

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

M.A.

The Jews of late Antiquity and the Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism

COURSE CODE : HEBRG070

DATE : 08-MAY-06

TIME : 10.00

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours

MA Examination
HEBRG070: The Jews of late Antiquity and the emergence of rabbinic Judaism

Answer TWO questions from EACH section

SECTION ONE

Answer two of the following questions: [30 marks each]

1. Explain the importance of defining the term 'rabbi' in the context of the 1st – 6th centuries CE.
2. Assess the impact of EITHER the first revolt (66-70 CE) OR the second revolt (132-5 CE) against Rome on the development of rabbinic Judaism.
3. Assess the originality of Rabbi's (R. Yehudah ha-Nasi) contribution to the rabbinic movement.
4. How dominant was rabbinic Judaism in the Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish communities of the Amoraic period?
5. Describe and discuss the complexity of Babylonian-Palestinian rabbinic relations.
6. To what extent do the Mishnah, Palestinian Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud reveal a progressive evolution in rabbinic literary activity?
7. How informative can rabbinic literature be to the modern historian?

SECTION TWO

Explain and discuss the historical context, contents, and significance of two of the following passages: [20 marks each]

8.

6. The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, O ye Pharisees, for ye say, 'The Holy Scriptures render the hands unclean', [and] 'The writings of Hamiram' do not render the hands unclean'. Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai said, Have we naught against the Pharisees save this!—for lo, they say, 'The bones of an ass are clean, and the bones of Johanan the High Priest are unclean'. They said to him, As is our love for them so is their uncleanness—that no man make spoons of the bones of his father or mother. He said to them, Even so the Holy Scriptures: as is our love for them so is their uncleanness; [whereas] the writings of Hamiram which are held in no account do not render the hands unclean.

7. The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, O ye Pharisees, for ye declare clean an unbroken stream of liquid.⁸ The Pharisees say, We cry out against you, O ye Sadducees, for ye declare clean a channel of water that flows from a burial ground.

TURN OVER

9.

.. Our Rabbis taught: This *halachah* was hidden from [i.e., forgotten by] the Bene Bathyra.⁶ On one occasion the fourteenth [of Nisan] fell on the Sabbath, [and] they forgot and did not know whether the Passover overrides the Sabbath or not. Said they, 'Is there any man who knows whether the Passover overrides the Sabbath or not?' They were told, 'There is a certain man who has come up from Babylonia, Hillel the Babylonian by name, who served¹ the two greatest men of the time,² and he knows whether the Passover overrides the Sabbath or not'. [Thereupon] they summoned him [and] said to him, 'Do you know whether the Passover overrides the Sabbath or not?' 'Have we then [only] one Passover during the year which overrides the Sabbath?' replied he to them, 'Surely we have many more than two hundred Passovers during the year which override the Sabbath!' Said they to him, 'How do you know it?'⁴ He answered them, '*In its appointed time*' is stated in connection with the Passover, and '*In its appointed time*'⁵ is stated in connection with the *tamid*; just as '*Its appointed time*' which is said in connection with the *tamid* overrides the Sabbath, so '*Its appointed time*' which is said in connection with the Passover overrides the Sabbath. Moreover, it follows *a minori*; if the *tamid*, [the omission of] which is not punished by *kareth*, overrides the Sabbath, then the Passover, [neglect of] which is punished by *kareth*,⁶ is it not logical that it overrides the Sabbath! They immediately set him at their head and appointed him *Nasi* [Patriarch] over them,⁷ and he was sitting and lecturing the whole day on the laws of Passover. He began rebuking them with words. Said he to them, 'What caused it for you that I should come up from Babylonia to be a *Nasi* over you? It was your indolence, because you did not serve the two greatest men of the time, Shemaiah and Abtalyon.' Said they to him, 'Master, what if a man forgot and did not bring a knife on the eve of the Sabbath?' 'I have heard this law,' he answered, 'but have forgotten it. But leave it to Israel: if they are not prophets, yet they are the children of prophets!' On the morrow, he whose Passover was a lamb stuck it [the knife] in its wool; he whose Passover was a goat stuck it between its horns. He saw the incident and recollected the *halachah* and said, 'Thus have I received the tradition from the mouth[s] of Shemaiah and Abtalyon.'

CONTINUED

10.

And the story is told of a certain disciple who came and asked R. Joshua: 'What is [the status of] of the Evening Prayer?' 'It is optional,' he replied. He asked Rabban Gamaliel but he replied: 'It is obligatory.' Said he: 'Tomorrow at the Meeting House (*bet ha-va 'ad*) rise and ask what the law is in this matter.' So on the morrow the disciple rose and asked Rabban Gamaliel: 'What is the Evening Prayer?' 'It is obligatory,' he replied. Said he: 'But R. Joshua has told me that it is optional?' Said Rabban Gamaliel to R. Joshua: 'Do you say it is optional?' 'No,' he replied. Said he: 'Rise to your feet that they may testify against you.' So Rabban Gamaliel sat there expounding while R. Joshua remained standing till all the people murmured and said to Hutzpit the *turgeman*: 'Dismiss the people.' Then they said to R. Zinon, the official (*hazan*), 'Begin to recite', and he began to recite: 'For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?' (Nahum 3:19).

So they went and appointed R. Eleazar b. Azariah to the *yeshivah*.¹⁴ He was only sixteen years old, yet his whole head became full of grey hair. R. Akiba sat there in distress, saying: 'It is not that he: [R. Eleazar b.

Azariah] is a greater son of the Torah [i.e. more learned] than I, but he is a son of great men and I am not. Happy the man whose ancestors bring merit to him. Happy the man who has a peg upon which to hang.' Of what did this peg of R. Eleazar b. Azariah consist? He was tenth in line from Ezra.

And how many benches were there? R. Jacob b. Sisi said: 'There were eighty benches of scholars (*talmidey hakhamim*) apart from those who stood behind the barrier.' R. Jose b. Avun said: 'There were 300 benches apart from those who stood behind the barrier.'

As we have learnt:¹⁵ On the day they appointed R. Eleazar b. Azariah to the *yeshivah*. We learn there:¹⁶ R. Eleazar expounded this in the presence of the Sages in the vineyard at Jabneh. Was there a vineyard there? But this refers to the scholars who sat in rows like vines in a vineyard.

11.

וכשקדשו את השנה באושה, ביום הראשון עבר ר' יוחנן בן ברוקה ואמ' כדברי ר' יוחנן בן נורי, אמ' רבן שמעון בן גמליאל לא היינו נוהגין כן ביבנה. ביום השני עבר ר' חנינא בנו של ר' יוסה הגלילי ואמ' כדברי ר' עקיבא, ואמ' רבן שמעון בן גמליאל כך היינו נוהגין ביבנה.

12.

דבי נשיאה אוקמו דיינא דלא הוה גמיר. א"ל ליהודה בר נחמני מתורגמניה דריש לקיש, קום עליה באמורא. קם גחין עליה ולא א"ל ולא מדי. פתח

ואמר: "הוי אומר לעץ הקיצה עורי לאבן דומם הוא יורה הנה הוא תפוש זהב וכסף וכל רוח אין בקרבו" (חבקוק ב, יט). ועתיד הקב"ה ליפרע ממעמידין, שנאמר "וה' בהיכל קדשו הס מפניו כל הארץ" (שם, ב, כ). אמר ריש לקיש, כל המעמיד דיין שאינו הגון כאילו נוטע אשרה בישראל.

TURN OVER

13.

In the days of R. Joshua b. Hananiah the [Roman] State ordered the Temple to be rebuilt. Pappus and Lulianus set tables from Acco as far as Antioch and provided those

who came up from the Exile [i.e. Babylon] with all their needs. Thereupon Samaritans went and warned [the Emperor]: 'Be it known now unto the king, that, if this rebellious city be builded and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute (mindah), impost (belo) or toll—halak' (Ezra IV, 13): 'mindah' is land tax; 'belo' is poll-tax¹; 'halak' is *androtiga*.² 'Yet what can I do,' said he, 'seeing that I have already given the order?' 'Send a command to them that they must change its site or add five cubits thereto or lessen it by five cubits, and then they will withdraw from it of their own accord.' Now the Community [of Israel] was assembled in the plain of Beth Rimmon; when the [royal] dispatches arrived, they burst out weeping, and wanted to revolt against the [Roman] power. Thereupon they [the Sages] decided: Let a wise man go and pacify the congregation. Then let R. Joshua b. Hanania go, as he is a master of Scripture. So he went and harangued them: A wild lion killed [an animal], and a bone stuck in his throat. Thereupon he proclaimed: 'I will reward anyone who removes it.' An Egyptian heron, which has a long beak, came and pulled it out and demanded his reward. 'Go,' he replied, 'you will be able to boast that you entered the lion's mouth in peace and came out in peace' [unscathed]. Even so, Let us be satisfied that we entered into dealings with this people in peace and have emerged in peace.³

14.

And in the days of Rabbi [Yehudah the Patriarch] Rav emigrated to Babylonia in the year 530 of the Selucid era, which we are accustomed to use [= 219 C.E.].

R. Shila was head of the rabbis here [in Babylonia]. Now the head of the rabbis in Babylonia was called *resh sidra*—as it says [Yoma 20b], "Rav happened to be in the locality of R. Shila and served as his amora."

When R. Shila died, there were Rav and Samuel. Rav gave precedence to Samuel and did not want to be his superior and have him sit before him. Nor did Samuel want to be Rav's superior and have Rav sit before him, for Rav was several years older than Samuel.

Because of this Rav left Samuel in Nehardea, which was the locality of the latter and a place of Torah, and went far away to a place lacking in Torah, viz., Sura, which was called Mata Mehasya. There were many Israelites there who did not even know the prohibition of [mixing] milk and meat. Rav said, "I will dwell here until Torah increases in this place." This is explained in [Chapter] *kol habbasar* [Hullin. 110a].

ובימי⁵ דרבי⁶ נהית⁷ רב לבבל
בשנת תקיל למנין * (מן) [יין]
דרנילנא " ביה.

והוה הכא¹⁰ ר'י¹¹ שילא¹² רישא¹³
דרבנן והוה מקרי רישא דרבנן¹⁴ בבבל
ריש סידרא ואמרינן רב איקלע לאתריה
דר' שילא קם עליה כאמורי¹⁵.
וכך נחת¹⁶ נפשיה דר' שילא הו
רב ושמואל ואדבריה רב לשמואל ולא¹⁷
איצטבי לאותוביה¹⁸ קמיה¹⁹ ולמהוי
רישא עלוהי²⁰ ואף שמואל נמי לא
איצטבי לאותוביה¹⁸ לרב קמיה ולמהוי²¹
רישא עליה דהוה רב²² קשיש²³
משמואל שנים רבות

משום הכין²⁴ שבקיה רב לשמואל
בנהרדעא דהי²⁵ דוכתיה ומקום התורה
ואיתרחק²⁶ לדוכתא קלא הוה אית²⁷ בה
תורה והיא²⁸ סורה דמקריא²⁹ מתא מחסיה
דהוה³⁰ נשישי ישראל התם [נמי]³¹ והוה
בהון דאסילו³² אסור בשר בחלב לא³³
ידעין ואמר³⁴ איתבי הכא עד³⁵ היכין³⁶
שחרבה תורה³⁷ בהא³⁸ דוכתא כי הוה
מעשה³⁹ דמפרש בכל הבשר⁴⁰

END OF PAPER