

The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian

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“Kingdom of Heaven” figures prominently in one Judaic system, forms part of the background of another, and plays no role whatsoever in a third, which makes possible the comparison and contrast of Judaisms. What is at stake in this exercise is how and whether “Kingdom of Heaven” functions as a category-formation in the Aggadic theology as it does in the Evangelists’ account of Jesus’ teaching and the media framed to bear that message. In Aggadic and Halakic contexts, by contrast, the theme of God’s rule pervades, but the particularization of that theme as “Kingdom of Heaven” forms no more than an inert category-formation, one that figures as part of the background of ideas that everywhere inhere but nowhere take an active, generative role.

Key Words: Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven, Qaddish, category-formations, systemically generative, systemically inert, Halakah, Aggadah

WHY DOES THE FORMULA "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" FIGURE IN THE SYSTEMIC COMPARISON OF CATEGORY-FORMATIONS?

Theological systems of social thought produced by diverse heirs of the Hebrew Scriptures concur on generative category-formations: Israel/Gentiles, sin-repentance-atonement, for example. These are critical not only to the Aggadic theology that structures the Rabbinic system but, appropriately adapted, to the theological constructions that animate other canonical communities. But a component deriving from Scripture that figures prominently in one Judaic system may form part of the background of another or play no role whatsoever in a third. So the comparison and contrast of Judaisms begins with the available theological category-formations: generative or inert.¹

1. For an elaboration of the analytic issues raised here, see my *Comparing Theological Category-Formations in Rabbinic Judaism: Generative versus Inert, Primary versus Subordinate*

“The Kingdom of Heaven” provides one such case. It is generative in one continuator-system of Scripture, inert in another. When, specifically, we come to the theme the Kingdom of Heaven (in Rabbinic writings) or the Kingdom of God (in Christian ones), we find what forms to the one an inert reference-point, lacking systemic mission or position, and to the other, a category-formation integral to the construction and the working of entire compositions of thought. In the Aggadic system it is one way of referring to God’s dominion—that alone. In the Christian system set forth in the Synoptic Gospels, it defines the heart of Jesus’ message. Indeed, it is so systemically active that a particular literary medium, the parable, is designated as principal medium for the message. That surely justifies classifying the conception as a generative category-formation by the evidence of the systemic writings themselves.

To define what is at issue, we begin with the simple question: how, in framing a hypothesis of matters, do we intuit the activity of any given category-formation? The answer implicit throughout is: we rely on the signals of the language of our documents, beginning with the words they use to deal with transactions deemed comparable or congruent, or with actors of the same sort. Israel stands for Israelites and corporate Israel; sin-repentance-atonement covers a variety of actions characterized by the same attitude. So the choice of words such as *Israel* or *Gentile*, or of the complex sin-repentance-atonement forms the first indication of the presence and activity of a candidate for defining a systemic category-formation.

But the task transcends concordance-work, for a single word on its own does not stand for a systemic category-formation. In the theological grammar of the Rabbinic Aggadah, we may say, a head-noun presents us with a candidate for designation as a category-formation but on its own does not establish its claim to play a considerable role in its system. That qualification—a noun is not a category-formation, it is only a noun—we shall see in connection with the Messiah-theme, which divides itself among and contributes to a variety of fundamental and generative category-formations but possesses no integrity or autonomy within the Aggadic theological system, for reasons to be explained.

That brings us to our problem, which is the systemic standing of the conception of “Kingdom of Heaven” in the Aggadic theological sys-

(Leiden: Brill, 2005). I compare Generative versus Inert Category-Formations—Generative Category-Formations: The Synergy of Sin, Repentance, and Atonement; and An Inert Category-Formation: The Kingdom of Heaven. Then I compare Primary versus Subordinate Category-Formation—Primary Category-Formations: Israel/Gentiles; and the Messiah-Theme: Its Diverse Roles in the Eschatological Narrative of the Resurrection of the Individual Israelite and the Advent of the World to Come for Corporate Israel.

tem, comparable to “Kingdom of God” elsewhere. “Kingdom of God” stands for a collection of related notions: God is King, God rules, God exercises dominion, God’s politics govern, God commands and Israel obeys, Israelites are God’s slaves, and so on. The language provides a way of referring to those integrated conceptions. What we want to know is how the language of the Aggadic compilations and compositions presents in the formula “Kingdom of Heaven” the idea of divine governance and whether the usages of that formula signal an integral and generative conception or an inert and passive, neutral one. That it is a ubiquitous notion is proved self-evident by the formulation of the Qaddish, which beseeches the prompt advent of “his Kingdom.” But where and how, in the Aggadic system the conception of God’s dominion figures as a generative category-formation, not merely part of the background of givens, is not equivalently self-evident. God’s dominion both pervades the system and leaves no categorical mark upon the composition and workings of the system.

Now that observation points to what is at stake in this exercise. It is how and whether “Kingdom of Heaven” functions as a category-formation in the Aggadic theology as it does in the Evangelists’ account of Jesus’ teaching and the media framed to bear that message. In Aggadic and Halakic contexts, by contrast, the theme of God’s rule pervades, but the particularization of that theme as “Kingdom of Heaven” forms no more than an inert category-formation, one that figures as part of the background of ideas that everywhere inhere but nowhere take an active, generative role.

WHAT DOES "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" LOOK LIKE WHEN IT IS SYSTEMICALLY GENERATIVE--ACTIVE AND INTEGRAL?

When it is generative, the “Kingdom of Heaven” will come to realization within the unfolding of the mythic narrative of the system, link to other principal parts of the system to provoke fresh thought about new problems, and find a literary expression in context that accords to the conception particular emphasis. These conditions are met by the category-formations sin-repentance-atonement and Israel/Gentiles.

Let us begin with an elementary question: Why should we suppose the Kingdom of Heaven presents a candidate for identification as a category-formation? To answer that question for “Kingdom of Heaven,” we need more than a case in which God’s rule registers in some categorical role. Such a case does not qualify as systemically consequential—generative in the way in which sin-repentance-atonement generate new thought about fresh problems or exercise predictive power. We deal here with a generality, not a systemic particularization, in a working set of category-formations of a generalization.

So to legitimate invoking the Kingdom of God as a generative category-formation, I have to show that, in a competing system constructed by heirs of the same Scripture, that topic does function as active and principal. So we need to begin with the demonstration that an idea such as God's dominion, at the foundations everywhere, sustaining every system that privileges the Hebrew Scriptures, can rise to the surface of systemic discourse and form the center of that discourse. Does an entire working set of category-formations derive energy from that particularization of a general conception, as, for example, the Rabbinic Aggadic system does from sin-repentance-atonement? Such an example from some Scripturally founded system other than the Rabbinic one will validate the supposition that "the Kingdom of Heaven" can serve as a generative category-formation. With that picture in hand, we gain perspective on the counterpart data of the Aggadic writings: if this is what a generative categorical expression of the concept of divine rule looks like, then how shall we classify the counterpart expression in the Rabbinic writings?

I suppose that the "Kingdom of Heaven" presents a candidate for identification as an Aggadic category-formation in Rabbinic theology, resting as it does on deep foundations in Scripture, because in the Synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus' teaching, saturated as they are in the heritage of Israelite Scripture, "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God" not only defines the central motif. It also is given its own literary medium for carrying the message, the parable in Evangelical formulation.² The simple fact is, as represented by the Gospels, the system of thought set forth in the teaching attributed to Jesus centers on the Kingdom of God.

Reading the vast and compelling literature on the subject of the Kingdom of God, Bruce D. Chilton and J. I. H. McDonald state matters in a decisive way: "The programmatic center of Jesus' ministry was . . . that of God's rule. The Synoptic Gospels make it evident that his essential purpose was to promulgate the announcement that God's Kingdom had come near (see Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15, Luke 4:43)."³ So too they state:

Jesus' stated purpose in the Gospels is to preach the Kingdom [of God] and hereby to win his hearers' repentance in the face of God's imminent action. . . . In a number of cases, Jesus' parables—which largely concern the Kingdom—portray a situation of eschatological

2. For an account of the diverse representations and utilizations of parabolic writing, see my *Rabbinic Narrative: A Documentary Perspective*, vol. 4: *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View* (Brill Reference Library of Judaism 14–17; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

3. Bruce D. Chilton and J. I. H. McDonald, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 3.

crisis, be it as harvest . . . as surprising transformation . . . as amazing discovery . . . or as final reckoning.⁴

The meaning of “Kingdom of God” in the Gospels is defined by Chilton and McDonald in the following language:

if Jesus’ initial proclamation is of the “imminence” of the Kingdom, the performance of the message . . . effects the present crisis in time . . . the encounter with the Kingdom. The Kingdom that intersects time is “at hand” in the sense that it may be entered. (p. 61)

[Jesus] has brought the Kingdom within our reach and created space for us to move into God’s realm and feel its power. (p. 62)

Chilton and McDonald also point out that the bulk of the parables that distinguish the traditions of Jesus’ teaching focus on the Kingdom of God:

The parables articulate and image a reality that can be discerned, encountered, and responded to in the midst of life. . . . The Kingdom can be compared to the mysterious process of growth that calls for decisive human action at the critical moment, but is otherwise independent of human activity (Mark 4:26–9), or to the astonishing product of the tiny mustard seed (Mark 4:30) or to the fate of a seed sown in a field (Mark 4:3–9), or to the leavening process (Matt. 13:33, Luke 3:20), or to the budding fig tree (Mark 13:28). It may also be compared to the consequence of the sabotaging of a wheat field, and how the “householder” deals with the weed-infested crops (Matt. 3:24–30). It is like finding treasure in a field (Matt. 13:44) or a pearl of great value (Matt. 13:45). . . . Again, it is like searching for a lost sheep (Matt. 18:12, Luke 15:4–7) or a lost coin (Luke 1:8). . . . The motifs . . . may be found in the complex world of human relations. . . . The Kingdom . . . has already broken in upon the human scene—not least in the parabler and the parables he tells. (pp. 63–64)

The relevance of the parable to our inquiry should not be missed, since Chilton and McDonald make it explicit: Jesus is at the center of the Kingdom. “If the Kingdom is discerned in the interaction of people and world, Jesus himself is a catalyst of such interaction” (p. 70), and in so many words:

[Jesus’] performance of the Kingdom cannot be interpreted primarily in Christological terms; rather, Christology has to be understood in the light of his performance of the Kingdom. His ministry is now seen to follow a teleological pattern which leads through suffering and death to the life of “resurrection.” Hence any attempt to capture the Kingdom of God within worldly sovereignty or power . . . will meet with either critical or ambivalent response, for the transcendent factor qualifies the alleged realization: while not denying worldly obligations, one

4. *Ibid.*, 5.

always renders to God what belongs to him—including the Kingdom (“only God is King”). (p. 71)

Chilton and McDonald’s judgment suffices to make the point I wish to register. That is, any systemic account of Jesus’ teaching will identify the Kingdom of God as a critical component of that system, articulately interacting with other components (with ethics, for Chilton and McDonald). The Kingdom of God constitutes a category-formation imparting energy and cogency to the message, indeed, defining its point of coherence. In that context, the focus upon the parable as medium for the message contributes a strong indication of the systemic centrality of the category-formation—not just a generalized theme or conception but a particular realization of matters. However broad and varied the range of academic debate on the Gospels and the religious system set forth by their principal, nearly all scholarship concurs on the critical role of the category-formation Kingdom of God.

That is what “Kingdom of God” looks like when it constitutes a category-formation in a system grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures of ancient Israel, as is the Rabbinic system expressed in the Aggadic corpus. Let us now address the counterpart concretizations of the theme of God’s dominion and ask whether these coalesce into an articulated component of the categorical structure and system as a whole.

HOW IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN DEFINED?

I have first to show that “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven” are synonymous and that the usages of the Aggadic writings are accurately portrayed in treating the two formulations as equivalent in all material ways. The evidence is abundant. “Heaven” routinely refers to God, and Kingdom of Heaven means, “Kingdom of God,” as in the following examples of tractate *'Abot*:

Tractate *'Abot*

- 1:3 A. Antigonus of Sokho received [the Torah] from Simeon the Righteous. He would say, (1) “Do not be like servants who serve the master on condition of receiving a reward, (2) but [be] like servants who serve the master not on condition of receiving a reward. (3) And let the fear of Heaven be upon you.”
- 1:11 A. Abtalion says, (1) “Sages, watch what you say, Lest you become liable to the punishment of exile, and go into exile to a place of bad water, and disciples who follow you drink [bad water] and die, and the name of heaven be thereby profaned.”
- 2:2 A. Rabban Gamaliel, son of R. Judah the Patriarch, says, “And all who work with the community—let them work with them for the sake of Heaven.”
- 2:12 A. R. Yosé says, “. . . may everything you do be for the sake of Heaven.”

- 4:4 B. R. Yohanan b. Beroqah says, “Whoever secretly treats the Name of Heaven as profane publicly pays the price. All the same are the one who does so inadvertently and the one who does so deliberately, when it comes to treating the name of Heaven as profane.”
- 4:11 D. R. Yohanan Hassandelar says, “Any gathering which is for the sake of Heaven is going to endure. And any which is not for the sake of Heaven is not going to endure.”
- 4:12 A. R. Eleazar b. Shammua says, “The honor owing to your disciple should be as precious to you as yours.
 B. “And the honor owing to your fellow should be like the reverence owing to your master.
 C. “And the reverence owing to your master should be like the awe owing to Heaven.”
- 5:17 A. Any dispute which is for the sake of Heaven will in the end yield results, and any which is not for the sake of Heaven will in the end not yield results.
 B. What is a dispute for the sake of Heaven? This is the sort of dispute between Hillel and Shammai.
 C. And what is one which is not for the sake of Heaven? It is the dispute of Korach and all his party.

These cases all prove that by “Heaven” the Rabbinic authors mean God, and there can be no doubt whatsoever that “Heaven” forms a euphemism for God, pure and simple. Further, in the Mishnah we find reference to the liturgical formula “the Name of his Kingdom,” meaning, the Kingdom of God:

Mishnah Tractate *Yoma* 3:8

- A. He came over to his bullock.
 B. Now his bullock was set between the Porch and the Altar.
 C. Its head was to the south and its face to the west.
 D. And the priest stands at the east, with his face to the west.
 E. And he puts his two hands on it and states the confession.
 F. And thus did he say, “O Lord, I have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before you, I and my house. O Lord, forgive the iniquities, transgressions, and sins, which I have done by committing iniquity, transgression, and sin before you, I and my house.
 G. “As it is written in the Torah of Moses, your servant, For on this day shall atonement be made for you to clean you. From all of your sins shall you be clean before the Lord (Lev. 16:30).”
 H. And they respond to him, “Blessed is the name of the glory of his Kingdom forever and ever.”

“His Kingdom ” here, as in the wording of the Qaddish-prayer, is synonymous with “Kingdom of God ” and its equivalent, “Kingdom of Heaven.”

These passages serve to demonstrate that “his Kingdom,” “Kingdom of Heaven,” and “Kingdom of God” refer to the same thing, which is God’s rule over creation and humanity. But at the heart of the matter

is: does the Rabbinic system, Halakic and Aggadic, so formulate that conception as to highlight it, use it in the identification and resolution of problems, build the structure of society, and define personal virtue in its terms? Do the components of the Rabbinic system, viewed whole, focus upon the Kingdom of Heaven, realize it, and situate it as the centerpiece of systemic construction, in the way in which the Evangelists do in the Synoptic Gospels? Does the concretization of the conception divine dominion as “Kingdom of Heaven” generatively function in the Aggadic system in the way in which the Rabbinic thinkers treat sin-repentance-atonement as critical to the message of their system and in the way in which the same thinkers find in Israel/Gentiles the source of dynamics of their system?

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN HALAKIC FORMULATION

While we address what is principally an Aggadic category-formation, the Kingdom of Heaven does encompass normative actions, not only attitudes. The specific reference to “Kingdom of Heaven” in Mishnah-tractate *Berakot* 2:1–2, 2:5 is the sole Halakic point at which the matter is defined and invoked. The specific act that is involved concerns the recitation of the *Shema'*, and what one must do is accept the Kingdom of God in the act of saying the opening lines of that creed. That view of matters emerges in Joshua b. Qorha's statement in *m. Ber.* 2:2H–I:

Mishnah Tractate *Berakot* 2:1–2

- H. Said R. Joshua b. Qorha, “Why does *Shema'* precede ‘And it shall come to pass’ [in the order of this liturgy]?”
- I. “So that one should first accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and afterwards accept the yoke of the commandments.
- J. “[Why does] ‘And it shall come to pass’ [precede]: ‘And the Lord said’?”
- K. “For ‘And it shall come to pass’ is customarily [recited] by both day and night.
- L. “And ‘And the Lord said’ is customarily [recited] only by day.

The norm is, when one recites the *Shema'*, he accepts the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, meaning, God's dominion, and then the yoke of the commandments, meaning, the religious obligations imposed by God in the Torah. The former is made explicit in the following:

Mishnah Tractate *Berakot* 2:5

- A. A bridegroom is exempt from the recitation of the *Shema'* on the first night [after the wedding] until after the Sabbath [following the wedding],

- B. if he did not yet consummate the marriage.
- C. M^oSH B: Rabban Gamaliel who was married and recited the Shema' on the first night of his marriage.
- D. [His students] said to him, "Did our master not teach us: 'A bridegroom is exempt from the recitation of the Shema' on the first night'?"
- E. He said to them, "I cannot accede to you so as to suspend myself from [accepting] the Kingdom of Heaven [even] for one hour."

The sole counterpart reference in the Tosefta is *t. Berakot* 2.1:

Tosefta *Berakot* 2.1

- 2:1 A. One who recites the Shema' must mention the exodus from Egypt [cf. *m. Ber.* 1:5] in [the benediction following the Shema', which begins] "True and firm."
- B. Rabbi says, "In it [that benediction] one must mention [God's] Kingdom."

This is the *locus classicus* for the Rabbinic conception of the Kingdom of God / Kingdom of Heaven, so far as the Halakic texts are concerned. Accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven involves an expression of one's attitude, regarding oneself as God's servant and acting in his service, living in his domain. It is an act of individual Israelites but characterizes the community of Israel as well.

The Babylonian Talmud's exposition of the Mishnah passage is as follows. Italics signify Aramaic; plain type, Hebrew. I indent passages that are secondary and intruded, yielding a clear account of the main line of thought and argument. I limit my comments to points pertinent to our problem. What we shall see is the context in which the conception of the Kingdom of Heaven figures in the Halakic framework. I eliminate passages where it does not pertain.

B. Berakot 2:1–2 iv.2/14b–15a

- IV.2 A. *Rab washed his hands, recited the Shema^o, put on phylacteries, and then said the Prayer.*
- B. *How could he have done it this way?*
- C. *And has it not been stated on Tannaite authority:*
- D. He who digs a burial niche for a corpse in a grave-area is exempt from the requirement to recite the Shema' and from having to say the Prayer and from having to put on phylacteries and from all of the religious duties that are listed in the Torah. Once the time for reciting the Shema' comes, he comes up [out of the hole], washes his hands, puts on his phylacteries, recites the Shema' and says the Prayer.
- E. *Lo, there is a contradiction in the cited passage itself, which announces at the beginning that one is exempt and at the end that he is obligated [to carry out the rites].*
- F. *That indeed is no contradiction, since the latter part deals with a case in which there are two ditch-diggers, and the former part a case in which there is only one.*

- G. *In any event the cited passage presents a contradiction to the position of Rab [at A].*
- H. *Rab accords with R. Joshua b. Qorhah, who has said, "First comes accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and afterward comes accepting the yoke of the commandments [on which account the phylacteries, which serve to carry out a commandment, come after reciting the Shema']."*
- I. *Now I can well understand that R. Joshua b. Qorhah had the idea of reciting one passage before reciting another passage. But does he mean to imply that one should place a recitation of a passage before the actual carrying out of one's religious duty [with reference to the phylacteries]?*
- J. *And, furthermore, does he really accord with the view of R. Joshua b. Qorhah?*
- K. *And has not R. Hiyya bar Ashi said, "Many times I stood before Rab, and he would first of all wash his hands and say a blessing, then he would repeat our chapter to us, then he would put on his phylacteries, then recite the Shema'."*
- L. *Now if you say that he referred to the time before the hour for reciting the Shema' had come, if that were the case, what would be the purpose of the testimony of R. Hiyya bar Ashi?*
- M. *It would serve to exclude the position of one who maintains that it is not necessary to say a blessing in connection with Mishnah-study.*
- N. *Thus [Hiyya] has informed us that also for Mishnah-study it is required to say a blessing.*
- O. *In any event it is a contradiction to the position of Rab [outlined at the outset].*
- P. *His messenger was the one who made the mistake [and brought his phylacteries too late that day. Normally he put them on first.]*

I see no development of the notion of the Kingdom of Heaven, only an allusion to the premise that in reciting the Shema', one accepts the yoke of God's rule. The order of actions follows from that established fact. The same fact recurs in the following at IV.3.C:

- IV.3 A. Said Ulla, "Whoever recites the Shema' without putting on phylacteries is as if he gave false testimony against himself."
- B. Said R. Hiyya bar Abba said R. Yohanan, "It is as if he brought a burnt-offering without adding a meal-offering, or a sacrifice without drink-offerings."
- C. And R. Yohanan said, "He who wants to accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven in a full way [15A] should first empty his bowel, then wash his hands, put on his phylacteries, recite the Shema', and say the Prayer, and this constitutes accepting the Kingdom of Heaven in a full way."

Now accepting the King of Heaven involves not only reciting the *Shema'* but a variety of actions and rites.

- D. And R. Hiyya bar Abba said R. Yohanan said, "Whoever empties his bowel, then washes his hands, puts on his phylacteries, recites the

Shema' and says the Prayer is regarded by Scripture as if he had built an altar and offered an offering on it.

- E. "For it is written, 'I will wash my hands in cleanliness and I will walk around your altar, O Lord' (Ps. 26:6)."
- F. *Said Raba to him, "Does not the master maintain that it is as if he had immersed,*
- G. "for it is written, 'I shall wash in cleanliness,' and not, 'I shall wash my hands.'"

Other references in the Babylonian Talmud to "Kingdom of Heaven" are cited below. They do nothing to change the picture of a rite involving a gesture in affirmation of God's rule—a way of referring to God's dominion over Israel that concerns the affirmative action of a private person:

B. Berakot 1:2 i.16/10b

- I.16. L. And R. Isaac said R. Yohanan said R. Yosé b. R. Hanina said in the name of R. Eliezer b. Jacob, "Whoever eats, drinks, and only then says his prayers is regarded by Scripture as follows: 'And me have you cast beyond your back' (1 Kgs. 14:9).
- M. "Do not read the letters as though they say 'your back' but rather, 'your pride.'
- N. "Said the Holy One, blessed be he, 'After this one has taken pride in himself, only then has he accepted the Kingdom of Heaven!'"

Once more we find "Kingdom of Heaven" an established fact, a matter of attitude, what one undertakes to accept through the recitation of the cited creed. The same is indicated in the following entries:

B. Berakot 3:3 i.1/20a–b

- A. Women, and slaves, and minors are exempt from the recitation of the Shema' [20B] and from [the obligation of wearing] phylacteries,
- B. but are obligated [to recite] the Prayer,
- C. and [are obligated to post] the mezuzah and to recite Grace after meals.
- I.1 A. *As to [the exemption from reciting the Shema'] that is self-evident, since it is a religious duty of commission that has to be done at a particular time, and from the obligations to carry out religious duties of commission that have to be done at a particular time women are exempt.*
- B. *What might you have said? Since in the recitation of the Shema' is the act of accepting the Kingdom of Heaven, [they might be obligated to recite the Shema' even though they are exempt from other religious duties in that classification].*
- C. *So we are informed that that is not the case.*

All we have is the reiteration of the established fact that when one recites the Shema', she accepts the Kingdom of Heaven. The same fact defines part of the background of the following narrative:

B. Berakot 9:1–9 xviii.2/61b

XVIII.2 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. The wicked government once made a decree that the Israelites should not take up the study of Torah. Pappos b. Judah came and found R. Aqiba gathering crowds in public and taking up the study of Torah.
- C. He said to him, “Aqiba, aren’t you afraid of the government?”
- D. He said to him, “I shall show you a parable. What is the matter like? It is like the case of a fox who was going along the river and saw fish running in swarms place to place.
- E. “He said to them, ‘Why are you running away?’
- F. “They said to him, ‘Because of the nets people cast over us.’
- G. “He said to him, ‘Why don’t you come up on dry land, and you and I can live in peace as my ancestors lived in peace with yours?’
- H. “They said to him, ‘Are you the one they call the cleverest of all wild beasts? You are not clever, you’re a fool. Now if in the place in which we can live, we are afraid, in a place in which we perish, how much the more so [should we fear]!’
- I. “Now we too, if when we are in session and taking up the study of Torah, in which it is written, ‘For it is your life and the length of your days’ (Deut. 30:20), things are as they are, if we should go and abandon it, how much the more so [shall we be in trouble]!”
- J. They say that only a few days passed before they arrested and imprisoned R. Aqiba. They arrested and imprisoned Pappos b. Judah nearby. He said to him, “Pappos, who brought you here?”
- K. He said to him, “Happy are you, Aqiba, because you were arrested on account of teachings of Torah. Woe is Pappos, who was arrested on account of nonsense.”
- L. The hour at which they brought R. Aqiba out to be put to death was the time for reciting the Shema’. They were combing his flesh with iron combs while he was accepting upon himself [in the recitation of the Shema’] the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- M. His disciples said to him, “Our master, to such an extent?”
- N. He said to them, “For my whole life I have been troubled about this verse, ‘With all your soul’ [meaning] even though he takes your soul. I wondered when I shall have the privilege of carrying out this commandment. Now that it has come to hand, should I not carry it out?”
- O. He held on to the word, “One,” until his soul expired [as he said the word] “one.” An echo came forth and said, “Happy are you, Rabbi Aqiba, that your soul expired with the word ‘one.’”
- P. The serving angels said before the Holy One, blessed be he, “Is this Torah and that the reward? ‘From them that die by your hand, O Lord’ (Ps. 17:14) [ought to have been his lot].”
- Q. He said to them, “ ‘Their portion is in life’ (Ps. 17:14).”
- R. An echo went forth and proclaimed, “Happy are you, R. Aqiba, for you are selected for the life of the world to come.”

B. Hagigah 1:2 vi.30/5b

30. A. “But if you won’t obey it, my soul shall weep in secret for the pride” (Jer. 13:17):

- B. Said R. Samuel bar Inayya in the name of Rab, “The Holy One, blessed be he, has a place which is called ‘Secret.’ ”
31. A. *And what is the meaning of* for the pride?
- B. Said R. Samuel bar Isaac, “Because of the pride of Israel that has been taken from them and handed over to the nations of the world.”
- C. R. Samuel bar Nahmani said, “Because of the pride of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The repertoire of references to the Kingdom of God in the Babylonian Talmud point to the conviction that God rules on earth and that Israel responds to God’s rule by accepting the yoke of his dominion, which they do by carrying out various religious obligations of omission and commission. That, sum and substance, defines the category. In the Halakic context, accepting the yoke of God’s Kingdom is associated with putting on phylacteries and reciting the Shema’—normative actions.

The Kingdom of Heaven, however, is no abstraction to be realized in individual consciousness alone. It is made concrete within the Halakic system. God’s court forms part of the system of enforcing the law of the Torah, and this is made explicit. No grasp of the category-formation Kingdom of Heaven is complete without a clear recognition of the concreteness of the conviction that God rules. Within the theory of sages, sages’ courts govern concrete cases on earth, but only within a larger system in which the Heavenly court exercises jurisdiction over cases of another order. Certain concrete sins or crimes (the system knows no distinction between them) are referred to Heaven for judgment.

So Israel forms the this-worldly extension of God’s heavenly Kingdom, and that is the fact even now. Not only so, but it is a fact that bears material and tangible consequences in the governance of the social order. That is why the heavenly court is assigned tasks alongside the earthly one. The sages’ court punishes murder when the rules of testimony, which are strict and rigid, permit; when not, there is always Heaven to step in. Or when a man clearly has deserved an efficient and sufficient cause of death, the earthly court punishes him.

But what are the sorts of concrete actions left over for Heaven to punish—and to penalize as concretely as the earthly court does? These include, for example, the following:

Tosefta Tractate *Baba Qamma* 6.16

- A. He who frightens his fellow to death is exempt from punishment by the laws of man,
 B. and his case is handed to Heaven.
 C. [If] he shouted into his ear and deafened him, he is exempt.
 D. [If] he seized him and shouted into his ear and deafened him, he is liable.
 E. He who frightens the ox of his fellow to death is exempt from punishment by the laws of man,

- F. and his case is handed over to Heaven.
- 6:17 A. [If] one force-fed [the ox of his fellow] with asafoetida, creeper-berries, a poisonous ointment, or chicken excrement, he is exempt from punishment under the laws of man,
- B. and his case is handed over to Heaven.
- C. He who performs an extraneous act of labor while preparing purification-water or a cow for purification belonging to his fellow [thus spoiling what has been done] is exempt from punishment by the laws of man,
- D. and his case is handed over to Heaven.
- E. A court-official who administered a blow by the decision of a court and did injury is exempt from punishment by the laws of man,
- F. and his case is handed over to Heaven.
- G. He who chops up the foetus in the belly of a woman by the decision of a court and did damage is exempt from punishment by the laws of man,
- H. and his case is handed over to Heaven.
- I. A seasoned physician who administered a remedy by a decision of a court and did damage is exempt from punishment by the laws of man,
- J. and his case is handed over to Heaven.

The Heavenly court alone is asked for a final assessment of the motives behind an action, of the causation embodied in the action when the case is ambiguous, and other imponderables. What the sages' courts cannot discern, the Heavenly court will perceive. What is important in these rules emerges from the concrete character of the cases handed over to Heaven for adjudication. The Kingdom of Heaven embraces the here and now, and sages took for granted that God and God's agencies would carry out their responsibilities within the larger system of the governance of holy Israel that sages contemplated.

But despite that fact, in the Halakic system the Kingdom of God does not define a category-formation and does not surface in any established one. It forms part of the background of the Halakic category-formations that do generate new questions and new answers and do sort out new data—that narrative that I set forth in organizing and rationalizing the Halakic data into a system. The category is Halakically inert; everywhere the premise, nowhere part of the proposition.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN AGGADIC EXPOSITION

“The Kingdom of Heaven” in Aggadic settings provides one way, and not a dominant one, of saying that Israel is ruled by God. Here and now Israel forms the realm of God in this world, where God takes up presence, in synagogues and in schoolhouses, respectively, where prayers are recited and the Torah studied. God's Kingdom, unlike the

kingdoms of this world and age, is not locative, and it is also not tangible. It is a Kingdom that one enters by right attitude, through accepting the government and laws of that king and undertaking to obey his rules, the commandments. I find a fine definition for the Rabbinic Aggadic disposition of the matter of the Kingdom of God in Chilton and McDonald's language:

[The Kingdom of God] is realized . . . not in the dream world of apocalyptic nor in temple cult, legalistic casuistry, ascetic discipline nor power politics, but in personal and community life that is responsive to the call of God. (p. 79)

The martyrdom of Aqiba, in the midst of his recitation of the *Shema'* and acceptance of God's Kingdom, forms an appropriate illustration of the realization of God's dominion in personal and communal response to God's commandments. How is the matter articulated in Aggadic settings? The answer to that question affords the required data for situating the concept at hand within the larger Rabbinic system and determining its activity in that system: generative or inert. What we shall see is that the conception of God's dominion comes to expression in a variety of category-formations, not only the Kingdom of Heaven. The Rabbinic sages found a variety of categories for the expression of the notion that God governs Israel and the world, and some of these, such as the religious duties or commandments and associated formulas, markedly exceed in density and richness the Kingdom of Heaven.

First we must express the general notion of God's dominion that is concretized and realized in the mythic legomenon Kingdom of Heaven: To be Israel in the sages' model means to live in God's Kingdom, wherever one is located and whenever, in the sequence of the ages, one enjoys this-worldly existence. God's Kingdom forms the realm of eternity within time. Embodying God's Kingdom by obeying God's will, Israel was created to carry out religious duties and perform good deeds. These are what differentiate Israel from the Gentiles-idolators.

What this means, concretely, is that God rules now, and those who acknowledge and accept his rule, performing his commandments, and living by his will, live under God's dominion. To single out Israel, God sanctified the people by endowing them with numerous commandments. Carrying out these commandments, then, brings Israel into the Kingdom of Heaven, as they acknowledge the dominion of God. That merging of politics and theology emerges in the language of the formula for reciting a blessing before carrying out a commandment or religious duty, "Blessed are you, Lord our God, king of the world, who has sanctified us by his commandments and commanded us to. . . ." That is the formula that transforms an ordinary deed into an act of sanctification, a gesture of belonging to God's Kingdom. But in that

context the concretization of the matter in the language “Kingdom of Heaven” does not figure. That signals the inert status of the language at hand.

The recitation of a blessing also entails recognition of God’s kingship with the phrase “. . . king of the world, who has commanded us . . . ,” and that clause is deemed essential to any blessing:

Y. Berakot 9.1 i:3

- A. R. Zeira and R. Judah in the name of Rab, “Any blessing which does not include [a reference to] God’s Kingdom, is not a valid blessing.”
- B. Said R. Tanhuma, “I will tell you what is the basis [in Scripture for this rule]: ‘I will extol thee my God and King’ [Ps. 145:1].”

God is addressed in the political metaphor because God’s Kingdom is at hand, not at one moment, but at all times;⁵ the “us” then embodies all Israel, even in a single individual, and the critical language then follows: “who has given commandments,” one of which is going to be carried out. That is how Israel is subject to the dominion of God and, if properly motivated, now lives in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is a phenomenon of this age as well as the world to come, and it involves tangible actions of everyday life, not only abstract existence. The doctrines in detail hold together in the conviction that God rules here and now, for those who, with a correct act of will and with proper conduct, accept his rule.

This is accomplished in various ways. First of all, as the Halakic corpus has already shown us, it takes place through the declaration of the unity of God in the *Shema*. In so doing, the Israelite accepts God’s authority, then the commandments that are entailed by that authority. The Halakah suffices to state the matter, and there is no Aggadic iteration: a person should first accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven (i.e., recite the *Shema*) and then accept upon himself the yoke of the commandments (e.g., the obligation to wear Tefillin or phylacteries; *m. Ber.* 2.2/I). The holy people have accepted God’s kingship at Sinai and do not have the right to serve any other; so we recall the statement:

5. That signals the incompatibility of the category-formation “Kingdom of God/Heaven,” as defined and instantiated and utilized in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Rabbinic Aggadic writings. The parables of Jesus all treat “Kingdom of God” in temporal terms—that which is about to break into time, for which people are to make themselves ready (through repentance)—comparable to the judgment to which *m. Sanh.* 10:1 refers, meaning in that context, the world or age to come or the restoration to Eden. But in the Rabbinic setting, “kingdom of Heaven” is present in the here and now, not a matter of temporal order but of existential condition. The parables of Jesus and their counterparts in the Rabbinic writings are not only incompatible, they are mutually unintelligible, even where in detail they intersect.

Tosefta Tractate *Baba Qamma* 7.5

- A. On what account is the ear among all the limbs designated to be pierced? Because it heard from Mount Sinai, “For unto me are the children of Israel slaves, they are my slaves” (Lev. 25:55).
- B. Yet the ear broke off itself the yoke of Heaven and took upon itself the rule of the yoke of mortal man.
- C. Therefore Scripture says, “Let the ear come and be pierced, for it has not observed the commandment which it heard.”

In the following protracted exposition, we see how the conception of Israel’s forming God’s Kingdom plays itself out in the setting of Israel’s current situation. Here we notice, therefore, the way in which the critical problematic—the anomaly of Israel’s subordination to the idolatrous nations—governs discourse throughout:

Sifré to Numbers cxv:v.4

- A. [“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God”]:
- B. Why make mention of the Exodus from Egypt in the setting of discourse on each and every one of the religious duties?

A parable makes the matter transparent:

- C. The matter may be compared to the case of a king whose ally was taken captive. When the king paid the ransom [and so redeemed him], he did not redeem him as a free man but as a slave, so that if the king made a decree and the other did not accept it, he might say to him, “You are my slave.”
- D. When he came into a city, he said to him, “Tie my shoe-latch, carry my clothing before me and bring them to the bath house.” [Doing these services marks a man as the slave of the one for whom he does them.]
- E. The son began to complain. The king produced the bond and said to him, “You are my slave.”
- F. So when the Holy One, blessed be he, redeemed the seed of Abraham, his ally, he redeemed them not as sons but as slaves. When he makes a decree and they do not accept it, he may say to them, “You are my slaves.”
- G. When the people had gone forth to the wilderness, he began to make decrees for them involving part of the lesser religious duties as well as part of the more stringent religious duties, for example, the Sabbath, the prohibition against consanguineous marriages, the fringes, and the requirement to don *Tefillin*. The Israelites began to complain. He said to them, “You are my slaves. It was on that stipulation that I redeemed you, on the condition that I may make a decree and you must carry it out.”

Israel accepts God’s rule as a slave accepts his redeemer’s authority; that is, Israel owes God allegiance and obedience. By carrying out God’s will through the commandments, Israel enters God’s dominion.

But the concretization of the matter in the language “Kingdom of Heaven” does not contribute.

As the passage unfolds, the operative category-formation is Is-rael/nations, not “Kingdom of Heaven.” Now the urgent question presents itself: since Israel is governed by the nations of the world, does that not mean that God has given up his dominion over them? Then Israel no longer is subject to God’s authority and need not keep the commandments.

Sifré to Numbers cxv:v.5

- A. “So you shall remember and do [all my commandments and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God.] I am the Lord your God” (Num. 15:37–41).
- B. Why repeat the phrase, “I am the Lord your God”?
- C. Is it not already stated, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God”?
- D. Why then repeat the phrase, “I am the Lord your God”?
- E. It is so that the Israelites should not say, “Why has the Omnipresent given us commandments? Let us not do them and not collect a reward.”
- F. They do not do them, and they shall not collect a reward.

Now the precedent provided by Scripture shows the governing rule:

- G. This is in line with what the Israelites said to Ezekiel: “Some of the elders of Israel came to consult the Lord [and were sitting with me. Then this word came to me from the Lord: ‘Man, say to the elders of Israel, This is the word of the Lord God: Do you come to consult me? As I live, I will not be consulted by you. This is the very word of the Lord God]’” (Ez. 20:1–3).
- H. They said to Ezekiel, “In the case of a slave whose master has sold him off, has not the slave left the master’s dominion?”
- I. He said to them, “Yes.”
- J. They said to him, “Since the Omnipresent has sold us to the nations of the world, we have left his dominion.”
- K. He said to them, “Lo, in the case of a slave whose master has sold him only on the stipulation that later on the slave will return, has the slave left the dominion of the master? [Surely not.]”
- L. “When you say to yourselves, ‘Let us become like the nations and tribes of other lands and worship wood and stone,’ you are thinking of something that can never be. As I live, says the Lord God, I will reign over you with a strong hand, with arm outstretched and wrath poured out” (Ez. 20:32–33).
- M. “. . . with a strong hand”: this refers to pestilence, as it is said, “Lo the hand of the Lord is upon your cattle in the field” (Ex. 9:3).
- N. “. . . with arm outstretched”: this refers to the sword, as it is said, “And his sword is unsheathed in his hand, stretched forth against Jerusalem” (1 Chr. 21:16).

- O. “. . . and wrath poured out:” this refers to famine.
 P. “After I have brought against you these three forms of punishment, one after the other, then ‘I will reign over you’—despite yourselves.
 Q. That is why it is said a second time, “I am the Lord your God.”

God will not relinquish his rule over Israel, and he enforces his dominion despite Israel’s conduct. The moral order then plays itself out within the inexorable logic of God’s will.

But for all their interest in matters of jurisprudence and politics, to which we referred above, for sages, the Kingdom of Heaven above all was realized in the ordinary world in which Israel performed the commandments. “Kingdom of Heaven” in the Halakah does not introduce the notion of the Qaddish, “May your Kingdom come speedily and in our days . . . ,” that is, the temporal-ordinal view. Rather it stresses that the Kingdom of Heaven is a mark of the human condition, not a historical age. That concept plays slight role here; when the Rabbinic Aggadic documents wish to speak of the world or age to come, they invoked a different category-formation from Kingdom of Heaven, as in the category-formation Resurrection and the correlative but distinct category-formation the World to Come. In that context, “Kingdom of Heaven” simply does not figure.

So “Kingdom of Heaven” is atemporal. When an Israelite carried out a positive commandment or, more important, in obedience to Heaven refrained from a deed prohibited by a negative commandment, that formed the moment of realization of God’s rule on earth. Then Israel through Israelites may bring about God’s rule on earth. The commandments, originally emerging in small groups, mark the appearance of God’s Kingdom on earth. But alone among nations Israel finally got all of them, 248 positive ones, matching the bones of the body, 365 negative ones, matching the days of the solar year. So Israel alone within humanity has the possibility, and the power, to bring about God’s rule, which is fully realized in the restoration that marks the last things in the model of first things. Here the gradual delivery of the commandments is spelled out, the story of the sequential exposure of the concretizations of the Kingdom of Heaven in the life of humanity:

PESIQTÁ DERAB KAHANA xii:i.1FF.

1. A. R. Judah bar Simon commenced discourse by citing the following verse:
 “Many daughters show how capable they are, but you excel them all. [Charm is a delusion and beauty fleeting; it is the God-fearing woman who is honored. Extol her for the fruit of her toil and let her labors bring her honor in the city gate]” (Prov. 31:29–31).

We start with the six commandments assigned to Adam, as the facts of Scripture indicate:

- B. “The first man was assigned six religious duties, and they are: not worshipping idols, not blaspheming, setting up courts of justice, not murdering, not practicing fornication, not stealing.
- C. “And all of them derive from a single verse of Scripture: ‘And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, [but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die]”’ (Gen. 2:16).
- D. “‘And the Lord God commanded the man, saying’: this refers to idolatry, as it is said, ‘For Ephraim was happy to walk after the command’ (Hos. 5:11).
- E. “‘The Lord’: this refers to blasphemy, as it is said, ‘Whoever curses the name of the Lord will surely die’ (Lev. 24:16).
- F. “‘God’: this refers to setting up courts of justice, as it is said, ‘God [in context, the judges] you shall not curse’ (Ex. 22:27).
- G. “‘The man’: this refers to murder, as it is said, ‘He who sheds the blood of man by man his blood shall be shed’ (Gen. 9:6).
- H. “‘Saying’: this refers to fornication, as it is said, ‘Saying, will a man divorce his wife’ (Jer. 3:1).
- I. “‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden’: this refers to the prohibition of stealing, as you say, ‘but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.’”

Noah inherited those six commandments and was given another:

- J. “Noah was commanded, in addition, not to cut a limb from a living beast, as it is said, ‘But as to meat with its soul—its blood you shall not eat’ (Gen. 9:4).”

Abraham got the seven and an eighth (though, elsewhere, it is alleged that Abraham in any event observed all of the commandments):

- K. “Abraham was commanded, in addition, concerning circumcision, as it is said, ‘And as to you, my covenant you shall keep’ (Gen. 17:9).
- L. “Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day, as it is said, ‘And Abraham circumcised Isaac, his son, on the eighth day’ (Gen. 21:4).”

Jacob got a ninth; his son Judah, a tenth:

- M. “Jacob was commanded not to eat the sciatic nerve, as it is said, ‘On that account the children of Israel will not eat the sciatic nerve’ (Gen. 32:33).
- N. “Judah was commanded concerning marrying the childless brother’s widow, as it is said, ‘And Judah said to Onen, Go to the wife of your childless brother and exercise the duties of a levir with her’ (Gen. 38:8).”

But Israel got them all, matching the bones of the body to the days of the year, the whole of life through all time:

- O. “But as to you, at Sinai you received six hundred thirteen religious duties, two hundred forty-eight religious duties of commission [acts

to be done], three hundred sixty-five religious duties of omission [acts not to be done],

P. “the former matching the two hundred forty-eight limbs that a human being has.

Q. “Each limb says to a person, ‘By your leave, with me do this religious duty.’

R. “Three hundred sixty-five religious duties of omission [acts not to be done] matching the days of the solar calendar.

S. “Each day says to a person, ‘By your leave, on me do not carry out that transgression.’”

That Israel got them all and so entered God’s Kingdom is what requires explanation, and the explanation has to do with the union of the days of the solar year with the bones of man: at all time, with all one’s being, one obeys God’s commandments. The mode of explanation here does not require the introduction of proof texts, appealing rather to the state of nature (solar calendar, the bone-structure of man) to account for the facts. The Kingdom of Heaven, then, encompasses every day of the year and the components of the human body. The amplification in R.–S. cannot be improved upon.

But the concrete realization of God’s Kingdom required constant encounter with the Torah, and that is not only because the Torah formed the source of the commandments that Israel was to carry out in obedience to its Heavenly Father and King. It also was because, within the words of God’s own “I,” his self-manifestation was eternally recorded and therefore always to be encountered. Torah-study constituted the occasion for meeting God, because the words of the Torah convey whatever man knows with certainty about God. If Israel meets God in the Torah, God therefore is present when the Torah is opened and studied; then God is present within Israel:

B. Megillah 4:4 i.14

A. Expounded Raba: What [is meant by what] is written, “Lord, you have been a dwelling place for us” (Ps. 90:1)?

B. These are the synagogues and academies.

C. Said Abbayye, “Initially I used to study at home and pray in the synagogue. After I heard what David said [namely], ‘Lord, I loved the place of your house’ (Ps. 26:8), I studied in the synagogue.”

There the Holy Spirit comes to rest. What is striking here is that God’s domain is defined without the Kingdom of Heaven being invoked. “The Kingdom of Heaven” comes to the surface in connection with an act of attitude—accepting the yoke of the Kingdom—and consequent actions of obedience, carrying out the commandments. But as that is at any time, so it is at any place, and “Kingdom of God” does not serve to identify schoolhouses or synagogues.

That is not the only context in which, were Kingdom of Heaven a generative category-formation, the concept should be expected to play an important role. Another issue, ubiquitous in the Aggadic theology, concerns Israel's suffering and estrangement from God. Israel suffers for disobedience to the Torah, a critical component of the category-formation Israel/Gentiles. God's inaccessibility to Israel forms part of that category-formation, and it is explained by reference to Israel's sin, that is, by invoking yet another principal category-formation, sin-repentance-atonement. When the Aggadah turns to the image of God's hiding his face, we find no interest in the imagery or language of Kingdom of Heaven. No one says, for example, that God hides his face when Israel(ites) fail to accept the Kingdom of Heaven.

The way the matter is expressed encompasses the active category-formations, therefore, and omits the inert one. Thus although Israel is subject to God's rule, God is not always accessible to Israel, because of Israel's own doings. But that is only for a moment. Within the restorationist theology at hand, God may hide his face and make himself inaccessible to Israel by reason of evil, but in the end God will restore his presence to Israel:

J. R. Jacob bar Abbayye in the name of R. Aha brings proof of the same proposition from the following verse of Scripture: "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him" (Is. 8:17).

K. There was never a more difficult hour for the world than that hour at which the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Moses, "And I will surely hide my face in that day [on account of all the evil which they have done, because they have turned to other gods]" (Deut. 31:18).

Now follows the entire theology of restoration: Israel's repentance and God's consoling forgiveness mark the return to perfection as at the beginning:

L. At that hour: "I will wait for the Lord," for thus did he say to him at Sinai, "[And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall comfort them as a witness,] for it will live unforgotten in the months of their descendants; [for I know the purposes which they are already forming, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give]" (Deut. 31:21).

M. And to what end?

N. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me [are the signs and the portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Sinai]" (Is. 8:18).

O. Now were they really his children? And were they not his disciples?

P. But it teaches that they were as precious to him as his children, so he called them, "My children."

The articulation of the relationship of God to Israel as master to slaves makes no mark here. Now the relationship is father to children, pure and simple. So the natural metaphors in this context attest to the absence of the master-metaphor Kingdom of Heaven.

Accordingly, Israel meets God not principally in obedience to the commandments that embody the yoke of the Kingdom but rather in Torah study, and the more one studies, the more one gains; there is ample occasion to learn by hearing the Torah:

B. Sukkah 4:7 iv.4/46a

- M. And R. Zira said, and some say it was R. Hanina bar Papa, “Come and see that the trait of the Holy One, blessed be he, is not like the trait of mortal man.
- N. “In the case of mortal man, an empty vessel holds something, but a full vessel does not.
- O. “But the trait of the Holy One, blessed be he, [is not like that.] A full utensil will hold [something], but an empty one will not hold something.
- P. “For it is said, ‘And it shall come to pass, if you will listen diligently’ (Deut. 28:1). [One has to learn much and if he does, he will retain his knowledge.]
- Q. “The sense is, If you will listen, you will go on listening, and if not, you will not go on listening.
- R. “Another matter: If you hear concerning what is already in hand, you will also hear what is new.
- S. “ ‘But if your heart turns away’ (Deut. 30:17), you will not hear anything again.”

So much for Israel’s study of the Torah. It is the propaedeutic of prophecy, which leads to the encounter with the Holy Spirit.

The failure to invoke the category Kingdom of God proves still more blatant when we consider a statement of the system viewed whole: what are the consequences of Israel’s humbly accepting the divine rule? What Israel must do is to accept God’s will, carry out God’s commandments, above all, humbly take up its position in the Kingdom of God. Israel’s task is to accept its fate as destiny decreed by God, to be humble and accepting, and ultimately to triumph in God’s time. Israel is similar to the dust of the earth, which is why Israel, like the dirt, will endure forever. That summary-formulation of matters manages to come to fulfillment without invoking the category-formation Kingdom of Heaven, which is, when present, inert, and when absent, unremarkable, as we see in the following counterpart to a creedal construction:

Genesis Rabbah xli:ix.1

- A. “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth” (Gen. 13:16):
- B. Just as the dust of the earth is from one end of the world to the other, so your children will be from one end of the world to the other.

- C. Just as the dust of the earth is blessed only with water, so your children will be blessed only through the merit attained by study of the Torah, which is compared to water [hence: through water].
- D. Just as the dust of the earth wears out metal utensils and yet endures forever, so Israel endures while the nations of the world come to an end.
- E. Just as the dust of the world is treated as something on which to trample, so your children are treated as something to be trampled upon by the government.
- F. That is in line with this verse: "And I will put it into the hand of them that afflict you" (Is. 51:23), that is to say, those who make your wounds flow. . . .
- G. Nonetheless, it is for your good that they do so, for they cleanse you of guilt, in line with this verse: "You make her soft with showers" (Ps. 65:11).
- H. "That have said to your soul, 'Bow down, that we may go over'" (Is. 51:23):
- I. What did they do to them? They made them lie down in the streets and drew ploughs over them."
- J. R. Azariah in the name of R. Aha: "That is a good sign. Just as the street wears out those who pass over it and endures forever, so your children will wear out all the nations of the world and will live forever."

The generative category-formation in this powerful creedal statement is, once more, Israel/nations. Israel will show acceptance and humility and so overcome the nations not by power nor by its own might but by means of winning God's help through Torah-study, obedience, and patience. These responses to God's rule do not require the category-formation Kingdom of God to register their point.

GENERATIVE VERSUS INERT CATEGORY-FORMATIONS: THE CASE AT HAND

How does the category-formation Kingdom of Heaven qualify as inert and not generative? To answer that question we take up these criteria:

Does the Category Kingdom of Heaven Describe Most of the Data, Halakic and Aggadic, That Relate to God's Dominion?

The survey of Halakic data yields a sparse result, one important item: reciting the *Shema'* marks acceptance of God's Kingdom; one striking, but tangential item, God's court in Heaven judges cases that the sages' court on earth cannot adjudicate. The Aggadic data prove diffuse. God's rule is everywhere acknowledged, but the category-formation Kingdom of God does not form the principal medium for presentation of the

conception of God's dominion, which does not suffice to cover all modes of expressing that one conception. "Kingdom" serves to refer to God's governance, but God's governance comes into play even when "Kingdom" is not invoked. The rather diffuse survey of Aggadic data completed above hardly suggests that the category Kingdom of Heaven encompasses most of the Aggadic expressions of the conception that God rules. Where, as in the final instance, the creedal construction, we should have anticipated its presence (e.g., rule by nations versus Kingdom of Heaven), it is blatant for its absence.

Does the Category Kingdom of Heaven Yield a Theory of the Future, Possessing Predictive Quality?

The Kingdom of God is present tense, and those that accept it live in the workaday world of the here and the now. Those who enter the Kingdom of God by reciting the *Shema'* carry out God's will, as we see in the story of Aqiba's martyrdom. But how that category permits projecting into the future one's aspirations or hopes is not self-evident to me. Perhaps it suffices to note that those that live in God's Kingdom inherit the world to come and eternal life. But that anticipation plays no part in the exposition of the category. In eschatological matters, we look in vain for utilization, in predicting the future, of the category God's Kingdom. "The world to come" or the Garden of Eden and "God's Kingdom" rarely intersect in eschatological contexts, and a necessary connection between them is not expressed in the Aggadic materials reviewed here or there. Here the contrast with the Gospels' focus on Kingdom of God makes its mark. For the Kingdom of God yields a theory of the future and does possess predictive quality.

Does the Category Kingdom of Heaven Yield Norms of Public Policy?

Sin-repentance-atonement encompass a public policy that favors humility over arrogance. Israel/nations likewise explains to Israel how it should act in history, as the creedal construction shows. Does Kingdom of Heaven contain within itself a definition of virtue spilling over into public life, as does the category-formation already examined? The answer is obviously affirmative, for it is the same definition that flows from the category as it encompasses public policy of corporate Israel. But there is a difference. In the generative and active category-formation sin-repentance-atonement, the definition of the public norms responds to the particularities of the details at hand: sin is the result of arrogance, repentance comes about through humility, and atonement embodies an act of contrition.

But what particular traits of God's kingdom comparably come to expression in the public policy defining virtue consequent upon the specific character of God's Kingdom as a category? The only narrative that has passed before us invokes the image of the slave, Israel, carrying the master's towel and clothing to the bath house—not a mark of humility of will and spirit but of acceptance of the status of slavery. So if sin-repentance-atonement produce a guide to public policy (social virtue, for example) that matches the main lines of the category-formation and embodies what is implicit in the myth embodied therein, then by that criterion we cannot affirm the same outcome here.

What Indicates the Inert, as against the Generative, Category-Formation?

What this exercise has demonstrated is now clear. The generative category-formations function within a complete and effective system of the social order of the Israel contemplated by the Aggadic writings viewed whole. They process data of diverse kinds within a single paradigm, and one category-formation requires others, fore and aft, to accomplish its part of the systemic task. By contrast, here what we see is how a theme in a particular realization of that theme forms part of the background, not acting upon, or in concert with, other ideas but expressive of the outcome of that action. That God, creator of the world and revealer of the Torah, exercises dominion in the world enjoys the standing of self-evidence.

But in the Aggadic system the realization of that conception in the image and language "Kingdom of Heaven" proves routine and commonplace. It provokes no deep thought on, for example, how God exercises dominion or on why at some points God declines to intervene, while at others, he does. These and similar indicators of systemic generativity do not make an appearance in the Aggadic record. But when we deal with active and generative Aggadic category-formations, we do find deep thought on, for example, how God rules through the Gentiles and how Israel commands its own fate, through an act of humility and self-abnegation.

What makes the system work is its power to identify new questions and generate new responses, all the time within the established paradigm. A category-formation of a generative order imparts dynamism to the system, always repeating itself in fresh ways and in response to new cases. An inert one merely repeats the same cases and says nothing new. The difference has come to full exposition in the contrast between the generativity of the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels and the inert status of the Kingdom of Heaven in the Halakic context and its striking absence where it can have done good service in the Aggadic setting.

The upshot is an account of how the system expresses a conception integral to its logic: God rules the world is surely the absolute premise of all religious thought in Scripture and in every writing of every heir of Scripture; that, furthermore, is incidental to the generativity of that logic in systemic context. When we come to the category-formation Israel/Gentiles, we see how God exercises dominion, the particular media that serve his purpose, and the systemic consequences of his eternal governance of the humanity made in his image. To that context, we now realize, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs in perspective but never participates in proposition. But in the counterpart, Gospels' system, the Kingdom of Heaven everywhere dominates, as Chilton and MacDonald make clear, at the very heart of matters.

The main point is simple. Comparison among category-formations and compositions set forth by heirs to a common Scripture provides the key. What is inert in the Rabbinic system is generative in its Gospels' counterpart. The Christian heirs of Israelite Scripture subordinate much else to the Kingdom of God, to which (even) the generative Rabbinic category-formations sin-repentance-atonement and Israel/nations submit. The Rabbinic heirs find at the heart of matters sin/repentance/atonement, to which (even) Israel/Gentiles and Kingdom of Heaven accommodate themselves. When we know what category-formation adapts itself to what other, we know the difference in systemic category-formations between the inert and the generative, subordinate and primary.