

## PHARISAISM AND THE CRISIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

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IN THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.E., a minuscule subject people in a speck of land between Syria and Egypt began to order their lives by a book, the Pentateuch, which they believed to be the revelation of the single God Yahweh-Elohim. He had created heaven and earth, capped His creation with man, and after successive failures to secure the loyalty and obedience of mankind at large, he had selected Abraham to father a people. They would be Yahweh-Elohim's special concern, and the recipients of a land flowing with milk and honey, to hold so long as they remained loyal to Yahweh-Elohim and His covenant with them. Should they violate this covenant, Yahweh-Elohim would punish them mercilessly with famine, plague, even dispersion. What Yahweh-Elohim demanded of them was submission to His laws ordaining an elaborate cultic system for the expiation of sins, with authority lodging in the hands of an Aaronide priesthood, presided over by a direct descendent of Aaron-Eleazar-Phineas. Although dependent for their existence on Persian imperial pleasure, this people swore fealty to Yahweh-Elohim whom they firmly believed to be the one and only God in the universe, and whose very omnipotence had made Israel a subject people. This audacious denial of empirical reality was affirmed by a community small in number, and not eager to attract adherents from without. Yet, in the first century of the Christian era, Josephus was to write that the religion of the Jews was having a powerful impact upon both the educated classes and the masses throughout the Greco-Roman world.<sup>1</sup>

When this fact is coupled with the phenomenon of the rise

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Against Apion*, II:281-86.

and spread of Christianity throughout the Greco-Roman world in the first four centuries C.E., the historian is faced with the intriguing problem, not only of how monotheism vanquished polytheism, but of how the Pentateuchal Judaism of a relatively undeveloped agricultural-priestly society could grip the hearts and minds of individuals nurtured in polytheism and acculturated to urbanization. How could a God addressing Himself to peasant and priest, demanding sacrificial victims as prerequisites for expiation, threatening instant death to non-Aaronides who might approach His altar, holding forth the promise of abundant harvest and serenity for His people and length of days for his loyal worshippers, attract the attention, much less the commitment, of an urbanized individual, buffeted by complexity, and seeking reassurance that his individuation would not be permanently blotted out by the remorseless unconcern of fate?

And to sharpen the problem: Where is to be found the source of the syndrome which gave Christianity its uniqueness; namely, 1) the concept of an omniscient, omnipotent, yet intensely personal Creator-Father God whose sovereignty extended over all that is celestial and terrestrial and whose power embraced all functions, all experience, all persons in all times, and whose abundant grace and love for mankind was made manifest through the offer of His only son to deliver sinful man from death, as he opened to him the way to eternal life; 2) the value of the individual in the sight of the Father-Creator God who not only is concerned with him as a unique person in this world, but seeks to afford him the opportunity for *eternal* individuation; 3) the stress on *internalization*: for Christ is real only if he is introjected; hence the arena where the battle for eternal life rages is the inner self, while externality is but temptation, test, and ephemerality.

Whence this syndrome? Surely not Hebrew Scriptures with its this-world-oriented system of rewards and punishments, and its stress on cultic expiation. Nor could it derive from the mystery cults with its stress on immortality, but

its toleration of many gods. From the philosophers perhaps? Hardly, in view of their disdain for a God who was a person and whose son was a person and who reached out to the semi-literate masses to offer them *too* eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

This paper seeks the source of this threefold syndrome in a revolutionary form of Judaism that emerged at a time when the Hellenistic monarchies were giving clear signs of disintegration and that transmuted a hierocratic, cultic, agriculturally-oriented Pentateuchal Judaism into a Judaism centered in the aspirations of the individual for eternal individuation, solace, comfort, inner security and reassurance, and in a God sovereign over multiplicity and frightening novelty. This revolutionary form was Pharisaism, and the raw materials from which it emerged were Pentateuchal monotheism, polis institutions, Hellenistic modes of thought and analysis, and creative innovation.

## II

The Pharisees have been called by many names, but to my knowledge, never "revolutionaries." They are generally pictured as a sect of rigorous, law-abiding Pietists who separated themselves (hence allegedly the name *perushim*, "separatists") from the masses, the *am ha-aretz*, because of their greater concern with the precise observance of the laws of Levitical purity.<sup>3</sup> They appear in the Gospels not as great

<sup>2</sup> The deliberate withholding by the philosophers of their true beliefs from the masses is stressed by Josephus, *ibid.*: 168-81; 224

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees* (Philadelphia, 1962), I, 74-78, II, 606 and most recently "The Origin of the Pharisees Reconsidered", *Conservative Judaism* 23 (Winter, 1969), pp. 25-36. For the spectrum of scholarly views on the Pharisees, see Ralph Marcus, "The Pharisees in the Light of Modern Scholarship," *Journal of Religion*, 32 (1952) pp. 153-64; A. Michel and I. Le Moyne, "Pharisiens", *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. H. Cazelles and Andre Feuillet (Paris, 1965), fascicules 39-40, pp. 1022-1115.

I should especially wish to draw the reader's attention to the seminal contributions of Solomon Zeitlin to the unravelling of the sticky problems obscuring the identity and the history of the Pharisees. Of these, his "Ha-Zedukkim we-ha-Perushim," *Horeb* 3 (1936), pp.

champions of an internalized system but as hypocritical externalizers. Though they conjure up the image of religionists and sages, they do not evoke pictures of aggressive revolutionaries stirring the masses to overthrow Aaronide Pentateuchalism with the sanction of the twofold Law, written *and* oral—a revolutionary concept hitherto unknown; inspiring them with the promise of individual immortality; creating institutions, such as the *Beth Din ha-Gadol*, and the synagogue, which had no biblical precedent; elevating a scholar class into Moses' seat without scriptural warrant; coining new names for God, *makom* (the All Present), *shekhinah* (the all-dwelling Presence), *ha Kadosh Barukh Hu* (the Holy One Blessed be He); reshaping the very nature of the Hebrew language to communicate their revolutionary message; fashioning distinctive oral legislation (*halakah, takkanah, gezerah*) and oral dicta (the *aggada* form); abandoning scriptural literary models— narrative history, poetry, and the book—for novel *oral* forms of teaching such as distinctive legislation (*halakah, gezerah, takkanah*) and dicta (the *aggadah* form); adopting logical-deductive, categorical modes of reasoning; fashioning a form of Judaism that could never have developed from the logical immanent development of Aaronide Pentateuchalism. Virtually every element in Pentateuchalism underwent transformation;

56-89, is to be singled out for its methodological originality, and for the impact it has had, and still has, on my own efforts at re-conceptualization. ("The Internal City", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 5 [Spring, 1966], 225-40; "The Pharisaic Revolution," *Perspectives in Jewish Learning* 2 [Chicago, 1966], 26-51; "Prolegomenon" to *Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Oesterley and Loewe, Ktav Reissue [New York, 1969], xi-lxx; "Defining the Pharisees", HUCA [1970]. As will be evident from this study—and from those cited above—I diverge from Zeitlin on Pharisaic origins and on the nature, degree, and the extent of the Pharisaic Revolution (cf. my "Solomon Zeitlin's Contribution to the Historiography of the Inter-Testamental Period," *Judaism* 14 [Summer, 1965] 354-67). For Zeitlin's most recent views, see his *Rise and Fall of the Judean State*, (Philadelphia, 1962, 67), 2 vols., *passim*. and "The Origin of the Pharisees Reconfirmed" J.Q.R. 59 (April, 1969), pp. 255-267.

indeed, more often than not, there is annulment, negation, and substitution.

Revolutionaries they were, however hidden their revolution has remained from scholarly exposure ! Ironically, this concealment derives from the nature of the revolution itself: the triumph of a non-writing scholar class that deemed historical narrative irrelevant—only paradigms of the righteous life and the lesson-rich event were pertinent for showing the road to salvation—and who viewed themselves as restorationists not revolutionaries. The non-existence of a sustained historical narrative is itself among the most telling proofs of a revolutionary break with the biblical models which as late as Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah is historical-narrative in orientation.<sup>4</sup>

The evidence for the Pharisaic revolution is by no means trivial, though not easily extricated from the sparse sources. Even Josephus tells us nothing of the historical genesis of the Pharisees, introducing them along with the Sadducees and the Essenes as the dominant *haeresis*, a school of thought, in the time of Jonathan the Hasmonean (160-144 B.C.E.).<sup>5</sup> But Josephus is forthright in affirming that the twofold law of the Pharisees was *operative* prior to its annulment by John

<sup>4</sup> The history of Pharisaism is largely non-recoverable because of the nature of the sources. Since the writing down of the Oral Law in the Mishnah and the Tosefta did not take place until the third century or later C.E., and since this Law was continuously undergoing change, and since most of it is anonymous, dating becomes a hazardous enterprise. Furthermore, the so-called tannaitic midrash raises its own special problems. And as for the non-legal materials, the *aggadah*, the problems of dating are almost insuperable.

I have attempted to solve these problems by emphasizing the fact of the emergence of a non-writing scholar class with novel modes for transmitting both law and lore as the proof of a revolutionary transformation. The Pharisaic forms *halakah*, *aggadah* and midrash have no biblical prototypes !

I also have drawn on Josephus wherever possible, since he was a Pharisee himself and since he explicitly affirms their existence and operation from the time of Jonathan, the Hasmonean, but not before.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII: 171-73.

Hyrchanus after his break with the Pharisees;<sup>6</sup> that its abrogation was followed by the insurrection of the masses;<sup>7</sup> that the long reign of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.E.) was marked by a bloody civil war<sup>8</sup> which ended only after his death, when Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.) restored the Pharisaic twofold law.<sup>9</sup> Thus we have conclusive evidence that the Oral Law of the Pharisees was *operative* in the early Hasmonean period, and that not even a Hasmonean dared abrogate this Law without inviting violent, bloody insurrection. Furthermore, Josephus makes it clear that there did exist an alternative to the twofold Law, namely, the onefold, Pentateuchal Law of the Sadducees, for this Law was substituted by John Hyrcanus for the Pharisaic twofold Law.<sup>10</sup> And since *operative* law is the foundation of any viable social or political order, we are confronted here with an issue of concrete power and authority and not of academic or scholastic ruminations. When civil war follows the elimination of one system and its replacement by another, it is evident that the ultimate control of society is at stake. The fact that Salome's restoration of Pharisaic authority was followed by the physical

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII: 288-98. Note especially 296: "... ὥστε τῇ Σαδδουκαίων ἐποίηδε προσθέσθαι μοίρα, τῶν Φαρισαίων ἀποστάντα καὶ τὰ τε ὑπ' αὐτῶν κατασταθέντα νόμιμα τῷ δήμῳ καταλύσαι καὶ τοὺς φυλάττοντας αὐτὰ καλᾶσαι. μῖσος οὖν ἐντεῦθεν αὐτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πλήθους ἐγένετο".

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 299: Ὑρκανὸς δὲ παύσας τὴν στάσιν...

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 398-404.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*: 408-9, Note especially 408: "... καὶ πάντα τοῖς Φαρισαίοις ἐπιτρέπει ποιεῖν, δις καὶ τὸ πλῆθος ἐκέλευσε πειθαρχεῖν, καὶ εἴ τι δὲ καὶ τῶν νομίμων Ὑρκανὸς ὁ πενθερὸς αὐτῆς κατέλυσεν ὧν εἰσῆνεγκαν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι κατὰ τὴν πατρῶαν παράδοσιν, τοῦτο πάλιν ἀποκατέστησεν.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 297-8 where Josephus explicitly stresses the distinction between the two systems of Law: "περὶ μέντοι τούτων αὐθις ἐροῦμεν νῦν δὲ δηλῶσαι βούλομαι ὅτι νόμιμά τινα παρέδοσαν τῷ δήμῳ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἐκ πατέρων διαδοχῆς, ἅπερ οὐκ ἀναγεγράφται ἐν τοῖς Μωυσέως νόμοις, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα τὸ τῶν Σαδδουκαίων γένος ἐκβάλλει, λέγον ἐκεῖνα δεῖν ἡγεῖσθαι νόμιμα τὰ γεγραμμένα τὰ δ' ἐκ παραδόσεως τῶν πατέρων μὴ τηρεῖν. καὶ περὶ τούτων ζητήσεις αὐτοῖς καὶ διαφορὰς γίνεσθαι συνέβαινε μεγάλας..."

liquidation of the Sadducean advisers of Alexander Janneus points undeniably to the Pharisees as a revolutionary class: they were ready to bring to bear whatever coercive means were necessary for attaining, securing, and consolidating their ultimate authority.<sup>11</sup>

We have direct evidence that the Pharisees did not shrink from insurrectionary violence when their twofold Law was threatened. We have *indirect* evidence that the twofold Law was originally instituted through a revolutionary upheaval. This indirect evidence is compelling, for it rests on a detailed description of pre-Hasmonean society as it appeared to a knowledgeable, discerning, and communicative observer-participant, namely Ben Sira. A *Sofer*, a Scribe, himself, he is rapturous about the system of Judaism which flourished in his day— a non-Pharisaic system which concentrated all authority and power in the Aaronide priests, presided over by the High Priest Simon whose lineage was traced through Onias, his father, to Zadok to Phineas, to Eleazar, to Aaron.<sup>12</sup> No other class, not even that of the *Soferim*, the Scribes, had any authority over the Law.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Ben Sira underwrites Aaronide authority by reminding the reader of the fate of Dathan, Abiram and Korah who had dared to challenge Aaron's supremacy.<sup>14</sup>

Wherever we turn in Ben Sira we are given a world that is in complete harmony with the Pentateuch *literally* apprehended. No institutions but those legislated by the Five Books of Moses; no twofold Law; no law-wielding, law-making, law-sanctioning scholar class; no non-biblical names for God; no *Beth Din ha Gadol*; no synagogues; no mandatory prayer; no promise of eternal individuation; no elevation of the oral mode over the written.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 410-16.

<sup>12</sup> Ecclesiasticus 50:1-21; cf. 45:23-24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 39:1-11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 45:17-19. Note that Aaron (45:6-22) overshadows Moses (45:1-5), and that an everlasting covenant was established with Phineas (23-24).

When we turn from Ben Sira to all other writings that have survived from the pre-Hasmonean period—no insignificant number—the non-existence of the Pharisees, and their distinctive concepts and institutions is confirmed. In vain does one search through Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, Ruth, Esther, Daniel or the Song of Songs. Indeed, the very Ezra who was to become a venerated hero of the Pharisees is depicted in the book that bears his name as the champion of Pentateuchal literalism who knows nothing of an Oral Law or a non-Aaronide ruling class.

If we move from Scriptures to Josephus, the negative evidence is no less eloquent. His sources likewise yielded only evidence of hierocracy, except for the challenge of the Tobiads whose aims were *polis* rights and not the enshrinement of the twofold-Law-bearing scholar class. As late as the eve of the Hasmonean revolt, when the priesthood was usurped by Jason and then Menelaus, Josephus knows nothing of the Pharisees.

Yet no later than the time of Jonathan the Hasmonean, the Pharisees are the dominant *haeresis*, and in the earlier years of John Hyrcanus' high priesthood their twofold Law is operative. Aaronide supremacy has collapsed in the interim; and a hitherto unknown scholar class is seated in Moses' seat and a new system of laws is in force. The overwhelming majority of the Jews is so loyal to this new class and *its* system of Law that they defy a Hasmonean and High Priest, and lay down their lives in a desperate generation-long civil war to restore the Pharisees.

Could anything but a large-scale revolution have bridged the gap between two systems of Judaism so logically discontinuous? Is it conceivable that the Aaronides would peacefully yield their supremacy grounded in literal Pentateuchalism to a scholar class trumpeting the sanction of a twofold Law unknown to the Pentateuch or other sacred Scripture? And if there was a transfer of power from one

class to another why should we hesitate to call it a revolution ?

### III

Having posited the Pharisaic Revolution, we must now search for its roots in structural changes profound enough not only to have dislodged the Aaronide Pentateuchalists, but also to spur the fashioning of a highly novel form of Judaism. Briefly stated, the structural changes were the inevitable consequences of the steady transformation of an agriculturally centered society of the Persian empire into an urbanized, polis-based society of the Hellenistic monarchies. The Pentateuch and the Aaronide supremacy that it underwrote, were geared to the interests, needs, and functions of the peasant. The Pentateuch addresses itself neither to the urban dweller, his needs, interests and functions, nor, for that matter, to the peasant swept into intimate economic and social relations with the city. The primary ideology of the Pentateuch is the assurance that the single cosmic creator God has chosen a particular people, Israel, who will enjoy agricultural bounty if they obey and support the Aaronide priesthood. This class alone has the power to expiate for sins and to call down Yahweh's blessings on the people. The individual is thus linked to Elohim-Yahweh through the Aaronides and the altar; and though direct prayer to Elohim-Yahweh may be permissible, even laudatory, it is neither mandatory nor efficacious without the sacrificial cult. Furthermore, though the individual is assured of a good and long life if he obeys Elohim-Yahweh—that is, concretely, the Aaronides—he is neither promised eternal life in the world to come, nor resurrection. Priestly intermediation is the heart of the Pentateuchal legal system and therefore precludes a direct God-to-individual relationship which would bypass this intermediation.

The shift from a relatively primitive agricultural-priestly society to a far more complex agricultural-urban one began in the Persian period with the steady growth of an agricultural

surplus which enriched the cultus, and proceeded at a heightened tempo under the pressure of the *polisification* process that transformed the economic, social, and political structures of the ancient Near East.<sup>15</sup> Although Aaronide supremacy was affirmed by Alexander, the Ptolemies, and even Antiochus III (223-187 B.C.), and Jerusalem did *not* become a *polis*, the springing up of *poleis* on Palestinian soil and the intense heightening of economic interaction throughout the Mediterranean, spurred urbanization, lured peasants to the city, quickened the pace of economic growth, stirred individual initiative, unleashed leisure, and prodded minds to think and sensitive souls to wonder and question.

The outcome was an economic, social, and cultural matrix bearing little resemblance to that frail and undeveloped peasant-priestly society that had underwritten Aaronide Pentateuchalism. Yet withal, the Aaronide system displayed ability to adapt creatively. Nurtured by ever growing economic surplus, the cultic institutions became more resplendent and the Aaronide priesthood more lustrous. The heightened sense of individuality that urbanization unleashed found ample opportunity for expression within the wide and flexible limits set by the Aaronides; for they allowed full scope for any creative expression that did not directly challenge either the Pentateuch as the revelation of Elohim-Yahweh or the Aaronides as the sole authorities over its legislation.

The evidence for this creative solution is to be found everywhere within the literature of that age: the post-exilic Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Ben Sira. Although the forms may differ, the basic elements have a common source: the individual, aware of himself as an observer of the world of experience about him, striving to link this awareness to the Elohim-Yahweh who had revealed the Pentateuch and enjoined that He be worshipped unto all generations through the intermediation of the altar tended by the Aaronides, and the Aaronides alone.

<sup>15</sup> See Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1959) pp. 90-116.

Thus the Psalmist:

“When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers  
The moon and the stars which you have established;  
What is man that you should remember him  
and the son of man that you should care for him?  
Yet you have made him little less than God,  
and you crown him with glory and honor.  
You have given him dominion over the works of your hand;  
Everything have you set under his feet . . .” Psalms 8:4-6

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“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,  
will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, I will trust in him.’  
For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence;  
He will cover you with His pinions;  
and under His wings you will take refuge;  
a shield and a buckler is his truth.  
You will not be afraid of the terror of the night,  
of the arrow that flies by day,  
of the pestilence that walks in the darkness,  
of the destruction that destroys at noonday . . .  
Because he desires Me in love, I will deliver him;  
I will protect him because he knows my name.  
When he calls to Me, I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will rescue him and honor him.  
With long life I will satisfy him,  
and show him my helpfulness.

Psalms 91:1-6, 14-16

The Psalms offer the individual a mode for articulating his personal longing, agony, confusion, sinfulness, bewilderment, even his vengeful hostility, yet holding him steadfastly loyal to the Pentateuch and the cultus; indeed, it is this

loyalty that assures a listening ear, a sympathetic heart, and a potent response:

“Happy is the man  
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked  
 nor stands in the way of sinners,  
 nor sits in the seat of the scoffers;  
 but his delight is in the Torah of the Lord,  
 and in His Torah does he meditate day  
 and night . . .”

Psalms 1:1-2

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“The Torah of the Lord is perfect  
 reviving the soul;  
 The testimony of the Lord is sure,  
 making wise the simple;  
 the precepts of the Lord are right,  
 rejoicing the heart;  
 the commandment of the Lord is clear,  
 enlightening the eyes;  
 the fear of the lord is pure, standing forever,  
 the judgments of the Lord are true,  
 they are righteous altogether,  
 more to be desired than gold,  
 even much fine gold;  
 sweeter also than honey  
 and the drippings of the honeycomb . . .  
 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
 be before you,  
 O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Psalms 19:8-10, 14

The writers of wisdom literature follow the lead of the Psalmist. In the sagely reflection of Proverbs on the paradoxes of life, the brooding of Ecclesiastes over its disillusionments, or the agonizing questions of a Job, there is no hostility towards Aaronide supremacy, no challenge to Pentateuchal

sovereignty, no clarion call for a new order. And this melding of intense individualism with Pentateuchalism is forthrightly bespoken by Ben Sira who cries out:

“O that a guard were set over my mouth,  
 and a seal of prudence on my lips,  
 that it may keep me from falling,  
 so that my tongue may not destroy me.  
 O Lord Father and rule of my life,  
 do not abandon me to their counsel,  
 and let me not fall because of them!  
 O that whips were set over my thoughts,  
 and the discipline of wisdom over my mind!  
 That they may not spare me in my errors,  
 and that it may not pass by my sins;  
 in order that my mistakes may not be multiplied,  
 and my sins not abound;  
 then shall I not fall before my adversaries,  
 and my enemy will not rejoice over me.  
 O Lord, Father and God of my life,  
 do not give me haughty eyes,  
 and remove from me evil desire.  
 Let neither gluttony nor lust overcome me,  
 and do not surrender me to a shameless soul . . .

Sirach 22:27; 23:1-6

and yet admonishes:

“With all your soul fear the Lord  
 and honor his priests.  
 With all your might love your Maker,  
 and do not forsake his ministers.  
 Fear the Lord and honor the priest  
 and give his portion as is commanded you:  
 the first fruits, the guilt offering,  
 the gift of the shoulders,  
 the sacrifice of sanctification,  
 and the first fruits of holy things.”

Ibid. 7:29-31

He braids a garland of exquisite praise for the Pentateuch:

“All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,  
 the Law which Moses commanded us  
 as an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob.  
 It fills men with wisdom like Pishon,  
 and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits.  
 It makes them full of understanding like the Euphrates  
 and like the Jordan at harvest time.  
 It makes instruction shine forth like light,  
 like the Gihon at the time of vintage.  
 Just as the first man did not know her perfectly,  
 the last one has not fathomed her;  
 for her thought is more abundant than the sea,  
 and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

and is overawed by the majesty of the High Priest Simon  
 officiating in the Temple:

“How glorious he was when the people gathered round him  
 as he came out of the inner sanctuary  
 Like the morning star among the clouds,  
 like the moon when it is full;  
 like the sun shining on the Temple of the Most High  
 and like the rainbow gleaming in glorious clouds;  
 like roses in the days of the first fruits,  
 like lilies by a spring of water,  
 like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day;  
 like fire and incense in the censer,  
 like a vessel of hammered gold  
 adorned with all kinds of precious stones;  
 like an olivetree putting forth its fruit,  
 and like cypress towering in the clouds.  
 When he put on his glorious robe  
 and clothed himself with superb perfection  
 and went up to the holy altar  
 he made the court of the sanctuary glorious.

Ibid. 50:5-11

The transition, therefore, from relatively simple agricultural society to a more complex agricultural-urban one not only did not at first undermine Aaronide Pentateuchalism, but actually strengthened it—as witness the eloquent testimony of Ben Sira. Far from being stifled, the growing experience of individuation found, within the broad limits of the Pentateuchal system, fallow soil for rootage; for the depiction of Elohim-Yahweh as an intensely personal deity, with human, though elevated attributes, offered rich possibilities as an ego ideal for the individual, since He was an Individual who had neither peer nor competitor. There was no other God, human or otherwise, to split the individual's self-system by attributing to one god sovereignty over one's impulses, to another god sovereignty over one's economic function, and to still a third god sovereignty over one's political or social loyalties. Thus a person to Person relationship could be established which tended to hold the individual together, so he might experience himself and his world as a unity, rather than to fragmentize his inner self or his outer world.

Nonetheless, this one to One relationship was hemmed in by the Pentateuchal limits at the base of Aaronide cultic intermediation. Yahweh could indeed be the individual's Rock and Fortress, his Protector and Redeemer, his Shepherd and his Comforter, provided that Yahweh's Torah, the Pentateuch, was that man's delight and its cultic demands a refreshment for the soul. The sinful soul could cry out in anguish to Yahweh, but without the appropriate guilt offering, he would be compounding his sin, not expiating it. A delicate balance between the Pentateuchal principle of intermediation and the individual's search for an unobstructed person to Person relationship may have been effected, but it dangled on a precarious contradiction.

Cataclysmic change rendered the compromise solution unviable. Pentateuchalism and Aaronide supremacy were shattered by the mounting pressure to Hellenize the priesthood and to carry through whatever structural changes might be

essential for the attainment of *polis* rights. Fast on the heels of Antiochus III's ousting of the Ptolemies from Judea came the successful bid first by Jason, then by Menelaus in the reign of Antiochus IV, to secure the High Priesthood as an instrument for Hellenization (170 B.C.). The cynical disregard for Pentateuchal legitimacy by these priests, followed by a willingness to embrace polytheism, created a crisis of confidence in the traditional Aaronide leadership and seeded the soil for a revolutionary upheaval. A new scholar class stepped into the breach, stirring the masses with a novel concept, the twofold Law (Written *and* Oral), and with a novel promise, eternal individuation. This revolutionary scholar class was the Pharisees and their achievement, the transmutation of Pentateuchalism and the dismantling of Aaronide supremacy.

The evidence of the revolution they wrought is spelled out in no chronicle, but in the transfer of authority from the Aaronides to a non-Aaronidic scholar class; in the subordination of the literal Pentateuch to an orally transmitted system of law; in the creation of a legislature, the *Beth Din ha-Gadol*; in the emergence of the synagogue; in the coining of new names and the forging of new concepts for God; in the re-shaping of language and form of discourse; and in compelling the individual to confront the single Father Creator God in a direct and unmediated relationship. And, if one were to seek out the elemental idea that let loose the revolution and stirred the masses, it was the notion of an internalized Law guiding one along the road to eternal individuation.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Josephus. *Against Apion* II: 217 b—219: "The prize, however, for those who live according to the laws is not silver or gold, nor is it a crown of wild olive or parsley, nor any such like public proclamation. But rather, each individual heeding the witness of his conscience, and the prophesying of the lawgiver, and confirmed by the strong faithfulness of God is convinced that God has granted a rebirth and a better life following on the revolution [of the aeons] for those who observe the laws and, when necessary, die eagerly for them." Josephus thus stresses both internalization ("ἀλλ' ἕκαστος αὐτῶν τὸ συνειδὸς ἔχων μαρτυροῦν πεπίστευκεν . . .") and the restriction of the prize of

## IV

The Pharisaic revolution was so radical and thorough because the ground had been well-prepared by the steady penetration of *polis* institutions and Hellenistic culture throughout the Near East, and by the internal crisis that undermined the old system precisely during those years that witnessed the Hasmonean Revolt and the Pharisaic Revolution. Wracked by internal rebellions and weakened by the unrelaxing pressure of Roman power, the Hellenistic monarchies disintegrated into impotence, and unloosed the moorings that had underpinned the security of the individual. Wars had never been absent between the Ptolemies and Seleucids but there had been conflicts fought by strong and stable societies, each effectively supporting the system of *poleis* that served as the basic means of imperial control. Indeed, while mercenaries fought, the individual of the *poleis* not only felt secure in his *polis* identity, but also in his membership in a larger world, an ecumene, that transcended the political and territorial limits of the Hellenistic monarchies. An Antiochian saw mirrored in an Alexandrian his own image.

This twofold security was undermined with the collapse of the Hellenistic monarchies. But the individuation that had been generated by the spread of *poleis* throughout the Near East and had been nourished by the autonomous institutions that had been their hallmark did not come to an end with the breakdown of its foundations; on the contrary, the individual became even more aware of his individuation precisely because the external insecurity compelled introspection—not solely for the sensitive poet or the contemplative philosopher—but for everyone. If the external reassurances of one's worth and one's identity were evaporating, where else was one to turn but to an inner world that could reaffirm one's individuality in the face of a bewilderingly

immortality to those who have been steadfastly loyal to the laws (ὅτι τοῖς τοῦ νόμου διαφυλάξασι).

unreliable external world? Once individuation had been unleashed there could be no return to the ideologies that had sustained the peasant in his struggle to fill his granary, and to supply his kneading trough. *Polisification*, with its provisions for citizen participation in law-making, had hammered out a sense of individuality to the point of no return.

Polytheism and Judaism both took up the challenge. Drawing on a host of agricultural and astral deities associated with the agricultural cycle of eternal renewal, the mystery cults transmuted them into gods who had the power to grant eternal life to urbanized individuals. The offer was open to all individuals irrespective of class or of territorial or ethnic origin; i.e., it was an appeal to the individual and *his* search for inner security *wherever* he might be and *whatever* his condition in life. Since polytheism was, with the exception of the Jews, universally acknowledged, the mystery cults could count on a willingness of the individual to take seriously the claim for any legitimate god. The deities of these cults, however, though possessing human attributes, did not have them so bound together as to offer a personal God who could serve as an ego ideal for the individual, unless recourse were made to allegory. Each one had only certain limited functions. A Person did not confront a person. In addition, the fact that other gods existed with equivalent claims diluted the sense of cosmic significance of one's individuality. This particular god cared for him, or that particular god, but not a one and only creator-person God.<sup>17</sup>

In two other respects, the mystery cults fell short of solving the individual's search for an internal identity. First, although they offered immortality through cultic participation, they failed to implant within the conscience of the individual an internalized standard that operated continuously; that mobilized the guilt system whenever a breach occurred; and that ceased to flagellate only when reparation satisfying to the internalized standard was effected. And second, the mystery

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. II: 239-54.

cults failed to establish a community of believers whose activity as a community not only transcended the cultic moments, but was more essential for securing eternal life than cultic participation—or, perhaps better stated—was a prerequisite for cultic efficacy.

Judaism likewise offered a solution to the problems of the individual to cope with a disintegrative external world. But it was not the Judaism of the Pentateuch with its preeminent concern with the peasant, the priest, and cultic intermediation. Nor was it the Judaism of the delicate balance between individual and cult that had crowned the security of an optimally functioning Pentateuchal system in Ben Sira's day. It was a new form of Judaism that in addressing itself directly to the crisis of the individual Jew offered a religion that could reach out to every individual wherever he might be and whatever his ethnic or racial origin. This new form was Pharisaism.

Though the Pharisees were beholden to the Pentateuch for their notion of the one and only God who had given an immutable revelation to Moses, they intensified His relationship to the individual at the expense of cult. They did this by affirming that he was the Father-Creator-Law-giving God of the individual—a real cosmic omnipotent Father who was directly accessible to the individual through *mandatory* prayer and whose law was to be *internalized* within the conscience.<sup>18</sup> This *internalized* law was not the literal Pentateuchal Law, but that twofold Law—oral and written—promulgated by the Pharisees. This twofold Law differed radically from the Pentateuch, not only in acknowledging an authority unknown to the Pentateuch, the Pharisaic scholar class, but in spelling out for the individual a discipline em-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* II: 178 where Josephus stresses the thorough familiarity with the laws, a familiarity made possible by internalization at a tender age (“τοιγαροῦν ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης εὐθους αἰσθήσεως αὐτοῦς ἐκμανθάνοντες ἔχομεν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὡσπερ ἐγκεχαραγμένους . . .”); cf. also *ibid.* 204 b.

bracing all human activity. No hour of the day or night was beyond its jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup> It was a system of law that shifted the center of concern from the cultus to the conscience, and that focused on social responsibility. One was bound in responsibility to fellow members of the community of those who had also internalized the twofold law—and the non-Pentateuchal term *gemiluth hasadim*, the doing of kindly acts, was coined to denote this responsibility.<sup>20</sup> The assurance was that the Father-Creator-Law-giving God was accessible. He was called by names unknown to the Pentateuch: Our Father Who art in Heaven (*abinu she-ba-shamaim*), *Makom* (the "All-Present"), *Shekhinah* ('the Divine Presence'), *ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* ("the Holy One blessed be He"). No longer was God to be found in a special place, the Temple, but everywhere where the individual might be, for the heavenly Father, unlike an earthly father is eternal and is indeed everywhere at once.

The individual was His concern, all individuals, not just Jews. He wanted the individual to have the opportunity for an *eternal* individuation as a reward for keeping the internalized twofold Law.<sup>21</sup> This Law had been made available

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 171 where Josephus emphasized the totality of divine obligation ("ἀπασαιγὰρ αἱ πράξεις καὶ διατριβαὶ καὶ λόγοι πάντες ἐπι τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἡμῖν εὐσέβειαν ἔχουσι τὴν ἀναφορὰν. οὐδὲν γὰρ τούτων ἀνεξέταστον οὐδ' ἀοριστον παρέλιπεν") and 174 where he spells it out as the standard demanded by God the Father and absolute Master ("... ἢν ὡσπερ ὑπὸ πατρὶ τούτῳ καὶ δεσπότῃ ζῶντες μῆτε βουλόμενοι μῆθ' ὑπ' ἀγνοίας ἀμαρτάνωμεν.")

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Josephus, *ibid.* 209-210, and Mishnah Peah 1: אלו דברים שאין להם שיעור הפאה, והבכורים, והראיון, וגמילות חסדים, ותלמוד תורה. אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הוה והקרן קימת לו לעולם הבא. כיבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים והבאת שלום ביו אדם לחבירו ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם

It should be noted that activities most highly rewarded are those involving inter-personal relationships and study. No mention is made of liturgical or cultic acts. It should also be noted that the ultimate reward is in "the world to come". It should likewise be stressed that *talmud torah* is a Pharisaic term, that it means the study of the twofold Law, and that it is the surest means for attaining *personal* salvation.

<sup>21</sup> Josephus, *ibid.* 217b—219; *Wars* III: 371-6; *Antiquities*, XVIII:

to Israel by the Father-God through Moses, and its prescriptions were continually being made explicit by the Pharisaic scholar class through the *Beth Din ha-Gadol*, the "Great Legislature." Although it was given to Israel, it was open, through proselytism, to all mankind.<sup>22</sup> And though Israel was viewed as a holy community, the personal salvation of each individual was independent of the failure of the community to live up to its mandate. The road to salvation was one that was open to any person, even though no other walked with him. And there was only one way to know how far one had to tread: to scrutinize one's loyalty to the internal standard, as did God, the Father in Heaven, himself.

Pharisaism was thus the Judaism of a reality within. It designated this reality as the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and it confirmed this reality by legislating that in the morning and in the evening the sovereignty of the internal kingdom be affirmed in the saying of the *Shema*.<sup>23</sup> No such command is to be found in the Pentateuch. The *Shema* affirms that God is one and that his laws are eternally binding. Along with the

14, I: 230-31. Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 is the classical tannaitic proof text, since it is embedded in a legal context involving the judicial powers of the *bet din* to inflict capital punishment. This text כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר ועמך כולם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ וצור מטעי מעשה ידי להתפאר. ואלו שאין להם חלק לעוה"ב: האומר אין תחית המתים, ואין תורה מן השמים...

confirms that salvation, i.e., the world to come, was *available* to every Israelite but it was not *guaranteed* to him. He had to earn it by loyal adherence to the twofold Law. An Israelite who rejected the twofold law in principle; i.e. rejected the promise of eternal life, or rejected its divine origin—ואין תורה מן השמים (the two-fold Torah) had no claim to the World to Come.

<sup>22</sup> Josephus, *Against Apion*, II, 210

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Mishnah *Berakhot*: 2:2...

א"ר יהושע בן קרחה למה קדמה שמע לוהיה אם שמוע (אלא) כדי שיקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים תחלה ואח"כ יקבל עליו עול מצות...

ibid 2:5:

חתן פטור מקריאת שמע... מעשה ברבן גמליאל שקרא בלילה הראשון שנשא... אמר להם איני שומע לכם לבטל ממני מלכות שמים אפי' שעה אחת.

Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, IV: 212

*Shema*, the Pharisees insisted that the *Tefillah*, a fixed form of blessings and prayer, be uttered daily;<sup>24</sup> and that whenever one partook of God's bounty or was attracted to some extraordinary manifestation of God's power, one was to utter a blessing.<sup>25</sup>

Little wonder then that the form of religious expression that emerged out of Pharisaism was the synagogue, a decentralized institution for the reading of Scripture, and subsequently for the utterance of prayers in the community of fellow believers in the internalized kingdom—an institution that not only solved the problem of diaspora Judaism, but so effectively undercut the cultus in Judea that only an appropriate event was required for its complete collapse.<sup>26</sup>

And this is not all. The Pharisees made the Temple irrelevant by shifting the attention of Jews to a scholar class and away from the priesthood. Not only did the Pharisees legislate how the Aaronides were to perform their functions, but by transferring authority from a book, the Pentateuch, to a non-writing scholar class, the Israelite had no alternative but to *listen* to what this class had to say; for the road to salvation was to be found in their teachings and not in a literal perusal of the Pentateuch.<sup>27</sup>

Their mode of teaching was anything but Pentateuchal.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. *Berakhot*, chapters 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapters 6-9.

<sup>26</sup> The problem of the origin of the synagogue is a vexing one, since no sources exist chronicling or describing its development. Although most scholars argue for a pre-Hasmonean dating, I have attempted to challenge the methodological assumption that the silence of the sources can be drawn upon to postulate the existence of something. Not only does Ben Sira know nothing of synagogues, but the synagogue when known is exclusively a Pharisaic institution. (See E. Rivkin, "Ben Sira and the Non-Existence of the Synagogue," *In the Time of Harvest*, ed. D. J. Silver [New York, 1963], pp. 321-354.) By contrast, the synagogue is ubiquitous in the Gospels and Acts.

<sup>27</sup> Thus Josephus affirms that the divine worship and sacrifices were carried out in accordance with Pharisaic law (*Antiquities* XVIII: 14-15). He also makes clear that even the Sadducees had to knuckle under to Pharisaic teachings whenever they reluctantly served as magistrates. (*Ibid.*).

Gone were the written word and the historical narrative. Gone were the Pentateuchal legal formulae and poetry too, even the prayers were prose. No more was the mode of articulating wisdom in batches of sententious sentences employed. In their stead is the paradigm of the exemplary life, however unhistorical; the moral of a salvation-laden event; laws severed from history and filled with terminology betraying analytical awareness and sophisticated abstraction; language adapted to the novel modes of oral discourse and replete with a non-Pentateuchal vocabulary coined to express non-Pentateuchal concepts.<sup>28</sup> Wherever one turns, he is met with a new *form* of Judaism that reiterates its distinctive new message: the one and only Father-Creator-twofold Law-giving God so loved man that he offered him an internalized Law that his individuality might never come to an end.<sup>29</sup>

If then the source of the *distinctive* Pharisaic forms, institutions, and concepts are not Pentateuchal—though the Pentateuch remained venerated as a divinely revealed book—what served as the models? It would seem that we must posit two sources: (1) the legal systems and thought patterns of the Hellenistic-Roman World, and (2) creative problem-solving. Thus the *Beth Din ha-Gadol* as a legislature would seem to be modeled after the *boulé*; the notion of unwritten laws drawn from the Greek and Hellenistic philosophers; the non-Pentateuchal formulae for a legal statement, abstract legal principles, the analytical methods and exegesis from Greco-Roman models; the preeminence of a scholar class and the significance of the teacher-student relationship

<sup>28</sup> Here once again the evidence is to be found in the *forms* themselves and not in the precise dating of content. Thus the *Mishnah* form, the *aggadah* form, the *midrashic* form were oral lore before commitment to writing. The language used to communicate does not utilize biblical models, even in the formulation of law. Indeed even when a verse is interpreted, the two modes of expression are not assimilated.

<sup>29</sup> The power of this message is underwritten by the fact that it is the presupposition underwriting the authority of the *Mishnah* and the *Tosefta*. There is no need to repeat this presupposition explicitly, since *every halakah* takes it for granted.

from the philosophic schools; the concepts of Father-God, eternal life, a cosmos—the Pharisees were the first to use the word *olam* to mean world—and the significance of the individual, from the Hellenistic intellectual climate.

But these sources were not passively assimilated. They were drawn upon to the extent that they were helpful in solving the particular problem that generated a revolutionary solution: how to preserve the sole sovereignty of the Pentateuchal God in the face of the collapse of Aaronidism and the inadequacy of the literal Pentateuch for the problems of the urbanized individual. Creative thinking was basic for working out a solution to this problem. To justify the transfer of power from the Aaronides to the scholar class recourse was had to the concept of an *unwritten* revelation that took precedence over the written revelation, and to the claim that the twofold Law was transmitted by Moses to Joshua, by Joshua to the elders, by the elders to the prophets, by the prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue—and by them in turn to the Pharisaic scholar class. The Aaronides had thus never been in charge of the Law! As evidence that the elders and the prophets had indeed wielded an authority that was not limited to the literal Pentateuch, the Pharisees could cite any number of illustrations from the historical and prophetic books of the Bible where prophets had literally taken the Law into their hands by carrying out some Pentateuchally forbidden act, such as sacrifices offered by non-Aaronides. The concept of the Oral Law carried with it precisely this authorization: to negate the Pentateuch if necessary, so that it might be preserved.

The outcome of creative innovation was a distinctive form of Judaism, not a Jewish form of Hellenism. Indeed so thoroughly were the Hellenistic materials interwoven to form a pattern of Judaism, that to this day the Pharisees are believed to have been the successful defenders of a pure Judaism against the pressures of Hellenization. The Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Tannaitic midrash, the *aggadah*—all have

been and still are the hallmarks of authentic, normative Judaism. They are full of law and lore that deal with the Sabbath, the Festivals, the sacrificial cult, prayer, etc. Yet the form, the medium, is Hellenistic-Roman and some of its most crucial concepts are Hellenistic-Roman.

Thus pharisaism confronted the mystery cults. Its appeal is now evident. The individual could solve the crisis of the transition from external to internal security by turning to an omnipotent Father God who could serve simultaneously as the guarantor of eternal individuation and an ego ideal. His attributes were those very human qualities that the individual might successfully imitate. Here was an eternal Person who was just, merciful, kind, moral and fatherly. He had revealed a standard that could be internalized and His eye was ever watchful of one's loyalty and obedience. He also had made known through the Pharisaic scholar class His wish that man do kindly acts to his fellow man, for which he would be rewarded in the world to come.

Since this God was an individual, no individual could find Him wanting. And He held sway over all creation, all mankind, all experience, all eternity, with power undiluted. Thus in identifying with Him one became aware of the world and experience as unifiable. Unlike polytheism, the individual was not offered a fragmented world, but a world whose diverseness and variety was a manifestation of unity. The individual who had through experience become aware that he shared a universe with others and turned to polytheism to seek inner security was offered disorganization. Pharisaism, by contrast, held out to him a Father God who could make him whole, even as He made the universe whole.

## V

Pharisaism won its adherents, but it did not emerge triumphant over polytheism. It did, however, generate out of itself a new religion, Christianity, which did emerge triumphant. The winning form of Christianity was rooted in Paul,

who by his own confession was a Pharisee,<sup>30</sup> but one who had overthrown the internalized kingdom of the twofold Law.<sup>31</sup> He, like the Pharisees, preached of a single creator Father God, but this God so loved man that he gave his Son so man might find eternal life. The Son, Christ, was to be internalized, not the twofold Law. Christ was to be the inner standard to measure one's steps to salvation. Christ was the internal security to withstand the blows of outrageous fortune.<sup>32</sup> But Christ was one, and his Father one, and the individual to be saved was one. What chance did the mystery cults have now that monotheism was secured in Christ and Christ secured in the individual ?

When, therefore, in the third century, the proud Roman imperium was bending before rebellions from within and onslaughts from without— a fate it had once helped to shape for the Hellenistic monarchies—and the citizens of the Roman empire were experiencing the crumbling of the external foundations of their individuality and their identity, Christianity spoke of an eternal reality grounded in the Father God and Christ, an internal Kingdom that could not be moved. Reassurance was given that the individual was eternally dear to Christ, however shattered by the crumbling world about— and men listened and were moved. They did not know that the solution to the crisis of their individuality was rooted in that form of Judaism which many centuries before had radically transmuted Pentateuchalism to offer the individual an internalized kingdom secured by the

<sup>30</sup> Philippians 3:5-6. Cf. Galatians 1:13-14 where Paul boasts of his devotion to the "traditions of my fathers" which can only mean the oral laws: "καὶ προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συναηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Romans 7:7-25. *Since Paul himself avows that he had not only been a follower of the Pharisaic Law, but had fully met all its demands, the Law which proved so agonizing to him could not have been simply the Pentateuchal Law but the Pharisaic twofold Law.*

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Romans 7:9-11, 31-39, I Corinthians 8-13, II Corinthians 4:16-6:10 and *passim*.

one God and promising eternal individuation. Nor were they aware that the threefold system of unity that gave Christianity its power to transcend externality was the very system that was to make Judaism impervious to the message of Christ's saving grace: the single Father-God, the promise of eternal individuation, and an internalized standard.