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MEMORY AND IDENTITY  
IN ANCIENT JUDAISM AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

A CONVERSATION WITH BARRY SCHWARTZ

*Edited by*  
Tom Thatcher

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## MEMORY AND LOSS IN EARLY RABBINIC TEXT AND RITUAL\*

Steven D. Fraade

In memory of Dorothy S. Fraade, 1923–2011

Early rabbinic literature poses special challenges to social memory theory and its application that are in some ways very different from those posed by the New Testament and the search for the “historical Jesus.” Conversely, early rabbinic literature provides exceptional opportunities for examining the relation between the practice and theory of collective memory in relation to the formation and maintenance of social identity. In what follows I will attend to both these challenges and opportunities (typically the flip side of one another) through the analysis of specific rabbinic texts that both thematize and practice collective memory in the face of profound collective loss.

The “challenges” noted above are highlighted when read against the backdrop of Schwartz’s analysis of the sources for Jesus’ career in the introduction to this volume and elsewhere. First, there is no central coherent narrative of the origins of rabbinic Judaism nor any extant continuous biographical narratives, even if fictitious, of its “founding figures” (e.g., Hillel, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi Akiva). All we have are scattered narrative fragments or anecdotes that are adduced for entirely nonbiographical/historiographical purposes, nothing like the New Testament Gospels. Second, at least as recorded in early rabbinic literature, if these “founding figures” were portrayed in any sense as “charismatic,” it was not due primarily to their supernatural or miraculous fetes nor to their apocalyptic pronouncements or eschatological roles but rather to their memorized control of received scriptural and oral traditions and their interpretive acuity in teaching, applying, and exemplifying those traditions. Third, early rabbinic corpora do not establish their authority (such as it is) through attribution to named authors, whether pseudobiographical or historical, even though indi-

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\* I wish to acknowledge the sage interventions of Vered Noam in reading an earlier version of this essay.

vidual pronouncements may be attributed to, or anecdotal narratives might have as their subjects, named sages, whom we may presume at the very least to have lived. Rather, they are composite anthologies, often structured as commentaries to antecedent texts, whether scriptural or rabbinic, with an implied claim to *collective* authorship and authority (see Fraade 2011). Dating the composite collections is hard enough; dating their contained traditions, whether legal or narrative, is even more difficult, rendering their employment for historicist narrative reconstruction difficult at best. Fourth and finally, since early rabbinic teaching comes under the rubric of “oral Torah” (תורה שבעל פה) or “oral teaching” (משנה) as distinct from “written Torah” (תורה שבכתב) or “read Scripture” (מקרא), great premium is placed on memorization, and many rabbinic texts express fears of forgetting what has been learned and provide techniques for the “art of memory” (see Naeh 2001, 2005; Fraade 2007). Thus, as a laboratory for the examination of the workings of collective memory, rabbinic literature is unusual for both its insistence on the orality of its teachings and for their packaging as collective (anonymously anthologized) teaching.

With these general considerations of limitations and opportunities in mind, we may direct our attention more narrowly to the topic at hand. Memory, both individual and collective, is, by definition, principally (but not solely) about the past. Similarly, we might presume that the past, by definition, is no longer present, that is, is lost. Memory is the means by which we seek to retrieve the past, to recover it so as to restore it, as it were, to the present by a process of re-presentation. Conversely, memory is a means of entering and reliving, as it were, the past, if only briefly. To the extent to which memory is collectively shared, it must be ritually embodied.

But what is the nature of that recovery when what is remembered is loss itself, that is, something that cannot be restored, at least not in the near future? For early rabbinic Judaism, the defining loss (among others, e.g., prophecy) is that of the Second Temple and its sacrificial worship at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE. The central figures in the recovery from the destruction of the temple, according to both rabbinic tradition and modern historiography, are Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and his students, who flourished in the Land of Israel during the mid- to late first century CE. We will focus in what follows on a few specific textual embodiments of that tradition, with particular attention to their incorporation of memory and commemoration (for earlier and broader treatments, see, e.g., Neusner 1970; Kister 1998; Cohn 2012).

## RABBAN YOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI'S EDICTS OF RITUAL COMMEMORATION

The following passage, from the earliest extant rabbinic text, the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE), gives legal and ritual expression to the challenges of adapting Judaism and Jewish society to the radically altered conditions following the destruction of the Second Temple and the combined needs of collective Israel (however broad or narrow) both to preserve the memory of what was lost and to compensate for that loss:

יום טוב של ראש השנה שחל להיות בשבת במקדש היו תוקעים אבל לא במדינה. משחרב בית המקדש התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שיהו תוקעין בכל מקום שיש בו בית דין, אמר רבי אלעזר, «לא התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אלא ביבנה בלבד». אמרו לו, «אחד יבנה ואחד כל מקום שיש בו בית דין». ועוד זאת היתה ירושלם יתירה על יבנה שכל עיר שהיא רואה ושמעת וקרובה ויכולה לבא תוקעין וביבנה לא היו תוקעין אלא בבית דין בלבד.  
(m. Roš Haš. 4.1–2)

The festival day of the New Year that coincided with the Sabbath—in the temple they would sound the shofar, but not in the provinces. When the temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai made the rule that they should sound the shofar in every locale in which there was a court. Said R. Eleazar, “Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai made that rule only in the case of Yavneh alone.” They said to him, “All the same are Yavneh and every locale in which there is a court.” And in this regard also was Jerusalem ahead of Yavneh: in every town that is within sight and sound [of Jerusalem], and nearby and able to come up to Jerusalem, they sound the shofar. But as to Yavneh, they sound the shofar only in the court alone.

בראשונה היה הלולב ניטל במקדש שבעה ובמדינה יום אחד. משחרב בית המקדש התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שיהא לולב ניטל במדינה שבעה וזכר למקדש ושיהא יום הגף כולו אסור.  
(m. Roš Haš. 4.3; see also m. Suk. 3.12)

In olden times the *lulav* was taken up in the temple for seven days, and in the provinces for one day. When the temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai made the rule that in the provinces the *lulav* should be taken up for seven days, as a memorial to the temple, and that the day [16 Nisan] on which the *omer* is waved should be wholly prohibited [in regard to the eating of new produce].<sup>1</sup>

1. Both translations above are slightly modified from Neusner 1988, 305.

The two sources cited above are legal narratives that describe rulings of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple, which had been the center of Jewish worship, principally sacrificial. At issue is whether certain ritual practices that had been restricted to the Jerusalem temple (blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah when coinciding with Shabbat; taking the *lulav* for all seven days of Sukkot; see also m. Roš Haš. 4.4 with respect to calendrical matters) should be allowed in local communities once sacrificial worship in the temple was no longer possible. Whether these narratives are historically representative, that is, whether Yohanan ben Zakkai actually made these rulings as described (and, if so, whether they were followed by anyone other than his disciples), or whether they are rhetorical retrojections from a later time (but prior to the Mishnah's redaction around 200 CE) cannot be ascertained from either internal or external evidence. Of interest in our present context are aspects of the stories relating to memory and loss.

According to the first source above (m. Roš Haš. 4.1–2), at some point, presumably after Yohanan ben Zakkai's death, his successors differed in their memory of what precisely he had ruled. Was the prerogative of Jerusalem before the temple was destroyed transferred thereafter only to Yavneh (to which Yohanan ben Zakkai relocated shortly before the temple was destroyed) by virtue of its (presumably rabbinic) court, or did it extend to any town that contained a (presumably rabbinic) court?<sup>2</sup> In other words, what was the extent of the compensatory displacement of Jerusalem's status once the temple was gone? This disagreement presumes that Yohanan ben Zakkai's ruling had not been committed to writing but to memory, resulting in two different versions of what he had ruled.

Even so, Jerusalem, as the Jewish "metropolis" (literally, "mother city," to borrow Philo's term; see *Flaccus* 46), enjoyed a status that was unequaled by any other city or town, even Yavneh, with that status extending beyond its central temple/court to the city as a whole, including, as it were, its suburbs.<sup>3</sup> Thus, at the same time that centralized ritual and worship is decentralized, and what had once been Jerusalem's special status (by virtue of its temple) is, in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple, distributed to other towns by virtue of their (presumably rabbinic) courts, at least

2. For another example of the transfer of (judicial) authority from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to Yavneh, see *Sipre Deut.* 153–154 (Finkelstein 1969, 206–7) and discussion in Fraade 1991, 83–87.

3. A similar attitude toward the expanded "temple city" can be seen in the Temple Scroll from Qumran (e.g., 11QT<sup>a</sup> 45.11–12); see also Eliav 2005.

one aspect of Jerusalem's exceptionalism is preserved—that is, remains in the past while being remembered in the present, both through textual and ritual practice.

According to the second source above (m. Roš Haš. 4.3), Yohanan ben Zakkai is said to have made a similar ruling that distributed another of Jerusalem's sole ritual prerogatives while the temple stood to other towns in the aftermath of its destruction. The taking of the *lulav* for all seven days of Sukkot, previously the prerogative of the temple alone, is termed a "memorial to (reminder of) the temple."<sup>4</sup> Thus, in distributing Jerusalem's special status to the other towns after the destruction of the temple, the temple is not to be forgotten, as if superseded, but emphatically remembered, perhaps with a hint of hope in its eventual rebuilding. In performing the ritual of taking the *lulav*, formerly associated with the temple, outside of Jerusalem after its destruction, the association with the temple is not reduced but accentuated. Thus, we see here a similar dialectic as we saw in the previous *mishnayot* of displacement and preservation of the temple's privileged status after its loss, its very displacement being the occasion for its ritualized commemoration, with the performative effect of linking the worshiper to past loss while keeping alive the hope for eventual restoration.<sup>5</sup> Here as elsewhere, memory points simultaneously backward and forward in time.

Turning to our earliest running commentary on the book of Leviticus, the Sifra, we observe the same tradition as found in the Mishnah, but now formulated exegetically as an interpretation of Lev 23:40.

«ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון [...] ושמחתם לפני ה' אלהיכם שבעת ימים»  
 (ויקרא כ"ג מ'), ולא בגבולים כל שבעה. ומשחרב בית המקדש התקין רבן  
 יוחנן בן זכאי שיהיה לולב ניטל במדינה שבעה זכר למקדש, ושיהיה יום  
 הנף כולו אסור.

(Sifra Emor 16.9; ed. Weiss 1862, 102d)

4. The phrase *למקדש זכר* is found in tannaitic collections only here and in parallels: m. Suk. 3.12; Sifra Emor 16.9 (ed. Weiss 1862, 102d); and t. Yoma 1.9, in a case of unapproved memorializing. The expression *זכר לירושלים* ("in memory of Jerusalem") appears three times in a toseftan passage that will be treated below (and another three times in a close parallel).

5. Compare the phrase *למקדש כהלל זכר* ("in memory of the temple as Hillel [did in temple times]") in b. Pesah. 115a and the Passover Haggadah (immediately preceding the meal), which evinces memory of what has been lost (the Passover sacrifice), ritual reenactment of its performance as if continually present (but without its central sacrificial ingredient), and a hope for its restoration.

“[On the first day you shall take ...], and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days” (Lev. 23:40): but not outside [of Jerusalem] all seven [days]. When the temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai made a rule that in the provinces the *lulav* should be taken for seven days, as a memorial to the temple, and that the day on which the *omer* is waved should be wholly prohibited [in regard to the eating of new produce]. (my translation)

From this we can see the exegetical underpinnings of the tradition that, so long as the temple stood, rejoicing with the *lulav* for seven days was to be performed “before the Lord your God,” in God’s presence—that is, within the temple. With the destruction of the temple, Yohanan ben Zakkai might have decided that the condition of “before the Lord your God” could no longer be fulfilled and that the *lulav* should only be taken on the first day of the festival in fulfillment of the beginning of the verse, “On the first day you shall take....” Instead, he is said to have ruled that in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple one should take the *lulav* for all seven days anywhere, not so much as a biblical ritual obligation in its own right but in memory of the destroyed temple. That is, so long as one did so in commemoration of the destroyed temple, “before the Lord your God” could apply “in the provinces.” In effect, one should perform the ritual as if in Jerusalem while the temple was standing (“before the Lord your God”) while recognizing that it is not. Implicitly, the central locus of the presence of God has been decentralized, even as the loss of center is acknowledged.

It should be noted that centuries later, in the iconography of the synagogue, the *etrog* and *lulav* commonly appear with ritual objects associated with the temple: holy ark, menorah, shofar, and incense shovel (see Hachlili 2001, 211–27, esp. 216–18). The association of the *lulav* with the temple did not cease with the latter’s destruction but rather continued, with the visual representation of the *lulav* (among other ritual objects) preserving the memory and symbolic presence of the temple among synagogue worshippers, wherever they might be. We should not ignore the role of visualization, alongside orality and aurality, in collective memory (see Fraade 2009). However, with time the association of the *etrog* and *lulav* with the Jerusalem temple per se may have been somewhat weakened, at least in common perception, as the ritual performance of their being “taken” was associated more immediately with the locus of the synagogue. Alternatively, the ritual of the *etrog* and *lulav* may be viewed as one of many media by which the synagogue was itself experienced as זכר למקדש (see Fine 1997, who appears to overlook this aspect).

Finally, the conclusion of the mishnah (m. Roš Haš. 4.3) and its associated midrash (Sifra Emor 16.9) draws a distinction between the time of the temple, when new produce could be eaten on the 16th of Nisan as soon as the *omer* (barley sheaf) had been waved in the temple, and the time after its destruction, when, according to a ruling of Yohanan ben Zakkai, the *omer* could no longer be waved and new produce could not be eaten on that whole day. Here again, the sense of loss (of the “day of waving”) is dialectically juxtaposed with a sense of overcoming of loss (by taking the *lulav*), discontinuity with the (temple) past and continuity with it, notwithstanding the temple’s loss. In the case of the shofar, loss is overcome (while still recalled), whereas in the case of the “day of waving” an unbridgeable gap between present and past is affirmed implicitly, only to be bridged with the future rebuilding of the temple (explicitly in the Babylonian Talmud’s commentary ad loc., b. Suk. 41a; b. Roš Haš. 30a, at מהרה יבנה בית המקדש).

#### NARRATIVES OF REACTION TO THE LOSS OF THE TEMPLE

We turn now to a relatively late collection of narrative traditions that portray immediate rabbinic reactions to the destruction of the Second Temple. In this case, the memories of that event appear to be inconsistent.

[א] שמעון הצדיק היה משירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה הוא היה אומר: על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים.

.....  
[ב] ותלמוד תורה חביבה לפני המקום מעולות....מכאן לחכם שיושב ודורש בקהל שמעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו הקריב חלב ודם לגבי מזבח.

.....  
[ג] הא למדת שאין עבודה שהיא חביבה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא יותר מעבודת בית המקדש.

.....  
[ד] פעם אחת היה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי יוצא מירושלים והיה ר' יהושע הולך אחריו וראה בית המקדש חרב אמר ר' יהושע, «אוי לנו על זה שהוא חרב מקום שמכפרים בו עונותיהם של ישראל». א"ל, «בני אל ירע לך. יש לנו כפרה אחת שהיא כמותה ואיזה זה גמילות חסדים שנאמר «כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח» (הושע ו' ו').»

.....  
[ה] באותה שעה נלכדה ירושלים והיה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי יושב ומצפה וחרד כדרך שהיה עלי יושב ומצפה שנאמר «והנה עלי יושב על הכסא יד דרך מצפה כי היה לבו חרד על ארון האלהים» (שמואל א' ד' י"ג). כיון ששמע

רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שהחריב את ירושלים ושרף את בית המקדש באש קרע  
בגדיו וקרעו תלמידיו את בגדיהם והיו בוכין וצועקין וסופדין.  
(*Abot de Rabbi Nathan* A4; ed. Schechter, 18–24)

[A] Simeon the Righteous was among the last of the men of the Great Assembly. He used to say: On three things the world stands: on the [study of] Torah, on the [temple] service, and on acts of lovingkindness.

.....

[B] But the study of Torah is more beloved by God than burnt offerings.... Hence, when a sage sits and expounds to the congregation, Scripture accounts it to him as though he had offered up fat and blood on the altar.

.....

[C] Thus you learn that there is no service more beloved of the Holy One, blessed be He, than the temple service.

.....

[D] Once as Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed after him and beheld the temple in ruins. "Woe unto us," Rabbi Joshua cried, "that this, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!"

"My son," Rabban Yohanan said to him, "be not grieved; we have another atonement as effective as this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, 'For I desire mercy and not sacrifice' (Hos. 6:6)."

.....

[E] It was then that Jerusalem was destroyed. Meanwhile Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai sat and waited trembling, the way Eli had sat and waited; as it is said, "Lo, Eli sat upon his seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God" [1 Sam 4:13]. When Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai heard that Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple was up in flames, he tore his clothing and his disciples tore their clothing, and they wept, crying aloud and mourning.<sup>6</sup>

This late collection, *The Fathers* according to Rabbi Nathan, which has incorporated what can be presumed to be earlier traditions, narratively depicts two seemingly contradictory reactions of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to the destruction of the Second Temple. The overall passage is structured as a commentary on m. 'Avot 1.2 (section A), in which the high priest Simon the Righteous (ca. 200 BCE) enumerates the three things upon which the "world stands." Such a tripod suggests that if any one of the legs were to be removed, the world would topple. When the statement would have been made (or was imagined to have been made), the temple

6. Translation slightly modified from Goldin 1955, 32–37.

still functioned; when it was rabbinically commented upon, the temple service had long ceased to exist. The only way for the world to survive this loss would be for the remaining two legs to assume the burden formerly born by the now-missing leg, or for "(temple) service" (עבודה) to be reinterpreted as referring to other kinds of service/worship, services no longer requiring the temple with its sacrificial worship and continuing in its absence.

It is with respect to this very question of how to regard and respond to the temple's loss that our commentary appears to be contradictory. On the one hand, section B suggests that God prefers Torah study to sacrificial worship and that Torah teaching is accounted by God as a divinely sanctioned substitute for temple worship. In other words, the loss of temple worship could easily, and preferably, be replaced. On the other hand, section C insists at length (note that the quote above is an abbreviated citation) that the world depends on the temple service for its very maintenance and that it is God's most beloved form of worship.<sup>7</sup> Further, this contradiction is directly ascribed to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai himself, who thereby exemplifies two very different responses to the destruction of the temple. On the one hand (section D), he comforts his student, Rabbi Joshua (ben Hananyah), relying on a prophetic proof-text to prove that God prefers acts of lovingkindness to temple sacrifices. On the other hand, Yohanan ben Zakkai is portrayed (section E), again with the assistance of a scriptural proof-text, as being in a state of abject mourning for the destroyed temple, with no hint of possible consolation or substitution. There is no way to know which, if either, of these scenes represents the "actual" reaction of the great sage to the destruction of the temple—it would be futile to ask which picture better portrays the "historical" Yohanan ben Zakkai.

Of course, one might try to harmonize the two representations of Yohanan ben Zakkai, suggesting that perhaps they represent different responses at different times or under different circumstances, for example, one to a student and one while alone. However, the fact that the same contradictory expressions are directly juxtaposed by the anonymous anthologizer and independently of Yohanan ben Zakkai (sections B and C), with each providing scriptural warrants, suggests that the inclusion of seemingly

7. For a similar, but less dramatic, redactional juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory views of Temple worship as being both lost but replaced, and continually present and important, see *Sipre Deut* 41 (ed. Finkelstein, 87–88) and discussion in Fraade 1991, 89–92, 241 n. 81.

opposite responses sheds less light on the “historical” Yohanan ben Zakkai than on the composite nature of the redacted text, whose reader/auditor would encounter therein two very different emotional perspectives on the destruction of the temple. These cannot be reductively harmonized without distorting the redacted text as a whole: as it stands, the destruction of the temple represents a rupture of a fundamental, irreparable nature, calling for acts of mourning; *and also*, the destruction of the temple is a loss for which divinely preferred substitutes (Torah study, acts of lovingkindness, prayer) are readily available, thereby calling for compensatory rehabilitation. Was the editor simply unable to choose between these options, or did “he” not choose between them because they are both “true,” even though in sharp dialectical tension with one another? These are not two versions of a single historical event, between which *we* must choose which to remember or which *we* need to condense into a single synoptic narrative. They represent two recognizable and understandable but irreconcilable ways of re-presenting and responding to the *loss of past* and a *past of loss*. To quote Barry Schwartz’s introduction to the present volume, “the ‘meaning’ of the message is not in any single one of its versions, but in all of them taken together” (p. 13 above).

As much as works of collective memory might seek to be socially unifying, they also can serve to divide a larger society into social subsets that seek to respond to common loss in divisively contested manners, as is further illustrated by the following passage from the Tosefta.

[11] משחרב הבית האחרון<sup>8</sup> רבו פרושין בישראל שלא היו אוכלין בשר ולא שותין יין. ניטפל להן ר' יהושע. אמ' להן, «בני, מפני מה אין אתם אוכלין בשר?» אמרו לו, «נאכל בשר שבכל יום היה תמיד קרב לגבי מזבח ועכשיו בטל?» אמ' להן, «לא נאכל. ומפני מה אין אתם שותין יין?» אמרו לו, «יין נשתה שבכל יום היה מתנסך על גבי המזבח ועכשיו בטל?» אמ' להם, «לא נשתה.» אמ' להם, «אם כן לחם לא נאכל שממנו היו מביאין שתי הלחם ולחם הפנים. מים לא נשתה שמהן היו מנסכין מים בחג. תאנים וענבים לא נאכל שמהם היו מביאין בכורים בעצרת.» שתקו.

[12] אמ' להם, «בני, להתאבל יותר מדיי אי איפשר ושלא להתאבל אי איפשר. אלא כך אמרו חכמים: סד אדם את ביתו בסיד ומשייר דבר מועט זכר לירושלם.»

[13] עושה אדם צרכי סעודה ומשייר דבר מועט, זכר לירושלם.

[14] עושה אשה תכשיטין ומשיירת דבר מועט, זכר לירושלם שנ' «אם אשכחך ירושלם תשכה ימיני תדבק לשוני לחכי אם לא אזכרכי» (תהלים קל"ז ה' י) וגו'.

[15] וכל המתאבלים עליה בעולם הזה שמחים עמה לעולם הבא שנ' «שמחו את ירושלם וגילו בה כל אוהביה» (ישעיה צ"ו י) וגו'.

(t. Soṭ. 15.11–15; ed. Lieberman 1973, 243–44)<sup>9</sup>

[11] After the last temple was destroyed, abstainers [*pērušim*] became many in Israel, who would not eat meat or drink wine. R. Joshua engaged with them, saying to them, “My children, on what account do you not eat meat?” They said to him, “Shall we eat meat, for every day a continual burnt offering [of meat] was offered on the altar, and now it is no more?” He said to them, “Then let us not eat it. And then why are you not drinking wine?” They said to him, “Shall we drink wine, for every day wine was poured out as a drink offering on the altar, and now it is no more?” He said to them, “Then let us not drink it.” He said to them, “But if so, we also should not eat bread, for from it did they bring the two loaves and the showbread. We also should not drink water, for they did pour out a water offering on the Festival. We also should not eat figs and grapes, for they would bring them as firstfruits on the festival of Aseret [Shabu’ot].” They fell silent.

[12] He said to them, “My children, to mourn too much is not possible and not to mourn is not possible. But thus have the sages said: A man puts on plaster on his house but leaves open a small area, as a memorial [זכר] to Jerusalem.

[13] “A man prepares what is needed for a meal but leaves out some small things, as a memorial to Jerusalem.

[14] “A woman prepares her ornaments but leaves out some small thing, as a memorial to Jerusalem, since it is said, ‘If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!’” (Ps 137:5–6)

[15] And whoever mourns for her in this world will rejoice with her in the world to come, as it is said, “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for

8. The Erfurt manuscript reads בית המקדש (“temple”).

9. See t. B. Bat. 2.17; t. Ta’an. 3.14; b. B. Bat. 60b; b. Ta’an. 30b; Midr. Pss. 137:6. See also Lieberman 1973, 772–74.



her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her." [Isa 66:10]<sup>10</sup>

Here again, for purposes of the present discussion, the question of the historicity of the portrayed dialogue between the "abstainers" (see Fraade 1988, 269–72) and Rabbi Joshua ben Hananyah is immaterial. Viewed as an artifact of memory, the toseftan passage reflects two approaches to collective loss and its commemoration: one of ongoing self-denial, one of symbolic omission. The dietary self-denials of the "abstainers" are explained as acts of sympathy (mourning) for the loss of the temple, the daily rituals of which prominently featured meat and wine. According to this view, it would be inappropriate to derive pleasure from foods that are associated with the destroyed temple and its lost rituals. Rabbi Joshua replies with a *reductio ad absurdum*, arguing that such thinking would lead to self-denial of virtually all types of food and drink, and seeks a middle ground between excessive mourning and no mourning at all, a universal dilemma (see Sir 38:16–23). This middle ground is reached by invoking three rabbinic responses that are less abstinent than symbolic, common social practices in which something small but noticeable is "left out" as a "memorial/reminder of Jerusalem." The spatial loss of the holy temple is mirrored, as it were, in the seemingly mundane spaces left in the plaster of one's house, the arrangement of one's meal, and the ornamentation of one's self (or one's wife).

Whereas the position of the "abstainers" might be assumed to reflect the supererogatory practices of a separatist group (*pērūšīm*) rather than Jewish society overall,<sup>11</sup> the prescriptions of the sages (phrased as the recommended practices for any "man" or "woman") would have been intended for wide social adoption. These "memorials/reminders of Jerusalem" would have a chance of long-lasting and broadly collective concrete practice. Such symbolic but tangible and visible practices would ensure long-lasting *collective* memory of Jerusalem (and its temple), thereby fulfilling the evocative words of the psalmist, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem...."

10. Translation slightly modified from Neusner 1979, 209. Note that Neusner fails to translate the latter half of the first sentence in 15.12.

11. This is stated explicitly in the preceding section of the Tosefta (15.10; ed. Lieberman, 243): אמ' ר' ישמעאל: מיום שחרב בית המקדש דין הוא שלא לאכל בשר ושלא לשתות יין. אלא שאין בית דין גוזרין על הצבור דברים שאין יכולין לעמוד בהן ("Said R. Ishmael, 'From the day on which the Temple was destroyed, it would have been reasonable not to eat meat and not to drink wine. But a court does not make a decree for the community concerning things which the community simply cannot bear'") [trans. Neusner 1979, 208].

Lest, however, we think of the memory of Jerusalem as only past-directed and present-enacted, the passage ends with a midrashic reading of Isa 66:10 that evokes the fulfillment and completion of present mourning for past loss in future (eschatological) rejoicing.

#### CONCLUSION: MEMORY, RITUAL, AND HISTORY

The seemingly contradictory, but more likely dialectical, ways that rabbinic textual and ritual collective memory re-presents the loss of the temple might be compared to the ways that private individuals respond to the loss of a loved one: we grieve as if nothing can fill the void, even as we learn to compensate through substitution for our loss; we seek to remain connected to and mournful of a loved one whose loss cannot be restored, even as we draw meaning from his or her life and its loss that enables us to move forward with our own lives. Social memory, especially its textualization and ritualization as commemoration, facilitates both, continually connecting to a shared past, whether glorious or tragic, which we can never fully retrieve and to which there is no return, while at the same time enabling us to transcend (but not efface) the loss of past so as to face and embrace the future through constant reengagement with a past of loss. The writing of history, whether sacred or critical, enables us to experience the very same "dialectic of alterity" between experiencing time as both continuity and rupture, זכר למקדש—the recalling of a receding holiness/wholeness that is ever yet before us as we pursue both completion and restoration.

The acknowledged difficulties of reconstructing a coherent and continuous historical narrative from the works of collective memory that we have examined renders those works of memory no less historical in their own rights as textual/social practices of profound historical response.

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