
With these three volumes, the fifth seder of Neusner's great work on the Mishnah is brought to an end; the other sedarim follow in uninterrupted sequence (the third seder, Nashim, is in the meantime also already in print). Volume IV deals, in the by now known and proven method of the short and pregnant commentary, with the tractates Arakhim and Temurah and vol. V with the tractates Keritot, Meilah, Tamid, Middot and Qinnin.

It is a pity that, as before, the author has waived a form and redaction critical analysis of the seder, i.e., an equivalent to volume XXI of *Purities*. It is certainly understandable and justified that Neusner has striven for a "severe economy of intellect and restricted conceptual initiative" (vol. VI, p. 7), and it is doubtless also correct that such an analysis would bring few new results "because the documents in the main, though not entirely, are formulated in the penultimate stages of redaction" (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, it is only an exact form and redaction critical research that can guard against unfounded and subjective judgements, which Neusner in fact opposes and so brilliantly refutes in *Purities*. Thus, for example, his reconstruction of the "basic version" of the narrative tractate Tamid (vol. V, p. 149) appears to be fairly arbitrary, and R. Sarason's decisive rejection of this reconstruction (*ibid.* n.1. "I totally disagree with this theory of the tractate, and view the narration . . . as basically continuous") justified. Another example is Middot, where the more precise formal structure of the tractate falls victim to an over-abrupt curtailment in the meagre commentary on the contents (cf. p. 173, n.1).

Volume VI constitutes the most important and most interesting part of the study. Here, the Mishnaic system of cult and sanctuary is unfolded in various, and from the methodical point of view clearly differentiated, stages. Following a short introduction to the Temple Scroll by B. A. Levine (pp. xvii-xx)—which is not incorporated into the study—Part 1 describes the system as a whole and compares it with the Bible and also with the early-Christian concept of sacrifice and Temple worship (pp. 13-46). In Part 2, the most extensive section ("The Formation of the Tractates", pp. 49-212), the individual tractates, in each case arranged according to themes, are subdivided chronologically. The enquiry seeks to determine which thematic statements are to be allocated to the period prior to A.D. 70, to that of Yavneh (A.D. 70 until the Bar Kokhba revolt), to that of Usha (from the Bar Kokhba revolt to around A.D. 170), and to the age from Usha to the final redaction of the Mishnah (around A.D. 170-200). The method is that used successfully in *Purities*, "of asking about the relationship in both conception and attribution between one set of materials and another intersecting set of materials" (vol. VI, p. 6).

The outcome of this research is summarised in Part 3 ("The Unfolding of the Law", pp. 215-269) from systematic viewpoints, in that the sacrifice and cult halakhot of the individual periods is presented independently of the layout of the tractate. For the period prior to A.D. 70, it turns out that in contrast to *Purities* there is no trace of any kind of system at all: "Before A.D. 70, there is virtually no evidence at all that anything like a system of ideas and rules on Holy Things was under consideration among those groups which transmitted their legacy to Yavneh and Usha and, ultimately, to Rabbi himself" (p. 216).
As might be expected, another picture emerges for the Yavneh period. It is then that the most significant principles and structure of the seder were established, and a considerable part of the tractates seems, in nucleus at least, to go back to the Yavneh period (Zebahim, Bekhorot, Temurah, Keritot, Meilah and Qinnin). It is, however, remarkable how little new material the Mishnah contains: "It is only rarely that we uncover an idea which is generative in Mishnah's earliest systematic stratum, Yavneh, and which cannot be located in Scripture or in the result of a single process of exegesis of Scripture" (p. 221). This emphatic recourse to the Bible implies, nevertheless, a very significant statement, namely the rejection of the priests (ironically, in the most "priestly" of the Mishnah's themes) in favour of the rabbis: "Now, after so many, many centuries, the work of definition begins way back, in Scripture's facts, and not in current priestly traditions. What a repudiation of the priests!" (p. 242). The priests are reduced "to the status of robots and automatons" (p. 240). "The Temple is holy. Its priests therefore are indispensable. But the governance of the Temple is in accord with Torah, and it is the sage who knows Torah and therefore applies it" (p. 241).

In the Usha period, admittedly, much new material was added, but "few genuinely new ideas on Holy Things" (p. 268). Neusner dates the tractates Menahot, Hullin, Arakhin, Tamid and Middot essentially to Usha, but ranks only Tamid and Middot as really new tractates and as typical of Usha. "The real importance of the work of the Ushans therefore is in affirming what the Yavneans had begun, but doing so under conditions radically different from those which had confronted the earlier masters" (p. 269).

This reconstruction of the Yavneh and Usha strata is as interesting as it is suggestive. The decisive conceptual difference between both periods is not obtained from an analysis of the Mishnah but from the (presupposed) radical turning-point of the Bar Kokhba revolt. In the Yavneh stratum, Neusner discovers a "hopeful mood", an expression of hope that the Temple might be rebuilt. The Usha stratum, on the other hand, came into being on the basis of the Temple's final destruction, i.e., of a radically altered situation. This is certainly correct for Usha, but it is questionable whether the allegedly more hopeful perspective of Yavneh can really be justified historically (not to mention whether it emerges from an analysis of the seder), or whether the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 was not for the redactors of the Yavneh stratum just as drastic an event as the transformation of Jerusalem into Aelia Capitolina was for the redactors of the Usha stratum. This would transfer to the plane of the Yavneh stratum the problem, intensified and reinforced, of why this seder came into being at all.

In the final section ("The System in Context", pp. 273-90), Neusner attempts to answers the following question: Whatever was it that induced the rabbis, in the political situation of the second century A.D., to edit a seder on, of all things, the Temple and the cult? The question—and herein rests Neusner's rhetorical and intellectual mastery—is formulated with progressive sharpness until the answer is at last arrived at.

The Temple is the centre of the cosmos. With its destruction and the transformation of Jerusalem into the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina, Judaism lost its centre. The compilation of a Mishnah seder on Temple and cult in this situation is therefore in the last resort nonsense. "Mishnah presents a map of nonsense: ultimate seriousness about never-never-land, endless, concrete, and intimate detail about a
utopian cosmos—things which are not and for now cannot be . . . Our division is incongruous to its world, wholly out of joint with the reality of the people who made it, irrelevant to the everyday alternatives facing those to whom it speaks . . . The fantasy is complete. Mishnah therefore maps out a territory wholly of the imagination, a realm of the unreal. Not only is map not territory. Map also is all one has, for now, there is no territory’’ (p. 274 f.).

This “nonsense” of the fifth seder of the Mishnah is heightened if one compares the latter with the Bible, with theories on sacrifice in general, and with contemporary early Christian writings. The Mishnah develops no deep exploratory theories concerning the essence of sacrificial worship but says basically what the Bible has already said. “All there said is right, and all that is right is said there’’ (p. 277).

The question turned thus into a paradox includes the reply: “If then, we ask our document how it proposes to rebuild the world, it must answer, ‘By changing everything while pretending—acting as if—nothing has changed.’ . . . The pretense that nothing has changed in five hundred years . . . and that the ancient system goes forward unaffected by change and by time is the most eloquent apologetic’’ (p. 281 f.). The Mishnah’s statement consists of an assertion that in face of a radically altered world, nothing (essential) has changed. Here lies the sense of the “nonsense”. It is not what it says that is new, but when it says it. “Mishnah thematically and conceptually does not open toward a new, utopian religious situation. Mishnah in substance turns backward and inward, to an old, this-worldly situation. Mishnah appears in the present context as a mediating document. It stands between the old and the new. It refers backward. But in the very nature of its accessibility to a broad world of Jews, it opens out toward the community. Now the focus will be upon people, not place, anywhere, not somewhere. Mishnah in function appropriates human models of society, and not heavenly models of cosmology’’ (p. 284). The moment that the (ancient) cosmological system reaches its highest fulfilment, the (new) anthropocentric system comes into being in which the rabbis, and no longer the priests, constitute the final authority. “By including in Mishnah a division on sacrifice and sanctuary, the sages address Israelite society with a message. The message is that cosmic order is not to be replicated. But it can at least be studied in sages’ words. The Temple cannot be regained. It can at least be remembered in vivid detail supplied by sages. If there is no access to the holy place, there is at least engagement with the master of the rules of the holy place” (p. 289).

The change from a cosmo-centric to an anthropocentric society in rabbinic Judaism of the second century A.D. is thus the principal issue of the analysis of the fifth seder of the Mishnah. The cosmic significance of the Temple, with its priesthood effecting harmony between heaven and earth, is superseded by the new society of the rabbis and of the people of Israel, which guarantees harmony between heaven and earth in performance of the Torah (through Mishnah). This finding tallies with those resulting from other studies in the realm of rabbinic Judaism (e.g., in angelology, where compared with early Judaism there was a change from a cosmological to an anthropocentric view of the world), and opens a fruitful path for further research into Mishnah and rabbinic literature as a whole.

All in all, Neusner’s History of the Mishnaic Law of Holy Things is most stimulating. (This applies above all to volume VI.) His technique of repeated and increasingly pointed questioning does not of course make things easy for the reader since the answer does not ensue in a straight line but as it were in concentric circles.
It entails a wealth of intellectual possibilities (therein lies its fascination) which are, however, only partly utilised and developed, and are often merely rephrased in the form of puns. For readers who cannot, or do not wish to, work through all the volumes, we would recommend the pregnant summary of the most important of the findings under the title, "Map without Territory: Mishnah's System of Sacrifice and Sanctuary" in History of Religions 19 (1979), pp. 103-27.

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With these volumes, Professor Neusner reaches the half-way point of his exposition of the thought-system of Mishnah, having earlier investigated both the thought-system and the literary history of the order of Tohorot (cf. JJS 27 (1976), pp. 212-16; 28 (1977), p. 100). The latter concern is set aside in the volumes on Kodashim (cf. JJS 31 (1980), pp. 244-46) and Nashim, since the author sees no likelihood that further results may be obtained from it. The approaches in the latter two orders are closely parallel. The texts of Mishnah and Tosefta are translated pericope by pericope, in the form-analytical style which Neusner has made familiar. This first commentary on the text (as the author himself describes it) is usually followed by a second "explanation", designed further to elicit the historical, simple meaning, and the relationships between pericopae on which the "system" is built. Neusner now regards the Tosefta as rather less important than hitherto: it attracts less explanation and is viewed entirely as complementary to the Mishnah, without systemic integrity of its own. The last volume of each series presents the author's views as to the nature of the overall system of the Order, the process of formation of each of its tractates, the resultant picture of the "unfolding of the law" (in terms of a tripartite periodization: before 70, from 70 to 140, and from 140 to 170), and its meaning in relation to its historical context. It is thus easy for the reader to compare the findings on Nashim and Kodashim, quite apart from the explicit comparisons (encompassing also the earlier work on Purities) which are often found in Women.

The legal historian will discover much of interest in these volumes, despite the author's scepticism about historical or comparative approaches to Jewish law other than those which he defines for the purposes of his project. For he provides a comprehensive account of the sequence of materials now preserved in the Mishnah, thus taking a vitally important step towards the reconstruction of the internal history of Tannaitic law. Aspects of this reconstruction—and even of the methodological premises on which it is based—will give rise to debate: Neusner's perception of the internal coherence of sections of the data has led him to an increasingly conservative attitude towards attributions (particularly of Ushan masters); he places great emphasis on logical priority (not always an objective judgment) as a guide to temporal sequence; and seems to downgrade the post-170 generation. Nevertheless,