

VIII

THE STRUCTURE AND SYSTEM OF BABYLONIAN TALMUD TAMID

The remarks made earlier concerning tractate Meilah pertain here as well. We turn directly to an outline of the tractate, which yields the simple fact that Bavli-tractate Tamid is a truncated commentary to the Mishnah.

I. Mishnah-tractate Tamid 1:1-2

A. IN THREE PLACES DO THE PRIESTS KEEP WATCH IN THE SANCTUARY: (1) IN THE ROOM OF ABTINAS, (2) IN THE ROOM OF THE FLAME, AND (3) IN THE ROOM OF THE HEARTH.

1. I:1: what is the source in Scripture for this fact?

B. THE ROOM OF ABTINAS AND THE ROOM OF THE FLAME WERE UPPER ROOMS: AND YOUNGSTERS KEEP WATCH THERE.

1. II:1: The question was raised: were they actually upper rooms, or perhaps they were elevated like upper rooms?

a. II:2: Pursuing the analysis of the evidence just now introduced from M. Mid. 1:5: How on the basis of Scripture do we know that the priests occupied the upper, the Levites the lower, room?

C. THE ROOM OF THE HEARTH IS VAULTED:

1. III:1: And there was one watch that was maintained in the room of the hearth.

D. AND IT WAS A LARGE ROOM SURROUNDED BY A RAISED PAVEMENT OF STONE.

1. IV:1: What was this raised pavement of stone?

E. AND THE MATURE MEMBERS OF THE [PRIESTLY] HOUSEHOLD [OF THE DAY] SLEEP THERE [ON THE RAISED PAVEMENT], WITH THE KEYS TO THE COURTYARD IN THEIR CHARGE.

1. V:1: How come they slept on the pavement? Let them bring in beds!

F. AND [THERE SLEEP] THE FLEDGLING PRIESTS, EACH WITH HIS MATTRESS ON THE GROUND:

1. VI:1: How come these are referred to earlier as “boys” but here, as neophyte priests?

G. IN THREE PLACES DO THE PRIESTS KEEP WATCH IN THE SANCTUARY: (1) IN THE ROOM OF ABTINAS, (2) IN THE ROOM OF THE FLAME, AND (3) IN THE ROOM OF THE HEARTH. AND THE LEVITES [KEEP WATCH] IN TWENTY-ONE PLACES [1Ch. 26:17-18]:

FIVE AT THE FIVE GATES OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT; FOUR AT THE FOUR CORNERS ON THE INSIDE [OF THE TEMPLE WALL]; FIVE AT THE FIVE GATES OF THE COURTYARD; FOUR AT THE FOUR CORNERS ON THE OUTSIDE [THE WALL OF THE COURTYARD]; AND ONE AT THE OFFICE OF THE OFFERING; AND ONE AT THE OFFICE OF THE VEIL, AND ONE BEHIND THE MERCY SEAT [OUTSIDE OF THE WESTERN WALL OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES [Middot 1:1]:

1. VII:1: What is the source in Scripture for these statements?

a. VII:2: What is the meaning of parbar?

2. VII:3: Resumes VII.1.

3. VII:4:

H. FIVE AT THE FIVE GATES OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT; FOUR AT THE FOUR CORNERS ON THE INSIDE [OF THE TEMPLE WALL]; FIVE AT THE FIVE GATES OF THE COURTYARD; FOUR AT THE FOUR CORNERS ON THE OUTSIDE [THE WALL OF THE COURTYARD]:

1. VIII:1: What differentiates the Temple mount, where maintain the guard on the inside, from the courtyard, where we maintain the guard on the outside?

2. VIII:2: Clarification of the cited passage of Mishnah-tractate Middot continues.

I. THEY [THE PRIESTS] DID NOT SLEEP IN THE CONSECRATED GARMENTS. BUT THEY SPREAD THEM OUT, DOUBLED THEM OVER, AND LAY THEM DOWN UNDER THEIR HEADS, AND COVER THEMSELVES WITH THEIR OWN CLOTHES:

1. IX:1: Sleeping is what they did not do in those garments, but they walked about in them. That yields the proposition that the garments of the priesthood were available for the priests' own personal utilization.

2. IX:2: Now there is a problem with the very formulation of the Mishnah's rule. From the language, and lay them down under their heads, it follows that the garments of the priesthood were available for the priests' own personal utilization.

3. IX:3:

J. [IF] ONE OF THEM SHOULD HAVE A NOCTURNAL EMISSION OF SEMEN, HE GOES OUT, PROCEEDING ALONG THE PASSAGE THAT LEADS BELOW THE BUILDING:

1. X:1: *This sustains the view of R. Yohanan, who has said, "The underground tunnels of the Temple were not consecrated. That was so that a priest who had a nocturnal emission could be sent out of the two precincts."*

K. AND LAMPS FLICKER ON THIS SIDE AND ON THAT, UNTIL HE REACHES THE IMMERSION ROOM.

AND THERE WAS A FIRE THERE, AND A PRIVY IN GOOD TASTE. AND THIS WAS ITS GOOD TASTE: [IF] HE FOUND IT LOCKED, HE KNOWS THAT SOMEONE IS THERE; [IF HE FOUND IT] OPEN, HE KNOWS THAT NO ONE IS THERE.

HE WENT DOWN AND IMMersed, CAME UP AND DRIED OFF, AND WARMED HIMSELF BY THE FIRE. HE CAME AND SAT HIMSELF DOWN WITH HIS BROTHERS, THE PRIESTS [IN THE HOUSE OF THE HEARTH], UNTIL THE GATES WERE OPENED. HE GOES OUT, PROCEEDING ON HIS WAY [HOME].

1. XI:1: a story in which the rule at hand figures.

a. XI:2: Illustration of a detail of the foregoing.

b. XI:3: Continuation of foregoing; relevant sayings.

L. HE WHO WANTS TO TAKE UP [THE ASHES] FROM THE ALTAR GETS UP EARLY, AND IMMERSSES BEFORE THE SUPERINTENDENT COMES BY AND AT WHAT TIME DOES THE SUPERINTENDENT COME BY? NOT ALL THE TIMES ARE THE SAME. SOMETIMES HE COMES AT COCKCROW, OR NEAR THEN, EARLIER OR LATER. THE SUPERINTENDENT CAME AND KNOCKED ON THEIR DOOR. AND THEY OPENED IT TO HIM.

1. XII:1: Analysis of the corresponding Mishnah-passage at M. **Middot 1:2** on the same topic.

M. HE SAID TO THEM, “LET HIM WHO HAS IMMERSSED COME AND CAST LOTS.” THEY CAST LOTS. WHOEVER WON WON.

1. XIII:1: Now there is an internal contradiction in the formulation of the Mishnah’s statement itself. First you say, He who wants to take up [the ashes] from the altar gets up early, and immerses before the superintendent comes by. It follows that the matter does not depend upon the lottery. And then the Tannaite formulation continues, He said to them, “Let him who has immersed come and cast lots.” They cast lots. Whoever won won. It follows that the matter does depend upon the lottery.

II. Mishnah-tractate Tamid 1:3-4

A. HE TOOK THE KEY AND OPENED THE DOOR AND ENTERED VIA THE ROOM OF THE HEARTH INTO THE TEMPLE COURTYARD. AND THEY ENTERED AFTER HIM WITH TWO LIGHTED TORCHES IN THEIR HANDS. AND THEY DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTIES.

THESE GO ALONG THE COLONNADE EASTWARD, AND THOSE GO ALONG THE COLONNADE WESTWARD.

1. I:1: But were there really colonnades in the courtyard of the Temple?

B. THEY WOULD GO ALONG AND INSPECT [TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WAS IN ORDER], UNTIL THEY REACH THE PLACE WHERE THEY MAKE THE BAKED CAKES.

THESE MET UP WITH THOSE. THEY SAID, “IS IT IN ORDER?” “ALL IS IN ORDER.” THEY HAD THOSE WHO MAKE THE BAKED CAKES BEGIN TO MAKE BAKED CAKES. HE WHO HAD WON [THE RIGHT] TO TAKE UP [THE ASH] FROM THE ALTAR [LEV. 6: 3] HE WILL TAKE UP THE ASH FROM THE ALTAR. AND THEY SAY TO HIM, “BE CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH A UTENSIL [THE FIRE SHOVEL] BEFORE YOU SANCTIFY YOUR HANDS AND YOUR FEET IN THE LAVER.” AND LO, THE FIRE SHOVEL IS PLACED IN THE CORNER BETWEEN THE RAMP AND THE ALTAR, AT THE WESTWARD SIDE OF THE RAMP. NO ONE GOES IN WITH HIM, NOR IS THERE A LIGHT IN HIS HAND. BUT HE GOES ALONG BY THE LIGHT OF THE ALTAR FIRE. THEY DID NOT SEE HIM, NOR DID THEY HEAR A SOUND FROM HIM UNTIL THEY HEAR THE NOISE OF THE WOODEN DEVICE WHICH BEN QATIN MADE FOR THE LAVER. AND THEY SAY, “THE TIME HAS COME.” HE SANCTIFIED HIS HANDS AND FEET WITH THE LAVER. HE TOOK THE SILVER FIRE SHOVEL AND WENT UP TO THE

TOP OF THE ALTAR, AND HE CLEARED AWAY THE CINDERS FROM ONE SIDE AND THE OTHER, SCOOPED UP THE INNERMOST ASHES, AND CAME DOWN. HE REACHED THE PAVEMENT. HE TURNED HIS FACE NORTHWARD [TOWARD THE ALTAR] — HE WENT ALONG TEN CUBITS TO THE EAST OF THE RAMP. HE HEAPED UP THE CINDERS TOGETHER ON THE PAVEMENT, THREE HANDBREADTHS FROM THE RAMP, THE PLACE IN WHICH THEY TOSS THE CROPS OF FOWL, AND THE ASHES OF THE INNERMOST ALTAR AND THE CANDLESTICK.

1. II:1: Is this to suggest that the baked cakes were offered first of all?

III. Mishnah-tractate Tamid 2:1-5

A. HIS BROTHERS SAW THAT HE CAME DOWN, AND THEY CAME RUNNING. THEY HASTENED AND SANCTIFIED THEIR HANDS AND THEIR FEET FROM THE LAVER. THEY TOOK THE SHOVELS AND THE RAKES AND WENT UP TO THE TOP OF THE ALTAR. THE LIMBS AND THE FAT PIECES WHICH HAD NOT BEEN CONSUMED THE PRECEDING NIGHT THEY RAKED TO THE SIDES OF THE ALTAR. IF THE SIDES DID NOT HOLD THEM, THEY ARRANGED THEM ON THE CIRCUIT BY THE RAMP. THEY BEGAN HEAPING UP ASHES ON THE APPLE [ASH PILE]. AND THE APPLE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ALTAR.

SOMETIMES THERE WERE THREE HUNDRED KORS [OF ASHES]

1. I:1: This is an exaggeration.

2. I:2: Further case.

3. I:3: As above.

4. I:4: As above.

B. AND AT FESTIVAL THEY DID NOT CLEAR AWAY THE ASHES, FOR THEY ARE AN ORNAMENT TO THE ALTAR. THE PRIESTS NEVER THROUGH NEGLECT FAILED TO REMOVE THE ASHES.

THEY BEGAN HEAPING UP THE TWIGS TO PREPARE THE ALTAR FIRE. AND ARE ALL SORTS OF WOOD VALID FOR THE ALTAR FIRE? YES. ALL SORTS OF WOOD ARE VALID FOR THE ALTAR FIRE, EXCEPT FOR OLIVE WOOD AND WOOD OF THE VINE. BUT WITH THESE WERE THEY USED [TO LIGHT THE FIRE]: BOUGHS (1) OF THE FIG TREE, OR (2) OF THE WALNUT TREE, OR (3) OF OLEASTER WOOD:

1. II:1: What is the operative consideration behind this rule?

C. HE ARRANGED THE ALTAR FIRE, THE LARGER ONE ON THE EAST SIDE, WITH ITS OPEN SIDE [AT WHICH SIDE IT WAS TENDED] FACING EAST.

AND THE TIPS OF THE INNER TWIGS WERE TOUCHING THE APPLE. AND THERE WAS A SPACE BETWEEN THE TWIGS, THROUGH WHICH THEY SET FIRE TO THE KINDLING WOOD. THEY SELECTED FROM THERE FINE PIECES OF FIG WOOD [= M. 2:3FL] [WITH WHICH] TO ARRANGE THE SECOND ALTAR FIRE, [THE ONE] FOR THE INCENSE, TOWARD THE SOUTHWESTERN CORNER, FOUR CUBITS TO THE NORTH OF THE CORNER. [ON WEEKDAYS, THEY TOOK] SUFFICIENT [WOOD TO PRODUCE] AN AMOUNT OF FIVE SEAHS OF CINDERS, AND ON THE SABBATH, SUFFICIENT FOR AN AMOUNT OF EIGHT SEAHS OF CINDERS. FOR THERE DID THEY PLACE THE TWO DISHES OF FRANKINCENSE WHICH ACCOMPANY THE SHOW BREAD. THE LIMBS

AND PIECES OF FAT WHICH HAD NOT BEEN CONSUMED THE PRECEDING EVENING THEY PUT BACK ONTO THE ALTAR FIRE. THEY KINDLED THE TWO ALTAR FIRES. AND THEY CAME DOWN. AND THEY WENT TO THE OFFICE MADE OF HEWN STONE.

1. IV:1: What is the operative consideration [that places the open end facing east]?

IV. Mishnah-tractate Tamid 3:1-9

This Bavli-tractate presents no talmud to Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Three.

V. Mishnah-tractate Tamid 4:1-3

A. THEY DID NOT [WHOLLY] BIND UP THE LAMB BUT [ONLY] TIED IT[S FORELEG AND HINDLEG]:

1. I:1: A Tannaite statement: [They tied up] its forelegs and hindlegs as in the binding of Isaac, Abraham's son.

2. I:2: How come?

3. I:3: Why are the tables made of marble [comment on M. Sheq. 6:4], relevant because of the narrative on wear the meat is placed.

B. THOSE WHO HAD WON [THE PRIVILEGE OF TAKING] THE LIMBS TAKE HOLD OF IT. AND THUS WAS THE MANNER OF TYING IT: ITS HEAD TO THE SOUTH [TOWARD THE ALTAR], AND ITS FACE TO THE WEST [TOWARD THE HEKHAL] HE WHO EFFECTS THE ACT OF SLAUGHTER STANDS IN THE EAST WITH HIS FACE TO THE WEST.

AND THAT [DAILY WHOLE OFFERING] OF THE DAWN WAS SLAUGHTERED AT THE NORTHWESTERN CORNER, AT THE SECOND RING. THAT [DAILY WHOLE OFFERING] OF TWILIGHT WAS SLAUGHTERED AT THE NORTHEASTERN CORNER [OF THE ALTAR], AT THE SECOND RING. THE SLAUGHTERER SLAUGHTERED. THE ONE WHO RECEIVES THE BLOOD RECEIVED THE BLOOD. HE CAME TO THE NORTHEASTERN CORNER. HE TOSSES [THE BLOOD] IN A NORTHEASTERLY DIRECTION. [THEN HE CAME] TO THE SOUTHWESTERN CORNER. HE TOSSES [THE BLOOD] IN A SOUTHWESTERLY DIRECTION. THE RESIDUE OF THE BLOOD DID HE POUR OUT ON THE SOUTHERN BASE [OF THE ALTAR]. HE [WHO SLAUGHTERED THE DAILY WHOLE OFFERING] DID NOT BREAK THE HIND LEG. BUT HE PIERCES IT AT THE KNEE JOINT AND HANGS IT UP THEREWITH. HE DID FLAY IT DOWNWARD, UNTIL HE REACHED THE BREAST. [WHEN] HE REACHED THE BREAST, HE CUT OFF THE HEAD AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT. HE CUT OFF THE SHANKS AND GAVE THEM TO HIM WHO HAD WON THEM. HE STRIPPED OFF THE HIDE. HE CUT OPEN THE HEART AND REMOVED ITS BLOOD. HE CUT OFF THE FORELEGS AND GAVE THEM TO HIM WHO HAD WON THEM. HE CAME UP TO THE RIGHT HIND LEG, CUT IT OFF, AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT, AND THE TWO TESTICLES WITH IT. HE CUT IT [THE CARCASS] OPEN, SO THAT ALL OF IT WAS OPEN BEFORE HIM. HE TOOK THE FAT AND PUT IT AT THE PLACE AT WHICH THE HEAD HAD BEEN CUT OFF ABOVE. HE TOOK THE INNARDS AND GAVE THEM TO HIM WHO HAD WON THEM, FOR THE PURPOSE OF WASHING THEM. AND AS TO THE STOMACH: THEY WASH IT IN THE SWILLING ROOM, SO MUCH AS WAS REQUIRED. AND AS TO THE

INNARDS: THEY WASH THEM THREE TIMES AT THE VERY LEAST, ON THE MARBLE TABLES WHICH ARE BETWEEN THE PILLARS. HE TOOK THE KNIFE AND SEPARATED THE LUNGS FROM THE LIVER, AND THE LOBE OF THE LIVER FROM THE LIVER. BUT HE DID NOT MOVE IT FROM ITS PLACE, HE PIERCED THE BREAST AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT. HE PROCEEDED TO THE RIGHT FLANK AND DID CUT IT DOWNWARD TO THE BACKBONE — BUT HE DID NOT TOUCH THE BACKBONE — UNTIL HE REACHED THE TWO THIN RIBS. HE CUT IT OFF AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT, WITH THE LIVER SUSPENDED FROM IT. HE CAME TO THE NECK, AND LEFT WITH IT TWO RIBS ON THIS SIDE AND TWO RIBS ON THAT SIDE. HE CUT IT OFF AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT, WITH THE WINDPIPE, HEART, AND LUNGS HANGING FROM IT. HE CAME TO THE LEFT FLANK AND LEFT WITH IT TWO THIN RIBS ABOVE AND TWO THIN RIBS BELOW. AND SO DID HE LEAVE THEM ON THE OTHER SIDE. IT TURNS OUT THAT HE LEFT ON BOTH OF THEM TWO EACH ABOVE AND TWO EACH BELOW. HE CUT IT OFF AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT, AND THE BACKBONE WITH IT, AND THE SPLEEN HANGING FROM IT. THIS WAS THE LARGER PART, BUT THAT OF THE RIGHT SIDE DO THEY CALL THE LARGER PART, FOR THE LIVER IS SUSPENDED ON IT. HE CAME TO THE RUMP, CUT IT OFF, AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT, WITH THE FAT TAIL, AND THE LOBE OF THE LIVER, AND THE TWO KIDNEYS WITH IT. HE TOOK THE LEFT HIND LEG AND GAVE IT TO HIM WHO HAD WON IT. ALL OF THEM TURNED OUT TO BE STANDING IN A ROW, AND THE LIMBS IN THEIR HANDS: (1) THE FIRST, WITH THE HEAD AND A HIND-LEG, THE HEAD IN HIS RIGHT HAND, WITH ITS MUZZLE ALONG HIS ARM, AND ITS HORNS IN HIS FINGERS, AND THE PLACE AT WHICH IT WAS SLAUGHTERED TURNED UPWARDS, AND THE FAT SET ON TOP OF IT [THAT PLACE], AND THE RIGHT HIND LEG IN HIS LEFT HAND, AND THE FLAYED END OUTERMOST; (2) THE SECOND, WITH THE TWO FORELEGS, THAT OF THE RIGHT HAND IN HIS RIGHT HAND, AND THAT OF THE LEFT IN HIS LEFT, WITH THE FLAYED END OUTERMOST; (3) THE THIRD, WITH THE RUMP AND THE [OTHER] HIND LEG, THE RUMP IN HIS RIGHT HAND, AND THE FAT TAIL HANGING DOWN BETWEEN HIS FINGERS, AND THE LOBE OF THE LIVER AND THE TWO KIDNEYS WITH IT, THE LEFT HIND LEG IN HIS LEFT HAND, WITH THE FLAYED END OUTERMOST; (4) THE FOURTH, WITH THE BREAST AND THE NECK, THE BREAST IN HIS RIGHT HAND, AND THE NECK IN HIS LEFT, AND WITH ITS RIBS BETWEEN HIS FINGERS; (5) THE FIFTH WITH THE TWO FLANKS, THAT OF THE RIGHT IN HIS RIGHT HAND, THAT OF THE LEFT IN HIS LEFT, WITH THE FLAYED ENDS OUTWARDS; (6) THE SIXTH, WITH THE INNARDS PUT IN A DISH, AND THE SHANKS ON TOP OF THEM, ABOVE; (7) THE SEVENTH, WITH THE FINE FLOUR; (8) THE EIGHTH, WITH THE BAKED CAKES; (9) THE NINTH, WITH THE WINE. THEY WENT AND PUT THEM ON THE LOWER HALF OF THE RAMP, ON THE WEST SIDE OF IT. AND THEY SALTED THEM [THE LIMBS AND MEAL OFFERING]. THEN THEY CAME DOWN AND CAME TO THE OFFICE OF HEWN STONE TO RECITE THE SHEMA.

1. I:1: What is the scriptural foundation for this rule?

C. TEN QUESTIONS DID ALEXANDER OF MACEDONIA ASK THE ELDERS OF THE SOUTH.

1. I:2: “Is the distance from heaven to earth greater than the distance from east to west?” “This distance and that distance are equal, since it is said, ‘As the heavens are high above the earth...as the distance from east to west’ (Psa. 103:11).

a. I:3: Gloss of the concluding lines of the foregoing.

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF TORAH-STUDY NIGHT AND DAY

1. I:4: Whoever takes up the study of the Torah by night — the presence of God is with him: ‘Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the watch.

VI. Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Five

The Bavli-tractate presents no talmud to Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Five.

VII. Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Six

The Bavli-tractate presents no talmud to Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Six.

VIII. Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Seven

The Bavli-tractate presents no talmud to Mishnah-tractate Tamid Chapter Seven.

Points of Structure

1. DOES BABYLONIAN TALMUD-TRACTATE TAMID FOLLOW A COHERENT OUTLINE GOVERNED BY A CONSISTENT RULES?

The Talmud for the Mishnah-tractate follows standard patterns. The structure is defined by the Mishnah-sentences that are chosen for discussion, and these are set forth in the order in which they occur in the Mishnah-tractate. Nothing in its content suggests a reason for omitting from Talmudic analysis the larger part of the Mishnah-tractate.

2. WHAT ARE THE SALIENT TRAITS OF ITS STRUCTURE?

The Talmud is a commentary to the Mishnah.

3. WHAT IS THE RATIONALITY OF THE STRUCTURE?

So far as the Talmud for this Mishnah-tractate undertakes the task, the work is done in the conventional way.

4. WHERE ARE THE POINTS OF IRRATIONALITY IN THE STRUCTURE?

The first anomaly is the introduction of paragraphs of Mishnah-tractate Middot, which are subjected to the standard inquiry. But these are introduced in the setting of the paragraphs of Mishnah-tractate Tamid to which they correspond at I.H, I. The one important point of disruption is at V.C, D.

Points of System

1. DOES THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD-TRACTATE TAMID SERVE ONLY AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE MISHNAH-TRACTATE OF THE SAME NAME?

The absence of Talmud for more than half of the Mishnah-tractate gives a negative answer to that question, but how the omission of so much of the Mishnah-tractate constitutes a re-presentation of the Mishnah-tractate I cannot say.

2. HOW DO THE TOPICAL COMPOSITES FIT INTO THE TALMUD-TRACTATE TAMID AND WHAT DO THEY CONTRIBUTE THAT THE MISHNAH-TRACTATE OF THE SAME NAME WOULD LACK WITHOUT THEM?

This question brings us to V.C. While we may discern a thematic thread that leads from V.B to V.C, the unit is so remarkable for its utter independence from its topical context that it must be regarded as a true anomaly. If we ask for any point at which the tale, with its several distinct units, requires us to consider the topic of our tractate in a fresh light, or suggests a perspective that we should not otherwise have formed for our tractate's subject, we find no compelling reply. Here is therefore a fine example of what the Talmud would have set forth were it not organized in the way it is, which is, as a systematic exegesis of the Mishnah's topics and concrete statements concerning those topics. Perhaps V.D's obvious task — to write a suitable homily to conclude the tractate — may be extended to encompass V.C, in which case the theory behind including the story was to show the superiority of our sages' Torah-learning over gentile wisdom, represented by Alexander. But then the story is disproportionate to the task. We have therefore to conclude that the topical composite — Alexander and our sages — in no way forms part of the Talmud's re-presentation of the Mishnah-tractate or of its topic.

3. CAN WE STATE WHAT THE COMPILERS OF THIS DOCUMENT PROPOSE TO ACCOMPLISH IN PRODUCING THIS COMPLETE, ORGANIZED PIECE OF WRITING?

So far as our truncated tractate accomplishes the task of Mishnah-exegesis, the goal of the compilers is clear and unexceptional. The question on the abbreviated character of the tractate need not detain us, since it concerns structure, not system. What we learn about the system that the Bavli's sages bring to the Mishnah derives from two sets of facts, first, the character of the Mishnah-commentary, second, the results of the introduction of compositions and composites that aim at other than Mishnah-commentary. Here the data prove too fragmentary to generate plausible hypotheses; but in due course, they will surely serve in the formation of such hypotheses.