

STEFAN C. REIF

PROBLEMS WITH PRAYERS



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FORSCHUNGEN ZUR WISSENSCHAFT
DES JUDENTUMS

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PROBLEMS WITH PRAYERS

STUDIES IN THE TEXTUAL HISTORY
OF EARLY RABBINIC LITURGY

BY
STEFAN C. REIF

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For 'other women' in my life ~

In memory of my mother Annie (1916–2002),
who worked so hard to fund my primary education
and lovingly inspired my earliest ambitions ~

To honour my sisters, Cynthia and Sharron,
whose love, loyalty and devotion are an example of what is best in
sibling relationships ~

And for my grand-daughter, Naama,
who was not yet born when an earlier book was dedicated to my other
grandchildren, and to encourage her always to be as articulate as now

Preface

Background to the volume

When I took early retirement a few months ago, I was asked on numerous occasions about my main motivation and I had no hesitation in replying that I was anxious to devote any remaining, energetic years to the interests that had first led me to choose an academic career, namely, research, publication and lecturing. What greatly appealed to me was the possibility of declining those tasks about which I am less than enthusiastic (and often have to do with apparently pointless bureaucratic procedures) and concentrating on a range of projects that I had commenced during my years of academic tenure but not yet succeeded in completing. Such projects include volumes on liturgical topics, the lives of Genizah researchers, and medieval Jewish Bible commentary, and the current collection of essays represents the first of these to reach fruition.

In choosing a particular selection of essays out of a larger number that have previously appeared in conference proceedings, *Festschriften* and other collective volumes, and adding to those some new chapters, I have been guided by the need to adhere to a reasonably consistent theme. That theme is simply summarized as the pursuit of the historical within the liturgical and further explanations and clarifications of my methodology are to be found in the first chapter. I have tried to weld together the essays so that they can be understood as part of an overall scholarly thesis but they may also be read totally independently by those interested in their respective topics. With this in mind, I have sometimes repeated myself in text and in footnotes, thereby relieving the reader of the need to jump from one chapter to another in order to clarify or amplify a point. I have also done my best to adopt a fairly consistent bibliographical style within the references but, again, only so far as dictated by the needs of respective chapters. Since full bibliographical details of all publications have been given in each chapter, I have thought it redundant to repeat these in a bibliography at the end of the volume.

For many of my previous books and articles, my wife, Shulie, did most of the complicated computer work, as well as carefully sub-editing the text and the footnotes. She did basic work on many of the

chapters of this volume but her serious illness in recent months has prevented her from completing the tasks. She has advised whenever she could, but, with the exception of some help from my son, Aryeh, and from colleagues in the Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University Library, I have been left to my own devices. The result will inevitably not reach the high standard that she has devotedly maintained for me over the years. I am most grateful to the publishers of this volume, Walter de Gruyter, for their confidence and support; to the editors of the series, Professor Ernst L. Ehrlich and Professor Günter Stemberger, for accepting the volume; and to Dr Albrecht Döhnert, de Gruyter's editor-in-chief of theology, Jewish studies and religious studies, for much kindness and helpful guidance.

Original provenance of some chapters

The second chapter is based on 'Jewish Liturgy in the Second Temple Period: Some Methodological Considerations', in: *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies 1993* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1994), 1–8, and the third chapter on 'The Second Temple Period, Qumran Research and Rabbinic Liturgy: Some Contextual and Linguistic Comparisons' in: E. Chazon and A. Pinnick (eds), *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Leiden; Brill, 2003, 133–149. The fourth chapter is essentially what I published in 'Prayer in Ben Sira, Qumran and Second Temple Judaism' in: R. Egger-Wenzel (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference, Durham, Ushaw College, 2001*, Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2002, 321–41, and an earlier version of chapter 5 appeared as 'The Bible in Jewish Liturgy' in: A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler (eds), *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 1937–48. The studies of the priesthood and of the shema' are making their first appearance in print. Chapter 8 first appeared as 'Jerusalem in Jewish Liturgy' in: L. I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, New York: Continuum, 1998, 424–37; chapter 9 was originally included as 'Some Notions of Restoration in Early Rabbinic Prayer' in: J. M. Scott (ed.), *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 281–304; and chapter 10 was recently published as 'Approaches to Sacrifice in Early Jewish Prayer' in: R. Hayward and B. Embry (eds), *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for University of Manchester, 2005, 135–50.

Various parts of the study of the physical transmission of the liturgical medium originate in three publications: 'Codicological

Aspects of Jewish Liturgical History', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75/3 (1993), 117–31; 'Written Prayers from the Genizah; Their Physical Aspect and its Relationship to their Content' (Hebrew) in: J. Tabory (ed.), *From Qumran to Cairo: Studies in the History of Prayer*, Jerusalem: Orhot Press, 1999, 121–130; and 'From Manuscript Codex to Printed Volume: a Jewish Liturgical Transition?' in: R. Langer and S. Fine (eds), *Liturgy in the Life of the Synagogue*, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005, 95–108. The piece on Maimonides is being published for the first time while chapter 13 is based on different parts of the same three publications used in chapter 11, as well as on 'The Importance of the Cairo Genizah for the Study of the History of Prayer' (Hebrew) in: *Kenishta*, ed. J. Tabory, Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2001, 43–52, and on 'Some Recent Developments in the Study of Medieval Jewish Liturgy' in: N. de Lange (ed.), *Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 60–73.

The next three chapters were written for *Festschriften*, as follows: 'Some Observations on Solomon Luria's Prayer-Book', in: *Tradition and Transition: Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Sir Immanuel Jakobovits to celebrate twenty years in office*, ed. J. Sacks, London: Jews' College Publications, 1986, 245–57; 'Liturgical Difficulties and Genizah Manuscripts' in: S. Morag, I. Ben-Ami and N. A. Stillman (eds), *Studies in Judaism and Islam Presented to Shelomo Dov Goitein*, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981, 99–122; and 'Al-Ha-Nissim' in a forthcoming volume in honour of Colette Sirat being edited by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger and Nicholas de Lange. The seventeenth chapter is an updated translation into English of what appeared in Hebrew as 'We-'ilu Finu. A Poetic Aramaic Version' in: S. Elizur, M. D. Herr, G. Shaked, A. Shinan (eds), *Knesset 'Ezra: Literature and Life in the Synagogue: Studies Presented to Ezra Fleischer*, Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1994, 269–83, while the final chapter appeared in German as 'Ein Genisa-Fragment des Tischdank' in: W. Homolka (ed.), *Liturgie als Theologie: Das Gebet als Zentrum im jüdischen Denken*, Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2005, 11–29. A Hebrew version is scheduled to appear in a *Festschrift* for Aron Dotan. I am deeply grateful to all the relevant publishers for kindly granting permission to use some of my material from their publications and to the Syndics of Cambridge University Library for permitting the reproduction of their Genizah fragments in the plates at the end of the volume.

Contents

Preface	VII
1 Introduction	1
2 Liturgy in the Second Temple Period: Methodology	21
3 Qumran Research and Rabbinic Liturgy	33
4 Prayer in Ben Sira, Qumran and Second Temple Judaism ..	51
5 Use of the Bible	71
6 Priesthood in Early Sources	93
7 The Theological Significance of the Shema'	107
8 Jerusalem	127
9 Notions of Restoration	143
10 Approaches to Sacrifices	165
11 From Codex to LaTeX: The Physical Transmission	181
12 Maimonides on the Prayers	207
13 Modern Study of Medieval Liturgy	229
14 Solomon Luria's Prayer-book	255
15 'Truth and faith' in Genizah Manuscripts	271
16 ' <i>Al Ha-Nissim</i> : Its Emergence and Textual Evolution	291
17 A Well-Known Hymn in Aramaic Guise	315
18 A Genizah Fragment of Grace After Meals	333
Indexes	
Sources	349
Prayers	358
Names	359
Subjects	366
Plates of Genizah Fragments at Cambridge University Library ..	371
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Introduction

The collection of Jewish liturgical studies that constitutes the present volume is intended to complement the study that I published more than a dozen years ago under the title of *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge, 1993). In that earlier monograph, I presented an overview of the development of Jewish liturgy from biblical until modern times, attempting as I did so to offer some fresh perspectives on the topic in its entirety. I traced the emergence and evolution of the major rites and practices, adopting a broad approach that took account not only of the requirements of Jewish religious law but also of theological, political and social factors and the impact of Christianity and Islam. By its very definition, such an approach was bound to relate to general trends rather than to detailed examples and I was conscious at that time that I ought at some future date to offer the reader some closer analyses of how these and other factors left their marks on the precise formulation of prayer texts. There are some aspects of the studies included at the beginning of the current volume that still opt, to at least a limited degree, for the broad sweep, but they are appropriate because their topics had yet to be seriously treated when I penned the previous work and because they do contain detailed as well as general assessments. By and large, however, most of the chapters contain substantial data derived from primary sources and the evidence of manuscripts.

The seventeen chapters that follow this introduction are essentially a summary of most of my liturgical research over the course of the past twelve years. Eleven of the studies have appeared (or will shortly appear) in collective volumes and in conference proceedings while three are fresh treatments and the remaining three have been adapted from earlier publications. Details of their origins will be provided at the end of this introductory chapter. Much of the research I have done relates directly to Genizah manuscripts, a source that has been close to my heart for some thirty-three years and one that often provides testimony to liturgical (as well, of course, as non-liturgical) developments that greatly predate what we know from other manuscript material and from printed works. But even when my research is concerned with pre-Genizah history such as, say, the late Second Temple period or the early geonic era, the Genizah evidence stands quietly at the rear waiting to be summoned. This is because it knows that the researcher must ultimately decide how to date,

characterize and conceptualize its contents and how to explain where they vary significantly from what became, or is regarded (rightly or wrongly) as having become, the standard rabbinic liturgy sanctioned by the Iraqi Jewish authorities from the ninth to the eleventh centuries.

The aim of these introductory remarks is to set the scene for the studies themselves by noting what I had to say in my earlier volume and summarizing some of my more recent findings. I shall sound a few warning notes, cite the evidence from Qumran and Ben Sira in order to contextualize the developments of the first two Christian centuries, and then turn to liturgical themes and specific prayers, most of which are highly illuminated by the precious fragments from the Cairo Genizah. I shall then draw some broad conclusions. Readers will then be able to pursue in more detail, and with reference to source material, the particular topics that interest them in any order, or in none, since my summary and conclusions will already be behind them and since I have, in any case, tried to ensure that each study may read independently.

Earlier findings

Since this volume sets out from where my earlier one left off, let me briefly recall what I had to say about the Genizah evidence in that earlier publication. I made the point that just as it is now beyond doubt that standard and authoritative versions of midrashic and targumic material are a product only of the later geonic period, so it is possible to argue convincingly a similar case in the matter of liturgy. Pluralism, multiformity, and variation were characteristic of the late talmudic and early geonic periods, although it is not yet clear whether they represent a continuation of, or a reaction against, the notions of the earlier rabbinic teachers. That very much depends on whether one subscribes to the view that such notions and such teachers were or were not already themselves wholly authoritative. Be that as it may, I listed the types of liturgical non-conformity to be found among the Genizah texts, including novel benedictions, some of them disapproved by some talmudic and post-talmudic teachers, and alternative versions of such central prayer-texts as the *'amidah*, the *qaddish* and the grace after meals.

I also drew attention to the uses made of biblical texts that are unfamiliar or unacceptable in the dominant versions, or had been thought to have disappeared at an earlier stage, such as the liturgical recitation of the Decalogue. What had also emerged from the Genizah source were messianic, pietistic and mystical renderings of central parts of the liturgy, otherwise lost or eliminated, and clear indications not only of what appeared to be hybrid rites but also of a lack of liturgical

unanimity even in specific areas and communities. Aramaic and Arabic were sometimes used where the later standard had opted exclusively for Hebrew and the vast numbers of liturgical poems newly discovered testified to the fact that such a literary genre had almost ousted the regular and simpler forms of prayer from their central place. Indeed, according to Ezra Fleischer's interpretation of the liturgical history of the geonic period, the Genizah variants do not reflect an earlier lack of unanimity among the talmudic authorities but a revolutionary displacement of their versions with those of the later liturgical poets.

Scholarly controversy

Since Fleischer's interpretation was an important part of the scholarly discussion of the early 1990s, it is important to make further reference to it in the present context and to the reactions it spawned. Fleischer was adamant that there was no obligatory Jewish prayer in any communal contexts during the Second Temple Period; that the apocryphal, hellenistic and early Christian sources said nothing of such prayer; and that the customs adopted and practised at Qumran were those of sectarians. Only at Yavneh was the novel idea introduced of praying thrice daily and Rabban Gamliel laid down a clear formulation of the prayers. This was closely followed in the Babylonian centres and the liturgical traditions of those communities are consequently closer to the original than those of Eretz Israel which are the product of later poetic tendencies.

Although agreeing with the overall argument that the communal prayers of the tannaitic rabbis, *as they came to be formulated and legislated in the second century*, were not recited in earlier synagogues, I was troubled by what appeared to me to be the anachronisms, generalizations and dogmatic conclusions in some of Fleischer's informed but controversial presentation. I did not wish to rule out completely the possibility that when Jews came together in communal contexts they might have prayed, as well as studying and providing communal facilities, and I felt that the definition of the Qumranic material as sectarian, and therefore somehow irrelevant to the early development of rabbinic liturgical practice, was misleading. Other sources did hint at communal Jewish prayer and Palestinian texts were, in my view, just as likely, if not more likely than Babylonian ones, to be original and authentic. Similar patterns of liturgical development, however differently expressed, could be detected for each generation and were a more impressive interpretation of historical change than a theory of unrelated revolutions led by bombastic individuals. A

synchronic approach to the talmudic sources was still dictated by the lack of definitive criteria for establishing a reliable diachronic analysis.

What then has to be added on the basis of the work of the last fifteen years to this argument about the late Second Temple and early rabbinic and Christian periods? Firstly, given the increased evidence of the dynamic religious variety of that time, and the attendant stresses and strains, one must be wary, in the matter of methodology, of assuming that sects, philosophies and religious practices can be clearly and categorically defined or that credit can be given to a few outstanding individuals for major developments. The critical historian should, rather, be on the lookout for the degree to which religious traditions were mutually influential, overlapping and multifarious and for the manner in which individuals might be championing notions that have evolved in their own, or in other environments. As Moshe Greenberg (*Biblical Prose Prayer as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel* Berkeley, 1983) and Lee Levine (*The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, New Haven, 1999) have forcefully and convincingly argued, the growing importance and formality of what had started out life as individual prayer, as well as the evolution of the synagogue as a centre of worship, may represent tendencies towards the democratic, egalitarian and popular, as against the oligarchic, elitist and exclusivist values of the Temple and the priesthood.

Qumran and Ben Sira

The evidence from the Dead Sea manuscripts points to the regular recitation at stipulated times or occasions of communal prayers, although there is no overall consistency of formulation or context. Some parts of such prayers are reminiscent of what was formulated by the tannaitic rabbis but, as in other cases of similarity between their religious traditions, it is not clear if there was a direct line of transmission or whether the medium was an oral or written one. While the material familiar from Qumran makes a re-appearance in rabbinic liturgy, the format, the vocabulary and the usage have all taken on a distinctive character that reflects the ideology of early talmudic Judaism. There was clearly more than one provenance for the development of hymns and prayers during the Second Temple period. Among the sources from which the early rabbis apparently drew their liturgical inspiration (perhaps in some cases indirectly) were the Temple and its priesthood, contemporary circles of pietists and mystics, proto-synagogal gatherings such as the *ma'amadot*, and local custom. There is ample evidence in the talmudic and geonic eras that this process of liturgical innovation, adaptation and adjustment did not

come to an end in the second-century so that it hardly seems valid to extrapolate backwards from the late geonic period to the early talmudic one in an effort to reconstruct precisely what constituted the earliest rabbinic formulations.

If we now offer a three-way comparison between Ben Sira, Qumran and the Rabbis, it has to be acknowledged that the apocryphal book has less in common with other two sources than the latter two have with each other. To cite some examples, Ben Sira has no mention of regular prayers at specific times, of poetic formulations for special occasions, or of a special liturgical role for sabbaths and festivals and there is little stress in his book on angels, apocalyptic notions and the end of time. On the other hand, like the Rabbis after him, Ben Sira clearly sees the possibility of worshipping God in a variety of ways and contexts, including the educational and the intellectual, and has the greatest respect for the Jerusalem Temple – he perhaps more practically and the Rabbis more theoretically.

The use of hymns, prayers and benedictions, as well as of biblical words and phrases to which fresh meanings have been given, is common to all three sources. They also all include as central themes in their entreaties the election of Israel, the status of Zion, the holiness of Jerusalem, the return of the Davidic dynasty, and the manifestation of God's great power now and in the future. Ben Sira undoubtedly takes the matter of worship beyond that of most of the Hebrew Bible but does not reflect the same liturgical intensity as that found at Qumran. He thus sets the tone for some rabbinic developments but is apparently not the source for various others.

Priesthood

A brief sketch of the *kohen* (or, priest) in Jewish history testifies to some interesting religious tendencies, especially in the areas of worship. Priesthood was undoubtedly one of the central religious functions of the world of the Hebrew Bible. In the periods leading up to the Babylonian Exile and immediately thereafter, priests were probably at their most powerful and influential but this situation changed in the Hellenistic era. In response to the ambitions of some priestly families to extend even further their religious and political power, especially in Jerusalem, other groups offered alternative understandings of their role in both the present and the eschatological future and approved of the participation of non-priests in religious ritual.

The early forms of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were concerned about the status and function of priests within their religious practices and how they related to the wider body of their co-

religionists. The earliest talmudic-midrashic sources are ambivalent in their assessment of priestly characteristics but the trend was ultimately towards replacing priests with rabbis in the academy and prayer-leaders in the synagogue. The first generations of liturgical poets, on the other hand, made efforts to glorify the priesthood, the Temple and the associated activities and it is tempting to see in this something of a response to the arrangements in the Byzantine Church.

The halakhic authorities of the early Middle Ages presupposed the validity of the biblical restrictions on some of the priest's activities as well as of his right to pronounce the priestly blessing in the synagogue and to take precedence in other liturgical spheres. As the centuries passed, however, some doubts were raised about his genealogical and spiritual status and this led the priests to mount counter-attacks in order to maintain their privileges. Even before the rise of progressive interpretations of Judaism in the modern world, the priesthood had lost virtually all but its ceremonial role, and those interceptions tended to abolish what remained. In more recent decades, however, there has been something of a tendency towards the restoration of some religious functions that had gradually lapsed.

Shema'

At the axial age, one encounters the broader use of one paragraph, and maybe even two paragraphs, of the *shema'*, or at least parts of these two passages, as well as of the Decalogue. There is a particular awareness of, and affection for, such passages and they are regarded as bearing a special theological message. They are consequently used as amulets, phylacteries or simply as sacred texts. What emerges from New Testament texts is that there also existed a tendency (perhaps inspired by hellenistic, philosophical notions) to see the whole religious message summarized in one brief biblical text, as interpreted by tradition, be it from the Decalogue, the *shema'*, or what current scholarship knows as the Holiness Code.

The *shema'* developed among the early rabbis as a declaration of their acceptance of the kingdom of God, rather than any other kingdom (such as that of Rome), and of all the commandments of the Torah. The devotion required in the light of such a declaration was interpreted as relating to all aspects of human nature, as demanding martyrdom when necessary, and as requiring a total acceptance of God's ultimate justice and the use of all one's assets. According to some halakhic midrashim, the messages carried by the *shema'* are that Israel has a special role and that its special devotion to God may be traced back to the Patriarchs. Israel's constant loyalty is a form of martyrdom and the

first paragraph of the *shema'* is liturgically superior to the Decalogue and to the other two passages, given its special message of God's kingship and the yoke of its acceptance by Israel. What has therefore happened is that a biblical source, or set of sources, has been hijacked and used as a banner to proclaim some central but broad religious messages and then gradually employed more particularistically as the liturgical expression of Israel's special role as understood in rabbinic theology.

Biblical texts

By the time that the talmudic rabbis of the early Christian centuries were debating the matter of the inclusion of biblical verses and chapters in their standard prayers for daily, sabbath and festival use, there were a number of these that were well established by popular tradition within the liturgical context. Minor examples are the sets of verses, included in the *musaf* ('additional') '*amidah* for New Year and illustrating the three themes of kingship, remembrance and *shofar* (ram's horn) that stand at the centre of that prayer, as well as the verses used on special fast-days proclaimed in times of drought. More common and more major examples are the *shema'*, the Decalogue, the *hallel* ('praise'), the Passover *Haggadah*, the Song at the Sea (Ex. 15), the priestly benediction (Num. 6:24–26) and the trisagion (Isa. 6:3). The role of biblical material in the liturgy was a lively and controversial one.

Rabbinic formulations were regarded as preferable to biblical precedents, and biblical verses were to be differentiated from rabbinic prayers. Could, for instance, the verses from Isa. 12:6 and Ps. 22:4 be employed at any point in the *qedushah* benediction of the '*amidah* without valid halakhic objections being raised? The early rabbinic teachers sometimes even made changes in liturgical formulations out of polemical considerations. A good example concerns the use of the Biblical Hebrew word '*olam*' (meaning 'world' as well as 'eternity' in post-biblical Hebrew) in such a way as to ensure that the notion of a future world was not excluded. Nevertheless, the liturgical pre-existence of such specific items as the *shema'*, and others mentioned above, provides positive proof that earlier attitudes had been different.

Perhaps what the talmudic rabbis feared was the potential influence of some groups who were regarded by them as sectarian and who had opted for the inclusion of biblical texts among their prayers. The Jews whose literary remains were found at Qumran, by the Dead Sea, were of such an ilk, and medieval Karaites, whose prayers were exclusively composed of biblical texts, pursued a similar liturgical philosophy. The situation among the Rabbanite Jews changed from the

beginning of the Islamic period when, instead of merely a few favourite verses (such as Ps. 51:17, 84:5 and 144:15) and complete Psalms (such as Ps. 145), substantial blocks of biblical verses, groups of chapters and individual verses, especially from the book of Psalms, came to be incorporated in the traditional daily prayers, and then in the first prayer-books. Either the popular urge to include biblical items was so powerful that the halakhic authorities had to submit to it or it was determined that the most attractive religious practices should not be left exclusively to the theological opposition.

Jerusalem

Moving further into this more theological use of liturgy, a comparison of the manner in which Jerusalem is handled in various rabbinic prayers, with careful attention being given to the variants to be found in Genizah fragments, is also instructive. While the Temple was still standing, a realistic picture emerges of that institution and its service, with the priests at their centre and the people of Israel at their edge, all of them the beneficiaries of the special favour expressed by God for Zion, a term that alludes to the whole religious arrangement. During the talmudic period, there is the keen anticipation of a recovery from the disasters that befell these institutions and the expectation of an almost imminent restoration of the city of Jerusalem, the Temple and its service, and the special relationship with God that they represent. God's compassion and mercy will bless Israel with security, and the people's prayers, as well as their offerings, will attract divine favour.

As the passing centuries eliminate even the vaguest folk memories of actual Jerusalem institutions, so the prayers chosen most commonly to relate to them become less embedded in reality and convey a more futuristic and messianic message. God's infinite power will bring unexpected joy and recompense to those suffering the pain of exile and persecution. A detailed picture is painted of an idealized future, with Jerusalem functioning with more than its former glory. The Temple and the Davidic kingdom are presupposed and each group of Jews is seen to be playing a part in the scene. Economy of expression and simplicity of language, particularly as championed by Babylonian formulations, give way to the kind of generous augmentation and colourful vocabulary that are more characteristic of Palestinian prayer texts.

Restoration

If one examines the theme of restoration in the rabbinic liturgy in a similar manner, one encounters three themes: 1) that God will rectify

the situation; 2) the restoration to Israel of Divine favour and warm relations to Israel; and 3) prophetic and messianic visions. Here it is more difficult to separate the themes chronologically and thematically but possible to reach some important broader conclusions. There are undoubtedly instances in which the same words have been interpreted in significantly different ways by various generations. References to Davidic rule, to the holy city and to divine worship did not necessarily convey the same concepts to the Jews of every centre and in each century. Nevertheless, it may confidently be concluded that the standard rabbinic prayers in their totality include all three themes and that the widespread textual, linguistic and theological variations testify to a dynamic process of development, though not one that displays one consistent tendency. It seems likely that this process was affected by the history of the Jewish people as it evolved from epoch to epoch and from centre to centre. Social, political and religious ideas undoubtedly left their mark on the texts of the prayers and, while the nature of such marks are identifiable, the details of their arrival and departure remain obscure in the early centuries of the first Christian millennium. What may be suggested for at least some periods is that, as the idea of restoration became less confidently and expeditiously expected, so it tended to be expressed progressively more in the language of the utopian visionary.

Sacrifices

If we now move on to the subject of the cultic service, there was clearly substantial talmudic discussion about the future of and/or the replacement of sacrifice and its relative theological importance in rabbinic Judaism. Although there was from the outset a strong body of opinion contending that there was no connection or continuation, there was also a tendency to seek ways of incorporating details of sacrifices into the prayers, and not simply opting for the view that prayers had wholly replaced sacrifices. This tendency subsequently strengthened in the post-talmudic period and is evidenced in the earliest prayer-books. There was also a major move on the part of the liturgical poets to restore the cult to a central role, especially by way of poetic versions of the *avodah* ritual for Yom Kippur, while a belief in the mystical, even magical use of language encouraged the recitation of the relevant passages concerning the cult.

The tenth century saw an enthusiastic interest on the parts of both Karaites and Rabbanites in special circumambulations of Jerusalem and in the recitation of connected prayers but, it must be admitted, without any central concern for details of the sacrificial cult. The Jewish liturgy

ultimately incorporated, in conflated format, and not always in a fully logical presentation, two independent trends towards either Torah study or cultic restoration. The kabbalists of the late medieval and early modern periods, for their part, saw a prophylactic value in the recitation of passages concerning the sacrifices and this gave such texts an increased status in the regular prayers. To propose, therefore, that sacrifice was replaced by prayer is undoubtedly a gross oversimplification of a long and complicated liturgical process.

Physical medium

Studies of the physical medium used for the transmission of the liturgical texts, as reflected in the Genizah material, also reveal an interesting course of development. It would appear that some fragments represent early attempts on the part of individuals rather than communities to commit oral traditions to writing. As with other areas of rabbinic literature, the adoption of the codex gave the texts a greater degree of canonicity, leading to a growing concern for precise formulation. The single leaf evolved into the more lengthy codex, the private individual became the professional scribe, and the texts that had once been brief and provisional notes gradually turned into formal prayer-books. This ultimately led later generations to append to such prayer-books their own notes, instructions, commentaries and decorations, thus enhancing both their religious status and their physical attractiveness.

Maimonides and son

Maimonides's liturgical work reveals a number of tensions about theological priorities and preferences, especially as they relate to religious idealism versus social reality. He was capable of innovation where the circumstances demanded it, particularly where the public reputation of Judaism was at stake. He was, however, broadly committed to the continued application of talmudic principles on the one side, and to the promotion of the religiosity of prayer on the other, while remaining aware of the distinction between legal requirement and customary practice. What is uncovered in his comments is a contentment with basic Hebrew liturgy and a desire never to lose sight of the main theme of a prayer or set of prayers. He demonstrates a preference for intense preparation over unnecessary expansion, especially of the mystical or superstitious variety. His preferred liturgy appears to be Egyptian/North African and to stand between the

centralized Babylonian rite emanating from the geonic authorities and the variegated traditions that flowed from it. On the other hand, there is evidence that in some respects he adhered to a Sefardi (Andalusian) liturgical tradition at home. His preferred liturgy made a major impact only on the Yemenite (*baladi* not *shami*) rite and appears to have lost much of its influence in the increasingly powerful centres of Europe. The substantial inroads later made by the mystics into the liturgical field were at least to some degree initiated by his son, Abraham, and do not reflect his overall approach, while the father's discomfort with the Palestinian liturgical rites led to a powerful and ultimately successful campaign by the son for their elimination.

As Mordechai Friedman has meticulously demonstrated, Genizah documents reveal that the war of words between Abraham Maimuni, the new communal leader, and his opponents continued from the time of his father's demise in 1204 virtually until his own death in 1237. Initially, the practice of referring to the leader of the Jewish community in parts of the synagogal liturgy (*reshut*), as well as in official documents, as an expression of allegiance, had to be abandoned by the leadership because of objections to Abraham's authority and ideology and it took almost a decade before he was able to re-assert this right for himself. Only by taking such action could the leadership forestall the creation of additional synagogues that would regard themselves as independent of the communal leadership. His opponents saw Abraham's pietistic campaign not as a defence of tradition but as a radically novel religiosity bent on mimicking Sufi practice and his rejection of Palestinian practice as an attempt to destroy well-established and authentic rituals. So incensed and desperate were they that on more than one occasion they appealed to the Muslim authorities to rule that his modes of worship were unconscionably innovative. He, for his part, was so convinced of the rectitude of his arguments that he found support for them in tannaitic sources. According to his interpretation, there was already then an established custom uniformly to kneel in rows facing the ark where the scrolls were kept and to conduct all the prayers in the direction of Jerusalem.

Luria's liturgy

Solomon Luria, in sixteenth-century Poland, stood in a long line of rabbinic authorities who saw a need to 'correct' the Hebrew of their liturgy from its rabbinic form to that of the Masoretic Bible. He cited numerous predecessors of a similar mind and made use of an extensive number of liturgical manuscripts and editions. For him, the language of the prayers had to reflect a certain logic and he was prepared to amend

what he had inherited in order to achieve this. If, for instance, there was a danger of misunderstanding or of inadvertently expressing what amounted to a heretical thought, he would propose an alternative text. Such a text would often, but not always, have a precedent in an authoritative source. On the other hand, change for the sake of uniformity with another, perhaps more dominant rite, was not to his liking. If he could find a biblical verse that supported the retention of a traditional liturgical text, this would be sufficient reason to reject any change. His preference was also generally for language that was communal rather than individual, for a limitation on unnecessary liturgical expansions, and for what he regarded as more grammatically accurate forms.

In truth

The Genizah texts also shed light on the original sense of the first sentence of the post-*shema* paragraph in the evening prayers: אמת ואמונה. כל זאת קים עלינו. Taking the Yemenite vocalization קים in the *pi'el* perfect and the absence of the words כי הוא in many Genizah texts as the starting points, there are various possible interpretations. A convincing sense could be 'has fulfilled all this for us', i.e. God has kept his promise just recited in the third paragraph of the *shema*, to be our God, 'and we are Israel His people'. The first two words could also be made to yield a better sense if it is recalled that the first of them is often used in the liturgy in the sense of באמת and both are given this sense here. Additional support for such a meaning is available in the variant reading באמת ובאמונה instead of אמת ואמונה which occurs in the morning *ge'ulah* benediction. The translation would then be 'In truth and faith, God has fulfilled all this for us'. Alternatively, אמת is only the introductory 'Truly' and not part of the remainder of the sentence, and just as in the third part of the sentence a claim is made about the fulfilment of God's promise so in the second part is the trustworthiness of what has been recited acknowledged in the words אמונה כל זאת. Such a sense and vocalization would admirably fit Ginzberg's theory about the origins of the prayer as an אמן to what has gone before. it would also be linguistically significant. The translation would then be 'Truly, all this is acknowledged'.

This novel treatment of the passage does not, however, provide any reference to the future redemption, apparently presupposed by Rashi and the *Tosafot* in their commentaries on BT, Ber 12a. It may, of course, be the case that they are reading the idea into קים עלינו but, if not, the possibility that קים was here originally קים as it appears in so many other cases, or יקים, should be considered. Perhaps mention should also

be made of the possibility that there is here a remnant of some form of *קים אמונה*, 'keeping a promise'. Changes in other such petitions for the future redemption are well-known and the last phrase *ואנחנו ישראל עמו*, which would not fit well as the concluding portion of such a petition, would therefore have to be a later addition.

There is the remote possibility that there is here some long-forgotten allusion to a popular text or its interpretation, a text such as Neh. 10:1 in which the expression *כל זאת* occurs in the context of 'making a covenant'. It may be added that the words *ברית* and *אמונה* are governed by none other a verb than *קים* in the *pi'el* in one of the Zadokite Documents (ed. C. Rabin, p. 39).

Genizah texts of 'Al Ha-Nissim

Neither the recitation nor the definitive wording of this prayer were talmudically ordained. The prayer was introduced by the geonic authorities and given expression in historical, poetic and supplicatory styles, perhaps each of them originally separate, but ultimately combined. Although the general structure of the text is agreed in all the versions, there are interesting textual variants. On the linguistic side, one can detect in a number of fragments tendencies towards the replacement of mishnaic philology, vocabulary and orthography with their biblical Hebrew counterparts, sometimes because the transmitters were ill-at-ease with the meanings they attached to mishnaic forms, and towards the use of biblical verses as prototypes. There was a clear tension between those who stressed the historical miracle and those who wished not only to offer thanks for the past but also to make entreaty for the future. Also controversial was the degree to which strong elements of eschatology, the supernatural and lyricism should be included in standard '*amidah*' benedictions. There are also political considerations (such as in the use of the term *מלכות הרשעה*), theological concerns about associating Israel with destruction and God with *lèse majesté*, and ambivalence about whether phrases are to be understood politically, theologically or intellectually (as with *עוסי תורתך*).

Aramaic poem

A close examination of an Aramaic poem in T-S NS 160.11 (ואלו פומנה) raises broader issues that are worthy of further discussion. Its style parallels and echoes those of Targum Onqelos and the fixed prayers of the early medieval period. Its vocabulary, grammatical forms and modes of expression closely match the language of the halakhic

authorities who held spiritual and cultural sway over much of the Mediterranean area at the end of the geonic period. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that, although there are no clear indications of the kind of Galilean Aramaic that is characteristic of so many targumic versions to be found in the Genizah collections, there are some linguistic elements that appear to have originated among the communities of the land of Israel. Given the incontrovertible existence of trilingualism on the part of the Jews in the post-geonic period, it hardly seems surprising to encounter texts in which there are switches between languages. It is not unlikely that one of the aspects of this linguistic and literary process was the development whereby Aramaic dialects came to be used that did not represent particular geographical areas. The scholarly authors of the later period chose to write Aramaic in order to expand the range of their literature and made use of a variety of earlier styles and characteristics that were borrowed from a number of different sources.

The manner in which our author re-works the material before him is basically similar to that employed by the Aramaic targumists when they added to the scriptural source but remained thoroughly loyal to its basic content. Recently published research work on such targumim have demonstrated the existence of many types of translation and supplement. In addition to the well-known Targum Onqelos, Pseudo-Jonathan and Yerushalmi renderings, there were also targumic collections that followed the sabbath and festival lectionaries or treated particular chapters or verses of scripture, as well as more general types of *tosefta* (additamenta) versions. In a number of respects, our Aramaic poem, though connected to the fixed liturgy rather than to the biblical text, is similar to such targumim and makes use of words and expressions that are linguistically typical of targumic Aramaic.

What we may therefore have here is a composition that is similar in aim and usage to those Aramaic liturgical poems of post-talmudic Byzantium and later Franco-Germany but certainly does not employ a language and style that is wholly comparable with theirs. It seems reasonable to suppose that it is an example of a literary genre that belongs to the history of Hebrew poetry at the end of the geonic period and that is linked to the emergence of the new centres of Jewish life that replaced those of Babylon and the Palestinian Jewish homeland. As long, however, as no similar such poems have been found and identified, it will not be possible to be more precise about its historical and literary milieu.

A few sentences should now deal with the context in which our previously unknown Aramaic poem was recited. Such a recitation was obviously attached to the *nishmat* prayer. Since the ritual practices of

Babylon and Palestine differed as to when that prayer was recited, there are two possibilities that immediately come to mind. Our poem was recited either in the sabbath morning service or as part of the weekday prayers. But there is also a third historical option. Perhaps our author's intention was to include his composition among the special prayers recited on Passover. In that case, it could have been attached to the morning service of the festival, or of its intermediate sabbath, like the other poems that appear on the remaining folios of the fragment, or it might have been recited as part of the *hallel* section of the Passover Haggadah of the first evening. Since the Genizah has revealed fragments that contain novel Aramaic versions of parts of the Haggadah that are generally familiar to us in Hebrew, such a phenomenon need not be regarded as rare or exceptional. The references in lines 5 and 12 to 'youngest speakers' and a gathering of 'young and old' (Aramaic originals: *וועטוין ודעדקין* and *במינש סבין ודרדקין*) may certainly allude to the Jewish communal gathering in the synagogue but one cannot rule out the important possibility that the author has in mind the domestic Passover seder. If so, what emerges is that the community in which he operated apparently had the custom of extending the range of the *hallel* beyond what is to be found in the prayer-book of R. Sa'adya Gaon and in many Genizah fragments.

Genizah grace

A number of more general conclusions, that are important for an accurate understanding of Jewish liturgical history, may also be derived from the data provided by a Genizah fragment of the grace after meals and from its relationship with other versions. The twelfth-century rabbinic liturgies clearly still displayed a considerable variety of textual detail that remained in flux even if the major factors had become more solidified. The crystallization of the definitively recognizable rites of Europe and the orient was only in its early stages. There were still tensions between traditional transmission and novelty, between inconsistency and standardization, and between the biblical and rabbinic varieties of Hebrew language. The image of God, the nature of his relationship with the worshipper, and the notion of the messianic era were all concepts that were, in their smaller detail if not in their major configuration, open to liturgical adjustment. Historians should be ready to find among the manuscript sources numerous examples of texts that are not purely Babylonian or Palestinian and should place *Seder Rav Amram*, as it has come down to us, among the *formae mixtae* of the post-geonic period and not within the purer Babylonian versions of the ninth century. Our manuscript appears to

belong to a genre that is in or close to North Africa and still retains mixed Babylonian and Palestinian elements as well as similarities to the modified version of *Seder Rav Amram* and the prayer-book of Maimonides. The prayer-book of Solomon ben Nathan is simply another example of the variety of 'western' and 'oriental' liturgical elements that still existed in North Africa in the twelfth century.

Conclusions

Ben Sira, Qumran and the Rabbis share some of the liturgical genres and a number of the dominant themes. Ben Sira moves beyond the biblical definition of worship but does not testify to the regular recitation of prayers at stipulated times or on specific occasions such as is found at Qumran. The Rabbis are inspired by various such earlier traditions but create their own formulation and usage. Although they grant the priesthood some privileges, its role in the synagogue gradually becomes little more than vestigial and symbolic.

Beginning its Jewish liturgical life as some form of amulet, the *shema* comes to be seen as the summary of a central religious message and then as a declaration of faith in the divine kingdom and in the importance of the religious commandments (מצוות). Once established in such a role, it is then regarded as the banner of other major aspects of rabbinic theology.

Some biblical verses and passages are used as tannaitic liturgical compositions but there is some apprehension among the talmudic rabbis about opting for biblical rather than rabbinic formulations. After the rise of Islam, and the success of early medieval Karaism, more substantial liturgical use is made by the rabbinic tradition of biblical texts, albeit never with the authoritative liturgical status of the *'amidah*.

In the period immediately following the destruction of the Judean state, there is a confidence that Jerusalem, the Temple and the cult, which had been of critical significance to many of the Jewish people, will be restored and God's favour again attracted. As the memory of the reality fades, so the nature of the prayers about these institutions becomes more idealistic and includes more colourful, futuristic and messianic elements.

The topic of restoration includes three themes in rabbinic liturgy: physical improvement, divine favour and messianic ideology. The specific manifestations of such themes are viewed differently by changing generations and in varied locations, often as a result of historical developments.

Although some of the early talmudic rabbis were of the opinion that there was little or no connection or continuation between the

sacrificial system and the daily prayers, others felt not only that the latter were the direct replacement of the former but also that ways should be sought of incorporating details of the sacrifices into the prayers. This view found further expression among the liturgical poets of the post-talmudic period and among those who saw such an incorporation either as part of Torah-study or an entreaty for the future.

It seems likely that most prayers were originally transmitted in an oral form and that the commitment to the written folio increased as the codex was more widely adopted by the Jews. Once that form became more standard, and indeed more lengthy, so did it attract to itself more content and a greater degree of authority. This process also laid the foundations for the addition of notes, commentaries and decorations by subsequent generations.

The liturgical preferences of Maimonides in the twelfth century are for talmudic principles, mishnaic Hebrew, personal religiosity and intense preparation but he is capable of innovation when public circumstances demand it and aware of the distinction between legal requirement and customary practice. In a liturgical situation that was obviously still somewhat fluid, his preferred public liturgy seems to have been Egyptian/North African but he sometimes adhered to Sefardi (Andalusian) tradition in his personal behaviour. His reservations about following the rites of Eretz Israel and about the place of mysticism were not shared by his son, Abraham, who was willing to involve himself in considerable communal controversy in order to eliminate the Palestinian customs and to implement Sufi-like changes in the local prayer customs.

What is especially intriguing about Solomon Luria is the fact that he straddled the medieval and modern worlds. He supported his views by reference to authoritative predecessors but at the same time cited evidence from manuscripts and early editions. He was anxious that the correct religious message should be imparted but also wished to maintain high standards of Hebrew language and grammar. He was prepared to opt for textual adjustment if logic demanded but only if he could not find some justification for retaining the standard version without betraying his rational values.

In the first of four detailed textual studies, it becomes clear that in the opening paragraph of the *ge'ulah* benediction following the *shema'* in the evening office, and beginning *אמת ואמונה*, the semantic range, the syntax and the vocalization of the first five words are all controversial. We may here be dealing with an original meaning that has been lost, some objection to one sense that has lead to the substitution of another, or a misunderstanding that has crept into the text as a result of a false

analogy with another phrase. The impetus for change may be theological, linguistic or grammatical.

Our second case concerns the recitation and formulation of the '*al ha-nissim*' prayer in the '*amidah*' during the festival of Hanukkah which were products of the post-talmudic period. Although much of the text is fairly standard, the variations documented in the Genizah manuscripts offer some interesting testimony. In addition to some intriguing political, theological and intellectual considerations, there were clearly tensions about whether the prayers should be in biblical or mishnaic Hebrew, whether the stress should be on past events or future hopes, and whether the atmosphere of the prayer should be poetic or prosaic.

The third text is that of an Aramaic poem that appears to be part of the Passover liturgy, either synagogal or domestic, and that treats the biblical source much as the Targumim did. Although it is similar in aim and usage to the poetry of post-talmudic Byzantium and later Franco-Germany, its language and style are different from theirs. It consequently testifies to the insertion into the standard prayers of poetic Aramaic expansions that have links with earlier and later genres but are by no means identical with them.

A Genizah manuscript containing the whole text of the grace after meals constitutes our fourth example. Although this version is unlikely to be earlier than the twelfth century, and few of its elements are totally innovative, it is impossible to identify it in its totality (only in specific parts of its content) with any one liturgical rite known from that period or the centuries immediately before or after it, or indeed to see its source in any purely Babylonian or Palestinian form. It is perhaps closest to a North African rite that still has both 'western' and 'oriental' aspects to it.

What therefore emerges from all these studies and the associated conclusions? There were undoubtedly forms of communal Jewish prayer before Rabban Gamliel and most Qumran scholars currently subscribe to the view that this was not a practice limited to only one small sect. It is possible to detect a process of liturgical evolution from the Second Temple period to the tannaitic, amoraic and geonic eras. Attitudes to the use of biblical verses and to the status of the priest is not uniform through these periods but appears to be dependent on external factors, revealing both negative and positive responses to the customs of other groups. Rabbinic liturgy is affected by changing political circumstances and by adjustments in theology. Liturgical poets do not necessarily have a revolutionary impact on the prayers but sometimes continue and expand earlier talmudic traditions. The physical medium left a major mark on the liturgical content, style and

status. Although there are efforts to establish the basic Babylonian forms, there remains even as late as the twelfth century a considerable degree of fluidity and the clearly definable rites do not emerge wholly and successfully until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Close textual analysis testifies to alterations, misunderstandings and controversies, behind which lie theological, political, intellectual and linguistic considerations.

Liturgy in the Second Temple Period: Methodology

Introduction

In any relatively narrow field of research it is undoubtedly a useful exercise to give oneself pause at regular intervals, to relate one's efforts to what is transpiring in the wider context, and to take stock of what has and can be achieved in one's own topic of interest. In performing such an exercise one is driven to think again about the general philosophy and methodology of a subject, the intricate and detailed examination of which may have evolved into something of an obsession, and to look afresh at problems and solutions in the light of ideas that have been fostered elsewhere. When invited to lecture on the present topic at an international symposium,¹ it occurred to me that the subject being considered was basically an historical one, however closely linked to theology, archaeology, language and literature, and that it might benefit from a few broad remarks about how general historians have recently come to view their scholarly endeavours. There will of course be those for whom this may constitute well-trodden ground and I can only excuse myself by claiming that there are few presentations, however familiar in part, that do not by their overall treatment of a theme inspire new thoughts and ideas on the part of those to whom they are offered and for whom open-mindedness is not a characteristic of academic indecision and weakness.

What is history?

Students of history have in recent decades conducted a lively debate about what does and does not constitute history and about the extent to which historical research may be related as much, if not more, to the present and the future as it is to the past. Such discussions touch on

1 I am grateful to Professor Lee Levine for having arranged a symposium on this general topic at the 1993 World Congress of Jewish Studies, and for having laid down for the participants some clear parameters for their contributions. His invitation to me to participate and the exchange between Professor Ezra Fleischer and myself in *Tarbiz* 60 (1991), pp. 677–88 provided the impetus for the present treatment of the theme.

philosophy, politics and morality and assuredly move greatly beyond the study of one specific element of a particular people's *religions-geschichte* such as concerns us here.² Indeed, such historians often express impatience and a lack of confidence in the scholarly abilities of those who occupy themselves with such specifics precisely because they cannot be trusted to see the interpretative wood for the factual trees. Let us then attempt to respond to such criticism by drawing from the reservoir of historiographical theory some notions that have come to be widely held and that may be of assistance to us in approaching any aspect of Second Temple period history.

There are numerous differences of approach and of emphasis that distinguish twentieth-century historical research from its nineteenth-century predecessor but the one that perhaps overshadows all the others concerns the status of facts in any attempt to improve our understanding of the past. Until well into the twentieth century it was believed that the true student of the past could stand outside his own chronology and locality and could, by an enthusiastic and judicious marshalling of progressively more intricate data from chosen sources, replace the folktales of tradition with the scientific analysis of the present, producing a picture of the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*. In the amusing and perceptive words of E. H. Carr, 'three generations of German, British and even French historians marched into battle intoning the magic words "*wie es eigentlich gewesen [ist]*" like an incantation – designed like most incantations, to save them from the tiresome obligation to think for themselves.'³ Not quite subscribing to the view that 'history is a pack of lies',⁴ more recent historians are no less committed to the pursuit of reliable information and fresh sources; it is just that they recognize that neither the historian nor his source can ever be regarded as dispassionate and that academic history is a matter of placing everyone and everything in its context and interpreting their significance accordingly and with as little subjectivity as one can manage. In framing a number of important questions that the researcher should ask about his sources, G. Kitson Clark cautions the

2 Some of the relevant issues are touched on in the entry 'History' in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 20 (Chicago, 1991), pp. 572–74 and much of the debate was fired by the controversial study of the subject by E. H. Carr, *What is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge January–March 1961* (Basingstoke and London, 1961; second edition, ed. R. W. Davies, 1986).

3 Carr, *What is History?* (see n. 2 above), p. 3, and the whole chapter entitled 'The historian and his facts' in that volume, pp. 1–24.

4 In a reference to the views of Charles Kingsley, Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge from 1860 to 1869, William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford, wrote the lines 'The Reverend Canon Kingsley cries / History is a pack of lies'; see *Letters of William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford, 1825–1901*, ed. W. H. Hutton (London, 1904), p. 162 (letter of December 1871 to J. R. Green).

potential historian about the danger of being 'habitually cynical about the statements made by one class of person or about one type of event, while trusting the statements made by other classes of person or about other types of event'.⁵ If one fails to take account of the relevant sources, one's views are no more than speculative; if one pays exclusive attention to what they have themselves to say without offering an overall interpretation, one is compiling footnotes and not writing history.

If doubts may justifiably be expressed about the possibility of objectivity on the part of those who have what they consider to be a clinical view of the past, how much more must such scepticism be applied to earlier sources that had no such pretensions but for whom religion and history were virtually indistinguishable. Sources are not all equally valid, relevant or informative, and to question their value and uncover their motivation are not acts of scholarly anarchism but a *sine qua non* of a balanced and critical analysis. J. H. Hexter has expressed it very well: 'the historian. . . must formulate rough hypotheses, often very rough, about what happened and how it happened, and then examine the available record to verify or correct his hypotheses. But at the outset, from an almost limitless range of conceivable hypotheses he must select for investigation the very few that lie somewhere in the target area; he must select only those for which the surviving records hold forth some hope of verification; and he must have a sense of what records among a multitude are likely to provide the evidence he needs'.⁶ The definition of periods and movements and the creation of terminology to describe them should be seen as aids to understanding history and not as a straitjacket employed to restrain the struggles of those who are bent on reaching out for alternative descriptions and expositions.

And what of interpretations of history that ascribe major developments to individual personalities and single causes? Of course particular men and women have left more of a mark than others on the story of humanity's progress or its opposite, and some causes may be evaluated as more central than others but an awkward social, economic and religious complexity is more convincing to the sophisticated historian than a convenient political simplicity. To quote E. H. Carr again, 'the desire to postulate individual genius as the creative force in history is characteristic of the primitive stages of historical consciousness', and Alexis de Tocqueville already postulated in 1840 that 'historians who write in aristocratic ages are wont to refer all

5 G. Kitson Clark, *Guide for Research Students Working on Historical Subjects* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 28–29.

6 J. H. Hexter, *Doing History* (London, 1971), p. 24.

occurrences to the particular will or temper of certain individuals...’ while those ‘who live in democratic ages exhibit precisely opposite characteristics.’⁷ Similar judgements might be made of the search for the fact that launched a thousand relationships. The modest caution of contemporary historians, once contrasted with the confident conclusions of the natural scientists, seems lately to be spreading from libraries to laboratories and no scholar who wishes to be taken seriously any longer believes that if an idea is repeated often enough and stridently enough, it becomes worthy of canonicity.

Second Temple period

If we may now particularize the discussion and move to a consideration of what is known as the Second Temple period, it must immediately be acknowledged that here too recent years have seen a considerable divergence of views about both the evidence and its interpretation. While in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Jewish and Christian scriptures and their authoritative religious literature were regarded as the major sources for understanding the period, more recent decades have seen the explosion of further data relating to Palestinian archaeology, Hellenistic Jewry and the Qumran scrolls, as well as a greater application of information derived from the non-Jewish world to an understanding of its Jewish equivalent.⁸ It was once thought easier to write ancient and medieval history than to analyse the events of the modern period because the very paucity of source material inhibited its interpreters from offering many alternative viewpoints. It is therefore perfectly fair to expect the explosion of data to have been accompanied by a matching expansion of critical theorizing about its significance, and to an extent that has indeed occurred.

Some have continued to see the period as a preparatory one that leads from the ‘Old Testament’ world to its ‘New Testament’ or rabbinic successor while others have laid emphasis on the unique religious developments of the time.⁹ The remarkable influence

7 Carr, *What is History?* (see n. 2 above), p. 39; Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2 (E.T. Henry Reeve, London, 1862), p. 102.

8 This is clearly exemplified by a comparison of the theories, sources and bibliography contained in the original E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (Leipzig, 1886–1890) with the revised English edition, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ 175BC–AD135*, eds G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (3 vols; Edinburgh, 1973–87).

9 E.g. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu: kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen³, 1962) translated as *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: an Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament*

exercised by the culture of Greece and Rome has intrigued one group of scholars while it has been the polemical response to such a challenge that has occupied the minds of some of their colleagues.¹⁰ There have been studies that read as if mysticism dominated religious ideology in the two or three centuries leading up to the destruction of the Temple and alternative theses that create the impression that law and ritual observance were central at all times.¹¹ The whole field of research has been richly fertilized by the notions that there were multiple Judaisms or at least that Judaism was multifarious; by new archaeological discoveries about the Temple, Jerusalem and other important structures; and by the growing number and variety of texts from the Dead Sea area.¹² There has even been an awareness on the part of some scholars that we may be dealing with wider social, political and economic factors rather than simply with theological history, and a few have ventured to suggest that in addition to piling batches of undigested information on to stacks of raw material, as some representatives of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and their successors

Period (London, 1969); S. Safrai, *The Jewish People in the Days of the Second Temple* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1970); and J. Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1982) and *Reading and Believing: Ancient Judaism and Contemporary Gullibility* (Atlanta, 1986).

- 10 E.g. S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Life and Manners of Jewish Palestine in the II–IV Centuries C.E.* (New York², 1962) and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B. C. E. – IV Century C. E.* (New York², 1962); V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (E. T. from the German, Philadelphia, 1959); E. Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Post-biblical Judaism* (New York, 1970) and *The Jews in the Greek Age* (London, 1988); M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (from the German edition of Tübingen, 1973; 2 vols; London, 1974); M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols; Jerusalem, 1974–84).
- 11 There is a growing awareness that, for all his pioneering efforts and brilliance, Scholem over-emphasised the role of mysticism and Albeck, for his part, took it for granted that later halakhic concepts applied in earlier times; see G. Scholem *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York², 1965) and H. Albeck, *Introduction to the Mishna* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv², 1960); translated into German as *Einführung in die Mischna* (Berlin and New York, 1971), and my review of the latter in *JSS* 19 (1974), pp. 112–18.
- 12 J. Neusner, W. S. Green and E. Frerichs (eds), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, 1987); Y. Yadin (ed.), *Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeology in the Holy City 1968–74* (Jerusalem, 1976); L. I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981), especially the articles by Levine, E. M. Myers and G. Foerster; E. M. Meyers and J. F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity* (London, 1981); G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London³, 1987); E. Tov, 'The unpublished Qumran texts from Caves 4 and 11', *JJS* 43 (1992), pp. 101–36 (including bibliography); and B. Z. Wacholder, 'A note on E. Tov's list of preliminary editions of the unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls', *JJS* 44 (1993), pp. 129–31.

were inclined to do, we should be asking searching questions about sources, methodology and definitions.¹³

Along which lines then should such questions be asked and what are the shortcomings that remain to be made good in this major area of Jewish history? One inadequacy that should perhaps immediately be noted is the tendency to overstress one aspect of the overall picture at the expense of all the others. No scholar can be a specialist in 'Old Testament', 'New Testament', Septuagint, Hellenism, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Talmud, Midrash, Targum and Qumran, nor can one researcher master archaeology, law, mysticism, socio-economic and political development and religious thought, but what all those writing about the period can surely appreciate is that no impressive description of any one of these topics can be achieved if it fails to take account of the existence of all or most of the others. In the words of H. Butterfield, 'for the historian the only absolute is change'¹⁴ and, given such an assessment of all events, it is impossible to understand any period without attempting to discover how its various constituents relate to each other. Since few or multiple factors may trigger developments, one is unlikely to identify the most major catalysts of a reaction unless one recognizes the various possibilities and their probable interconnection. No groups or individuals stand outside the time and place in which they operate¹⁵ and to claim that they may be understood without reference to such chronological and local factors is to demonstrate a naive faith in the kind of absolute terms or pure elements that can lay little claim to existence in human history.

That being the case, caution must be exercised in identifying the precise and unique characteristics and achievements of any Second

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- 13 Among other important publications representing a variety of approaches are to be numbered *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, eds S. Safrai and M. Stern (2 vols; Assen and Philadelphia, 1974–76); *Cambridge History of Judaism*, eds W. D. Davies, L. Finkelstein and J. Sturdy (3 vols published; Cambridge, 1984–99; fourth volume scheduled for publication in 2006); H. Maccoby, *Early Rabbinic Writings* (Cambridge, 1988); *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. E. Stone (Assen and Philadelphia, 1984); S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia, 1987); *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder (Assen and Philadelphia, 1988); E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE–66CE* (London and Philadelphia, 1992); and L. L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 129–49.
 - 14 H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), p. 58, cited by Carr (see n. 2 above), p. 115.
 - 15 Pace the view of E. Fleischer as expressed in his article 'On the beginnings of obligatory Jewish prayer', *Tarbiz* 59 (1990), p. 401 and his response to my criticism in the next volume of the same journal (see n. 1 above).

Temple group no less than those of any individuals of the period. In the first place, the sources, both primary and secondary, that provide the basic information about such groups and individuals may rarely be taken at face value (which sources can?) and without reference to the contexts from which they sprang into being. Instead of happily and naively welcoming all the data that they provide, one must ask oneself who compiled these traditions, how they were disseminated and with what readership or audience in mind. It is equally important to understand the motivations and ideologies that lay behind their creation and to uncover the inevitable layers of later rewriting that cover the earlier strata of records.

At the same time, one should take into careful consideration the fact that reasons given in the literature for the development of a particular tradition, especially of a religious nature, may bear little resemblance to the original impetus for its emergence and that the interpreter must exercise not only scepticism about the available data but also an imagination lively enough to attempt a reconstruction of the circumstances in which they were created. Just because the writers of the period may not have seen the events of their day in terms of social, political and economic history or religious phenomenology, does not mean that we are precluded from doing so in our own. Consequently, the definition of particular groups with sharply delineated characteristics, the description of central institutions with clear-cut roles to play, the employment of specific terminology with overtones that belong to a different age, and the attribution of revolutionary creativity to a few individuals are all highly dubious methods for the historian to pursue.¹⁶ One need only mention the terms 'Pharisees', 'Synagogue', 'Halakhah' and 'Men of the Great Synagogue' for an immediate appreciation of the message that I am trying to convey.

Liturgical forms

And so, finally, to the Second Temple period liturgy and to the factors and considerations that are to be taken into account in any putative notions about the nature of that phenomenon. If we can justifiably ask

¹⁶ Examples of such methods are to be found in the simple acceptance of the definitions offered by Josephus for the various Jewish philosophies of his age; in the views of Safrai in his articles on 'The Temple', 'The Synagogue' and 'Education and the Study of Torah' in *The Jewish People* (see n. 13 above), pp. 865–970 and in 'The Temple and the Divine Service' in *The World History of the Jewish People. First Series: Ancient Times. Volume Seven: The Herodian Period*, eds M. Avi-Yonah and Z. Baras (New Brunswick, 1975), pp. 284–337; and in the evaluation by Fleischer of Rabban Gamliel's role in the article 'On the beginnings' cited in n. 15 above.