juden im antiken Rom und ihr kulturelles Erbe,” in *“Wie*

schön sind deine Zelte, Jakob, deine Wohnungen, Israel!" (Num 24,5): Beiträge zur Geschichte jüdisch-europäischer Kultur (ed. R. Kampling; Apeliotes 5; Frankfurt: Lang, 2009), pp. 47-78. In our opinion, however, this suggestion does not stand up against critical analysis. In at least three places in the Mishnah and Tosefta, the expression "elders" is used to refer to the sages who traveled with Rabban Gamliel to Rome in a ship: "An incident in which Rabban Gamliel and the elders came in a ship" (*m. Ma'as. Š. 5:9*); "An incident in which Rabban Gamliel and the elders arrived on a ship, and a non-Jew put down a ramp, and Rabban Gamliel and the elders descended" (*m. Šabb. 16:8*); "An incident in which Rabban Gamliel and the elders were traveling on a ship and the day became sanctified upon them [i.e., the time for Sabbath arrived]. They said to Rabban Gamliel . . ." (*t. Šabb. 13:14*). There is a parallel mishnah to this tosefta in which Rabban Gamliel's travel companions are mentioned by name: R. Eleazar Ben Azariah, R. Yehoshua, and R. Aqiba, all of whom were among the most prominent scholars from the land of Israel. We also find a similar source in the *Midrash*: "An incident in which Rabban Gamliel and the elders were traveling on a ship and did not have a *lulav*" (*Sifra Emor 12*). On the other hand, we do not find the expression "the elders in Rome" or any other expression referring to local scholars in Rome in any other rabbinic source. It is thus clear to us that the question mentioned in the Mishnah that was addressed to the sages during their visit to Rome, to the degree that it is historically accurate, deals with an issue that was addressed to Jewish scholars during their visit in Rome. It is also important to note that the expression "elders" is used frequently in rabbinic literature to refer to the elders of the land of Israel, or of the temple. See, e.g., *m. Yoma 1:3; Sukkah 2:1; 4:4; Ta'an. 3:6*.

12. See *t. Giṭ. 1:4*.

13. See *t. Ter. 2:13*.

14. See *y. Yebam. 8:4, 8d* (AHL ed., col. 865).

15. See *t. B. Qam. 10:17*.

16. See *b. Ketub. 112a*.

17. See *t. Hul. 3:10; Parah 7:4; Miqw. 4:6*.

18. Alon, *Toldot Ha-Yehudim*.

19. D. Goodblatt, "Mēdinat Hayyām: The Coastal District" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 64 (1994): 13-37.

20. See, e.g., *t. Šabb. 15:8; b. Yebam. 98a*.

21. See, e.g., *b. Roš Haš. 26a*. This description of Rabbi Aqiba's travels is certainly haggadic in nature, yet the numerous references to places that he visited may very well testify to a tradition relating to the travels of Rabbi Aqiba with some historical basis.

22. Proof of this detachment can be derived ironically from an area that apparently demonstrates the connection: fundraising. Prior to the destruction of the temple, there were ongoing pilgrimages to the temple and the sending of financial support that maintained the connection between Diaspora Jews and the national and religious center in the land of Israel. Even after the destruction, Jews continued to send donations to the communal leadership (*nēš'ūt*) in Israel. Yet there are convincing proofs that with time and the weakening of the connection to the western Diaspora, these payments came to be viewed as antiquated and undesirable means of maintaining the connection. Two Roman laws from the years 363 and 399 CE deal with the cancellation of the tax that was collected on behalf of the *Nasi* in the land of Israel. It appears from the language of the law of 399 that the "emissaries" who collected the tax were merely messengers whose job was the transferal of silver and gold without any additional religious functions or goals. The very fact that the Romans believed that it was possible to break the bonds between the Greek- and Latin-speaking Diaspora and

the *Nasi* in Israel indicates that they perhaps viewed the connection as purely bureaucratic. These two laws were apparently passed to serve the needs of the Jews who viewed the tax as an unnecessary yoke. The tax was demanded by the administration of the *Nasi* and was collected by means of Roman law. At a certain stage, however, the law was annulled and the *Nasi* could no longer collect the tax. In the law from 363 CE Julian stated explicitly as follows: “That which is termed by you the tax of the emissaries is nullified. In the future, no one will be able to harm you by imposing these taxes. You are thus freed from worry.” Amnon Linder claims that the Jews were happy with this change in the law, which was designed to satisfy their interests. This supports the argument that the connection between the western Diaspora and the land of Israel became progressively weaker. If the administration of the *Nasi* was an institution with spiritual and halakic significance and influence on the Jews of the western Diaspora, they would have undoubtedly been strongly interested in the continuation of the tax. It thus seems that by the third or fourth century, this tax was a remnant of the past, and that it was no longer clear to the Jews of the western Diaspora why they should contribute these funds. The emperor intervened because he understood the reality. He was not working against the Jews, but was rather working on their behalf. See A. Linder, ed., *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), laws 13 and 30.

23. Sanders, *Jewish Law*, chs. 1 and 3.

24. On the centrality of the temple to the connection with the Diaspora and the national consciousness of Diaspora Jews prior to the destruction, see U. Rappaport, “The Jews of the Land of Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora During the Hellenistic and Hasmonean Periods” [Hebrew], *Te’uda* 12 (1996): 1-9; A. Kasher, “Jerusalem as a ‘Metropolis’ in Philo’s National Consciousness” [Hebrew], *Cathedra* 11 (1980): 46-56.

25. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave with M. E. Dahl; London: SCM, 1969); S. Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the Time of the Second Temple* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am ha-Sefer, 1965).

26. It was eaten in the entire city, as were *qodāšim qālim* (less stringent offerings). See *m. Zabim* 5:8. Also *ʿAbot R. Nat.*, Version A, ch. 35. This is also implied in Philo, *Spec.* 2.148. *Jubilees* 49:16-20 and *Megillat Ha-Mikdash* require that it be eaten in the temple courtyard, as are more stringent sacrifices.

27. See *m. Pesah* 10:6-7; *t. Sukkah* 3:2; *Pesah* 3:11. The recitation of the *Hallel* was part of the sacrificial offering, and it is therefore an interesting question whether it was recited as part of the festive meal that was held in the Diaspora or in places in the land of Israel that were distant from Jerusalem.

28. Louis Finkelstein suggested that the *Haggadah* is a more ancient text and that it existed already during the time of the Maccabees, but all of his proofs have been negated by other scholars. See E. D. Goldschmidt, *The Passover Haggadah: Its Sources and History* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1960), p. 30.

29. S. Safrai and Z. Safrai, *Haggadah of the Sages* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carta, 1998).

30. According to a number of manuscripts and a number of interpretations from the Middle Ages, *m. Pesah* 10, which serves as the foundation of the *Haggadah* and contains its basic structure, was originally connected to the first four chapters of the tractate as a separate tractate called *Pesah Rishon*. Chapters 5-9, which deal with the offering of the Passover sacrifice, constituted a separate tractate entitled *Massekhet Pesah Sheni*. In other words, the tenth chapter — which includes the *Haggadah* and the rituals surrounding its recitation — was not included in the description of the celebration of Passover in the time of the temple.

See H. Albeck, *Perush ha-Mishnah, Seder Moed*, p. 140 n. 9; Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Feshutah, Pesahim*, p. 647; Safrai and Safrai, *Haggadah*, p. 19.

31. J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Period of the Tanna'im and the Amora'im: Its Nature and its Patterns* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1966), p. 18; E. Fleischer, "On the Beginnings of Obligatory Jewish Prayer" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 59 (1989-1990): 397-441, here 402.

32. Fleischer, "On the Beginnings," pp. 404-11; Lee I. Levine, *The Synagogue in the Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: ASOR, 1987).

33. There are scholars who claim that the process of formulating set prayer was unrelated to the temple service, but they admit that we have no sources from the temple period that prove that there was prayer outside the temple. See Heinemann, *Prayer*, p. 22.

34. See *b. Meg.* 18a; *Ber.* 33a; *y. Meg.* 3:7, 74c (AHL ed., col. 767). All of these sources suggest that the prayers were established by the prophets and the men of the Great Assembly. In other words, they preceded the period of the sages, and were thus not established by them.

35. See M. Kiley et al., eds., *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1997).

36. For the meaning of the word *qeba'* as a form of the word *qebua'* (set), see L. Ginzberg, *Perushim ve-Hiddushim be-Yerushalmi* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 3:333-37. See also J. Heinemann, *Studies in Jewish Liturgy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983); A. Aderet, *From Destruction to Restoration: The Mode of Yavneh in Reestablishment of the Jewish People* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), p. 95. On the conservatism of Eliezer Ben Hyrkanos, see I. D. Gilath, R. *Eliezer Ben Hyrkanus: A Scholar Outcast* (BISNELC; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984).

37. The Babylonian Talmud brings three opinions as to the meaning of the concept "set prayer" in R. Eliezer's statement: "That his prayer is like a weight upon him"; "any prayer in which the person does not make supplication"; and, "any prayer in which the person cannot innovate." The first two opinions clearly relate to a prayer that has a set wording that the person praying just recites, which prayer is therefore like a weight upon him or which does not represent true supplication. The third opinion also relates to prayer that is already set, and that he therefore cannot introduce innovations because everything is already set.

38. There is a controversy among scholars as to the precise meaning of this *baraita*. Heinemann contends that we are talking about the final editing and formulation, based on the sources available to him (*Prayer*, p. 22). This is difficult to accept in our opinion, as he himself admits that we do not have any proofs regarding organized prayer during the time of temple. It is apparent from the simple meaning of the words that they established and edited the *Shemoneh Esreh* (Eighteen Benedictions). See Fleischer, "On the Beginnings," pp. 425-33. See also Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 60.

39. That the sages of Yavneh dealt intensively with the formulation of a set prayer service is evident from a number of sources. For example, the Mishnah states the following regarding the recitation of the *Shema* prayer: "In the morning one recites two [blessings] before it and one blessing after it. And in the evening two blessings before it and two blessings after it, one long and one short [blessing]: Where sages have said to say a long one, one is not permitted to say a short one. [Where they said] to say a short one, one is not permitted to say a long one. [Where they said] to conclude [with an appropriate blessing] one is not permitted not to conclude with one. [Where they said] not to conclude with a blessing, one is not permitted to do so. They mention the exodus from Egypt at night. Said R. Eleazar Ben Azariah, 'I am about seventy years old and I have not been worthy [of understanding why]

the exodus from Egypt is recounted at night, until Ben Zoma expounded it.' As it says, 'So that you may remember the day on which you left Egypt all the days of your life' (Deut 16:3). "The days of your life' [implies only] the days. 'All the days of your life' [includes] the nights." And sages say, "'The days of your life' [includes only] this world. 'All the days of your life' — encompasses the messianic age" (*m. Ber.* 1:4-5). This means that the evening prayer was still not fixed in the generation of Yavneh. Similarly, in *b. Ber.* 28a we learn about the argument as to whether the evening prayer is obligatory or optional: The protagonists in this argument are scholars from the generation of Yavneh, but their argument rests on the correlation between the prayer and the temple service. The one who contends that the evening service is not obligatory bases his position on the fact that it has no parallel in the temple service. In a mishnah that deals with the prayer service on Rosh Hashanah, we find the following controversy regarding the order of the prayers: "Regarding the order of the blessings: one recites the 'Patriarchs,' 'Powers,' and the 'Holiness of the Name,' and includes 'Malkuyot' (Coronation), but he does not blow [the ram's horn]; the 'Sanctity of the Day,' and he blows [the ram's horn]; 'Zikronot' (Memories), and he blows [the ram's horn]; 'Shofarot' (Blasts), and he blows [the ram's horn]; and he recites 'Service,' and 'Thanksgiving,' and the 'Priestly Blessing'; so says Rabbi Yohanan Ben Nuri. Rabbi Aqiba said to him, If he does not blow for 'Malkuyot,' why does he mention it? Rather he recites 'Patriarchs,' 'Powers,' and the 'Holiness of the Name,' and includes 'Malkuyot' in the 'Sanctity of the Day,' and he blows [the ram's horn]; 'Zikronot,' and he blows [the ram's horn]; 'Shofarot,' and he blows [the ram's horn]; and he recites 'Service,' 'Thanksgiving,' and the 'Priestly Blessing'" (*m. Roš Haš.* 4:5). From these texts it becomes clear that the sages of Yavneh were still in a process of formulating the fixed prayer, its content, style, and structure. In other words, it was still not set, and they were the ones who crystallized it.

40. Emanuel Tov argues that there is ample literary evidence for the notion that Scripture was read in Greek in religious gatherings of the Greek-speaking communities in the Diaspora from the first century onward. See E. Tov, "The Text of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek Bible Used in the Ancient Synagogue," in *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 C.E.: Papers Presented at an International Conference at Lund University, October 14-17, 2001* (ed. B. Olsson and M. Zetterholm; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), pp. 237-59. On the other hand, some argue that the Greek translation of the Torah and the Psalms were read along with the Hebrew original. In our opinion, there is no solid evidence on this issue. For those who hold that the Greek Jews also read the Hebrew, see A. I. Baumgarten, "Bilingual Jews and the Greek Bible," in *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism* (ed. J. Kugel; JSJSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 13-30, esp. pp. 13-20. That we do not have any Hebrew ms. of the OT from the western Diaspora before the ninth century CE perhaps supports our view. See also N. de Lange, "The Hebrew Language in the European Diaspora" [Hebrew], *Te'uda* 12 (1996): 111-37.

41. Thus, e.g., Lea Roth-Gerson very convincingly demonstrated that the Greek concept *sōtēria* (salvation) is found notably in the inscriptions of the Greek Diaspora and at times in the Greek inscriptions in the land of Israel, but never in Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions. Similarly, the Greek inscriptions tend to emphasize the Hellenistic focus on the individual donor, while the Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions reflect the rabbinic worldview that places the community at the center. See L. Roth-Gerson, "Similarities and Differences in Greek Synagogue Inscriptions of the Land of Israel and the Diaspora," in *Synagogues in Antiquity* [Hebrew] (ed. A. Kasher, A. Oppenheimer, and U. Rappaport; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1987), pp. 133-46.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

43. It is important to also mention in this context the Jewish gravestones that were found in southern Europe, attesting to the existence of Jewish communities in that region; see D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, vol. 1: *Italy (Excluding the City of Rome), Spain and Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). From a study of the monuments that Noy collected, it becomes clear that a vast majority of the inscriptions are in Greek or Latin, a fact demonstrating that these were the primary, if not exclusive, languages used in these communities for interpersonal communication as well as communal expression relating to the religious and intellectual life of these Jews. Indeed, on a significant percentage of the gravestones, there is also some Hebrew writing. The Hebrew inscriptions indicate that even though Hebrew was not the language of these Jews, they viewed it as an important symbol of their identity. They also indicate that these Jews wished to preserve their separate Jewish identity. However, when one examines the inscriptions themselves, it becomes clear that the people's knowledge of Hebrew as a living language was quite weak. Furthermore, the content of the inscriptions is not connected to the innovations of the rabbis. In addition, it should be noted that a large percentage of the Hebrew inscriptions consist of isolated words that are found repetitively on many monuments, such as *shalom* ("peace"), or phrases such as *shalom 'al yisra'el* ("peace on Israel") or *shalom 'al menuhato* ("rest in peace"). These words and phrases are repeated frequently and were apparently copied in a mechanical fashion. It is therefore correct, in our opinion, to view these inscriptions as accepted cultural symbols, and not as a proof of the use of Hebrew as a vernacular, and certainly not as an indication of familiarity with Rabbinic Hebrew. A number of inscriptions on later monuments demonstrate a somewhat more sophisticated Hebrew (pp. 151, 157, 169, 207). It is possible that with the passage of time, the knowledge of Hebrew increased to a certain degree and very slowly in subsequent years as it made its way from the east to southern Europe, and not the opposite as might have been expected. A deeper knowledge of Hebrew, beyond a number of isolated words, developed much later when rabbinic literature arrived in this region.

In addition to gravestones, other archaeological finds of interest include the remains of synagogues in Byzantine Europe, in which we find Jewish symbols such as the menorah (candelabrum), the shofar (ram's horn), and the lulab (palm branch) — clearly Jewish symbols that originated in biblical ritual and served as iconographic symbols as early as the Second Temple period. See L. I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 232-37. E. R. Goodenough claimed that the art from the period and location under discussion reflects a Judaism that is certainly not rabbinic. In this context, we would like to point out that biblical Jewish symbols were not antithetical to rabbinic practice, as they continued to be accepted and authorized in all generations and across all geographical boundaries (from Dura Europos, to Palestine, to Europe). These symbols represent an agreed upon and accessible common denominator between the Jewish communities of the east and the west. In reality, because of the language gap, the visual arts served as a common and accessible language of communication for all of Judaism. In addition, it is important to note that even in later periods, particularly rabbinic Jewish symbols did not develop. The ancient symbols that we have mentioned, with additional motifs from pagan and Christian art, continued to serve the needs of Jewish iconography well into the Middle Ages. Both a Jew who was committed to rabbinic Judaism and a western Hellenistic Jew could accept the Jewish iconography discussed without any dissonance with the form of Judaism that they adopted. See E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Pe-*

riod, vol. 12: *Summary and Conclusions* (Bollingen Series 37; New York: Pantheon, 1965). Nevertheless, we are not expressing agreement with Goodenough regarding Hellenistic Jewish literature, specifically Philo of Alexandria, as the sources from which art emerged. See also Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, p. 287.

44. Our argument might be better understood when contrasted with the situation in the Middle Ages in which the Mishnah and the Talmud, which had already been committed to writing, served as the basis for both a common learning curriculum and a common normative practice. Scholars throughout the Middle Ages studied and wrote about the Talmud exclusively in Hebrew. In Christian Europe, from the tenth century until the period of the Enlightenment, all rabbinic literature was written exclusively in Hebrew, or in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic. Although in the gaonic period some wrote in Arabic (Arabic in Hebrew script), a writing style that continued in Muslim Spain in the eleventh century, these works, unless immediately translated, were largely lost and (perhaps for this reason) had less influence. In the area of philosophy, a number of important works were written in Arabic until the mid-twelfth century (*Hovot Ha-Levavot* of Rabeinu Bahya ibn Pakuda, *The Kuzari* of R. Yehuda Halevi, and *The Guide for the Perplexed* of Maimonides), but all of them were translated into Hebrew soon after they were written. Works that were not translated into Hebrew became marginal and less important. Maimonides wrote his early halakic works, *The Commentary on the Mishnah* and *The Book of Commandments*, in Arabic, and only made the transition to Hebrew in the writing of the *Mishneh Torah*. In a responsum that he wrote to a scholar in Tyre, Maimonides related to his earlier writing in Arabic as follows: "I regret that I wrote in Arabic since everyone should read it, and I am waiting to translate it into the holy tongue, with God's help," in *Teshuvot ha-Rambam* [Hebrew] (ed. J. Blau; 4 vols.; Jerusalem: R. Mas, 1986), 2:745, no. 447. It was thus this fact that led Maimonides to change his literary approach and to utilize Hebrew in his later writing of the *Mishneh Torah*.

The deciding factor in this matter is not only that the writings were in Hebrew, but also, and perhaps primarily, that the canons were not translated to other languages. Thus the Bible, the Talmud, and the prayer book were used only in their original language throughout the Middle Ages in the entire Jewish Diaspora, including the Christian and Muslim lands. This fact resulted in the phenomenon that although different methods of study and different customs developed in different locales, there was seamless communication and transference from community to community and Diaspora to Diaspora because of the lack of a language gap. Thus the text had a major role in preserving the unity of the community throughout the Middle Ages.

45. In fact, with regard to the Shema prayer, we find that in Caesarea it was recited in Greek: "Rabbi said: 'I say that *kriat shema* should only be recited in the holy language [Hebrew]. What is the reason? For it states: "And these words shall be . . ." R. Levi Bar Hayta went to Caesaria and heard them reciting the *shema* in Greek. He wanted to stop them. R. Yosi heard and was adamant, saying: 'I say that a person who cannot read *ashurit* should not read it, but should say it in any language that he knows.' R. Berachya responded: 'With regard to the Scroll of Esther, if he reads in *ashurit* and in the vernacular, he only fulfils the requirement in *ashurit*.' Rabbi said: 'How do we know that if he knows how to read the Scroll of Esther in *ashurit* and in the vernacular, he only fulfils the requirement in *ashurit*? Rather, if he reads the vernacular, he fulfils the obligation in the vernacular. Similarly, he prays in any language that he knows so that he can request his needs and make the blessing over food. So he knows who he is blessing, we make him swear an oath of testimony or an oath on a deposit in his language' (y. *Soṭah* 7:2, 21b [AHL ed., col. 933]). It should be noted that it is

talking about *kriat shema* that is composed of a number of biblical sections that had certainly been translated into Greek hundreds of years earlier. What interests us in this article are prayers that were formulated by the sages, particularly during the generation after the destruction of the temple.

46. See Randall D. Chesnutt and Judith Newman, "Prayers in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha," in *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine*, ed. Kiley et al., pp. 38-42. They speak rightfully about the "scripturization of prayer" in the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha.

47. See in general David A. Fiensy, "Prayers, Hellenistic Synagogal," *ABD* 5:450-51.

48. Midrash *Tanḥ.* (Warsaw), *Ki Tissa* 34. And *Pesiq. Rab.* (Ish Shalom), ch. 5, reads: "Teach us [our master] what it is: 'Rabbi Yehuda Bar Shalom said: Moses asked that the Mishnah be [given] in writing, and God foresaw that the nations of the world would eventually translate the Torah and read it in Greek, saying they are Israel. The Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'Moses, in the future the nations of the world will claim that they are Israel and they are the sons of God, and Israel will say that they are the sons of God, the claims on both sides thus far being equal.' The Holy One, blessed be he, said to the Gentiles: 'You say that you are my children? All I know is that those by whom my mysteries reside are my children. What is that? It is the Mishnah that was given orally.'" See S. Lieberman, *Yewanit we-Yawnut be-Erets Yiśra'el: Meḥkarim be-orḥot-hayim be-Erets Yiśra'el bi-tekufat ha-Mishnah weha-Talmud* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1962; Hebrew trans. of *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* [2nd ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962]), p. 304; F. Dreyfus, "The Scales Are Even" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 52.1 (1982): 139-42, here 139; M. A. Friedman, "And So Far the Scales Are Balanced" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 54.1 (1984): 147-49, here 147; A. A. Hallevey, "The Scales Are Even" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 52.3 (1983): 514; E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (trans. I. Abrahams; 2nd ed.; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 1:305.

49. AHL ed., col. 89.

50. See Urbach, *Sages*, pp. 286-314, esp. pp. 305-10; A. Rozental, "Torah She-Ba'al Peh Ve-Torah Mi-Sinai," in *Mehkerei Talmud* (ed. M. Bar-Asher and D. Rozental; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993 [Hebrew]), 2:448.

51. AHL ed., col. 749. See Lieberman, *Yewanit we-Yawnut be-Erets Yiśra'el*, pp. 13-15; Alon, *Toldot Ha-Yehudim*, pp. 241-48. The translation of the Torah into Greek was already a fait accompli in the rabbinic period, as it was translated centuries earlier. They therefore viewed it as a given and tried to maintain it as much as possible as the unifying translation, consistent with their approach. A significant example is the translation of Onqelos; see *y. Meg.* 1:9, 71c (AHL ed., col. 749): "Onqelos the Proselyte translated the Torah in front of R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua and they praised him and said: You are fairer than the children of men." See also Y. L. Zunz, *Ha-Drashot Be-Yisrael ve'Hishtalshelutan Ha'historit* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1947), p. 41, who writes that Onqelos was a student of R. Aqiba, and he edited the LXX according to R. Aqiba's unique approach, which saw the importance of every word and letter. See E. Tov, "Greek Translations," in *Bible Translations: An Introduction* [Hebrew] (ed. C. Rabin; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1984), pp. 49-120. The sages generally granted authority to this translation.

52. S. Elitzur, *Wherefore Have We Fasted? 'Megillat Taanit Batra' and Similar Lists of Fasts* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2007), pp. 65, 70. For other formulations that are a bit different but express the same idea, see pp. 75, 77, 86, 94, 111, 121. The source of the list of fasts is apparently from the land of Israel, and is found in a number of liturgical poems (*piyutim*) composed in the land of Israel. For example, the following is found in the *piyut* for the month of Tvet of R. Pinchas Ben Yaakov Ha-Cohen, an eighth-century

composer from the land of Israel: "A fast for the writing of Greek on the 18th of the month" (Elitzur, p. 31). An earlier *piyut* of Kalir that includes the list of fasts is the only list in which the fast regarding the translation of the Torah into Greek is not listed (Elitzur, p. 18).

53. Elitzur, *Wherefore*, p. 197.

54. In light of the adoption of the Torah by the Christians, we find the following statement of R. Yohanan: "A Gentile who studies the Torah is culpable of death, as it says: 'Moses commanded us the law, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob' (Deut 33:4) — it is our inheritance and not theirs" (*b. Sanh.* 59a). See Urbach, *Sages*, p. 550.

55. Sanders, *Jewish Law*, pp. 274, 298.

56. Also, the reading of the Torah was apparently preserved in the manner that it had been done previously during the period of the temple: one person, a scholar, would himself read the Torah, and then explain it and extrapolate upon it. This is unlike the way in which the Torah reading developed in a later rabbinic period in the land of Israel, in which a number of people would read from the Torah. See the *baraita* that is cited in *y. Meg.* 4:3, 75a (AHL ed., col. 770): "The foreign-language speakers did not follow this practice, but one person read the entire section." See I. D. Gilath, *Studies in the Development of the Halakhah* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1992), pp. 357-60.

57. Cf. M. Kister, "Romans 5:12-21 against the Background of Torah-Theology and Hebrew Usage," *HTR* 100.4 (2007): 391-424.

58. On the development of a Christian communication network at that time, see D. Mendels, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity: An Essay on Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).