

The Origin of Judaism as an Institutional Religion: Reading of the Shema in the Public Sacrifice

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Introduction:

It is usually assumed in the history of monotheistic religions that Judaism may be looked upon as an ethnic religion or a religion of ritual practice while Christianity has become an individual religion through erasing the boundaries of ethnic or national Jewish society as to be universally accepted by non-Jews. However, from the perspective of the history of ancient Roman religion, both Jewish and Christian religious movements have made a crucial impact on its development. It seems commonly assumed among the scholars of Roman religion and Islam that both Judaism and Christianity have invented a new concept of religion in the sense that an individual can choose their own religion as their identity, thus becoming a member of that community. It should also be noted that the concept of religion has changed from a religion of ritual *praxis* to a religion of faith focused on one sublime heavenly being¹. Examining meticulously the Christian texts of the second and third centuries, Rüpke pointed out that to speak of the Jews and

1 I have relied primarily upon these three books: J. North, *Roman Religion*, New Surveys in the Classics No.30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. P. Berky, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); J. Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion*, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Christians of the second century AD as distinct groups would be anachronistic². Based on Rüpke's observations, I learned the importance of seeing historical phenomena from different angles, which allowed me to be conscious of our preconceptions and conventions of knowledge and to recognize that Judaism of the period of early Christianity appears as an institutional religion at its core in the sense that an individual can claim membership in the religious community through the process of initiation.

Therefore, it is more appropriate to define Judaism and Christianity as religious movements in hyphenated Judaeo-Christian religions during the first centuries of the Common Era. As scholars of early Christianity do not discuss such a perspective, this new view has aroused my concern in elucidating the aspect of institutional religion in Judaism during the late Second Temple period, which coincides approximately with the period associated with Jesus Christ. In this article, the author defines the term 'institutional religion' as an autonomous community founded on the idea of religious salvation through faith in some supernatural being. The membership of this group is regulated by the process of initiation.

Why or in which aspect was Judaism looked upon as an institutional religion? Usually, it means that a person can choose it as their personal religion. However, Judaism was mainly looked upon as a religion of temple ritual or an ethnic religion. It indeed had another aspect of religion of the Scripture which is usually thought of as an element of constituting an institutional religion. However, what aspect of Judaism resulted in its impact as an institutional religion? To clarify the matter, the viewpoint of Lived Ancient Religion (LAR) seems to be a very appropriate approach in identifying exactly which aspect had the competency to develop durable faith and identity. The methodology of LAR, as elucidated and demonstrated by Rüpke in the sphere of the ancient Roman religion, is to try to grasp the experiences, conceptions, and practices that people made their own

2 Rüpke, *Pantheon*, 358.

and used according to their circumstances, extending their communications with immediately implausible actors like deities and ancestors³. Accordingly, I will enquire how Jewish people began to perceive themselves as Jews and established an enduring identity based on Judaism as they performed some innovative acts of sacrifice or as they got engaged in wars against surrounding powers, such as the Seleucid kingdom in the Hasmonean revolt or the Roman Empire in the Jewish War. Then, I will examine Judaism in terms of institutional religion in the late Second Temple period⁴.

1. Three Aspects of Jewish Identity in the late Second Temple period:

Here, I assume as a working hypothesis three aspects of the Jewish identity of a person in terms of belonging to a community in Jewish society. The first aspect concerns Jewish identity (ID) in terms of the relationship between the inside and the outside of the Jewish people. Was it possible for a person from the outside of Jewish society to be accepted as a Jew into it? The second aspect concerns Jewish identity (ID) in terms of the relationship between a community within Jewish society and the entirety of Jewish people. Was there any well-defined community within Jewish society at that time? If so, what was the procedure for a Jew to become a member of a sect? As far as these two aspects are concerned, we have some information about historical facts in Jewish history at that time.

3 Rüpke, *Pantheon*, 211.

4 Being encouraged by the perspective of Lived Ancient Religion advocated by Rüpke, this article is a total revision of the thesis of the paper presented with the title “The Historical Significance of a Newly Discovered Synagogue in Galilee, Israel” at the XI Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies, Krakow 2018. The Japanese edition of this paper appeared in the following article: H. Ichikawa, “Historical Origins of the Two Trends in the Monotheistic Religions” (Tokyo: *Studies on Jewish Life and Culture*, No.33, Japan Society for Jewish Studies, 2019) 3–12.

As for the first aspect, we know that there were proselytes or ‘converts’ to Judaism designated as *proselytos* in Greek. The word is usually derived from a translation of the Hebrew word ‘*Ger*’ in the Hebrew Bible. The ‘*Ger*’ means a foreign sojourner living in the Israelite community who was to be treated as a companion. This word was usually appropriated in the later Hellenistic period to denote a convert to Judaism in modern scholarly and general literature. There is a debate and controversy about whether the conversion was forced by the Hasmonean rulers when they conquered areas surrounding Judea, i.e., Idumea and Galilee. In contrast, the Samaritans rejected it when their temple was destroyed. We know that the Hasmonean dynasty endeavored to conquer almost all the land of Israel that had been ruled in the period of the First Kingdom of David and Solomon, as was attested in the Book of Samuel and the Book of the Kings. It may be advisable to recall the remark of the late Professor M. Stern that the Hasmonean dynasty officially called themselves the Republic of High Priest X and Jewish people, and that Jews took all the Land of Israel as the territory of Jehuda⁵. They conquered Idumea in the age of Simon the High Priest by 134 BCE, and Galilee was later conquered at the age of John Hyrcanus by 104 BCE. As it is well known, King Herod, an Idumaean, was a convert to Judaism. The Land of Israel should be a sacred soil in which no pagans should settle so that the indigenous people of those areas should become the *Gerim*, foreign sojourners according to the precepts of the Bible. They could be Jews as far as they followed the specific ways of Jewish life. As we know from the Apocryphal literature of the Old Testament, Jews at that time were firmly conscious of their own specific distinctive cultural characteristics, calling it *Ioudaismos* in the Greek language. They followed the traditional practices of their forefathers⁶. Therefore, those Idumeans and Galileans may be

5 M. Stern and S. Safrai, *The History of Jewish People: Ancient period II, Vol. 2*, trans. T. Ishida (Tokyo: Rokko-Shuppan, 1976) 83.

6 See, i.e., M.S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997) 9–10.

understood as the assimilated people or the naturalized people in the modern sense of the term. It is not necessarily a religious conversion but rather a naturalization into a different nation or people. However, if we would like to take it as a religious conversion, certain factors still need to be included: the notion of faith or a belief in an invisible divine being and the specific relationship between humans and such a being⁷. It is usually assumed that the Hebrew Bible has no words for religion or faith. If a Jew became concerned with such thinking in hammering out the term Judaism, we are now facing the issue the self-consciousness of Jews and their shared identity at the time of the Hasmonean Era.

Concerning the second aspect, we have already observed several very famous groups within Jewish society during that period, namely, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, a particular group of John the Baptist, and finally, the early Christians, and so forth. As far as we could assume, we could add a group of Dead Sea Sect since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 and its aftermath. F. Josephus took these first three groups as philosophical schools, comparing them to the Greek philosophical schools in the Roman world during his time. The Pharisees and Sadducees were taken as much the same categories as in the Gospels or as two major political parties in the Jewish Sanhedrin according to the descriptions of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Rabbinic literature usually makes use of the term the Sages for designating rabbis or the Torah scholars, almost equivalent to the Pharisees. We have well-known traditions testifying that at the time of Hillel the Elder and his rival Shammai, the number of disciples increased, and they formed two major schools of Beth Shammai and Bet Hillel, both of which were disputing concerning the ritual procedures of Jewish table manners⁸. If we take this

7 On the constructive nature of the concept of Jewish conversion in the Talmudic literature, see J. Sakurai, "Rethinking the Bavli's "A Convert is like a Newborn child": Rabbinic Conversion as Redefinition of Fictive Kinship" *AJBI* Vol XLI, 2015"

8 Mishnah Shabbat, Chapter 8. On the increasing number of disciples of Hillel, see *Tosefta* Sanhedrin 7:1.

view of philosophical or scholarly group, we have to ask whether those Pharisees might have viewed themselves as a closed religious community or maintained the idea of having a specific religious identity shared by all Jews. In this respect, the particular reference to the *Am ha-Aretz*, ‘people of the Land,’ which were designated by the Pharisees, is to be implied. This notion signifies those Jews who should obey and adhere to the Precepts of the Torah, especially the laws of purity and impurity and those laws of tithing sacred portions of the earthly products, but would not do so. They are Jews but do not follow the Pharisaic ideal. In this case, the Pharisees could have imagined a kind of Jewish identity in mind that should have presupposed some notion of the Jews as a shared religious community in terms of the special relation with the God of the Israelites.

Contrasted to that outlook was a sect movement of the conscious, deliberate community, the so-called Dead Sea Sect, with the rigid “Manual of Discipline.” According to this text, they looked upon themselves as the people of Light as opposed to the rest of mankind as the people of Darkness. They were sure that the Temple of Jerusalem was contaminated by a new illegitimate high priesthood so that the blessing of God could not reach the earth and all the world might be destined to desolation, being ruled by the Evil forces. As they alone could keep the laws of God to be clean and righteous, the final war would lead them to salvation. The Qumran community rejected the validity of the only legitimate temple cult in Jerusalem and criticized it for having reversed the value system of the sacred city structure. The origin of the city structure can be traced back to the dualism of city and wilderness depicted in the cultic performance of the scapegoat on the day of Atonement. It is probable that the act of the high priest of determining the goat to be allotted to the demon in the wilderness gave rise to the belief that God differentiated between good and evil before the creation⁹. In this context, the

9 H. Ichikawa, “Kumuran-Shudan no Sekaikan: Dou-jidaishi-teki: Bunmyaku niyoru Kaishaku [On the Historical Context of the Cosmology of the Qumran Sect]”, (*Tsuku-*

dichotomy between them and the rest of the world is more rigid than the dichotomy between Israelites and the rest of the world. We cannot tell whether they viewed all Jewish people as a clearly outlined community, but we are inclined to assume that, in general, the Jewish society at that time was rigidly defined.

However, can we take it for granted? Jewish people had already dispersed to many areas around the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East since the Babylonian Exile and even more extensively so after the Hellenistic cultural expansion. Therefore, we would still consider the third aspect, which focuses on whether Jewish people had consciously defined their overall society in legal, social, or even religious terms during that period and how far Jews had been familiar with that notion. Scholars have already examined the issue and worked out some notions concerning the nature of Jewish society in its entirety during that period.

2. Jewish Identity in terms of Jewish Society in its entirety

Perhaps, we assume that the Israelites in Judea could have defined their Jewish identity in its entirety, at least in the late Second Temple period literature. First of all, the Greek term for Judaism was invented in the course of the history of this age. As stated above, due to the clash with Hellenistic cultural impact, Jewish people realized the different nature of their own society and called it 'Ioudaismos,' i.e., Judaism, which is found, for example, in the Second Book of Maccabees 2:21. While according to this passage, the term was reported to have been used by a

ba-Daigaku Chiiki-Kenkyu[*Tsukuba University Area Studies*] Vol.7, 1989),165–185). The summary of this article was later read at the XIII World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem in 2001, in the title “The Historical Context of the Cosmology of “The Manual of Discipline.” This view was originally worked out by the impetus from thought-breaking insight of D. Flusser’s book, *Megilot Midbar Yehudah ve-haisiim* [*The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*], (Broadcasting University Library, the Ministry of Defense, Israel 1985).

Greek author named Jason of Cyrene, the concept of Judaism overarching Jewish identity may have been shared by Jews and their neighbors. It consisted internally of the social hierarchy, on top of which resides the High Priest and some peculiar practices of Circumcision, the Sabbath, Kashrut, and the prohibition of idolatry. As we know, scholars already tried to suggest such notions as ‘common Judaism’ or ‘natural Judaic community’ among others, to elucidate the distinctive nature of Judaism¹⁰. These scholarly notions are contrasted to the deliberately self-conscious communities like a movement of the Dead Sea Sect with the “Manual of Discipline.”

These notions are helpful for us to grasp the cultural traits of Jewish people in its entirety. However, we do not know how far an individual member would have felt obliged to fulfill these practices, especially among the third group of lay Israelites, and we do not also know to what extent they had a commitment to the divine teachings and the Jewish society in its entirety. This is the question of the inner experiences of integrity, righteousness, and ethical attitudes to divine salvation, which were encapsulated in the sacred Scriptures. Here, we have to enquire about the faith of the Jews during that period.

It is said that the Hebrew language in the Bible did not have words denoting faith or religion. Only later, the Hebrew word *Emunah*, meaning faith or belief, and the word *Dat*, denoting religion, began to be used¹¹. Such usage occurred precisely when the Jewish sages began to transmit their divine teachings, and Christianity emerged among Jewish people. For example, we find several sentences with such a meaning. With ‘*Emunah*’ in the sense of the feeling of the heart of a believer, we have a sentence in Tractate Chulin in the Babylonian Talmud, that “There is no *Emunah* in the idolators of the stars,” and with ‘*Emunah*’ in the sense

10 The notion of common Judaism was given by E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE–66CE*, London, Philadelphia, 1992. That of ‘natural Judaic community’ is from M. S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism*, Prentice Hall, 1997.

11 The meanings of the word and its usages are cited from the Even Shoshan’s *New Dictionary of Hebrew Language*, Kiryat-Sefer, Jerusalem, 1983.

of fundamental principles of religion in which humans believe, we have a phrase in the Midrash of Exodus Rabbah, ‘the *Emunah* which the Israelites inherited.’ With ‘Dat’ in the sense of faith or religion, we have in the Tractate Sukkah of the Babylonian Talmud that “The story of Miriam who converted her Dat” and in the Tractate Pesachim that “Change of *Dat* renders it unfit.” In the course of history in the Second Temple period, the sense of belonging to a specific community had changed to require new notions to denote their sense of identity. What spheres can we examine in pursuit of the inner experience and the faith of individual Jews? The perspective and methodology of the Lived Ancient Religion will serve to grasp such a circumstance, for this view concerns the three facets of religious agency, religious identity, and the media for religious communication¹².

As far as we know from the present state of Jewish worship, the reading of the Shema has been looked upon as a kind of confession of Jewish faith. It consists of the three paragraphs from the Pentateuch: the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4–9), and ‘*And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken*’ (Deut. 11:13–21), and *the Lord spoke unto Moses* (Num 15:37–41). The first paragraph is the most famous, important, and easy to remember. Second Shema teaches the precise retribution of the divine will according to human actions. Finally, the third Shema instructs to prepare the fringes for the garment lest they should forget the divine commandments. It is recited twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, and reads “*Shema Israel, Adonai eloheinu adonai ehad*” (Deut. 6:4), which means, “*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*” Then, it reads, “*you shall love your Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might*” (Deut. 6:5). In addition, in the morning prayer, adult men of thirteen years old or above have to wear specific shawl on the shoulders and two phylacteries, one on the left arm and another on the front head, according to the instruction of that first paragraph of the Shema. It was looked upon not only as the reading of the Scripture but also

12 Rüpke, *Pantheon*, Chap.1.

as a confession of faith in one God with resolution and sincerity. It is meant to be a Jewish monotheistic claim and the essence of the Jewish faith.

Surprisingly, this act of reading the Shema had its origin in the morning service of the temple sacrifice during the late Second Temple period. The reading of the Shema is a name given to the whole structure of the benedictions and the three paragraphs of the Shema from the Scriptures. It was based upon pondering the relation between men and the sublime superhuman being, which could be called a worldview in a sophisticated form. It seems strange that the reading of the sacred scripture was incorporated into the sacrificial ritual of the Temple. However, some scholars assume that the Jewish temple sacrifice had originally been practiced in silence, and almost no voice was heard by the officiating priests¹³. The act of reading the Scripture is to be understood as the result of the innovation of the temple sacrifice, which was regarded as being done by the Sages or their forerunners according to the Rabbinic Literature. Here, the two ways of worshipping God were united.

3. The Innovation of Temple Sacrifice enforcing the individual faith in God:

Therefore, here we shall come to the point. I would like to elucidate the innovation of the temple sacrifice and to prove that the ritual innovation enforced the commitment of the lay people to the Jewish community, encouraging them to live with the belief in the God of Israel.

Jewish community at the time of Jesus of Nazareth is defined as a ritual society based upon the Second Temple of Jerusalem. Jewish people are the members of

13 J. Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah Bi-Tkufat Ha-Tannaim ve-Ha-Amoraim (Prayer in The Period of The Tannaim and The Amoraim — Its Nature and its Patterns)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, the fourth ed., 1984) 81.

the ritual society. Society runs ritual as its religion, and the Jewish religion was still a ritual religion. In addition, among the leading three hereditary groups of Jewish society, Priests and Levites were solely responsible for the sacrifices and worship of the Temple ritual. In contrast, the third group of lay Jews was not intensely involved in the ritual if they were not rich enough to donate money for the benefit of sacrificial expenses. What kind of merits and benefits were they likely to expect from the sacrifices at the temple if there was no well-defined relation between them and the temple sacrifice? Were they committed to the covenant with their God in such a loose position?

Moreover, in such a circumstance, the innovation was probably introduced by the Pharisees or the Sages in the period of the Hasmonean dynasty, and the event would be memorialized as a holy day in the calendar by being called the Scroll of Fast, ‘*Megillat Taanit*’ in Hebrew, an issue that will be treated below.

To clarify the innovation of the temple sacrifice, we have only the source from the later Rabbinic Literature. It is the tractate *Tamid* (The daily whole-offering) in the Fifth Seder ‘*Kodashim*’ of the Mishnah. This tractate preserves the ritual procedure of the *Korban Tamid*, the Daily Burnt Offering of a lamb, i.e., a holocaust, at the last phase of the Second Temple period. This tractate is said to have derived from the teaching of one or the several Sages from the generation close to the destruction of the Temple. Almost all the teachings are anonymous, except a controversy concerning the lot of the service of bringing on the Altar the dismembered parts of a lamb from the Ramp¹⁴.

According to the proceedings of the morning sacrifice of a lamb, which are detailed in the Mishnah tractate *Tamid*, the slaughtering of a lamb begins at sunrise and is cut into portions. Then, the portions are brought to the Ramp of the great Altar in the court of the Priests. Finally, all the priests go to the Chamber of Hewn

14 Ch. Albeck, Introduction to the Tractate *Tamid*, *Shisha Sidrei Mishnah, Seder Kodashim*, Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem and Dvir Co., Tel-Aviv, 1956. p.291.

Stone to recite the Shema. It looks as if the sacrifice is interrupted. As this sentence is brief and essential, the entire passage should be cited here.

They went along and put them on the lower half of the Ramp [of the Altar] and on the west side of it and salted them; then they came down and betook themselves to the Chamber of the Hewn Stone to recite the *Shema*'. The officer said to them, 'Recite ye a Benediction!' They recited a Benediction and the Ten Commandments, the *Shema*', and the *And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken*, and the *Lord spake unto Moses*. They pronounced three Benedictions with the people: 'True and sure,' and 'Abodah,' and the Priestly Blessing; and on the Sabbath, they pronounced a further Benediction for the outgoing Course of the priests. He said to them, 'Ye that is new to the incense preparation, come and cast lots', and they cast lots, and the lot fell upon whom it fell.¹⁵

Then, they return to the sacrifice to the court of the priests, and all the portions of the lamb are burned on the altar. As for the proceedings in the sanctuary, we know the story of Zacharias at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. Zacharias, the father of the future John the Baptist, was elected to burn incense by a lot, went into the sanctuary, and suddenly appeared to him an angel of the Lord.

As explained above, this sacrificial ritual of the *Korban Tamid*, which contains the reading of the Shema, was itself a conduct of the ritual innovations in the Hasmonaeen Dynasty attested by the unique calendar of the feasts, the *Megilat Taanit*, prohibiting the fast and funeral on these feasts. Though the sacrifice of the daily burnt offering of a lamb is instructed in the Book of the Numbers 28:3–8, this ritual of the *Korban Tamid* has a drastic renovation in two respects. First,

15 Cited from the Mishna Tamid 4:3, 5:1–2, H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.586–587.

it introduced the financial renovation in the temple ritual with the notion of the public sacrifice, and second, the incorporation of the reading of the Scripture into the sacrificial ritual. We shall deal here with the significance of the second point, which directly relates to the passage of the Mishnah.

In order to infer the purpose and intention of reading the scripture at the daily burnt offering, the choice of the Ten Commandments will give us an important hint. However, it would be later eliminated from the service of Jewish prayer. According to the Book of Exodus, the Decalogue has been understood as the appearance of the divine will on Mt. Sinai. Then, the Book of Exodus describes the long list of the directives of the covenant, followed by the recital by Moses of the Book of the Covenant toward the congregation of the Israelites in the ritual. Afterward, the congregation will respond with the vow that they will do, and they will hear, i.e. '*Naase ve-nishmaa*' in the Hebrew original, Exod. 24:7. Finally, Moses, taking the blood of the sacrifice, poured it on them and the sanctuary, and the covenant was completed. Therefore, the reading of the Decalogue is sure to make the people feel that the act of vowing the covenant is going on here in the Temple of Jerusalem as if it were on Mt. Sinai. The act of the daily offering is now understood as the act of the covenant between God and the whole of Israel. Therefore, we need the response of acceptance on the side of the congregation of the people instead of saying "We will do and we will hear" in Exod. 24:7. For that purpose, the passage of the Shema was selected. The reading of the Shema will be later distinctly understood as the acceptance of the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom by the Tannaim.¹⁶ However, such deliberation might have been already included in the temple ritual.

The reason can be found in the expression "to separate the Shema" for designating the act of reading the Shema. There was a regulation in the Mishnah on the

16 E. A. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs (Hebrew)* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Second edition, 1982) 351–355.

service at the synagogue, “If there are less [than] ten present they may not recite the *Shema*’ with its Benedictions, nor may one go before the Ark”¹⁷. “To recite” in this sentence translates the Hebrew word *PaRaS*, which means “to separate.” It has preserved the tradition of the temple ritual, meaning that the act was done in antiphony at the temple ritual. The leader and the congregation separated the phrase into “*Hear oh Israel, Adonai Eloheinu*” and “*Adonai Echad*.” As the priests could pronounce the sacred divine name of four letters YHWH literally instead of Adonai, the solemnity of the pronouncement required blessings entailing the notions of name, dignity, kingdom, and glory on the part of the congregation instead of saying “Amen, Amen” as the usual response in the service. Therefore, the congregation responded in the solemn vow of obedience and the blessing of the kingdom of God, saying, “*Barukh shem Kevod Malkhuto le-olam va-ed*.”¹⁸ It reads, “Blessed be the Name of His Glorious Kingdom for ever and ever.”¹⁸ Therefore, the reading of the Decalogue and the Shema should be addressed to all the Israelite people. The introduction of the reading of the sacred text has made the daily burnt offering the sacrificial ritual of the covenant at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, this act of sacrifice was the duty of the whole congregation. If the sacrifice was solely done by the Priests and Levites and financed by individuals, it could not have wielded any impact on Jewish society in its entirety. We can assume that this act of reading the Scripture in the daily burnt offering intended to establish theoretically and practically the faith in one God and the covenant of the people of God in the religious consciousness of Jews as a shared religious identity.

It is interesting to observe that the act of reading the scripture was held at a different place, away from the Altar of the Priestly Court. After officiating priests put the dismembered parts of the sacrifice on the Ramp of the outer Altar in the

17 Mishnah Megillah 4:3, (Danby, *Mishnah* 206).

18 Urbach, *Sages*, 348–349.

Court of the Priests, they went to the Chamber of the Hewn Stone in order to perform the act of reading the Scripture. The chamber was thought to be situated in the Court of the Israelites, which means that not only the priests but also the lay Israelites, the ordinary Jews, could attend the act of the reading if they would like.¹⁹ Overlooking the process of the sacrifice, it seems as if the priests should have interrupted their practice of offering the sacrifice for the reading of the Scripture. However, it would have been the only liable place to insert this act of the reading. After reading the Scripture, the process of sacrifice resumed, and the lot was cast to choose the task of burning the incense of the Inner Sanctuary. The story of Zakarias, the future father of John the Baptist, begins with this act.

Suppose we put this service of the *Korban Tamid* chronologically into the history of the sacrificial ritual in the Temple period. In that case, some elements reasonably fit the historical developments of Jewish religious consciousness. A recital of the Ten Commandments is still required in the ritual. However, later, after the destruction of the Temple and with the spread of heretical thoughts, the Sages began to deal with the difficulties and issued several edicts to separate themselves from the heretical groups and expulse them from the Jewish communities. The prohibition of reading the Ten Commandments was one of such devices.

On the other hand, concerning the Eighteen Benedictions, we have only three Benedictions recited by the priests after the recital of the Shema in this Mishnah. At the same time, we know that the Eighteen Benedictions came to be put here after

19 There are various opinions on the location of the Chamber; some assume it was located on the righthand side of the Court of the Israelites, which was found at the north-eastern corner of the upper precinct of the Inner Court (See the suggested restoration of the plan of the Second Temple in the Kehati's edition of the Mishnah, in P. Kehati, *Mishnayot Meboarot, Vol.10* (Jerusalem: Heikhal Shlomo,1977), and others assume that it was on its lefthand side (*Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Edition, Vol. 19*, (Thomson Gale & Keter 2007)'Temple', 612).

reading the Shema²⁰, both of which would constitute the fundamental principles of Rabbinic Judaism during the Late Antiquity. Therefore, we will assume at least two further stages of the development of the Jewish prayer: first, the incorporation of the Eighteen Benedictions into this ritual process and then, the addition of the Benediction of the heretical destruction to the process in the course of the spread of heretical groups, including early Christianity. Considering all these factors, we can assume that this transaction of ritual innovation was momentous in the history of the Jewish religious consciousness. We will elucidate such aspects of innovation, respectively, the notion of the public sacrifice, the payment of the temple tax, and the standing at the sacrifice by the lay Jew.

4. Three Aspects of Temple Innovation

The morning sacrifice of a lamb was defined as a public sacrifice, and all the people of Israel should be responsible for it. Therefore, all of them had to pay for the expenses of purchasing the lambs, which was the temple tax of half a shekel, and they had to attend the sacrifice at the temple precinct and watch the process every morning. However, it is no doubt physically impossible.

1) The Notion of the Public Sacrifice:

As the Daily burned offering of a lamb is mentioned in the Book of Numbers in the Pentateuch, it may sound strange to call it an innovation. However, the *Megilat Taanit*, the Aramaic calendar of the Second Temple period, makes it clear that the *Korban Tamid*'s sacrifice was an innovation for the Jewish people at that time.

20 J. Heinemann, *Tefillah* 18. The formulated prayer of Eighteen Benedictions was regarded as a creative invention by him. See in detail H. Ichikawa, “Yudaya-Kenja ni-okeru ‘Kaminokuni’ no Kan-nen” [The Idea of ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ in the Thought of Jewish Sages], *Seisyo Gaku Ronsyu* 46 (2014, 195–214) 207–209.

At the beginning of the calendar, we have it that the ritual of the *Korban Tamid* was established from the beginning of the month of Nisan until the eighth of the same month so that it would not be mourned during that period²¹. The commentary was subsequently added to the calendar by the Sages, and we know exactly the significance of the act. The Sadducees (or the Boethusians) and the Sages debated on the issue of who should pay for the sacrifice of the *Korban Tamid*. The former claimed that an individual person could pay as much as that person would, while the latter claimed that the whole of the Israelites should pay for the sacrifice. Both groups justified their views by referring to the Scripture. Therefore, the result would be decided by the vote. When the Sages outnumbered the Sadducees and won, they decided that the *Korban Tamid* should be financed by public expenditure and regulated that each person would pay half a shekel every year, put it in the bureau, and offering the *Korban Tamid* would be paid from that amount.

By this commentary, we know that the notion of public sacrifice was introduced into Jewish society and that this notion required due responsibility of every lay Israelite to the public offerings. The Mishnah makes mention of the list of such public offerings as “the Daily Whole-offerings and Additional Whole-offerings and their drink-offerings, the Omer and the Two Loaves and the Shewbread, and all [else needful for] the offerings of the congregation.”²² Most of them are regulated in the book of Leviticus, chapter 23. The payment of the temple tax is a most tangible duty for them. However, it is also an acquisition of some knowledge about the sacrifices, the divine covenant, and the commandments of the Torah required, which is much more vital for them as members of the people of God. The notion

21 B.-Z. Luria, *Megillath Ta'anith with Introductions and Notes*. (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1964). The academic version of this scroll by Z. Lichtenshtein-Avneri appeared in the periodical HUCA No.8-9, 1931/1932. It is available in *quntres le-studentim (Booklet for Students)* 23, the Hebrew University.

22 Danby, *Mishnah*, Shekalim4:1, 155.

of public sacrifice has connected all the Jews with the supreme being through the acting regulations of the covenant of Moses.

When did the Pharisees gain power in Jewish politics? While the Hasmonean rulers vacillated in their attitude toward the Pharisees, they became “real administrators of the state” at the time of Queen Alexandra Salome (her reign covered the period 78-69BCE), the wife of Alexander Jannai, according to Josephus²³. It is usually said that the Pharisees are very scrupulous regarding tithing and ritual purity. Those two issues are examples of daily concerns for considering a temple visit. Therefore, it is not an accident that stone vessels for food and silver coins of half a shekel are two typical findings in the excavations at the Jewish quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem from the layer of the late Second Temple period, where wealthy priest families lived in the area at the west adjacent to the Temple Mount. It is true that they were most scrupulous for the impurity and also were responsible for the minting silver coins of half a shekel²⁴.

However, by the act of the Korban Tamid, lay Jews came to be indispensably concerned with the issue of ritual purity and impurity for attendance at the temple for public sacrifice.

2) Payment of the Temple tax

According to the Mishnah tractate Shekalim, we read that the payment of half a shekel of the temple tax was announced at the synagogue through the reading of

23 Jewish War I 110-112, *Josephus II The Jewish War I-III*, tr. H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library, p.55., ‘Pharisees,’ *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. J. J. Collons & D. C. Harlow, Eerdmans Pub. Com. U.K. 2010, p.1062.

24 It is said to be quite lucky to find silver coins at the excavation, which may light brilliantly to make fun of the archaeologists. Thirteen silver coins of both one shekel and half a shekel of the Herodian era were found during the excavation of the Jewish quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. N. Avigad, *The Upper City of Jerusalem (Hebrew)*, Jerusalem: Shiqmona, 1981) 194-196. These are probably those Half-Shekel coins that have been exhibited at the Israel Museum.

the passage of the Scripture on the Half shekel on the first day of the month of Adar in the late winter, which is the end month of the year of the Second Commonwealth of Judea. The following month is the Nisan, the new month of the year in the spring. On the fifteenth of Adar, the tables were set up at the local towns to exchange money to pay the half shekel. Moreover, the bureau was set up at the temple on the twenty-fifth. After that, they exacted pledges from Levites and Israelites, proselytes, and freed slaves but not from women, slaves, or minors. Priests were also exempted from pledges for “the interests of peace”²⁵. As priests were privileged to officiate the sacrifice, they considered themselves the indispensable medium between God and the people. Josephus was very proud of his lineage of the priestly caste, though he regarded himself as a Pharisee. However, as the Jewish congregation became the subject of officiating the sacrifice by the act of temple tax, the priests came to be looked upon only as an agent or a proxy of the people of God, as if almost being deprived of the privilege. The priests were undoubtedly conscious of it, so the innovation of this notion of public sacrifice would have met the priestly authority’s negative response or denial. Therefore, the Sages had to take it into consideration for fear of some grave troubles.

The gospel records that those who received tribute money came to Galilee in the late winter before the pilgrimage for the Passover, the season of which coincided with the announcement of the Half shekel in the Mishnah. The payment was Didrachma in the gospel (Mathew 17:24), which is approximately the equivalent to the half a shekel of the temple tax. As far as is known from the parable of a hired employee at the plantation in the Gospel (Mathew 20:2), the average salary of the employees for a day was a Denari, which is equivalent to a drachma, so that the tax was as much as two days’ salary for a laborer at that time.

25 Mishnah Shekalim 1:1–3, see Danby, *Mishnah*, 152. Here, the word proselyte is the translation of the Hebrew word *Ger*, as stated above.

3) Attendance at the sacrifice

The term *Maamad* was hammered out for denoting the standing of the lay people at their sacrifice in the Second Temple of Jerusalem, and the question was raised about how to resolve the difficulty concerning public sacrifice. As the daily offering is paid by all the Israelites, they must be standing at the sanctuary when the offering is held at the temple. However, in reality, it is impossible. So, the Mishnah asks, ‘How can a man’s offering be offered while he does not stand by it?’ It preserves the answer in Rabbinic traditions that the Sages ruled that all the lay Israelite people were classified as 24 groups and allotted to the 24 priestly groups of *Mishmarot*. They were to attend the sacrifice, standing at the temple precinct for a week when their group of Priests worked there. The lay people living far away from Jerusalem would assemble at the place in their locality to recite the Creation story in the morning.

Now, the lay Jews, being allotted to one of the 24 groups of *Maamad*, have the privilege of attending the daily burnt offering as their own sacrifice. We can imagine that they enter the temple in purity, go through the temple mount over to the sanctuary in the middle, enter the court of the women, then walk the steps upward, go through the Nicanor Gate, watch the priests butchering the lamb, and then enter the Chamber of Hewn Stones and see the priests reciting the Ten Commandments and the Shema, receive their blessings, and come back to see the offering on the Altar and finally, receive all the blessings of the priests and listen to the psalms of the Levites. They are supposed to be filled with solemnity and a feeling of sacredness. Indeed, they may have experienced uncanny emotions. We need to find out whether this act of standing at the daily offering was chronologically the earliest experience of the lay people or whether they would have experienced such a solemn atmosphere in three pilgrimages, which are to be imposed upon them as annual festivals. However, the notion of public sacrifice had an effect on the consciousness of the Jews as people of God.

The act of reading the creation story is not preserved in Jewish worship in

the present day. We cannot tell whether it was an actual practice at the time of the Temple or only theoretically regulated. However, the Mishnah elucidates the manner of reading the story four weekdays a week when the same priests work at the temple. We can only infer the intentions of the Sages. The creation is not a past event, but every day is to repeat the creation as it happened according to the will of God, only if the daily burnt offering would be done by the Israelites as it is innocently done, since it is said in the mystical tradition that every day is the act of creation: *Kol Yom Maase Bereshit*.

A brief inference would be appropriate here concerning the chamber of the Hewn Stones. As far as we know from the Rabbinic literature, the name was given to the hall of the assembly of the Sanhedrin. Since it was thought to be located at the temple precinct, it was likely to be identified with this chamber. In addition, inferring from the shape of the building, those archaeological sites of synagogues in the First century CE, which have been found so far in Judea, at Magdara and Tel Rekhesh in the Galilee, and at Gamla in the Golan Heights, have seats of cut stones arranged along the four walls of the room as if it were a chamber of Hewn stones²⁶.

Conclusion:

Once the sacrifice was destined to be a task of the priestly caste, the lay people had no part to play in it. However, now, the lay people have come to play the role of leading actors, whereas the priests are almost reduced to just performers in the sacrificial process. The lay congregations are responsible for the sacrifice as members of the covenant with God and have to read the Shema and study all the

26 On the excavation of Tel Rekhesh, see e.g. Shuichi Hasegawa, Hisao Kuwabara and Yitzhak Paz, "Who Built Tel Rekhesh?", *Biblical Archaeology Review* 46/4, 2020, 34–40.

teachings of God revealed to Moses the Prophet. Both Jews living in the Land of Judea and those living in the diaspora show no difference. The recitation of the Shema was a sort of reading of the Torah, and here, it is assumed that the reading of the Torah has been related to the offering of the public sacrifice. These two forms of worship may have been separated until then, but here, they were connected into a composite worship of God in the Temple sacrifice, which was the primary concern of the Pharisees.

This change in the status of the lay Jews has probably transformed their attitudes, or at least some part of them, toward the Jewish belief system and the divine teachings. This encouraged the lay people to have a personal commitment to the Lord and foster the religious consciousness of their relation with God. They were conscious that they had the duty and pleasure of life as Jews based upon the covenant of God. In addition, the innovation of the sacrifice also transformed the status of the sacrifice itself. It is now the substantiation of the original covenant with God at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, if such notions as the natural Judaic community or the common Judaism can be assumed to be relevant to the Jewish characteristics at the time, we could safely say that it was not so much the cause of the ritual innovation as the effect of that act.

If we read the story of Jesus against such a religious circumstance, we will be more familiar with the liability of such events. Here are references to occasions related to the reading of the Shema in the Gospels: Revelation of the archangel Gabriel to Zacharias at the Temple sacrifice, Luke 1; the critical reflection on the inner adultery in mind in the parable on the mount, Math. 5:27–30; Payment by Jesus of the temple tax of didrachma, Math. 17:24–27; Debate on the great commandment in the law, Math. 22:36–40; Criticism of Jesus on broad phylacteries and hypocrites, Math. 23:5; and finally, the implication of the blood of the covenant spoken at the Last Supper in the Passover Seder, Math. 27–28.

In Rabbinic Literature, too, as the practice of the reading of the Shema without the Ten Commandments was already established in the Rabbinic circles, we will

find numerous traditions and sayings concerning the reading of the Shema, especially in terms of personal experiences of the divine nearness and the profundity of faith. It suffices here to mention two examples: a famous Midrashic exegesis of the first passage of the Shema and a Haggadic story of a famous sage, Rabbi Akiba, reading the Shema as a dying message.