Listing and Enlisting: The Rhetoric and Social Meaning of Tractate Avot

Daniel Bernard

A thesis

in

The Department

of

Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Religion) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

September 2008

Library and
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45718-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45718-4

ABSTRACT

Listing and Enlisting: The Rhetoric and Social Meaning of Tractate Avot

Daniel Bernard, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2008

The Mishnah's tractate Avot (*c.* 250-300 CE) is very popular in the Jewish tradition, however its origins, as well as its intended purpose, have yet to be specifically identified. Using a "socio-rhetorical" approach, this study aims to relocate the social context for the composition of Avot.

The study begins by analyzing Avot's rhetoric, focusing especially on its rhetoric of "listing," demonstrating that the document's structure is determined by its authors' use of listed or list-like language. This language is observed to be arranged in a transitional manner, moving the reader from the authors' listing of sages—who themselves are shown to favour the use of list-like speech—into, finally, exercises in listing.

Following a comparison of Avot with Mishnah and other Greco-Roman literature, the conclusion emerges that Avot's progressive structure is meant to mirror a social transition between the status of a (non-rabbinic) Jewish scribe, to that of a disciple within the nascent rabbinic guild. Avot was created in order to facilitate the recruitment and initial training of rabbinic neophytes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following is a study of the Mishnah's tractate Avot, and of how it was used within its original school setting as a sort of textbook for rabbinic students. Avot's authors recognized the vital importance of friends, associates, families, mentors, teachers, patrons, and schools in the student's path towards wisdom, and so, too, must I.

My first and greatest thanks must go to my parents, Natalie and Sonny Bernard. If not for their staggering love, support, and generosity, I have no doubt that I could not have completed this work. My sincerest thanks also go to Michelle Aiello, Sandra Chirico, Dr. Maria Mamfredis, and Fr. James Halstead for their early belief in my potential. Third, I would like to express my appreciation for the significant support provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, Concordia University, the family of Romek Hornstein, Abe and Harriet Gold, and the Concordia University Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies.

Finally, I am privileged to thank the faculty and staff at Concordia University, who have always represented enthusiastic and invaluable resources to me, as well as valued colleagues. To Dr. Jack Lightstone, who taught my very first university course in ancient Judaism, I am grateful for his steadfast encouragement of my abilities as a scholar. I would also like to thank Dr. Lynda Clarke, Dr. Leslie Orr, and Patricia Verret; and my committee members, Dr. Adele Reinhartz, Dr. Lionel Sanders, Dr. Norma Baumel Joseph, Dr. Ira Robinson, and Dr. Christine Jamieson. I reserve my final thanks for the infinitely patient and sympathetic Tina Montandon and Munit Merid, who never failed to remind me of that final piece of wisdom in Avot: לפום צערא אגרא ("According to the effort is the reward" [Avot 5:23]).

DEDICATION

I dedicate this monograph to the memories of my Bubbies Ann and Bella, both of whom passed away during the writing process. כל אשר תאמרי אעשה לך כי יודע כל שער עמי כי אשת חיל את (Ruth 3:11).

Daniel Bernard, Ph.D.

September 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to recover something of the context for the creation of the Mishnah's[1] tractate "Avot" (אבות, "Fathers"; *c.* 250-300 C.E.)[2], by understanding its rhetoric as appropriate to a specific type of social situation. Avot has probably been the most familiar of all early rabbinic texts amongst Jews for hundreds of years, uniquely entrenched as it is in the Jewish prayer book (*Siddur*), and available in countless popularly translated and interpreted editions. This brief document has been a popular subject for Jewish thinkers for centuries, read as much as an historical record of early rabbinism as it has been as an ethical guide or philosophical treatise. Yet despite its popularity and its concomitant emphasis in faith-based studies of rabbinic texts, contemporary critical studies of early rabbinic Judaism have tended to focus somewhat less on Avot than they have on other texts such as the Mishnah or Talmuds. Although Avot is one of the most popular rabbinic texts within the Jewish tradition, it is also generally misunderstood or misused as evidence of the early rabbinic movement.

The publishing of only rare, brief, or perfunctory critical studies of what is such a widely known rabbinic text as Avot has resulted in a relative scholarly ignorance of that text and of its place within a definable, original circumstance. Therefore scholars who would normally take care to understand a text based in criteria appropriate to the contemporary study of history are left, in the case of Avot, too often to rely on biased assumptions appropriate to and derived from traditional Jewish understandings of the text. We have very little material or external corroborating evidence about the early rabbinic movement. Consequently, contemporary students of this period are generally left

to focus on the more abundant internal textual evidence (from the Mishnah to the Talmuds) that the early rabbis left us.

In the absence of a more concrete understanding of the character of early rabbinic Judaism, Avot in particular has commonly been interpreted according to its perceived value as, at best, a collection of earlier strata of redaction, from which the scholar can prune earlier sources. But this study will argue that to regard Avot as useful historical evidence it must be first taken seriously as a whole document authored with some kind of function or persuasive agenda. This study aims to reconstruct the exigency for the creation of Avot within the formative period of rabbinic Judaism, as that period can be understood according to critical scholarship. Therefore this study begins to reconstruct Avot's historical origins through an analysis of its rhetoric, and by investigating the social circumstance for which that rhetoric would have been suitable. *The hypothesis will emerge that Avot was created with the intention of training new disciples from a pool of new, mid- to late-third century CE recruits into the college of rabbinic sages.*

I.1. Background: Third Century Galilee and the Early Rabbinic Movement

It was during the nascent period of the rabbinic movement that Avot was created. It will therefore be important below to keep in mind the wider socio-cultural context of Judaism in the late antique period, especially since the argument will be made that the (or some) rabbis at the time of Avot's creation were seeking out new members for their group[3] from the greater Jewish community of the Galilee in northern Palestine.

Especially in regard to its early period, the rabbinic movement is often defined in a rather circular manner, going something like this:

Question: What is rabbinic Judaism?

Answer: It is the Judaism represented by rabbis and their literature: *halakhic* (legal) and *aggadic* (legendary) material, most basically delineated by the major works of the Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmuds and *midrashic* (scriptural commentary) texts.

Question: What is the source of rabbinic literature?

Answer: Its source is the rabbis: the Torah-teaching, *halakhah*[4]-enforcing communal leaders of the rabbinic movement (both in Palestine and Babylonia) who expounded their opinions orally (only later to be "redacted" into the written texts).

Question: Who were the early rabbis?

Answer: The founders of rabbinic Judaism.

Elaborate histories of the early rabbinic period, or biographies of early rabbis, are regularly published. In these secondary sources, events or personages described in disparate rabbinic documents are rearranged, summarized, or simply rephrased for the benefit of a modern readership (related to the issue of the "received view," to be discussed in greater specificity below, and in relation to Avot particularly [I.2]). But the origins of the rabbinic form of Judaism still remain obscure and largely unsubstantiated by external evidence.

Most often, introductory textbooks of this period will stress that two main forms of Judaism emerged out of the crisis of the destruction of the Temple, "Christianity" and "rabbinic Judaism." Scholarship on early Christianity has become much more critical in recent decades, revealing that the diffusionist portrait for Christian origins—in which the

twelve disciples move out from Jerusalem to spread Christianity throughout the known world (based first on the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles)—is not historically accurate. Evidence for Christian origins begins with a confusing multiplicity of Christianities, and we are beginning to recognize the complexity of the social origins of Christian life and belief. However, scholarship on early rabbinic Judaism has often not recognized the lack of evidence for the origins of this form of Judaism, often accepting the retrospective claims of the Mishnah as more or less reliable. Nor has it sufficiently recognized the importance of the presence of what Jacob Neusner calls other "Judaisms" (whether the early Christians or other groups) in the social or ideological formation of rabbinic Judaism.[5]

Even by the beginning of the Roman occupation of Palestine, Judaism was already identifiable in a number of forms, some of which were more aligned with the centralized institution of the Temple, some which rejected it, and many which were somewhere in between. This phenomenon is represented by an array of groups, only some of which we are familiar with today (such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the *Yahad* at Qumran [responsible for the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls]). But all Jewish identity was at least based on the idea that YHWH (God) had made a reciprocal covenant with the ancestors of the Jewish ethnos, a covenant that promises the Israelites (and, therefore, their "Jewish" descendants [that is, from the tribe and land of Judah]) security and prosperity in their "Promised Land" in exchange for their vigilant adherence to YHWH's cultic laws ("Torah").

Both the Mishnah (משנה, "repetition," *c.* 200 CE, the earliest extant evidence for rabbinic Judaism) as well as some minimal external evidence confirm the context of

northern Palestine in the third century for the foundation of what we can recognize as particularly rabbinic Judaism. Judaism in the third century was regarded both as an ethnic group and as a particular religion—that is, the cult to YHWH—within the Roman Empire. Jews also enjoyed a special status that allowed them exemption from certain obligations of conquered *ethnoi* within the Empire, such as paying tribute to the emperor (understood as a cultic act), due to their (even by then) status as an ancient monotheistic cult. By this period, domination of Judaism, and of their ethnic homeland, the Land of Israel (Palestine), had been a long-standing fact of Jewish existence. But since the first revolt of 66-70 CE, the Second Jerusalem Temple, the long-standing devotional, social and economic center of Judaism, had been destroyed. And by the second revolt of 132-135 CE, Jerusalem itself was renamed Aelia Capitolina and Jews were forbidden access to it. This left much of the remainder a "Diaspora" community; even the strong post-second revolt Jewish presence in northern Palestine was, strictly speaking, a part of this Diaspora, since it is Zion—the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, on the land of the ancient Israelite kingdom of Judah—that, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, is the home of YHWH's presence and of the cult to Him.

Following "and largely as a result of" the revolt of 135 CE, "Jewish settlement in Palestine shifted northward to Upper Galilee..." and, "...the location of the Patriarch's headquarters [was in] Lower Galilee."[6] The hereditary office of the Patriarchate is often assumed to have been the ruling body of the autonomous community of Judaism in the post-Temple Roman period. The authors of both Mishnah and Avot assert a relationship between the rabbinic movement and the institution of the Patriarchate in the third century CE. Lee I. Levine notes that "[t]he status and authority of the patriarch (or *nasi* [Prince][7])

in late antiquity have been accorded various assessments by modern scholars."[8] Yet he continues, stating that "[t]he *opinio communis* is that the post-Bar Kokhba era [post-135 CE] witnessed a serious diminution in the political and economic position of Palestinian Jews generally, and with regard to the standing of the patriarch in particular."[9] In fact the evidence for the Patriarchate, beyond the rabbinic view of that institution, is scanty, only beginning to surface in relative volume in the fourth and fifth centuries, while evidence for the movement ends around 425-29 CE.[10] Descriptions of the Patriarchate by modern scholars have ranged from understanding the institution as a local client monarchy to understanding it as a relatively non-influential and non-authoritative local Palestinian patron family. Only rabbinic sources describe the *nasi* as the leader of a rabbinic academy. Although we have very few sources from the third century about this institution, one in particular gives us some hints about outsiders' (i.e. non-Jewish) perceptions of the institution. Origen in the mid-third century CE claimed that the patriarch had "considerable influence"[11] within the Jewish community of Palestine, holding trials and the ability to inflict capital punishment (although, as Origen states, without "full permission" of the Roman state).[12] His description of the patriarch is that of a wealthy, king-like figure of both power and authority within the Jewish community who, since the beginning of the third century, began to claim Davidic lineage for himself.[13]

One popular idea used to explain these powers is that the patriarch must have been a local puppet ruler appointed officially by the Roman government. Yet this does not appear to have been the case. For one, there is "no explicit evidence in rabbinic texts that the *nasi* owed his position to Rome in any... way."[14] Moreover, even Origen notes

the unofficial nature of the Patriarchate's influence. Finally, all sources concur that the patriarchs did not collect taxes for the state, as a puppet ruler would have done; this task was appointed instead to the local *boule* (council), of which the *nasi* was not a member.[15] Put simply, "the *nasi* was not assigned any formal designation by the Roman state in the third century..."[16]

Martin Goodman theorizes that the Partiarchate was permitted to exist and lead in a limited but unofficial manner by Rome because the empire did not perceive the patriarch as a "local ruler, but simply as a religious leader."[17] This is because Roman perceptions of Jewish identity revolved not around the idea of Jews as an ethnic group, but rather as a cultic body.[18] In other words, since Judaism was defined by Rome in this century as a voluntary (though ancient) cult to the ancient Jewish god YHWH, to which increasing numbers of gentiles were gravitating, the Patriarchate was allowed to exist and even thrive in a limited way, as it was not seen as a threatening or competing political institution.

But this did not stop the patriarchs from claiming more than simply cultic powers for themselves; in fact, their promulgation among fellow Jews the idea that the patriarchs are Davidic messiahs (in the literal sense of a legitimate heir to David's Judean throne) indicates aspirations beyond their politically sanctioned scope as does their Hebrew title, *nasi* ("prince"). Although heredity can indeed be established among members of the Patriarchate, most of whom were named Gamaliel, extending that heredity back to David (as well as, perhaps, to the influential sage Hillel) is much harder to demonstrate historically.[19] It seems that they were using their influence as powerful, local patrons to promote their own position within the Jewish community: The patriarch's "religious

authority sometimes gave him secular power over his flock, and... his role was permitted but neither officially sanctioned nor encouraged by the Roman state."[20]

There are indications during the third century CE of the general Jewish population's ambivalence towards the patriarchs in particular, and the Roman government in general. Aharon Oppenheimer notes that in the mid-third century, there emerged a general tension regarding Roman presence in Palestine:

> ...it can be said that Roman rule left its mark on daily life in the cities of the Galilee... first, [in] the organization of the cities, including granting of status, instituting the urban leadership, and imposing various duties on these institutions; and second, [in] the Roman military presence in towns... While Jewish sources generally are positive in their appreciation of Roman urban organization, especially in the period of R. Judah ha-Nasi, their attitude regarding the military presence is on the whole negative, particularly in the period of crisis of the empire in the third century [*c.* 235-284 CE]."[21]

While the Patriarchs could not in the third century gain further official, political prestige, they seem to have instead opted to increase their influence locally among a community of Jewish clients:

> Davidic ancestry clearly provided the Gamalielian dynasty with a strong justification for its exercise of authority. All the biblical and liturgical texts about David and his successors could be summoned to legitimate the status of the patriarchs in Jewish society.[22]

In other words, the Gamalielian patriarchs used (and seem to have felt that they needed to use) Jewish history as an apologetic for their own authority, claiming that their prestige is God-given, not attributable to the Romans, and that therefore they should be regarded as the legitimate local Jewish leaders, regardless of their lack of certain civil powers.

Within this context, other forms of Jewish culture developed as well. Perhaps most notably, the institution of the synagogue underwent significant changes during the third century, increasing in centrality among certain Jewish communities in Palestine and

elsewhere.[23] At this time, the synagogue buildings begin to appear in the archaeological records, and gathering at synagogues became a more common practice of various Jewish communities throughout the world, including northern Palestine. The Mishnah claims rabbinic leadership within the institution of the synagogue. But the external evidence for the rabbinic movement reveals that their own claims to authority were not concretized for their fellow Jews at the time; Erwin R. Goodenough classically demonstrates an absence of rabbinic influence in synagogue remains, while more recent material discoveries seem to confirm a general absence of the rabbinic influence on the piety of most Jews.[24] Seth Schwartz observes that "[i]n the third century..." both "...rabbinic and patriarchal authority were... limited."[25]

On an explicit level, the Mishnah draws very sharp boundaries between the Jewish community (for whom the rabbis dictate cultic and legal norms, according to the Mishnah) and other groups (whether gentile or not), in an attempt to replicate piety on the level of Temple service (in the absence of an actual Temple or a working caste of priests). For example, the Mishnah's tractate Avodah Zarah (roughly translated as "idolatry") rejects too much social or economic involvement with gentiles, branding it as idolatry, that is, participation in cult to other deities. Moreover, Scripture was defined by the early rabbinic authors as excluding any text beginning with the Hellenistic period (and which is otherwise regarded by non-rabbis as authoritative) from canon.[26] But the very language of the Mishnah itself (and Avot to an even greater extent) is replete with Greek or Latin loanwords and literary techniques, and even the rabbis' master-disciple social structure (to be discussed below [chapter III]) implies influence from institutional systems common to the wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern environment.

Most often, the origins of the rabbinic movement are traced back to the Second Temple Period group called the Pharisees. The Pharisees seem to have been Jewish leaders in Palestine who may have enjoyed political patronage of some kind. They led or instructed common people who were not members of their group in matters of law, which included matters of ritual purity, the interpretations of which they claimed to receive extra-Scripturally from their ancestors, passed down from generation to generation. They were prominent enough for Josephus to mention them numerous times, for the New Testament authors to discuss them as communal leaders (even though the authors also expressed conflict with them), and for later rabbinic sages to claim descent from them.

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin's recent *Jewish Literacy* is an excellent representation of the usual, "street-level" explanation of the supposed ancestral relationship of the Pharisees to the early rabbis: they are conflated if not practically equated. According to Telushkin, the Pharisees "are the ancestors of all contemporary Jews... their practices became normative Judaism"; "[t]heir understanding of Judaism was characterized by their belief in the Oral Law." And, most importantly for us, "[i]n *actuality* [my emphasis], the greatest teachers of talmudic Judaism, men like Hillel, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, and Rabbi Akiva, were Pharisees."[27] This assertion begins with the rabbinic texts themselves, which express "a close affinity to the Pharisaic teachers."[28] According to Alan Segal, following the basic outlines of the usual explanation in which rabbis assume near instant leadership of "Judaism" in the first and second centuries, Pharisaism grew into the "rabbinic movement... as a response to the need for a new ruling party to govern Israel under Roman occupation after disastrous failures of the two wars for independence in 66 and 132 C.E."[29]

But the Pharisees left us no primary evidence of their existence, meaning that the only extant descriptions of them contemporaneous to their period are by non-pharisaic outsiders, or even opponents. Recent scholarship has revealed that we actually know very little about the Pharisees, not enough to be able to demonstrate any direct continuity between them and the latter rabbis.[30] And while the Mishnah (early third century CE) mentions individuals, such as the patriarch Gamaliel, who in external sources are referred to as Pharisees (and many others who are not but are now simply assumed to have been Pharisees), the Mishnah does not portray them as rabbinic ancestors as much as they are portrayed, like most Jewish historical personages or events in the Mishnah, as having been a part of the rabbinic system all along.[31]

Inscriptional or archaeological evidence for rabbinic Judaism in the third century is scanty, "[g]enerally missing is reference to members of the rabbinic class/guild."[32] A significant exception to this rule, however, is represented by a lintel found from a now lost northern Palestinian (Golan) building of the third century CE, which reads in Hebrew "this is the study house of Rabbi Eliezer HaQappar." This sage is also described by both the Mishnah and Avot (4:21) as a "Rabbi," providing some corroboration for at least the existence of one of these sages, and of his entrenchment in an ancient, northern Palestinian school of which he was the master.[33] Furthermore, "[n]on-rabbinic literature, whether Roman or Christian, is virtually silent about rabbinic office."[34] Yet this state of affairs has not stopped many scholars from writing elaborate histories on early rabbinism (discussed below in I.2). These works, however, are often little more than reiterations of the histories presented in early rabbinic literature itself, histories that have yet to be substantially corroborated by external evidence.

The available evidence does not allow us to verify an evolutionary scheme for the origins of rabbinic Judaism. In fact, growing numbers of critical reconstructions of the nascent period of rabbinic Judaism seem to demonstrate that the creation of "rabbinism" was more messy and haphazard than the movement's later documents would have us believe. The neat picture of generations of Oral Law-advocating Pharisees, *tannaim* (Palestinian sages understood to be those whose words were "collected" and "edited" into the Mishnah, *c.*70-200 CE), *amoraim* (Palestinian and Babylonian scholars, *c.* 200-500 CE), *saboraim* (Talmudic editors, *c.* 500-700), and *Geonim* ("Excellencies," heads of Babylonian rabbinic academies *c.* 700-1000), derives internally from the documents' presentations of their own histories, and seems to have little basis in the corroboration of historical facts.[35]

Hence critical scholars (discussed below in I.3) are increasingly focusing on the history of the rabbinic documents themselves, that is, tracing a history of authorship and ideas, trying to understand the social development of the movement by tracing the provenances of the texts that it left us. Thus the history of rabbinic Judaism from this latter perspective begins not with Sinai, or Pharisees, or *amoraim*, but instead with the first extant document of rabbinic Judaism, the Mishnah (*c.* 200 CE).

Early rabbinic literature, however, is generally ahistorical. This is not a value judgment, nor is it dismissive or overly minimal. Rather, any comparative or even cursory look at a document composed during rabbinic Judaism's classical period (*c.* 200-700 CE) will yield a first reaction of bafflement for even the best trained historian, since "[n]one of the Rabbinical documents gives any *direct* indication of its own authorship or any *direct* indication of to whom it is addressed, or any direct statement of the

circumstances that led to its invention."[36] Moshe David Herr, as Marc Zvi Brettler remarks,

> ...points to an idiom in rabbinic literature: "what was, was," which shows the rabbis' complete disregard for actual events of the past. Based on the use of that idiom and other rabbinic evidence, he notes, "there was no question more meaningless or boring [to the rabbis] than the purpose and usefulness of an exact description of what actually transpired."[37]

These texts do not seem to care about being historical records, nor did their authors (or editors, or compilers) seem to aspire to be historiographers.[38] The first extant document to attempt a detailed historiography (besides, as some would argue, Avot itself) of rabbinic Judaism from its origins comes from the early Middle Ages, in Sherira Gaon's tenth century work, *Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon*. It is this work that is primarily responsible for the view of rabbinic history, still held by many today, in which the creation of rabbinic texts—and of the Talmud most preeminently—is a less consequential byproduct of the more important (and assumed) phenomenon of rabbinic oral teaching and judgment which the Talmud purports to record.[39]

Further, following William Scott Green,[40] Jack N. Lightstone describes early rabbinic literature as not being "mimetic," that is, the documents "do not mimic the social worlds which produced them; they are tendentious, party documents whose purpose is *to inculcate certain perceptions of reality* rather than to mirror reality."[41] Both the nature of language, as well as the interest and agenda of each author, prohibit true "reality" in any text, but in the case of rabbinic literature this is even more conspicuous. Again, Lightstone notes how "[m]uch of early rabbinic literature is characterized by rendering the vast variety of what is said in relatively few structured ways of saying things."[42] Each document, vast as it may be, is still reined in by a comparatively limited stock of

rhetorical forms—rhetorical forms that are, furthermore, often intended to actually *limit* the appeal, plausibility, and even readability, of its content to only a small group of authorized members of the rabbinic circle.

Therefore to read early rabbinic literature as accurate repositories of reliable accounts of previous events should be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Yet in 1970, Robert Goldenberg put forth that the assumption residing at the heart of historical scholarship on the Babylonian Talmud is that "it has a history which can be traced and accounted for" at all.[43] While this statement may seem superficially trite, it in fact points both to the nature of early rabbinic documents, as well as to the assumptions behind the scholars' historical inquiries. Lightstone critiques that "the focus and *starting point*" of more traditional studies "is not the idiomatic character of the documents but the history of legal-literary processes of which the documents are simply the epiphenomenal effects."[44] It has been much more common since the Middle Ages to start from the *a priori* stance that indeed the Mishnah, Talmuds, et al, are able to more or less reliably recount for us the history which they claim to recount; leaving the historian to simply restate what it is assumed the texts already tell us anyway. Since most scholars of rabbinic texts have also been trained in Talmudic methods, often in *yeshiva* settings, they have understood the texts from an insider's point of view. Especially since the nineteenth century, historical scholars of rabbinic texts have had apologetic agendas, attempting to argue their rendering of Jewish history against those of other factions, driven by the "author's need to derive authoritative normative law."[45] Consequently, these types of scholars securely adhere to the knowledge that the content of these texts more or less reflected reality; the

texts are more or less interpreted as records of cultures, individuals, and events that the scholars understand in advance to be real.

Rather than looking to rabbinic texts as records of historical events, Jacob Neusner since the 1970s has preferred to define rabbinic Judaism based on the *character*, not the content of its documents. He defines rabbinic Judaism as the "Judaism of the Dual Torah," meaning that there is an implicit understanding within all rabbinic documents, no matter how seemingly disparate, that Torah comes in both written form (i.e., the written laws of the Torah in Scripture) and oral form (that is, passed down orally through generations of rabbinic sages). It is this idea in basic form that contributes to the defense of an evolutionary understanding of the origins of rabbinic Judaism.

Most scholars, even those who disagree with him, tend to concur at least on the point that Neusner initiated in the 1970s a new era for the critical historical study of early rabbinic documents.[46] Influenced initially by Christian scholars' methods of form and redaction (and, in some ways, canonical) criticism, Neusner's project for the last four decades has been an attempt, firstly, to understand and catalogue each rabbinic text as a literary whole (not simply as a convenient collection of rabbinic opinion, history or biography), secondly, to compare it historically (if even possible) to other rabbinic texts which are also understood as complete by design.[47] Neusner cannot simply trust that attributions to named sages are reliable based on a faith in the reliability and trustworthiness of his ancient rabbinic predecessors. Neusner shifts the focus from the question of whether sections within these documents are reliable as earlier sources, onto the issue of these (whole) documents' purpose within the world of those who composed and first embraced them.

Lightstone has expanded upon this basic methodology, influenced by New Testament scholars of the "socio-rhetorical" school (initiated especially by Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, and to be discussed below [I.4]), into two oeuvres, one on the Mishnah, and another on the Babylonian Talmud.[48] Lightstone finds the usual historical, form, redaction, and canonical schools of criticism insufficient given the nature of early rabbinic documents (as noted above), which are not the same as the Christian texts for which those approaches were elaborated.[49] He maintains that they, in fact, "widen the gap between the text and the reconstruction of the social context about which the document purports to speak."[50] He notes that the kind of texts that rabbinic texts are seems to bespeak close ties with institutionalization, as they represent an attempt to (re)define canon, and define the language by which one can engage with canon, thereby bounding authority and legitimacy according to their rules, which are represented in the limited and meaningful rhetoric of these documents.[51] This theory, he acknowledges, is based in anthropological concepts, especially that "basic, repeated patterns can function as means of communication within a particular socio-cultural context."[52]

Using a similar "socio-rhetorical" method, *the present work will attempt to reconstruct the particular exigency for the creation of Avot within the context of the early rabbinic movement.* I will argue that Avot is structured in such a way that it implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) promotes the idea of list-making as a hallmark of rabbinic activity. It inculcates in the reader a particular version of rabbinic history, certain ideas about rabbinic ideology, and a rudimentary introduction of mishnaic *Listenwissenschaft*, the name used by Neusner to characterize Mishnah's particular kind of list-oriented

language.[53] This will lead to an interpretation of Avot as a training manual or "handbook"[54] for newly recruited rabbinic disciples in the mid- to late-third century CE.

"Rabbinism" did not represent the entirety or even the majority of Judaism in its nascent period, nor can we demonstrate that the rabbis were the "ruling party" of the Jewish community of Palestine described by Segal,[55] although they did make certain claims to authority. Rather, Lightstone characterizes the rabbinic movement in its early period as a small "guild" or "college" (*collegium*) of scribal sages working as administrators under the patronage of the Palestinian Patriarch (*nasi*)—sages whom today we call "rabbis" due to the title used for college members within their extant texts.

The first of those texts, the Mishnah, presents itself as a collection of legal debates attributed to those sages, but the literary context of these cases is an imagined world in which the Temple-state still existed. External evidence still does not confirm the extent of rabbinic claims to authority in the third century; rabbis in their early context seem to have had little power over their communities, certainly not as much as the Mishnah claims or implies.[56] Lightstone reckons it is the expertise of administration under the Patriarch Judah I that is inculcated by the repetitive, mnemonic language of Mishnah; the "cases" of Mishnah serve more to inculcate administrative expertise than as a practical legal guidebook.[57] Lightstone concludes that Mishnah therefore represents a stage at which the role of the rabbi (literally, "my master") was becoming increasingly defined and institutionalized (more on Mishnah below, III.4). His identity as a "master" status-holder was becoming defined by his command of Mishnah, and the worldview and way of life that it propounds: "...Mishnah's pervasive rhetorical traits... model the requisite mastery of the guild."[58]

As we will see, the early rabbinic documents represent incremental efforts by the rabbinic guild towards greater or different kinds of institutionalization. Rabbis in the classical period—from the Mishnah through Avot and on to the Talmuds—articulated a growing awareness of their own leadership potential, they expressed an increasing interest in entrenching themselves in academic and legal institutions, and they created texts corresponding to these stages of social and institutional formation. In this context, *I will argue that Avot represents a post-mishnaic phase of rabbinic social formation, in which the institution of the school and the subject of Mishnah and Torah are focused upon in the interest of recruiting and training new disciples.*

I.2. Problem: The Received View on Avot

In response to the relative lack of critical studies of Avot in its original context, this study attempts to provide an alternative to the "received view" within the academic field of Jewish History, which is normally employed to interpret Avot as historical evidence. The received view is "the prescribed way of asking and answering questions in a given academic discipline."[59] Within the field of Judaic Studies, or the more specialized field of "Rabbinics," the received view on Avot is most often produced by what Robbins calls an "historical-critical discourse," which in the case of the study of early Christianity, "does not try to present a historical study: 'that is, it does not try to reconstruct the historical events which actually occurred' (Matera 1986: 5). The goal 'is to study each passion narrative in terms of the particular evangelists' theology' (Matera 1986: 6)."[60] This discourse, avers Robbins,

> ...evokes a conviction that there is really no better insight into... history than these texts that were chosen by reputable early Christians to represent the story of who they are.[61]

Donald Harmon Akenson maintains that the study of rabbinic literature is usually conducted by specialists. Noting that vernacular translations of rabbinic literature were not made available until relatively recently (excluding Avot), he states that,

> Mostly... translations into vernacular languages foundered not on direct opposition, but because the scholars who were expert enough to do the work had no interest in having the texts read widely: this from a mixture of intellectual preciousness, possessiveness, and a sense that translations were vaguely impure.[62]

Those who proscribe to this kind of "guild orthodoxy," as Edward Said suggested about Orientalist scholars, serve more to maintain their tradition of interpretation than to critically examine evidence.[63] This perspective when it comes to studying ancient Judaic texts is naturally more often conducted within Jewish tradition, or within Jewish institutional settings. It therefore tends not to answer the question, "What did this text mean to its intended audience?" Rather it attempts foremost to answer the question, "What does this text mean to *us*?"[64]

The received view is most often derived from a confessional perspective, by contemporary Jews who wish to find in their sacred texts meanings relevant in the context of their own time and culture; this is an expected and legitimate theological and philosophical exercise. But this approach can be more impressionistic, as it does not usually rely—nor does it intrinsically need to rely—on hypotheses based in explicit models of interpretation, or on questions testable by other interpreters.[65] The received view is self-contained and does not need to present any conceptual framework or methodology from which its conclusions are derived. The text is *a priori* trusted as more or less accurate because the tradition which regards it as meaningful must also regard it

as trustworthy. This is the basis for a problem that, based on comments by B. Mack, J. Lightstone has observed is typical in studies of early rabbinism. This is the so-called "Catch-22,"[66] the problem of circularity, wherein the literature under examination provides "the primary evidence *and theoretical paradigms* for the reconstruction of" whence a text originated.[67] It is from this perspective that we tend to be left with conclusions such as those that confirm pharisaic origins for the rabbis, or voluminous histories or biographies of the early rabbis culled from the early rabbinic texts.[68]

In the case of academic studies of Avot in particular, I have observed two principal problems that limit our understanding of the value of Avot as historical evidence. Firstly, most studies trust, in some way or another, the traditional views about Avot (or even Avot's own claims about itself) as being more or less historically reliable. And secondly, even these types of study are far less abundant and therefore less influential than the popular and omnipresent commentaries in which one is most likely to encounter those traditional views. When Avot's origins are investigated, it is most often trusted more or less as what it claims to be: records of the sayings of sages of the early rabbinic movement. As discussed above, rabbinic texts are often interpreted in this circular manner, trusting a document's claims, without corroboration, as more or less factual. But with Avot the problem of circularity is arguably even more pronounced than with the study of other rabbinic texts. This is because Avot itself is used within Judaism as the source for the myth of "Oral Torah" that justifies the received view. This view holds that rabbis and their legal interpretations are not novel, but rather participate in the creation of an orally handed-down "Torah" that is coequal with scriptural Torah. The contention of Avot 1:1, that the earliest rabbis received "Torah" from Sinai in generation

after generation of masters and disciples, is used to buttress this claim, or it is often simply assumed *a priori*. So with Avot it is especially the text itself that is seen as able to explicate itself. The procedure of inquiry is a "Catch 22" similar to that observed above regarding the study of rabbinic literature in general: Whence Avot? From "the rabbis." How do we know? The mythology of Oral Torah and rabbinic succession tells us so. How do we know that mythology? From Avot!

Those who subscribe to the received view therefore read the text as being able to explicate its own origins. This understanding of the text, moreover, serves as part of a larger depiction of Jewish history that is also based on trust of the topical programs of the texts from which scholars are working. These scholars are engaged in the charge of providing meaning to the present reader, by interpreting a text as a well-described example of a meaningful and identity-providing history. What the text says about itself is taken more or less at face value and, as Lightstone continues, traditional scholars' "analyses assume a context in which worthwhile scholarly debate continues about the details only."[69]

Yet while this situation may disconcert a critical historian, it is also an understandable cultural and religious phenomenon, arising predictably from the unique status of Avot within Judaism. It must not be underemphasized that Avot is quite popular within the Jewish tradition, among lay Jews, rabbis and scholars. Avot presents itself as a compilation of wisdom sayings of the earliest generations of rabbinic leaders and, over time, the document has gained a wide readership among Jews who look to those sayings for moral and ethical guidance. Consequently, most of Avot's readers do not encounter the text as a mishnaic tractate. Rather, for centuries, independently published

commentaries on Avot by noted rabbis or Jewish thinkers have become a standard for Judaic literature.[70] It has been remarked hyperbolically that for every rabbi there is a commentary on Avot. In fact Akenson notes that by the end of the nineteenth century, Avot had been translated into 78 modern languages[71]; while Sharvit observes that "we know of more than two hundred separate commentaries on Avot, which were written during the ages in various countries."[72] And more are published every decade. These commentaries do not alter the text itself, but add the subjective interpretations of the commentators, featuring them as prominently as (if not more prominently than) the text itself, usually in the form of extensive footnotes. The purpose of these commentaries is to explain the text to modern Jewish readers, to give the ancient text contemporary meaning.

Today one can find in a typical Judaica book or gift store Avot in a form suited for most any variety of Jew—from widely referenced commentaries by modern rabbis such as Philip Blackman[73] or Joseph Hertz[74]; to admired calligraphic artworks by the likes of Mordechai Rosenstein which visually depict sayings from Avot; to Artscroll's *Pirkei Avos: Illustrated Youth Edition*,[75] which, according to their online catalogue, is intended for children aged ten to twelve.[76] Such a shop will often be found to have a shelf or even display area devoted to Avot commentaries, leaving the multi-volume but esoteric editions of the Talmud (such as the Schottenstein, Soncino or Steinsaltz editions) on a neutral shelf at the back of the room, or even another room. Those Talmud editions are among the so-called *seforim* (literally "books"): abstruse, original-language, sacred texts understood to be the serious province of rabbis, scholars, and educated men. Avot, on the other hand, is a popular text.[77] While, for example, the Mishnah was only translated into English for the first time in 1933, Avot has been commented upon in both

Hebrew and vernacular for centuries.[78] Avot is also part of synagogue liturgy, the only complete mishnaic tractate found in the *Siddur* (including a sixth chapter added during the Middle Ages called *Kinyan Torah*); traditionally read from Passover to Rosh Hashanah in Askenazic Judaism, and until Sukkot in Sephardic, before evening Sabbath services. Avot therefore also functions in a ritual context, during which its meaning is annually contemplated at synagogue over the protracted period of many weeks.

Discussion of the historical happenstances which have led to Avot's preeminent place in popular Jewish consciousness would be a fascinating thesis in itself, but is beyond the scope of the present monograph. However, we can briefly note here what it is in the text itself that seems to attract so many Jews to it. As stated above, the text appears to record a series of wisdom sayings, essentially aphorisms, attributed within the document to some of the early rabbis. As also noted above, the lineage of these rabbis extends back to Moses at Sinai by means of consecutive generations of masters and disciples, and therefore Avot also has value as an apology for the theory of "Oral Torah," a purpose for which it has been used for centuries.[79] For rabbinic leaders, Avot provides a valuable tool for adding to and inculcating their own authority within the community. Yet, political considerations aside, Avot is simply a well-loved collection of wise, and often quite amusing, sayings by figures whom Jews traditionally regard as authorities: the founding rabbis—not the least important oh whom was the first rabbi according to tradition, *Moshe Rabbenu* ("Moses Our Rabbi," or, "Moses Our Master").

Rabbis of later generations, including those of today, who see themselves as direct descendants of that intellectual ancestry, participate in Avot and in the tradition it is seen to establish by writing commentaries. Avot presents the wisdom sayings of early rabbis,

which are understood to be legitimate parts of "Oral Torah," because they come from rabbis who are shown to have properly "received Torah" from (or in other words, were trained by) a rabbi of the previous generation. By adding a commentary on Avot to the canon, a rabbi, in a way, partakes in what he (I have yet to find a commentary on Avot written by a woman) understands Avot as communicating, which is the value and necessity of perpetuating the oral tradition. Therefore, for the authors of the commentaries, Avot's natural state is seen to be as a text that invites, and is even incomprehensible without, their commentary; while for their audiences, the commentaries provide meaning to a document that they understand as ancient and invaluable.

Yet this most familiar way which lay Jews as well as scholars are likely to access the text does not speak to the historicity of Avot. Those who prescribe to the received view understand the historical value of Avot to lie more in the history that it (or later tradition) overtly depicts, and less in the document's form as a cohesive composition by an authorship with a particular agenda. Avot claims to be a repository of sages' sayings during the formative rabbinic period, and so those who prescribe to the received view tend to view the document this way as well. This way of evaluating a document is expected and understandable amongst adherents of a religion, and should be expected in a pious commentary.

But all too commonly, the assumptions that are made within Avot commentaries are also exploited as the framework for what purport to be historical or critical studies. Let us take as an example the treatment of Avot by M.B. Lerner in one of the most recognized scholarly works on early rabbinism, *The Literature of the Sages, First Part:*

Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates, edited by Shmuel Safrai.[80] The following excerpted selections will demonstrate how Lerner evaluates Avot, with all emphases added (unless otherwise indicated) by this author to highlight statements to be regarded cautiously:

> Chapter one *is essentially an ancient document summarizing the Oral Tora* from Moses on Sinai through the biblical period, and the Second Commonwealth, extending from the "Men of the Great *Synagogue*"... until the beginning of the first century C.E....[81]

Lerner presumes that the basic claims of Avot are to be taken more or less at face value as fact. The first chapter of Avot claims to present an historically accurate chain of tradition; the only type of historical evidence that Lerner sees as possible in reading this chapter is that it records and communicates exactly what tradition claims it does: a presentation of the history of "Oral Tora" transmission. Moreover, in reading that supposed history, Lerner has no problem in quite anachronistically using terms like "Oral Tora," or "Synagogue"[82] in discussing phenomena more ancient than the first articulations of these later concepts. Furthermore, whether these phenomena were even existent or relevant to the evidence is not questioned; what matters to Lerner is that they are presently relevant.

Similarly, Lerner reads Avot 2:8-14—a narrative depicting Yohanan Ben Zakkai and his disciples—as an historical record of the "academy" of a rabbinic master and his disciples.

> It is interesting to note that in *the academy* of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, *the curriculum* apparently included philosophical investigations.[83]

We have no evidence other than the narratives of rabbinic documents that allows us to confirm the existence, let alone the character, of Yohanan ben Zakkai's "academy" or the

"academy" of any other rabbi of this period (except for, perhaps, R. Eliezer HaQappar; see I.1 above). But Lerner's *a priori* assumptions do not allow him to even try to investigate whether this could be historically verified. And even if the existence of such a school could be proven to exist from outside evidence, why should Avot be trusted as an accurate record of it? Lerner takes at face value that there *was* such an academy because adhering to the traditional view requires believing that this is so. Only a detail about the supposed "curriculum" of this supposed academy is an interesting enough point for Lerner to seemingly discover.

Finally, what is Avot's historical value? According to Lerner, Avot (or at least its first four chapters) is the historiography it claims to be:

> It may be concluded that the first four chapters of *Avot* [author's emphasis] *represent a complete chronological panorama of the mishnaic period... Tannaic chronology* is *more or less carefully* observed.[84]

Lerner's inquiry is based in the tradition that holds those terms to be real, and Avot is seen as a repository of records pertaining to and deriving from that supposed period. Avot is useful as historical evidence to Lerner only because he trusts it as a more or less accurate historical record from which, through form or redaction criticism, either strata of editing can be extracted, or the lives of actual "sages" can be reconstructed. All of these assumptions can be found at the basis of these few selected statements, as well as in several other statements not cited here. But these assumptions also permeate the discourse of the entire chapter, leading to conclusions that are mostly erudite reiterations of the topical content of the text, and of the text's traditions of interpretation.

Compare Lerner's 1987 study to, for example, Rabbi Joseph Hertz's 1945 commentary on Avot, clearly intended for the tractate's typically popular audience rather

than for the student of history. Hertz's is fairly representative of the countless modern, traditional Avot commentaries. One observes that the assumptions and conclusions of both this popular volume and the academic inquiry conducted by Lerner are almost identical. Observe the following examples, again with emphases added:

> ...this tractate [of the Mishnah] is almost entirely concerned with *moral* conduct. It consists... of the favourite maxims... of some sixty *Rabbis*, extending over a period... *from 300 B.C.E. to 200 of the common era*.[85]

> [1:1-15 is] *a chronological record of the origin and transmission of the Oral Tradition* in Judaism, from the oldest Rabbinic authorities down to Hillel and Shammai.[86]

> [The "Great Assembly,"] or, "Great *Synagogue*". [*sic*] The Prophets, *Scribes, Sages and Teachers* who continued the spiritual regeneration of Israel that was begun by Ezra... *The main facts concerning the Great Assembly* are unassailable by sober historical criticism.[87]

Firstly, Hertz, a modern rabbi, is clearly concerned with what he considers to be historical fact, but primarily he is concerned with "morals," which his rather subjective (though no more or less subjective than an average pious commentary on Avot) interpretations of most any *mishnah*[88] can indicate. His historical findings are therefore founded more on assumption or trust in tradition than based in historical evidence. For instance, to him Avot accurately records sayings of rabbinic sages over a 500-year period. The date 200 CE is the rough date of the composition (or as tradition might put it, the "redaction") of the Mishnah, of which Hertz considers Avot to be a part. Avot cannot be conceived of as a creative product, but only as an accurate record of history composed by individuals who are trustworthy to keep that record. Hertz is not very interested in evidence, though, despite statements such as, "the main facts concerning the Great Assembly are unassailable by sober historical criticism."[89] Of course such claims about an historical phenomenon are praiseworthy to an historian, if the evidence does not allow

anything more. However, Hertz relies on ideas current to scholarship of his period, in which rabbinic documents were relied upon and trusted as historical records. He writes within "a context in which worthwhile scholarly debate continues about the details only."[90] Hertz is a participant in modern Judaism, and thus a (fairly understandable) participant in unreflectively passing on the received view as historical fact. Hertz's primary goal is to demonstrate how Avot has historically been, and therefore can be, applied by Jewish people as an ethical guide to an ideal, righteous society. This means that, for Hertz, implicit trust in the traditional, "historical" views about Avot are acceptable since his goals are to communicate morals within that tradition to fellow Jews.

However, since both Lerner's assumptions and conclusions do seem to match with Hertz's so closely, cannot the tacit goal of the former be said to at least be closer to what would usually be considered theology rather than history writing? Both approaches to Avot share the common goal of contributing to contemporary Jewish identity. Lerner simply provides a "scholarly refinement"[91] of the received view on Avot, and little more; and the same can be said of so many well-intentioned historical studies of the document.

We can deduce by surveying the secondary literature on early rabbinic texts, that, perhaps because Avot is so well known, scholars seem to think that detailed analysis of Avot is unnecessary. The Mishnah or Talmuds are scholars' books within Judaism, and so are more commonly studied by scholars when social or historical inquiry is attempted at all. It would seem that most scholars of early rabbinic Judaism are less interested in truly investigating the origins of Avot itself. Avot is assumed to be what it says it is: a more or less reliable record of early rabbinic historical information. Consequently, one of the most common methods when Avot is used as historical evidence is to sidestep serious

consideration of the whole document in favour of parsing it, often with little reasoning or explicit methodology, into what the interpreter deems to be the document's earlier sources.

This tendency plays out in a paper presented by Avot scholar Alon Goshen-Gottestein[92] at the AAR-SBL Annual Meeting in Toronto, 2002. Again, the title is telling: "The *Earliest Core* of Avot: Ideological Battles in the Shadow of Historical Structures" (emphasis added).[93] The article, regardless of its specific thesis, ably demonstrates the assumptions that lay behind the study as a whole. As the thesis statement avers, "*In approaching* Mishna Avot we recognize several independent redactional units" (emphasis added). The existence and primacy of "units"—at the expense of analyzing Avot as a whole document—and the concomitant analysis of them is not even questioned at the outset. It is not the search for earlier sources, strata, units, or "cores" in itself that is flawed, since all texts do come from some earlier version or versions (whether oral or written). My point, rather, is that the search for these earlier versions tends to take precedence in the field of scholarship on Avot, mostly ignoring the fact of the completed document.

Avot is most often seen by those who identify themselves as historians as a repository of earlier sources, because that is what the document claims to be: a record of the sayings of the earliest rabbinic sages. To doubt this would put into doubt the assumed but unverified existence of some supposed "Tannaitic" (or even "Pharisaic" and earlier) stages of nascent rabbinism that the scholars who normally read Avot understand it to be speaking about. Because of the interest on the part of Avot's usual readership in verifying the cogency of Avot's traditional interpretations, the question of the document's own

historical origins—i.e., as a final and creative product—is seen as more trifling (possibly even threatening) and remains widely ignored. For a field of scholarship to pursue hypothetical sources, while the evidence of the final text itself is taken as an assumed given, seems perplexing; but it is the influence of the received view, which claims to account for the historical meaning of Avot, that explains it. The trust that Avot is indeed a slowly redacted collection of rabbinic sayings leads the traditional scholars who most frequently study Avot to therefore look to it for historical sources in the form of strata or layers of composition. Goshen-Gottstein remarked to me after his presentation that he looks at Avot first as a repository of sources instead of as a comprehensive document because his work is that of an "archaeologist of texts."[94] His instinct is to forego analysis of Avot as we have it because he finds the idea that Avot, which presents itself as literarily diverse, must therefore be simply a series of literary strata, of "units." And this may well be so. But, put plainly, this ignores the evidence with which we are presented: we do have Avot as a whole text. In contradiction to this, his further analogy, that Avot as we have it is like an unexcavated *tel*, demonstrates the general historical bias against examining Avot: it is assumed that Avot as we have it is comparable to a pile of dirt, while the treasures lay underneath—quickly getting past that top layer is assumed to be an implicit necessity. This, I maintain, does violence to the text.

Understanding Avot as a collection of redacted sources or strata can be detrimental to the study of Avot as a whole document. This is because any theory about the origins of Avot in its completed form can be—and often is—immediately dismissed, since any statement in Avot can be viewed as either an earlier source or a later interpolation. That Avot was "authored" by someone or by a group with agenda is

sometimes seen as an indemonstrable, if not simply ludicrous, claim, since Avot's "redactors" can be trusted to have only presented Avot as exactly what it claims to be: a collection of some of the sayings of the earliest generations of rabbis. Such a position is not based on criticism or investigation, but on trust, on assumptions, and on an interest in confirming the foundations of that trust and of those assumptions. Therefore the tendency to avoid studying Avot as a whole document is often a result of the influence of the received view on Avot scholarship.

The discussion about the historical meaning of Avot is too commonly held on the terms of asking, "How accurate is this record of history," rather than what I will argue, and attempt to demonstrate, is the primary and heretofore under-examined question: "By and for whom would this document, which *claims* to record a history, have been appropriate?"[95] No balance yet exists between the dominant form of historically oriented scholarship of Avot—that is, of its supposed sources and strata—and the comparatively deficient amount of critical examinations of the entirety of the text as legitimate evidence for Avot's own origins.

I.3. Critical Studies of Avot

Instead of an overwhelming critical alternative or response to the ubiquity of the received view in Avot scholarship, most of the few critical studies of Avot still do not tend to treat the text as a document that can tell us important information about those responsible for its creation. While critical scholars have spent the last four decades making some headway in contributing to our understanding of other major rabbinic texts, and of the early rabbinic movement, scholarship on Avot in this vein has been far less

substantial. This, of course, might be excused given that it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that Jacob Neusner's critical reorientation began a new stage of the debate[96]; these scholars simply have not yet gotten around much to Avot.

Yet however understandable this situation may be, we are nevertheless left with conclusions that are brief and, one can sense, less in-depth than are possible about the more distinct setting for Avot's composition. When Avot is discussed by critical scholars, it is often in a rather perfunctory manner, within the context of works on broader historical topics. Here Avot is usually regarded, fairly but often too broadly, as an example of intellectual articulation of the early rabbis, a document created and intended to apologetically argue for the legitimacy of the rabbis by connecting them and their teachings to revealed Torah. But even then, it is usually only the first two chapters of Avot that are examined as reflections of any authorship or audience; it is those chapters that most clearly emphasize the theme of the "chain of tradition" (from Sinai to the rabbis).[97] The relative superficiality, as well as the scarcity, of critical treatments of a document arguably better known than either the Mishnah or the Talmuds presents a substantial problem if one wishes to refer to secondary literature on Avot's origins. Although reference will be made to several contemporary and modern studies of Avot throughout the remainder of this monograph, I will now present a brief and illustrative discussion of two scholars of Avot who represent the early phase of critical study of Rabbinic documents in the 1970s and 1980s, Jacob Neusner and Anthony J. Saldarini. While these and other critical studies will be influential on the discussion below, they also approach Avot from perspectives that seem to limit our possible understanding of the agenda of those responsible for the creation of the text.

I.3.a. Jacob Neusner

Jacob Neusner has treated Avot significantly in several of his hundreds of books, including *Torah From Our Sages: Pirke Avot. A New American Translation and Explanation*;[98] "Abot: From the Torah to Torah," in *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism*;[99] *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*;[100] and *Rabbinic Judaism: Structure and System.*[101] Most of these works touch on Avot in order to contribute to broader discussions of other topics. All the same, since Neusner is at the fore of critical scholarship on rabbinic literature he can provide a prime example of the current standard for understanding Avot as a whole document. However, his insight into Avot's social or historical origins is still relatively indistinct.

Neusner examines the formal structure of Avot in one of his many introductory volumes to Rabbinic Judaism, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*. This work represents a more basic restatement of his findings as presented in his earlier works. Neusner's approach is brilliant in its simplicity, and is also regularly ignored (or even derided) by many scholars of early rabbinism.[102] He begins by analyzing the rhetorical structure of the argument of any given early rabbinic document—including Avot. He then illustrates its "logic of coherent discourse," finally summarizing its "topical program." He notes that the rhetoric of Avot is essentially "aphoristic",[103] presenting wisdom sayings in the form of a list. The logic derives from the self-evident legitimacy of a list of authorities, as the topical program is simply wisdom or ethics—wisdom sayings associated with each other only by virtue of their place within the list.[104] Furthermore, based on his analysis Neusner also deduces an historical judgment:

> Tractate Abot is... a handbook of wise sayings for... disciples of sages, especially those involved in administration of the law."[105]

This conclusion, though judiciously based on the contours of the document itself, assumes much. What "law?" How is it "administered?" Who were these "disciples?" Neusner implies the presence of significant social and institutional relationships within the early rabbinic movement by using these terms, but his conclusion is quite vague, especially when compared to how careful Neusner is in analyzing the character of the document itself.

Even though he does not devote as much space to discussing Avot in his overall body of work as he does to discussing other documents such as the Mishnah, the Talmuds, or Midrashic literature, Neusner better than most scholars actually attempts to answer the question, "*What* is Avot?" Or in other words, "How is Avot—*as we have it*—actually constructed?" Neusner does not simply assume that we understand what Avot is or how it was constructed or understood in its original context, nor does he even discuss the matter of hypothetical earlier strata. His focus is on the composition of a known document rather than on the hypothetical compilation and redaction of supposed earlier sources.

However, Neusner has barely attempted to answer the question, "*Whence* Avot?" Or in other words, "For whom, by whom, where and when would this document have been composed?" Neusner's first work to focus on Avot alone did not sufficiently succeed in addressing the issue of Avot's socio-historical context. In 1983, after about a decade of championing a revolution of form and redaction criticism in the study of rabbinic texts, Neusner, a respected scholar of Judaic Studies as well as a rabbi, did what respected Torah scholars and rabbis seem implicitly to be expected to do: he published a commentary on Avot, *Torah From Our Sages: Pirke Avot. A New American Translation*

and Explanation.[106] This book is not only structured roughly as a traditional commentary (that is, the text is read and explicated more or less concurrently), but is also clearly directed not to a more scholarly audience, as his later *Introduction* would be, but to a popular one. As he states in his prologue,

> Who am I? And who do I imagine you to be? I am a teacher who writes in America, for North American Jews and for other Jews who read our American language. I imagine that you are a Jew, and that your native language is English... [Avot] addresses a long-ago time and place. Ours is a work of making this mode of address intelligible to ourselves.[107]

As with all other commentaries on Avot, historical fact serves Neusner in the end to render modern experience meaningful. And even though he uses his characteristically keen critical perspective in deciding what constitutes relevant historical fact, Neusner's ultimate aim, as even the subtitle of the commentary suggests ("A *New American* Translation and Explanation"), is not historical research but ethical guidance.

Here again, Neusner only superficially conjectures about Avot's origins. Though he takes the rhetoric of the document seriously, when it comes to contextualizing that rhetoric it does little more than ask leading questions. Neusner's prudence tells him that not much more than this can be done, at least for a lay audience. But he does state, "[a]t the outset, let us ask ourselves the necessary questions of authorship and context: Who wrote this book? How did it reach us?"[108] He responds by asserting that, "[t]he simple fact is that Pirke Avot does not contain the answers to these questions... We simply do not know anything about how things were formulated and placed into circulation."[109]

When characterizing those whom he thinks composed Avot, Neusner provides little more than descriptions of the rhetoric itself. For example, he states that "the framers [of Avot] did not want to give us history or biography. They composed Avot for some

other purpose."[110] In other words, if the document has or has not such and such a characteristic, then the authors of Avot are people who did or did not want such and such a characteristic to be present in their composition. Thus in his epilogue[111] he does not hypothesize about their identity as much as he points to where comparisons might be made by the reader of the commentary, in the form of clichéd descriptions of Greco-Roman forms of Judaism such as the "Essenes,"[112] "Early Christianity,"[113] or "the Pharisees,"[114] as they might be found in any introductory textbook on ancient Judaism. Most of this commentary is in fact just that: an exploratory commentary, not an argument about Avot or its authors. But his reconstruction of Avot's authorship seems vague, especially given Neusner's acknowledgment that Avot's rhetoric,

> ...shows that everything was put together in an artful way, with close attention to questions of form. Accumulations of wise sayings made over a long period of centuries do not magically fall into neat arrangements by threes, fives, twos, fours, sevens and the like... the sayings in these chapters do form patterns...[115]

And this, as we will see, is the essential premise from which I will begin my argument below: *Avot's "patterns" bespeak an authorship with purpose.*

As a form, redaction, and rhetorical critic, Neusner regards the literary structures of Avot, which are so often ignored in traditional commentaries, as indicators of social meaning. However, his conclusions regarding for whom, where, why, when, and by whom this text was written are only slightly vaguer than those in his 1994 *Introduction*. Neusner's work on Avot to date provides us with brilliant and innovative analyses of Avot's rhetoric, but relatively little social or historical interpretation of that rhetoric. I aim to demonstrate below (II-III) that Avot's internal rhetorical data can yield more specific information about the exigency for Avot's creation than Neusner has allowed.

I.3.b. Anthony J. Saldarini

Anthony J. Saldarini's *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan*[116] represents one of the more noted studies that have attempted any serious social or historical contextualization of Avot. The strength of Saldarini's study is its comparative approach, attempting to place Avot within not only the Judaic world of its time, but also within the context of the Greco-Roman world as a whole. He analyzes the literary features of Avot and tries to relate the text both in form and function to similar Greco-Roman literature. Further, he contextualizes Avot through his comparisons, attempting to hypothesize about a reasonable social setting for it. For example, since Avot can be paralleled to a certain extent with lists of founders of philosophical schools, a school setting is hypothesized for Avot as well. Saldarini analyzes, in more detail than is common, aspects of Avot such as its structure, its "genre and purpose," its "themes," and its "historical setting." His analyses, comparisons, and some of his social conclusions will prove to be valuable references throughout the present study.[117]

However, these conclusions, while useful, are still more of a literary than an historical nature; Saldarini's historical conclusions are based on a shaky argument in which strata of composition are seen to contribute to the formation of Avot. Saldarini's comparative work appears early in the book, and serves to contribute to the overall argument only insofar as it provides a background for the analysis that follows it. The study's historical contextualization of Avot takes place not as a result of a literary analysis of Avot; moreover, he uses Avot ultimately as a tool to understand another, related text, *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* ("The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan"; ARN).

When he does provide historical conclusions that derive from his analyses of Avot, they are problematic because they are coloured by dubious theoretical and methodological assumptions. Saldarini argues,

> ...that PA [Avot] and the [two] versions of ARN [Avot de Rabbi Nathan] resulted from a long process of transmission... Consequently, PA and ARN developed within a common tradition to reach different and parallel forms.[118]

While the above-mentioned comparisons of Avot with other ancient works are useful, they do not represent the greater part or the principal focus of the study as a whole. Instead, the subject is the supposed sources and redaction processes of a conjectural oral phenomenon. This despite the appearance (and also the consensus) that ARN is a kind of *midrash* (commentary) on Avot. Saldarini assumes from the outset that an oral tradition exists and therefore performs scholarly gymnastics with assumed earlier sources and strata to prove that the sources and strata he imagines really must have existed. Moreover, even though he recognizes the social and cultural influences upon a given document, he effectively regards Avot as evidence of a compilation of more historically valuable sources. This approach is, as we have seen, more typical of "historical-critical discourse." But whatever Saldarini's motivation or affiliation, the result is the same circularity. Consequently, though some of his more basic historical conclusions are essentially sound—especially, as we will see, the "school setting" for Avot—Saldarini's general hypothesis will be ignored here.

The dominant paradigm for understanding Avot as historical evidence is still derived from traditional understandings of "early rabbinism"—for which it is assumed Avot is best understood as a source of earlier literary strata—rather than from fragmented reconstructions of the group that produced Avot—as we have it—in a particular place

and time. While Neusner's strength lies in his rhetorical analyses of Avot, he still has not been able to connect that rhetoric to a social or historical context. Saldarini, on the other hand, presents us with useful references to social phenomena that seem to be indicated by Avot's language; but he relies much more heavily on source criticism, and in so doing barely takes into account the ways in which Avot as a completed document (and apart from ARN) functioned and was understood within the Greco-Roman world.

I.4. Methodology and Conceptual Framework: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation

It is better at the outset to see a text as evidence of socio-cultural communication, rather than as a mere repository of conveniently preserved earlier sources. To be able to understand the nature of a document's sources one must *first* attempt to understand the perspective and situation of those who put those sources together—from an allusion to a previous text to a direct insertion from one—into the document with which we are now familiar. From this perspective, it is not as important whether or not Avot contains sources; we can concede that no text is created *ex nihilo*. Rather, it is important first that the sum of the sources is Avot, and that Avot as it was designed contains meaning that was comprehensible within and appropriate to a particular social context. Avot has been understood to be historically useful evidence because it has been seen as a relatively reliable list of the early sages and their wisdom sayings, trusted as a more or less factual record of rabbinic origins, and not as the product of particular people with their own persuasive agenda (unless sometimes discussing the agenda of a "unit's" author). This perspective leads to a focus on the discrimination of its earlier sources. Alternately, Avot is mostly used as a sort of ethical handbook, which is legitimated by the presumed

historical provenance of the named rabbis' wisdom sayings. But even if one is used to thinking of Avot as a repository of the ethical sayings of particular rabbis, neither ethics nor source materials are valued without the background of a social context to aid in determining which sayings are worthy of inclusion in a text. Moreover, those sources are (re)fashioned according to the implicit rules of authoritative and persuasive language of the culture that used them. Only once Avot's rhetorical context is established from evidence internal to the document can we begin to investigate its social origins.

Understanding the mode of rhetoric employed by a document represents a key to reconstructing that document's implied authorship and intended audience. Rhetoric, or argumentation, is made up of "discursive techniques allowing us to induce or to increase the mind's adherence to the thesis presented for its assent."[119] Moreover, "it is in terms of an audience that an argumentation develops..."[120]; hence, "a mode of intellectual discourse is a particular mode of *social* production."[121] Avot, like any other document, is the creative "artifact"[122] of a particular culture, for which its rhetoric was self-evidently authoritative, appropriate, and persuasive. Not only are the so-called wisdom sayings of Avot particular to a kind of culture, but the style that is used to present those sayings is also meant as an appropriate response to and means to affect a social situation through rhetoric.

In examining Avot's rhetoric, I mean to examine the way that it organizes and structures what we will see are but a few related topics. *Those structures, I will argue below, function to implicitly communicate to an intended audience the notion that members of the rabbinic guild use list-like or enumerated language, as well to begin to inculcate the particular guild expertise of list-making rhetoric into that audience.* I must

therefore demonstrate that rather than being a random collection of historical sources, Avot is a sustained and cohesive document. To demonstrate this, regardless of the ostensibly disparate literary styles apparent within the whole of Avot, depends on demonstrating that certain rhetorical strategies, forms, and structures are both apparent and functional throughout the whole text. In other words, if rhetorical unity can be demonstrated, then one can assume that those who composed Avot in a cohesive fashion chose a style of language perceived to be authoritative, efficacious, and persuasive within a particular context, and given a particular rhetorical exigency. Consequently, I can hypothesize about the kind of culture and social situation for which that form of communication was suited. This is fundamentally what I mean by a "socio-rhetorical" approach, which "integrates the ways people use language with the ways they live in the world."[123] This methodology asserts that reconstructing an ancient document's social or historical context depends first upon determining its *rhetorical* context.

In its short history, the socio-rhetorical approach has existed in comparable but varying forms in the works of several authors. Socio-rhetorical criticism and interpretation was conceived in the late 1980s and early 1990s by biblical scholars whose aim was to better understand the texts that they read in light of the increasingly apparent inadequacy of form, redaction, or even pure rhetorical criticism. A long-recognized truism at the basis of the academic study of religion is that the object of study is not an abstraction called "religion" (as in, possibly, the philosophy of religion) or a divinity (as in theology), but human beings that are in some way "religious." But especially by the 1980s, one could readily perceive the influence of social-scientists upon a new generation of students of ancient religious texts and societies "with a special commitment to

overcoming ethnocentrism and anachronism."[124] Among these were the pioneers of socio-rhetorical criticism; foremost among whom were rhetorical New Testament interpreters Vernon Robbins and Burton Mack, the latter having written several socio-rhetorical studies of early Christian literature[125] and the former having written two similar introductory handbooks on his version of the socio-rhetorical method.[126] Robbins affirms that,

> Underlying the [socio-rhetorical] method is a presupposition that words themselves work in very complicated ways to communicate meanings that we only partially understand... [and] that meanings themselves have their meanings by their relation to other meanings... [P]henomena reside in texts in a manner that makes them programmatically and systematically analyzable...[127]

Texts are not historically valuable only (or even possibly at all in many cases) as a narrative whose details could be argued endlessly with disregard for the way that texts tend to function in the cultures from which they themselves derived. These scholars, and I, regard the cultural understanding of ancient groups to be a worthwhile historical endeavor, and the relevance of early rabbinic texts to be principally as evidence of the implicit communication of the worldviews and ways of life of those groups. The socio-rhetorical approach understands a text as a purposeful choice and arrangement of language; a text first and foremost represents an argument that is persuasive within a particular, intended social context.

Whether consciously or not, any approach will focus on limited aspects of Avot at the expense of others. But to focus especially on Avot's rhetoric is particularly justifiable, because to assume that Avot is only a record of what it claims to record, and not a sustained argument by a particular author or authors in a particular situation, is a faulty historical premise:

> [I]n recent years historians have come to view what people believed happened in the past as more casually important in determining events and of more value in explaining them, than what "really" happened, whatever that may have been. Further, the extent and manner to which people in authority (religious or civil) have controlled, or at least influenced strongly, what the demos thinks happened in the past is of more explanatory salience than the parsing of details about the actual past. It is nice if historians can get the original story straight (and pursuing the oldest versions of events usually tends to be more fun), but this usually is of secondary importance.[128]

This statement is representative of the contemporary "minimalist" school of biblical interpretation, which has also influenced the present monograph. This school of interpretation regards biblical documents not as repositories of historical sources or events (unless those events can be externally corroborated), but instead or primarily as purposeful historiographies, each an attempt by an authorship with agenda to portray history in particular ways for a particular intended audience. Marc Zvi Brettler applies such an approach to the Hebrew Scriptures, an approach he identifies as part of "the new biblical historiography."[129] In his *Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, Brettler succinctly introduces his method: "In this book, I will explore a selection of biblical texts in an attempt to discover how the texts might have functioned in antiquity. I will study the texts themselves rather than the events which lie behind them."[130] Moreover, Luther H. Martin, focusing on the New Testament, encapsulates the critique at the heart of the minimalistic historical interpretation of biblical texts:

> The study of Christian origins should in no way differ from the study of anything past and, yet, historical studies of Christianity continue to "privilege" the data with imagined origins. In contrast to such imaginative fictions, critical historiography is based on human events presumed actually to have occurred... Since the earliest historical evidence for "Christian" groups is socio-cultural, i.e., textual, might these texts be better understood historically as themselves positive data for a plurality of Christian social formations rather than as historiographical documents containing positivistic data about Christian origins?[131]

Following Burton L. Mack, the creation of "myth" is concurrent with stages of social formation, since the function of a myth is to embody and implicitly argue for the legitimacy of the worldview and way of life of those for whom the myth is intended. Mack has attempted to interpret Q (*Quelle*, German for "source")—the hypothetical missing source for the gospels of Luke and Matthew—in this way.[132] He saw in Q stages in composition—strata—each of which he argued represented a phase in the formation of the group of "Christians" responsible for Q's creation. He could therefore extract social information about the group over various periods of its expansion based on the style of language and the thematic foci demonstrated in each layer.

I will not, however, use this exact approach with Avot, contrary to the more common tendency to view Avot as a series of sources. I do not deny that Avot is composed of earlier sources, nor do I deny that, if it is, then those sources may reflect stages of social formation. What I do argue, and will attempt to demonstrate, is that notwithstanding these *likely* stages of composition, Avot as we have it represents an argument, that is, rhetoric, unified by few and consistent styles of expression and persuasion, generally represented by lists or list-like forms. The creative choice to arrange the document's content in their final forms represents historical evidence. This is because any language is indeed only authoritatively self-evident, meaningful, legitimate, and persuasive in particular social contexts. Therefore Avot, as we have it, represents evidence of a stage (even if not the earliest stage) of the social formation of the rabbinic guild, a stage embodied by the rhetoric which unifies Avot into one coherent document. It is therefore appropriate to interpret Avot first (and here) as a complete rhetorical product rather than as a repository of sources; the existence of those sources is imagined, the

existence of Avot is not. So I rephrase the question about Avot's historical origins, from the more ubiquitous "Whence the earliest strata of Avot?" or "How much of Avot's content is verifiable?" to "Whence Avot itself?"

One cannot attempt to understand the intended meaning of Avot if one denies that language is tied to a particular socio-cultural milieu. As Lightstone states, "to understand [a] text as rhetoric allows us to re-establish the link between text and social context on completely different grounds than those adopted by" the types of scholars who normally study Avot.[133] Jacob Neusner has attempted to answer the question, "What is Avot?" He takes seriously and then analyzes the main rhetorical strategies of the document. But, still, he and a few others have only barely begun to answer the question, "Whence Avot itself?" One could partially reconstruct such a culture and social situation with reasonable probability by correlating it with relevant contemporaneous external evidence. This would not be a situation described from the topics of the text itself or from later traditional interpretations, but reconstructed, however fragmentarily, based on critical evaluation of available evidence. In this case, our primary evidence, our data, is rhetorical.

I.5. Anticipation of Conclusions, Procedure and Structure

Hence I intend with this monograph to take initial steps towards *contextualizing within the ancient Greco-Roman world the implied culture and social situation evinced by the rhetoric of Avot.* My argument will proceed as follows. In chapter II, I begin by analyzing what I will demonstrate is the overarching structure that guides the content of Avot, the use of lists and list-like rhetoric. It will be observed that Avot uses two basic

types of listing rhetoric, its listing of sages (II.2.a), and lists most often attributed to the sages within that first list (II.2.b); each will be analyzed in isolation, and then understood together (II.3).

Chapter III will be devoted to reconstructing an original social context for Avot's rhetoric. First, Avot's topical content will be examined in order to aid in understanding the argument put forth by Avot's authorship (III.1). Second, I will submit that Avot's rhetoric betrays a recruitment and training function within the early rabbinic movement (III.2), which, third, becomes more apparent when Avot is compared with anthropological models for social and institutional transition (III.3). Fourth, Avot will be seen to "play" with both Mishnah-like rhetorical conventions, and wisdom-like rhetorical conventions (III.4, III.5). Since each text was appropriate to different types of group (the "guild" and the "school" respectively), we will also evaluate Avot's possible usefulness within each group type (III.4.a, III.5.a). It will be concluded that Avot much more easily fits within a Greco-Roman "school" context, not only because of its heavy use of wisdom rhetoric (which is a school genre), but also because Avot's progressive rhetorical structure seems to mirror a social transition from a new recruit to the movement, to a disciple studying within a rabbinic school (III.6). Therefore the aim of the following is not to loosely associate Avot with some nebulous rabbinic "school," but rather to demonstrate, given the contours of the document's own structure, why and how Avot was intended to function within an early rabbinic educational context.

II. RHETORICAL ANALYSIS: LISTING IN AVOT

Modern scholarship has produced some rather broad or even conflicting statements about any basic or overarching structure in Avot. Most observers note Avot's use of numbers and enumerating structures, its divergence from typical mishnaic language, its use of wisdom techniques, and its reliance on attributing its content, for the most part, to mishnaic sages. In R. Travers Herford's 1945 commentary, which made use of techniques of textual analysis common to Christian theologians of the time, the statement is made about Avot as a whole that it is "[a collection of] a number of sayings, some by named teachers, others anonymous, with no strict adherence, as it would seem, to any one method or any single point of view..."[134] Yet by 1983, Neusner countered this interpretation, stating that, "...the labor of selecting and arranging [Avot's] sayings was not cumulative, carried on over a long time... everything was put together in an artful way with close attention to questions of form."[135] More recently (2004), Amram D. Tropper has argued that Avot does indeed show fairly consistent usage of several common Greco-Roman rhetorical formulae, interspersed throughout the document.[136] But it would seem that the more analysis is conducted, the more difficult it is to characterize any *overarching* literary or rhetorical strategies used in creating Avot.

I contend that the most basic statement that could be made about Avot is that, principally, it lists, and it does so persistently and progressively. Saldarini notes that

> Lists are used in many cultures to catalogue, present, and preserve matters of importance and interest. Continuity, authority and education demand the construction of lists, such as the alphabet, numbers, lists of the Presidents of the USA and the top forty popular recordings.[137]

He continues, noting of Avot that its "chain of tradition is *a list* which is not itself reported in the name of any sage... rather it is stated as a fundamental and obvious fact."[138]

Further, Avot's latter portion "consist[s] mostly of enumerations, that is, *lists* of items which begin with an interpretive remark stating the number of items in the list and describing the nature of those items."[139] In his 1983 commentary, Neusner observed that Avot's fifth and final chapter presents us with "a sequence of lists of things, each in its proper classification, all carefully counted."[140] My analysis of Avot below will follow Neusner's observation, but it will go further to show that listing rhetoric in Avot is not only limited to chapter five or even to this type of list-making. Herbert Danby interpreted chapter five as something anomalous in Avot:

> The fifth chapter [of Avot] differs in form. Excepting the last four paragraphs the sayings are anonymous and classified in groups in which various numbers, such as ten, seven, or four, are used as a linking device.[141]

But for Avot's authors counting and listing are more than just a "linking device," they also constitute a kind of expertise that Avot's final chapter is designed to instill in the reader. Neusner observes that

> [The sages] execute [in chapter five] a kind of natural philosophy of the meaning of Israel's life. This work of arrangement and classification shows the orderliness which lies behind the diverse facets of Torah and of life itself. The sages thus impart the experience of completeness and order. They make sense of all that has gone before by showing the kinds of things that exist, how these may be added up and easily learned. This process of analysis shows the underlying pattern and demonstrates that we can, after all, master and make sense of everything there is to be known, all creation, the whole Torah.[142]

It will be my argument that Avot 5 is not an autonomous or anomalous unit in Avot, but rather that the arrangement and constitution of Avot's units was intended purposefully to lead into chapter five's listing exercises. Avot begins in its first *mishnah* by encouraging

the notion that sages are legitimate because of their "reception" of "Torah." But it also begins in the same *mishnah* by then introducing the notion that such sages speak in an enumerating, cataloguing or list-like manner. It is my contention that *the entirety of Avot is designed to move the reader progressively from an implied argument about the legitimacy of the rabbinic movement, into increasingly complex and finally explicit exercises in listing language*, which Avot models as the ideal type of speech and activity for a rabbinic master.

Robbins avers that the "[s]tudy of argumentative texture [in texts] investigates multiple kinds of inner reasoning in...discourse," of which there are two basic types, "logical" and "qualitative."[143] A logical argument "presents assertions and supports them with reasons, clarifies them through opposites and contraries, and possibly presents short counterarguments."[144] Avot as a whole does not appear to represent logical argumentation (although individual *mishnayot* in Avot do), as it does not uphold one or even a few explicit arguments. Avot is made up of "didactic lessons" which "give instruction. They do not attempt to persuade."[145] Neusner further observes that "Avot deals with no single topic, and... [it] contains no proposition that is argued in detail."[146]

Avot is, instead, a better example of qualitative reasoning, which, as defined by Robbins,

> ...occurs when the quality of the images and descriptions encourages the reader to accept the portrayal as true and real. This occurs when analogies, examples, and citations of ancient testimony function in a persuasive manner.[147]

In qualitative reasoning, "[w]hen new attributes and new titles emerge in the [narrative]... the narrative acquires qualitative *progressive form*.. [T]he reader

recognizes the appropriateness of the progression only after the events have occurred."[148] Finally, Robbins also remarks that "[p]rogression emerges out of *repetition*"[149]:

> When the same word occurs at least twice in a text, the result is repetition. Multiple occurrences of many different kinds of grammatical, syntactical, verbal, or topical phenomena may produce repetitive texture.[150]

Avot tries to persuade its audience using modes of rhetoric that form the framework of the document,[151] *which I argue follow a progressive pattern determined by its repetitive use of different types of listing rhetoric.*

Listing rhetoric is the most frequently repeated form in Avot. Avot begins as a list of the names of "rabbis," or "sages," and presents a saying or sayings attributed to each individual before moving onto the next individual in the list. Moreover, inside this structure, Avot employs rhetorical formulae as well as explicit topical foci that serve to actually promote the creating and enumeration of lists as a meaningful endeavor. Finally, while Avot begins as an implied list of rabbis, it ends as a series of enumerated lists that do not rely on their entrenchment in the list of rabbis at all. It is Avot's progressively structured rhetorics of listing that will be isolated and analyzed in the present chapter.

Elsewhere I have argued briefly that, notwithstanding its richly varied rhetorical strategies, on the macro level Avot employs an overarching pattern that ties the document together from beginning to end.[152] I erroneously described Avot's structure then as chiastic, but a more accurate description of its structure would be that it utilizes a progressive trajectory, subtly (and, I will argue, intentionally) shifting the document from the dominance of one form of list-making to another. Although it includes numerous rhetorical strategies and literary forms within it, Avot uses these list-making rhetorics as

the structural backbone that determines its shape and determines the inclusion of—and where to include—most of its various literary ingredients.

But it is the contention of this author that when analyzing the few rhetorical structures that implicitly communicate list-making and its inherent worth (according to Avot's authors), it can be demonstrated that the beginning and end of Avot are not simply units placed there by accident or happenstance (as Herford suggested), but rather that the content and forms in between consist of an intentional and therefore somehow functional transition between them. Hence, the hand of an active editor can be observed behind Avot, as Neusner has stated, and as Tropper has argued well. Moreover, we do not have to stop at observing the fact that various sections or units in Avot promote list-making. Ultimately, we can further argue that the authorship of Avot embedded a logical sequence within the document, which leads the reader from a list of rabbis—who themselves are shown to make rudimentary lists—to the creation of numbered lists in the voice of the implied author of Avot.[153]

In subsequent chapters I will compare Avot to other literature as well as to other relevant historical data, and in doing so we will begin to explore its probable purpose and meaning in the context of the early rabbinic movement. Here we will simply make an effort to demonstrate the existence of Avot's progressive structure, by means of analyzing its listing rhetorics. Before any comparison can begin, the object of analysis must be isolated with minimal external consideration. This is the purpose of the present chapter. Such an exercise will produce a fairer and reproducible (i.e., hopefully not merely impressionistic) representation and description of Avot's listing-related structures and forms.

II.1. Object and Procedure of Analysis

Avot's earliest extant manuscripts are medieval and contained in the Parma (11th century) and Kaufmann (11th-13th centuries) codices of the Mishnah.[154] Avot also exists in a number of similar but still "variant readings... [which] seem to suggest that the original edition of Avot might be impossible to recover."[155] But Akenson argues rather bluntly why Avot most likely came from the third century CE:

> ...chapter two of Aboth clearly cites the words of a son of Judah the Patriarch [Mishnah's patron], which is to say, at least thirty to fifty years after the Mishnah was compiled. Only by special pleading—by suggesting that the material in chapter 2 of Aboth is an interpolation—can this inference be obviated... [A]nd most importantly, Aboth has to be recognized as a later apologetic for Rabbi's Mishnah because it is *about* that Mishnah!... [G]iven its integral references to Rabbi's son, Rabban Gamaliel III, 250 CE or later is a reasonable speculation.[156]

The Mishnah itself contains narratives that cannot be corroborated about the location of the early rabbinic movement in northern Palestine. But even though the particulars of the narratives cannot be verified, it can be noted that the authors imagined the world of the rabbis and the Patriarchate to be headquartered in northern Palestine, which, as noted above (I.1) we can at least roughly corroborate. Tosefta (תוספתא, "addition"), moreover—which models, extends or adds to (and often changes) the base text of the Mishnah—often specifies even further about the Galilean location of early rabbinism, and of its further entrenchment in urban locales and institutions.[157] Finally, Avot, written as it is in mostly Mishnaic Hebrew, also called Rabbinic Hebrew (as well as a small number of isolated aphorisms written in Aramaic), can be dated roughly to the third century CE, and located geographically roughly in northern Palestine—the Galilee—where this dialect was current.[158] Hence the *terminus post quem* for the date of Avot would be *c.* 200

CE, the date of the Mishnah, but Avot can more reasonably be dated closer to its *terminus ante quem*, *c.* 250-300 CE.

It should also be noted that it is traditional to include a sixth chapter at the end of Avot, entitled *Kinyan Torah*. Commonly, *Kinyan Torah* is only included in some of the commentaries, and rarely included in printed Mishnahs. The consensus that this sixth chapter is a later, likely medieval, addition to Avot is not yet substantial, but it is still rather credible. Danby's 1933 English Mishnah translation only includes it hesitantly,[159] Neusner's analyses tend to leave out chapter six altogether, and most scholars note that stylistically chapter six does not match with the rest of Avot.[160] While the origin of *Kinyan Torah* would make a fascinating subject of inquiry itself, the present monograph will follow the consensus in this case and not include a discussion of Avot's sixth chapter, asserting that analysis of this chapter would not be relevant to our particular argument.

As stated above, it is not the purpose of this monograph to uncover the original strata, or "Urtext,"[161] of Avot. Sharvit noted in 1987 that a critical edition of Avot was still needed, and this remains the case today.[162] I will not attempt here to provide an exhaustive, critical analysis of Avot. Rather, the analysis below focuses on particular rhetorical strategies of Avot, and will follow the basic, standardized text of Avot as it appears in Davka's electronic *Judaic Classics Library.*[163] I am using a standardized text like Davka's because the macro nature of the structural analysis to follow does not require taking minor manuscript divergences into account, since the general structure and content of Avot remains intact throughout the different copies (only the inclusion or exclusion of *Kinyan Torah* is the major difference that materializes).

Using this electronic version of Avot, I created a spreadsheet, represented below in the Appendix. This spreadsheet presents Avot arranged according to its language related to list-making, including in its left-most columns all other content not relegated by list-making rhetorics, and quoted scriptural passages. Using this spreadsheet, tables and graphs were created, which will be used periodically throughout the discussion to visually illustrate aspects of the sequential development of Avot's various forms of rhetoric, as well as other numerical or analytical information that, given our interest in Avot's progressive nature, will prove informative.

However, quantitative observations will only serve to illustrate what will largely be a qualitative analysis. That is, the analysis will be based on the initial observation of the text's isolatable rhetorical strategies, and then we will read through the text, observing literary strategies both including as well as beyond (what can sometimes be deceptive or less instructive) quantitative measurements.

Finally, it should also be noted that different manuscripts and printed versions of Avot divide its *mishnayot* slightly differently. For the sake of convenience, the remainder of the monograph will refer to Davka's delineation of Avot's chapters and *mishnayot*.

II.2. Isolating, Analyzing, and Interpreting Avot's List-Making Rhetorics

In analyzing Avot's rhetoric, two basic formal structures related to list-making emerge, as can be seen in the Appendix below. These structures also happen to be introduced in Avot 1:1, increasing the likelihood that the authorship of the document intended for these themes and structures to direct the reader and govern the structure and course of the content[165]:

משה קבל תורה מסיני. ומסרה ליהושע. ויהושע לזקנים. וזקנים לנביאים. ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים. הוו מתונים בדין. והעמידו תלמידים הרבה. ועשו סיג לתורה:

> [1] Moses received Torah from Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets, and prophets transmitted it to [the] men of the great assembly.
>
> [2] They said three things: Be prudent in judgment, and raise up many disciples, and make a fence for [the] Torah.

We first encounter in this *mishnah* a list of individuals, beginning with Moses at Sinai and continuing down to the "men of the great assembly." These men are therefore part of a list of teachers in a continuous chain of tradition, and it is their reception and transmission of "Torah" from the previous generations that constitute the operative premise of this first kind of list.

"Torah" in the context of Greco-Roman Judaism was understood broadly. The word "Torah" itself means "direction and instruction," and it is the title of the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Pentateuch), which came to be known, thanks to the Greek translation of the Scriptures (the Septuagint [LXX]) as the Law (*nomos*). But it was also more than this to ancient Jews.[166] More specifically, "Torah is for the authors of [Avot]... and much of the Rabbinic tradition the supreme symbol for God and a godly life. It includes not only laws, but stories, myths, images, and ethical statements..."[167]

Saldarini notes that indeed Avot's list of Torah-receiving sages is comparable to ancient lists of kings, priests, masters of philosophical schools, and biblical genealogies.[168] As lists, these works are devoid of an explicit narrative. Avot's narrative is thin, introduced only in Avot 1:1, and the individuals in Avot are listed in the voice of the author. Moreover, we are introduced to the idea that these Torah-transmitting

individuals enumerate lists themselves, with the clause "They said three things," which three things are therefore initially attributed by the authors to the unified sages.

As the chart in the Appendix below demonstrates, Avot uses seven types of rhetorical formulae that are initially based on concepts introduced in Avot 1:1, and that interact with each other throughout the remainder document. Firstly, sages' names, or pronouns indicating the previously named sage (column A), are the subject and beginning of a new pericope 115 times. For each new sage, an inflected form of the verb "to say" (אמר; column B) indicates his action. At the beginning of Avot, most of the sages are shown to "receive" Torah from the sage of the previous generation (columns C and D), but this pattern all but disappears by Avot 2:15. Therefore, following 2:15, sages are simply listed by Avot in seemingly non-chronological order. There are also two types of rhetoric that demonstrate list-making besides the listing of sages' names. Firstly, lists are implied; in other words, they are not explicitly enumerated but the inner rhetoric of the passage implies a list or at least a list-like quality (column E). This type of rhetoric is placed most frequently in the voices of the sages, and while only implied in the grammar and syntax of each *mishnah*, this type of list has especially been demonstrated by Neusner in the rhetorical arrangements of his English translation of Avot.[169] Finally, lists are explicitly enumerated by the text (column F), most often followed by the list items themselves (column G), although sometimes (especially in chapter five) things are counted but the list itself is not then demonstrated.

Therefore, in the course of reading Avot from beginning to end, two forms of list persist: a list of sages (columns A through D), and enumerated lists or litany-like sets of clauses or phrases (columns E through G), usually (but especially not by the end of Avot)

attributed to a particular sage. However, although both basic forms persist, they are not used in consistent ways throughout the document. At the beginning, even if the sayings attributed to each sage were absent, then the cohesion of sections guided by the listing of sages would still remain intact. But as Avot goes on, the content of sayings, having previously been more passive and incidental, increasingly determines the shape of the document. The document shifts between the dominance of one form of listing over the other at various points, but the overall effect is a moving away from the listing of sages and into the portrayal of rabbinic sayings and language themselves.

It is the dynamic interplay of these listing or counting structures that I submit constitutes a major key to understanding the intended purpose of Avot. Hence our analysis will proceed as follows. Firstly, the rhetorical forms in columns A through D will be analyzed in isolation, as they progress through the document; and secondly, the forms represented in columns E through G will be likewise analyzed.

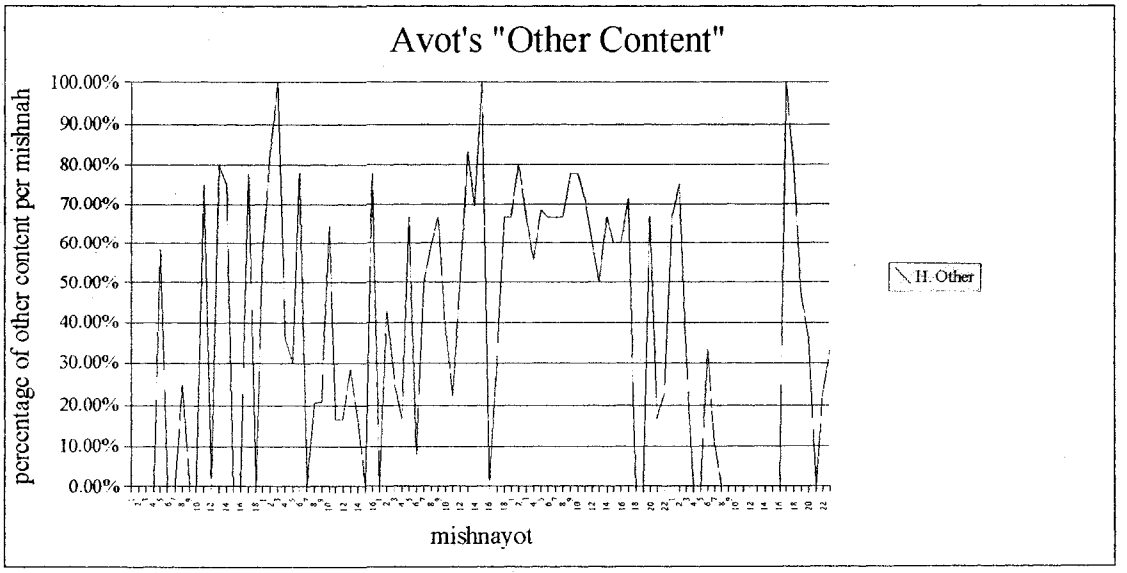

Figure 1

The content in column H is rather offhandedly labelled "other content," in that it is not dependent on listing to determine its form. Content not dependent on listing rhetoric represents only roughly 36% of Avot's content.[170] As demonstrated in *figure 1*, in chapters one through three Avot's other (i.e. non-listing related) content tends to vary consistently between either being absent to very present, generally ranging from 0 to 80% present. Chapter four's *mishnayot* are 50-80% composed of other content, representing the largest section in Avot to use non list-related rhetorics. Other content is absent from Avot for the greatest consecutive number of *mishnayot* in 5:8-16, and is generally less present in this chapter. The frequency of non-listing-reliant content in Avot remains constant for the first two chapters (peaking briefly in chapter two), waxes in chapter three, peaks in chapter four, and wanes significantly in chapter five; only in chapters three and four, therefore, does this kind of content come close to dominating the flow and structure of the document.

Column I contains direct scriptural quotations always indicated by the stock phrase "as it is said" (שנאמר).[171] We will examine Avot's topical content as well as its use of scripture in the next chapter, since it will be argued that neither aspect of Avot can be fairly understood without reference and comparison to other ancient literature.

II.2.a. The Listing of Sages

Avot begins with a simple assertion: that "receivers" of "Torah," which was revealed originally from God to Moses at Sinai, "say" things. The listing of sages in Avot takes place in what Robbins calls the text's "narrational texture," which "resides in voices (often not identified with a specific character) through which the words in a text speak;

the opening words in a text automatically presuppose a narrator speaking the words."[172] Avot's narrational texture is relatively minimal and straightforward; beyond Avot 1:1, Avot's implied narrator depicts only one time anything beyond a sage "saying" something (2:8), before the narration disappears almost altogether in the document by chapter five. The content represented in columns A through D of the Appendix represent the listing of the Torah-receiving sages themselves, in the voice of the document's implied narrator.

Avot 1:1-2:14 consists of a schematized portrait of the origins of the rabbinic movement. This section presents four phases of rabbinic history grouped into fives, the first from Sinai to the "great assembly" (1:1-2, with Antigonos ben Sokho serving as a transition in 1:3), the second consisting of the so-called "Pairs" (*zugot*) of sages (1:4-15), the third depicting five generations of the Patriarchate (1:16-2:4a, with Hillel in 2:4b-7 serving as a transition), and the fourth narrating a dialogue between Yohanan ben Zakkai and five of his disciples (2:8-2:14).

Something immediately intriguing about the choice of names in Avot 1:1 is that it is so conspicuously selective. That Moses would be seen as the beginning of wisdom and law in a form of Greco-Roman Judaism is not surprising. Judaisms in general regarded (and still regard) Moses as the prototypical and original lawgiver.[173] What is surprising is that while the authors perhaps predictably decides to portray Moses as passing on Torah to his well-known successor, Joshua, Joshua then is portrayed as passing Torah to "elders," then "prophets," and finally "the men of the great assembly." What of (Davidic/messianic) kings, (Levite) priests, or even biblical Judges (or, "Chieftans" [שופטים])? All of these are also classic archetypes of Israelite or Deuteronomic authority.

Take note that the authority of each individual or group mentioned here at the beginning of the chain of transmission is ascribed socially through institutional means, and is not usually natural, that is, by means of birthright. Some of the archetypes of Israelite authority not mentioned by Avot as authoritative—kings and especially the Levitical/Aaronid priesthood—are acknowledged in some of the topical content in Avot, but Avot 1:1 does not establish them as inheritors of "Torah." Not insignificantly, during the same period, the Patriarchate claimed for itself a messianic (that is, Davidic) birthright—which by definition implies a hereditary authority—in order to legitimate its own authority and power.

Following Joshua, each of the "receivers" in 1:1 is an institutional group, membership in which the rabbinic authors retroactively attribute to themselves through their genealogy. In 1:2, Simeon the Righteous (column A) is counted among the "men of the great assembly" (column C), the final receivers of Torah mentioned in 1:1. He is also shown to "say" (column B) something, and also in tripartite form. Beginning in 1:3, association of one sage to the next is made through the attachment of the verb "received" (קבל) to the previous sage as an indirect object (column D), referring back to the passive half of the Torah transmission equation (קבל and מסר) first established in 1:1.

Avot 1:4 begins the section of the so-called "Pairs." Between 1:4 and 1:15, five chronologically sequential pairs of sages are shown to "receive" from those mentioned from the previous generation, and then each is given a chance to "say" something, before moving onto the next generation. It is interesting to note that the names of the sages from 1:4 to 1:9 indicate their ancestry (to those outside the "chain of transmission"), whether by referring to their fathers or places of origin. Formally, then, the choice to refer in 1:10-

11 to the sages Shemaiah and Avtalion simply as such (that is, without reference to title or ancestry) aids in transitioning into the final of the pairs in 1:11-15, the most famous of rabbinic pairs (already well represented in Avot's preceding document, the Mishnah), Hillel and Shammai, who are also introduced without indication of title or ancestry.

Following the Pairs, we encounter a section in 1:16-2:8 that is noteworthy in isolation because it drops the use of "received" (קבל) to introduce its sages. These sages were known as, and are presented in Avot as, members of the Patriarchal family, which claimed a certain amount of power over the autonomous Jewish community in the late antique Roman Empire. The office of the Patriarch was understood by many to derive its authority from bloodline, and the Patriarchate was noted for publicly claiming Davidic (i.e., messianic) lineage. In Avot, members of the patriarchal family are not noted as having "received Torah" as their qualification for inclusion in the discussion, rather their biological genealogy communicates their own internal and isolated continuity. That Gamaliel and his descendants are blood relations is explicitly stated, except in the case of the second Hillel, last in this list of sages. His relationship to this family must be inferred by the reader. [174] That all but Hillel are members of the family of the Patriarch, even if it had not been common knowledge, is made explicit by referring to Rabbi in (2:2) as Rabbi Judah [I] the Prince (נשיא, "Patriarch"). Throughout this section, the absence of "received" (קבל)—which reappears after the patriarchal section—also implicitly communicates their lack of Torah "genealogy," as does, instead, explicitly mentioning their hereditary relationship.

Once this Patriarchal section ends, the document returns to the "received" formula with another sage portrayed in rabbinic tradition as the originator of the rabbinic academy

in Yavneh (Jamnia), Yohanan ben Zakkai.[175] He is stated to have received Torah from the great "pre-Yavnean" sages Hillel and Shammai. In fact, the five generations of Patriarchs following Hillel and Shammai (1:16-2:4) might deliberately serve to contrast with the upcoming narrative of Hillel's non-Patriarchal disciple, Yohanan ben Zakkai, and his five disciples (2:8-2:14). This might explain the ambiguity of the Hillel in 2:4-7. Is he the same Hillel as in the pairs, or a Patriarchal Hillel following Gamaliel II? Does Avot actually return to the same Hillel to start the branch of Torah-genealogy again, effectively skipping over the Patriarchate? The authors appear to leave it open to interpretation. However, if the authors felt a need to return to a group of five Torah-receivers beginning with the final of the Torah-receiving Pairs, then the use of this Hillel here serves to contrast two types of authority: authority based on Torah reception, and authority based on lineage. It appears that the authors do indeed return to the original Hillel here, refocusing the narrative on Torah-receiving sages. And comparing this section (1:16-2:14) with the premise established in 1:1—that God gives knowledge through Torah to Moses and then down through the generations, master to disciple—the implications become clear: the rabbis are as ancient as Torah itself, while the Patriarchate—although affiliated with the rabbis—is both novel and transitory. Avot implicitly argues here that if one seeks access to "Torah," and hence to God, genealogy is an irrelevant qualification. Only discipleship under a Torah-receiving rabbinic sage, argues Avot, truly gains one that access.

Once ben Zakkai's non-genetic credentials are established as having received Torah from Hillel and Shammai, so begins a relatively complicated section in Avot (2:8-14). This is the only section in Avot besides 1:1 in which the authors sustain a narrative

about a sage beyond depicting that sage as only "saying" or "receiving." Avot 2:8-14 is a portrait of the circle of Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciples. In this narrative, the sage-listing of columns A-D interact much more fluidly than anywhere else in Avot with the listed sayings (represented in columns E through G). The grouping of sages into fives in the voice of the implied author now becomes the repeated listing of five sages in the voice of ben Zakkai as well as the implied author. That is to say, the strategies of sage-listing on one hand, and of sages listing on the other, are merged and complicated here in ways that are unique within the document.

Once ben Zakkai is said to receive Torah, a long saying is attributed to him. First, a three-clause phrase implicitly repeats the number three, which Avot 1 established as the number of things that qualified sages tend to say; in all preceding *mishnayot*, in addition to 2:8, in which explicit counting is done, it is always in threes. In 2:8, ben Zakkai then uses a higher number, five, first having been only subtly introduced earlier in the structuring of the phases of rabbinic history; the narrator says that he "had five disciples." He then counts all five of them: R. Eliezar b. Hyrcanus, R. Joshua b. Hanina, R. Yosi the Priest, R. Simeon b. Netanel, and E. Eleazar b. Arakh. Then the author states that ben Zakkai, too, "would enumerate their positive attributes [הוא היה מונה שבחן]," a rare instance of the author attributing an action to a sage beyond "saying": "enumerat[ing]." Still in the voice of the author, such a list is presented:

הוא היה מונה שבחן.
רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס. בור סוד שאינו מאבד טפה.
רבי יהושע בן חנניה. אשרי יולדתו.
רבי יוסי הכהן. חסיד.
רבי שמעון בן נתנאל. ירא חטא.
ורבי אלעזר בן ערך. מעין המתגבר.

He would enumerate their positive attributes:
[1] Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: a plastered well that does not lose a drop.
[2] Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah: happy is she who gave birth to him.
[3] Rabbi Yose the Priest: pious.
[4] Rabbi Simeon ben Nethanel: fears sin.
[5] and Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh: a surging spring.

Then, yet again, ben Zakkai provides commentary, after which Abba Saul replies. Subsequent to this are three similarly structured sequences in which a query is presented to the disciples, each responding in turn. At the end of each sequence, "says" is implicitly attached to ben Zakkai, who judges which disciple's response is preferred (always either Eliezar or Eleazar), except for the last question.

This complex (by Avot's standards) narrative depicting ben Zakkai and his disciples at work also serves as the conclusion to the section of Avot that is concerned with "receiving" Torah. After 2:8 the "received" verb clause (column C) is purged from Avot, and after 2:15 the author dispenses with discussing in his own voice the concept of Torah reception. This leaves us, after the section depicting ben Zakkai and his disciples, with a new section, or unit, in Avot.

This unit consists of a long series of sages saying things—in other words, sages at work—not explicitly held together by any theory of chronology or tradition; their chronology has to either be assumed by the reader or confirmed by external knowledge. From here until 5:1 (and then briefly again in 5:20-23) the naming of a sage, who then goes on to say something, is not held together by any explicit reasoning, leaving any perception of its unity and continuity dependent on assuming for it the same logic from 1:1: that all of these sages are part of the community of Torah-receivers initiated by Moses. Tropper states that the ordering of sages here "adheres to a chronological structure but employs a generational rather than a teacher-student schema."[176] But the

basis for their relationship here can only be assumed by the reader to be part of the "spiritual genealogy," or by means of some externally acquired information about them. Strictly formally speaking then, this section (2:15-5:1; 5:20-23) is, in essence, a long list of rabbinic sages with a weaker premise serving to connect them. It seems to be more like a random collection of rabbinic sayings, with the attachment of the name of the sage only there as a matter of course, certainly no longer as an operating principle. Even Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch) makes a late re-appearance here (4:20)! And any mention of sages saying anything is finally dropped in 5:1. The attribution of content to a sage is only repeated briefly and ultimately at 5:20-23, perhaps to retain a sense of unity by not altogether disregarding the practice of the naming of sages by the end of the document, lending it a sense of closure.[177] Here, then, from 2:15 until the end of Avot, there is no explicit principle of connection between the sages, and therefore the cohesion of this section is less dependent on the listing of sages, which becomes a weaker rhetoric.

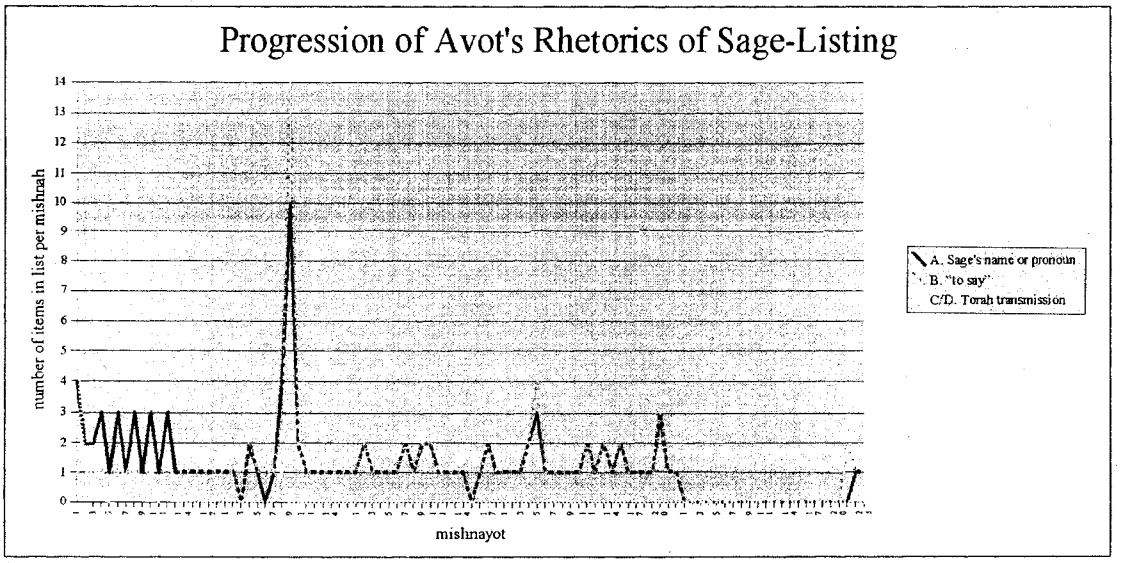

Figure 2

The above observations are rendered quantitatively in *figure 2*. In general, the number of sages per *mishnah* remains relatively constant, with rarely more than one or two sages listed per *mishnah*, beginning with the inclusion of the transmission verb, "to receive" [קבל]. In chapters one and two, Avot's rhetorical strategies for the listing of sages guide the reader through the text, the chronology of this line of "spiritual" succession (as opposed to patrilineal succession of the kind represented in the Patriarchal section) implied by the "received" verb first set up in Avot 1:1. For these two chapters the idea of genealogy based on blood versus genealogy based on discipleship is an important theme dealt with by Avot's sage-listing rhetoric ("Rabbi Y received Torah from Rabbi X. Rabbi Y says...").

There is a sharp peak in the section depicting Yohanan ben Zakkai interacting with his disciples (2:8-14), simultaneously with the disappearance of the Torah transmission verb from Avot. In chapters three and four, there is no such connecting principle, the names of the sages themselves are sometimes even at odds with otherwise established chronology. As Tropper notes, in chapters one and two, "[t]he rabbinic chain of transmission provides the overarching structure..." but chapters three and four "do not show obvious signs of an overarching structural principle."[178] Hence this sage-listing form in the middle section of Avot exists in the text, but it does not dominate or determine the logical flow of the text. Since the narrator no longer does it himself via the "Rabbi X received Torah from..." phrase, the reader instead is left here to make assumptions about the relevance of named sages. Finally, by the fifth and final chapter of Avot, this rhetoric of attributing sayings to sages disappears (except in 5:20-23).

Hence there is a trajectory in the ordering of units here. The sage-listing rhetoric of Avot moves from dominating the logic and flow of the document based on the theme of genealogy, to a more passive and less ordered existence within the document, to finally disappearing almost altogether.

As Robbins puts forth, narrational texture "usually reveals some kind of pattern that moves the discourse programmatically forward."[179] Avot's narrational texture is represented by its rhetoric of sage-listing, which eventually ceases to "[move] the discourse programmatically forward," gradually replaced in weight and substance by the placement of content outside of the voice of the implied author-narrator. Avot's narrational texture dominates the text as it begins, but it progressively loses its dominance over the flow of the document thanks to a gradual loss in the frequency or consequence of the repeated naming of sages.

II.2.b. The Explicit and Implicit Listing of Items, Clauses or Phrases

Robbins also observes that "[n]arrational commentary regularly sets the stage for attributed speech"[180]; Avot 1:1 introduces in its narrational texture the idea that those who "receive" "Torah" then "say" things in a numbered, or listed, manner. When the author states that "the men of the great assembly said three things" and then proceeds to list those things, this is not peculiar in Avot. Rather, it sets up a rhetorical premise that continues and is modified throughout the remainder of the document.

Avot 1:2 continues the motif of sages saying "three things" when Simeon the Righteous, who is said to be "of the remnants of the great assembly," states that "the world stands on three things." Following this, and until 1:17, the number three is no

longer announced; rather, almost every sage says at least one thing that is conspicuously tripartite in form (Avtalion in 1:11 is the exception). Avot 1:18 returns to explicitly listing "three things." Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel's saying in 1:18 corresponds to the other Simeon's list, Simeon the Righteous. Simeon the Righteous's *mishnah* (1:2) begins to use the form that is introduced in the chain of transmission of 1:1, and he lists the "three things [on which] the world stands," just like Simeon ben Gamaliel. Hence it is clear that a parallel is intended between these two Simeons, each of whom lists the same thing. However, the choice of items in that list differs. Simeon the Righteous, a sage whose knowledge was received from "Torah," claims that the world stands "[1] on the Torah, [2] and on the [Temple] service, [3] and on deeds of loving kindness." Contrastingly, Simeon ben Gamaliel, whose pedigree is clearly genealogical, claims that the world stands on much more general, philosophical, and not necessarily "Jewish" things: "[1] on judgment, [2] and on truth, [3] and on peace," although a proof text from scripture is then supplied to justify this list as being, indeed, Judaic ("Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates" [Zech. 8:16]).

Subsequently in 2:1, following a longer, un-list-like saying, Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch) returns to explicitly listing "three things" which he commands the reader to "consider... so you will not come into the hands of transgression. Know what is above you. [1] A seeing eye, [2] and a hearing ear, [3] and all of your deeds are written in a book." Simeon and Rabbi are the only two of the five in the Patriarchal section who are said to state things in threes; furthermore, the rest of the section does not contain any clearly implied lists of three or of any other number.

It is only with the return of Hillel in 2:4 that sayings come more regularly in list-like form. However, here the lists are implied, and they have changed in number from three and he, like the implied author, speaks now in fives; the first in the form of five negative commands ("do not separate from the community..." etc.), and the second in five negative statements ("there is no boor who fears sin..." etc.). Hillel continues speaking in 2:7 and here we have a long list of contrasting items. That it is an implied list is obvious, as it is a sequence of items or actions, each followed by a consequence, all following the identical and simple formula as follows:

מרבה בשר
מרבה רמה.
מרבה נכסים.
מרבה דאגה.
מרבה נשים.
מרבה כשפים.
[...]

[One who] increases [in] [מרבה] meat,
[is one who] increases [in] [מרבה] worms.
[One who] increases [in] [מרבה] property,
[is one who] increases [in] [מרבה] worries.
[One who] increases [in] [מרבה] women,
[is one who] increases [in] [מרבה] witchcraft.
[...]

This *mishnah* repeats this form nine times followed immediately by the following similar, but shorter, section:

קנה שם טוב.
קנה לעצמו.
קנה לו דברי תורה.
קנה לו חיי העולם הבא:

[One who] acquire[s] a good name,
acquire[s it] for himself.
[One who] acquire[s] the words of Torah,
acquire[s] for himself the world to come.

In each of the two sections above, the *mishnah's* list-like quality is emphasized both by its terseness as well as its repetitive use of key words (מרבה ["(one who) increases"] in the first, קנה ["(one who) acquires"] in the second), almost as a "bullet" introducing each new item, and serving to argue for the logic of a series of propositions using only a minimal vocabulary.

Avot 2:8 then returns to explicit listing with the aforementioned narrative of Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciples (2:8-14). First he begins with a tripartite proposition (if... [then]... because...). But following this the author states in his own voice, חמשה תלמידים היו לו... ואלו הן ("he had five disciples... and these are they").[182] As noted above, this narrative therefore represents an intriguing mixture of the sage-listing rhetoric of columns A-E and the listing rhetorics—elsewhere in the voice of the sages—of E-G. After the author lists the five disciples, he then states that Yohanan ben Zakkai would also count and list, because he "would enumerate their positive attributes" followed by a list of those attributes:

הוא היה מונה שבחן.
רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס. בור סוד שאינו מאבד טפה.
רבי יהושע בן חנניה. אשרי יולדתו.
רבי יוסי הכהן. חסיד.
רבי שמעון בן נתנאל. ירא חטא.
ורבי אלעזר בן ערך. מעין המתגבר.

He would enumerate their positive attributes:
[1] Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: a plastered well that does not lose a drop.
[2] Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah: happy is she who gave birth to him.
[3] Rabbi Yose the Priest: pious.
[4] Rabbi Simeon ben Nethanel: fears sin.
[5] and Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh: a surging spring.

At the end of this list, ben Zakkai judges the first disciple in the list, Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, to be superior to the others, whereas Abba Saul interjects (from whence?) judging the final disciple in the list, Eleazar ben Arakh to be the superior sage.

Avot 2:9 has ben Zakkai returning to instructing his disciples, challenging each to "see what is the straight path to which someone should stick."[183] Each disciple then answers in turn, repeating Avot's listing of the disciples, as well as the disciples presenting their responses in what adds up to another implied list of five, in the voice of the author-narrator:

רבי אליעזר
אומר
עין טובה.
רבי יהושע
אומר
חבר טוב.
רבי יוסי
אומר
שכן טוב.
רבי שמעון
אומר
הרואה את הנולד.
רבי אלעזר
אומר
לב טוב.

[1] Rabbi Eliezer
says:
A generous spirit.
[2] Rabbi Joshua
says:
A good friend.
[3] Rabbi Yose
says:
A good neighbor.
[4] Rabbi Simeon
says:
Foresight.
[5] Rabbi Eleazar
says:
Good will.[184]

Just as at the end of the previous dialogue between ben Zakkai and his disciples, the master then renders judgment on them following their responses to his query. In this case he prefers the response of the final disciple in the list, Eleazer ben Arakh (who was Abba Saul's preferred disciple in the preceding dialogue).

A third dialogue is then presented when ben Zakkai puts forth another test for them: "Go out and see what is the bad road, which someone should avoid" (translation: Neusner 1983, 73). Each responds as in the previous dialogues, thereby creating a list of five disciples, each with his own response. However Rabbi Simeon qualifies his response of "a loan," creating not only a tripartite response, but one that is further justified with a scriptural passage (the only previous sage to do this heretofore was Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel). Nonetheless, once more Eleazar ben Arakh's response (לב רע, "[an] evil heart") is preferred by ben Zakkai.

Then a final dialogue concludes this narrative beginning in 2:10, in which each disciple "said three things." Here each disciple is shown to say considerably more, and in a considerably more complex manner than hitherto. Yet the explicit statement that they "said three things" does not yield the simple tripartite sayings of the type found before it in Avot. As can be seen in the Appendix, the list-like rhetoric in Avot 2:10-14 is always complicated by extrinsic phrases, and in 2:10 the "three things" said by Eliezar do not even appear to be list-like or tripartite. Hence the variety of listing throughout the narrative grows increasingly complex through the addition of further literary elements, as each dialogue is played out.

Avot 2:15 returns us to the voice of the author and removes us from the ben Zakkai narrative. Yet interestingly, this saying by R. Tarfon is clearly a five-part saying,

serving rhetorically to transition the reader out of the narrative which contains so many five-part lists, into a new unit in Avot:

רבי טרפון
אומר
היום קצר
והמלאכה מרובה.
והפועלים עצלים.
והשכר הרבה.
ובעל הבית דוחק:

Rabbi Tarfon
says:
The day [is] short,
and the work [is] large,
and the labourers [are] lazy,
and the recompense [is] large,
and the master [employer] of the house [is] demanding.

Following this, a second saying attributed to Tarfon which is not clearly or implicitly list-like is then presented.

In chapters three and four, Avot's non-list-like rhetoric (column H) and scriptural quotations (column I) become much more prominent forms, the significance of which will be evaluated in chapter III below. We can also note for now that the listing and counting rhetorics become much more sporadic yet still relatively intricate when they occur, no longer interacting as clearly with Avot's sage-listing rhetorics. This creates a section of Avot which is less dependent on the premises of Avot 1:1, and less dependent on portraying sages as listing or counting for cohesion; yet this part of Avot still presents such activities as a consistent hallmark of rabbinic activity.

Chapter three begins with a statement in which Akaviah ben Mehallel speaks in the second person, imperative, הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה ("Reflect upon *three things* and you will not come into the hands of transgression." Those three

things are "know[ing] [1] from whence you come, [2] and whither you are going, [3] and before whom you stand to give judgment and account"). This kind of tripartite saying is already familiar to the reader of Avot. This *mishnah* serves rhetorically to return the reader to the idea of simple listing and enumerating following the ben Zakkai narrative, yet also transitions the reader into this new section.

Until this point listing and enumeration have been portrayed as roughly equivalent activities. However, it is possible, as well, to count things without necessarily doing so in list form. Avot 3:2-3 portrays counting without listing. Here, the counting interacts more with the content in columns H and I ("other content" and "scriptural quotation") than it does with any lists (which do not exist here) or with the names of rabbis, since the narratives are self contained, being merely attributed to this or that sage (specifically here R. Hanina ben Teradyon, and, once again, R. Simeon).

First, R. Hanina ben Teradyon in 3:2 discusses שנים שיושבין ואין ביניהן דברי תורה ("two who sit down and there are no matters of Torah between them"), followed by a judgment against them (הרי זה מושב לצים, "behold, this is a seat of the scornful"), concluded by a scriptural quotation to legitimate this judgment. This is then contrasted with the opposing situation, in which two do discuss matters of Torah, and are judged positively, also followed by a scriptural quotation as proof text. Finally, he states that even one who sits to work on "Torah" is blessed, again justified by quoting a scriptural verse. Second, in 3:3, R. Simeon's saying follows the same form and theme as that of R. Hanina ben Teradyon which directly preceded it, judging negatively against שלשה שאכלו על שולחן אחד ולא אמרו עליו דברי תורה ("three that ate on one table, and did not say over it matters of Torah"), again providing a scriptural proof text. This, again as in Teradyon's

saying, is then followed by a presentation of the opposite situation, which is judged positively and justified by another scriptural quotation.

Avot 3:6 repeats both the idea of counting those who sit down to discuss or not discuss "Torah," as well as the use of scriptural proof texts. But excluding this exception, following 2:3 and until the beginning of chapter five, Avot's listing rhetoric becomes more sporadic and incidental than it has generally been hitherto. Avot 3:4 contains an implied list of three clauses, but 3:6 represents another instance of explicitly counting. Following this *mishnah*, Avot's third chapter only includes implied lists of clauses when it lists or counts at all (in 3:10, 11, 16, and 17). From 3:7 until the end of the chapter, then, listing in the voice of sages becomes less frequent and, in fact, less consistently ordered or structured. That this is a transitional presentation is an important observation because, while the ordering of lists here is sporadic, it does gradually decrease in importance in this chapter until it no longer appears at all.

This feature functions as a transition into chapter four, which begins with a complete absence of any listing rhetoric attributed to sages. Neusner notes that at this point in the text,

> We have come to expect truly sizable constructions of coherent sayings, or, more accurately, sayings of coherent groups. Now we come to singletons. These are sayings assigned to individuals who bear no relationship to one another.[185]

Tropper calls chapter four "a clearly distinguishable literary unit because it sits between the name-structured c. 3 and the number-structured c. 5."[186] There is a brief, explicit list in 4:13, and then an implied list of phrases in 4:18. But even though this chapter is noticeably missing much listing rhetoric, it does gradually increase in prominence by the end of this chapter, just as it gradually decreased in the previous chapter. By the end of

the chapter, (4:21-22), five relatively long implied lists of clauses or phrases appear, attributed to Rabbi Elezar HaQappar. Just as chapter three's gradual absence of listing rhetoric served to transition the reader into chapter four, chapter four's gradual increase not only in the appearance of lists but also the complexity of them indicates a transition into chapter five.

Avot's fifth and final chapter "employs a numerical framework for the ordering of its materials."[187] It relinquishes the attribution of listing rhetoric to specific sages, finally presenting them here in the voice of the implied author himself. Here, then, the listing of clauses and phrases comes to completely dominate the structuring and the content of the final chapter of Avot. As Tropper notes, this final chapter is "organized in descending numerical order."[188]

Avot returns here to explicit listing beginning with the introduction of individual lists, but not followed by an actual list of representing the premise introduced. As Neusner observes, in Avot 5:1-4, "[w]hat we have... are simply prescriptions for lists, but these are not spelled out, and the point that they make is not made explicit."[189] For example, Avot 5:1 states that "the world was created by ten sayings," but those ten things are not listed. Rather, the principle behind the list is provided in the form of non-list-like "other content": "What does study (תלמוד[190]) say? And is it not so that by one word the world could be created?" Avot 5:1-8 consist of lists of ten, which, "review the entire sacred history of Israel," thus contrasting the beginning of Avot's final chapter with Avot's four groupings of rabbinic history in chapters one and two.[191] In chapter one it was Avot's rhetoric of sage-listing that guided the reader through Avot's authors' version of Jewish history; here in chapter five this is done by means of relatively elaborate listing

and counting exercises. These lists, all based on overtly scriptural or historical (although there was no difference to the early rabbis) narratives and concepts, continue from 5:1 to 5:19 (with an exceptional section in 5:16-18 in which no lists are introduced or counted). The first lists are all of ten items until 5:6, and the final two of these (5:5-6) are exceptional here because the lists are then displayed for the reader. These last two *mishnayot*, then, serve to transition into the next numerical section consisting of lists of seven. In 5:7-9, Avot explicitly lists and attempts to classify, according to the number seven, "the traits of individuals and the possibilities of ordinary life, meaning famine and plenty, poverty and wealth."[192] Then, in 5:9-15 lists of four are also introduced and explicitly listed. This section consists of a "transitional unit... emphasizing the same kinds of things [as 5:7-9]—pestilence and suffering—all using the number four."[193] Although strict listing rhetoric does not exist in 5:16-18 as it has been otherwise seen in Avot, Neusner notes that at this point in Avot we are nevertheless presented with a series of binary opposites.[194] Finally, Avot 5:20-22 exhibit only implied lists of phrases or clauses, until the document's final *mishnah* (5:23) contains no listing rhetoric.

The above analysis can be briefly summarized along with some quantitative data, which is represented in *figure 3* below, illustrating the generally developmental nature of Avot's list-making rhetoric:

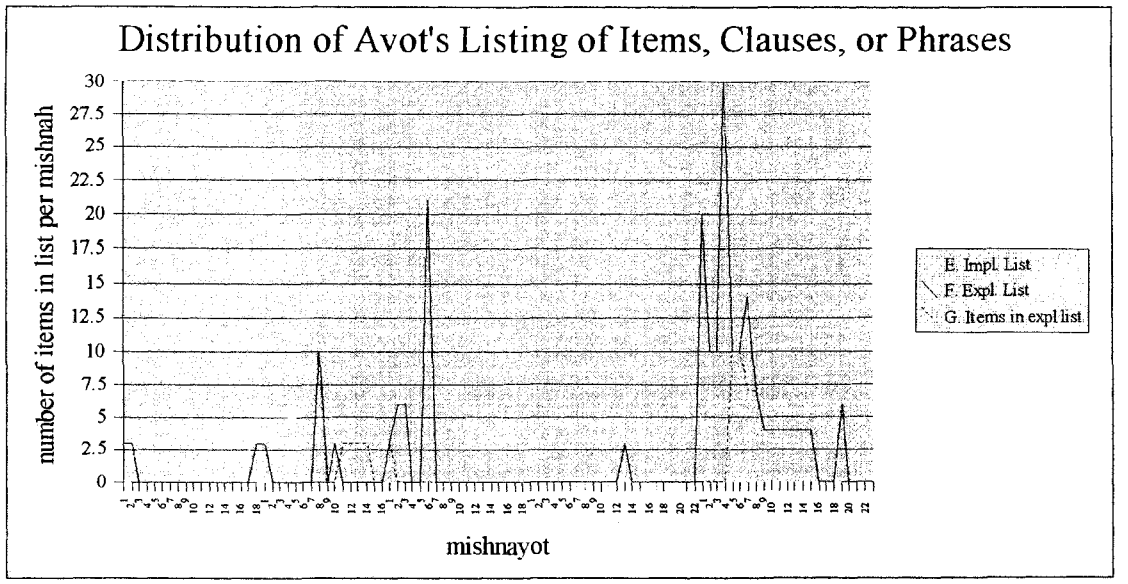

Figure 3

Listed or counted language is introduced in Avot 1:1 as the standard and basic way in which a sage in the "chain of transmission" speaks, and in most of the rest of Avot sages are depicted as consistently employing enumerated or listed-like language. Chapter one is book-ended by two *mishnayot* that explicitly count lists of three. In between, sages are shown with little exception to speak in the form of tripartite sayings, reinforcing the notion in 1:1 that this method of speech is to be understood as part of—if not the major form of—rabbinic language.

In chapter two's narrative depicting Yohanan ben Zakkai's circle of disciples, not only is ben Zakkai shown to list, count, or speak in a listed-like manner, but his disciples are, too, as is the narrator himself. In this section ben Zakkai "enumerates" the qualities of his five disciples, who are counted several times both in the voice of the author and in that of ben Zakkai.

In chapter three, the prominence and dominance of listing rhetoric steadily diminishes. This type of rhetoric disappears almost altogether in chapter four, finally gradually reappearing before the beginning of chapter five.

Finally, chapter five dispenses almost altogether with the listing of sages, placing the chapter's abundant, complex, and generally explicit listing and counting language in the voice of the implied author himself.

As Neusner concludes, "[t]his chapter has presented us with a series of lists. So at the end we have to ask what is gained by the making of lists."[195] Neusner continues, answering his own question by stating that,

> ...in making lists, information is organized into a useful pattern. By listing diverse things, what they have in common becomes clear... *[B]y making lists, by thinking in the orderly way in which the Mishnah's masters pursue thought*, we master and make sense of whatever is to be known.[196]

What the preceding analysis has shown is that neither advocating the virtues of list-making, nor presenting examples of list-making language, are relegated to chapter five. Avot's authors placed listing rhetoric throughout Avot, using it more passively, although still quite apparently, at first, and gradually increasing (with chapter four as a brief exception, to be discussed in chapter III below) the complexity, weight, and frequency of the lists. At first those lists are placed in the voices of those sages to whom they are attributed, but in chapter five, this device is removed by the authors. Hence Avot's listing rhetoric, while not a perfect trajectory in which numbered lists are mathematically increased, still presents us with a beginning that sets up the premise of sages speaking in more simple listed or counted forms, a middle which plays with this concept in varying

and creative ways, and finally an end in which explicit listing rhetoric takes the document over almost completely.

II.3. Conclusions

Avot 1:1 establishes an initial, dual premise. Firstly, rabbinic sages are part of a group of masters and disciples whose knowledge and ascribed authority derive from their reception of "Torah." And, secondly, those within this group speak authoritatively through the use of list- or litany-like language. What I am arguing is that Avot 1:1 does not set up its premise only within the limited literary context of a single unit within Avot, but rather that its initial two claims comprise the premise behind the structure of Avot that follows.

Although listing and enumerating language is not the only rhetoric found within Avot, it is the rhetoric that provides the framework for the document, and it is represented by Avot's authors as a, or even *the*, primary mode of speech by rabbinic sages. Notwithstanding other forms of language, here listed as "other content," as well as the use of scriptural quotations, there is no section in Avot of significant size that does not contain either the listing of sages, or other kinds of listing. As the first claim of Avot 1:1—that rabbis are authorities because of Torah-reception—diminishes not suddenly but gradually in its role in guiding the reader through the sequencing of Avot's *mishnayot*, chapters and units, its second premise—that authoritative rabbinic language is list-like—progressively replaces it in prominence, in the form of generally increasingly complex types of listing and enumerating rhetoric. As Avot's sage-listing rhetoric diminishes in cohesion and in importance for guiding the flow of the document, its listing rhetoric, as

well as "other content" (most frequently) attributed to sages, increases in occurrence, length, and dominance over the flow of the document.

These two types of listing rhetoric shift in dominance not suddenly, but gradually and even logically, based intrinsically in the authors' choice for the order of Avot's units; and it is indeed apparent that, more or less, "each and every chapter is a literary sub-unit distinguished by particular thematic and stylistic features."[197] But regardless of the provenance of these units, whether received or original, the arrangement of Avot's forms and content bespeaks not only an intentional structure, but also and therefore an implied purpose.

The initial choice of Avot's authorship to place the sayings of rabbis into the structure of a chain of transmission—essentially a list of rabbis whose cohesion is determined by the Torah-reception premise—not only shows what rabbis do, but it primarily serves as an argument for the legitimate authority of rabbis. Avot attempts to "emphasize the integrity of [rabbinic] memory paths,"[198] and it does so not only via a narrative depicting the history of Torah-transmission of the early rabbis, but also by representing the ideal mode of communication by which that transmission is facilitated: listing.

As Avot progresses, its initially dominant rhetoric becomes secondary as, roughly concurrently, the ideal form of rabbinic action—essentially listed or list-like speech—is focused upon more prominently and intricately. In other words, *as Avot progresses, language used to legitimate what a rabbi does becomes less important than language that demonstrates to the reader how it can be done.* Hence these two rhetorics are symbiotic: rabbinic thought is argued to be legitimate because it is, in fact, Torah received from

Sinai; and at the same time the use of list-like language is both argued and demonstrated to be a sound means of "transmitting" that Torah—or, in other words, of creating rabbinic thought.

Avot's flow is first guided by the idea that sages are authoritative because their expertise derives from "Torah," originally directly from God to Moses at Sinai. But as Avot comes closer to ending, and this premise has been well-established, what sages *do* is allowed to become a more prominent feature of Avot, until by the final chapter it forms the framework for the document. Furthermore, Avot continually adds and complicates types of language that are not listed or list-like (which will be discussed further in the following chapter). *The impression that is left is that Avot is meant to introduce the reader to both the authority* and *the expertise of a rabbinic sage*, as the authors chose to portray him.[199]

Avot serves as a primer on these authors' particular interpretation of the rabbinic movement. That Avot was meant to be some kind of training manual is not a new idea. But the reasoning for this assumption has only ever been demonstrated impressionistically (if at all). Conversely and correctively, the present analysis serves to begin to reconstruct a plan and method for Avot from which a fair hypothesis about the document's intended function can be generated.

In any case, so far this reconstruction has been only literary, and is still incomplete. We must also consider the topical content of Avot, as well as the character of its non-list-like rhetoric. But as we will see, these aspects of Avot can be best understood in the context of comparing Avot to other sources. Without comparing our initial interpretation of Avot's listing rhetorics with relevant social, historical and literary

information, then all we have reconstructed is a part of the fiction created by Avot's authorship. We can only begin to understand its relevance, verisimilitude, and purpose when we place it within an identifiable social world and a corroborating historical situation.

Upon doing this, it will be demonstrated how, in what context, and for what purpose Avot may have been created as a sort of rabbinic "training manual." We will furthermore see that this term does not quite do Avot's authors justice. Avot will be seen to be more than a simple "training manual," as it cleverly and persistently uses and combines many different strategies within its overarching structure. The expansion of our analysis of Avot's rhetoric, as well as evaluation of Avot compared to other (relevant) ancient evidence, will be the objective of the following chapter.

III. SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERPRETATION: ENLISTING AS A RABBINIC DISCIPLE

Having established in the previous chapter the basic structure for Avot, we will now begin to explore the social meaning of Avot's rhetoric. Avot, like any document, is the product of a social circumstance for which that document was appropriate as a response, and which that document was intended to affect through persuasion, both explicit and implicit; Avot not only reflects its situation, it refracts it. Even by the Hellenistic period, Jewish historians such as Aristeas, Demetrius or Eupolemus were using genealogies and presenting the history of their ancestors, such as Abraham, David, or Moses.[200] Moses was especially highly regarded as the prototypical lawgiver and philosopher.[201] And as Burton Mack notices, the authors of Avot attempt to use their own genealogy of rabbinic masters to rewrite Jewish history: "The new history started with Moses, but skirted the history of the kings and the etiologies for the temple, and ended up with the academy of rabbis... a parallel history."[202] In this sense, Avot can be seen as a myth intended to effectively mark those within the rabbinic movement as (the) legitimate Jewish authorities. As Mack further elucidates, the creation of myths goes hand-in-hand with the development of new social formations:

> Social formation and mythmaking are group activities that go together, each stimulating the other in a kind of dynamic feedback system. Both speed up when new groups form in times of social disintegration and cultural change... [S]o during the Greco-Roman period the merger of peoples and the disintegration of traditional societies sparked new patterns of association and called forth new ways of thinking.[203]

Avot is an attempt by a certain authorship to create a new identity in its reader, a new definition of Jewish identity which is dependent on rabbinic authority and learning; but for what purpose, and for what kind of audience?

As we will see, Avot's rhetorical strategies—both including and excluding those related to the creation of lists—cannot be fairly understood as attempts at buttressing a new social formation without comparing Avot to two types of literature that are suggested by it, Mishnah and wisdom literature. The forms of argumentation common to each genre were known at the time to be appropriate to particular rhetorical exigencies, or occasions. Therefore a comparison of Avot with other literature that uses similar strategies can be a helpful step toward reconstructing the purposes for which Avot's authors likely intended their document.

In context Avot seems an anachronism, as well as a cultural anomaly: it is deviant from many of the norms of writing for contemporaneous rabbinic documents (Mishnah and Tosefta), while heavily reliant on genres popular in preceding, as well as concurrent but competing, social and institutional milieus (wisdom and philosophical literature). Tropper notes that

> ...Avot, unlike the rest of the Mishnah, is composed in the spirit of an earlier literary tradition [wisdom], and this link may have been intended to imply that the wisdom of earlier sages such as Solomon and Ben Sira is one and the same as the wisdom and Torah of the rabbis.[204]

While it is a distinct creation, Avot uses both wisdom/philosophy-like as well as Mishnah-like rhetorical templates in order to be persuasive for a particular occasion.[205]

In this chapter we will use this comparative data to begin to hypothesize about Avot's intended purpose and its social meaning. Given this rough correspondence between Avot's listing and non-listing related rhetorical forms, and seeing that its other content is arranged according to the progressive structure put forth in the previous chapter, it will be argued that *Avot's structure mirrors a concomitant social transition.* Just as Avot moves the reader from simpler wisdom sayings attributed to rabbinic sages

to more complex and Mishnah-like listing rhetoric (eventually not attributed to sages at all), it will be argued that Avot was used as an aid in transitioning its intended audience from the status of a non-rabbinic scribe to that of a rabbinic disciple ready to tackle the considerable undertaking of training under a rabbi in the expertise of mishnaic *Listenwissenschaft*.

III.1. Topical Content and Non-Listing Dependent Rhetoric in Avot

Here we will evaluate the topical content of Avot not as a record of rabbinic life, but instead as a record of rabbinic argument. If Avot was structured in order to persuade, as I am arguing it was, its content would therefore have been chosen with a persuasive agenda in mind, formed in a way appropriate to a particular social condition. In that case, some of the argument of Avot's authorship may be gleaned, and therefore so can something of the exigency for the creation of that argument. If Avot is the result of the redaction of several sources, then we have seen that those who redacted them into Avot seem to have taken care to give their document a relatively unified and purposeful structure. It would not be unreasonable to think that they tailored Avot's content just as they did its form to suit their agenda. This suspicion appears to be verified, moreover, when we survey Avot's topical content, which is relatively limited, represented by a small repertoire of related themes.

We have already seen Avot's listing-related forms that certain themes and topics persist on the discursive and explicit level. The notion of reception and transmission of "Torah," as well as the preservation of that "Torah" via masters and disciples, is the first idea presented by Avot 1:1:

משה קבל תורה מסיני. ומסרה ליהושע. ויהושע לזקנים. וזקנים לנביאים. ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים. הוו מתונים בדין. והעמידו תלמידים הרבה. ועשו סיג לתורה:

> [1] Moses received Torah from Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets, and prophets transmitted it to [the] men of the great assembly.
>
> [2] They said three things: Be prudent in judgment, and raise up many disciples, and make a fence for [the] Torah.

Much of the content of Avot seems related to this overall theme of Torah-via-discipleship, as well. In Avot, "[t]he heaviest emphasis is placed on study of Torah, on the master-disciple relationship, on obedience to Torah and its accurate interpretation..."[206] Further passages of Avot, "similar to the Biblical proverbs, [exhort] to good behavior or [offer] observations on humanity, human behavior, and the world itself."[207] Finally, other passages of Avot, especially weighted towards the end of the document, deal with the mythic and cultic history of Israel, from Creation into the Greco-Roman period.

We must also take note that the content of Avot emphasizes certain key themes or topics also in progressive order, determined through repetition. This, as noted above, is what Robbins called a "qualitative" type of argument, which "...occurs when the quality of the images and descriptions encourages the reader to accept the portrayal as true and real. This occurs when analogies, examples, and citations of ancient testimony function in a persuasive manner."[208] Take note, firstly, of the frequency of the presentation of these key topics. Interestingly, Avot only directly refers to jurisprudence (including any mention of humans judging, trying legal cases, witnessing in court, and the like) in a total of nine *mishnayot*. Key topics as indicated by their frequency in Avot include God (including the notions of sinning against God, Heaven, or the frequent term from wisdom

literature, the "fear" [מורא] of God or Heaven; 54 *mishnayot*), study (including any mention of discipleship, learning, teaching, or sages; 42 *mishnayot*), Torah (36 *mishnayot*), and cult (to God, through Temple-service, or other acts of piety or worship of YHWH; 24 *mishnayot*). These observations alone point to the implicit intention of Avot's authors, through repetition, to connect the notions of service to God and the study of Torah. But we can even further explore Avot's use of these topics by observing the progression of their repetition throughout the document, as represented by the chart below:

		Heaven/ God/ fear of God/ sin	Study/ teaching/ discipleship/ sages	Torah	Cult/ Temple/ worship
Ch. 1	1	•	•	•	
	2			•	•
	3	•	•	•	
	4		•	•	
	5	•	•	•	
	6		•	•	
	7	•			
	8			•	
	9				
	10			•	
	11	•	•		
	12		•	•	•
	13		•	•	
	14				
	15		•	•	
	16		•		•
	17	•		•	
	18				
Ch. 2	1	•	•		
	2	•		•	
	3				
	4	•	•		
	5	•	•		•

		Heaven/ God/ fear of God/ sin	Study/ teaching/ discipleship/ sages	Torah	Cult/ Temple/ worship
	6	•			
	7	•		•	
	8	•	•	•	
	9	•			
	10	•	•		
	11	•			
	12	•	•	•	
	13	•			•
	14	•	•	•	
	15				
	16	•	•	•	
Ch. 3	1	•			
	2	•	•	•	•
	3		•	•	•
	4				
	5			•	
	6	•	•	•	
	7	•	•		•
	8		•		
	9	•			
	10	•	•		
	11	•	•	•	•
	12				
	13		•	•	•
	14	•	•		
	15	•			
	16	•			
	17	•	•	•	
	18		•	•	•
Ch. 4	1	•	•		
	2	•			•
	3				
	4	•			
	5	•	•	•	
	6			•	
	7			•	
	8				
	9			•	
	10	•		•	

	Heaven/ God/ fear of God/ sin	Study/ teaching/ discipleship/ sages	Torah	Cult/ Temple/ worship
11	•			•
12	•	•		
13	•		•	•
14		•	•	
15				
16	•			
17	•			
18				
19	•			
20		•		
21				
22	•			
Ch. 5 1	•			•
2	•			•
3	•			•
4	•			•
5	•			•
6	•			•
7		•		
8	•	•	•	•
9	•			•
10				
11				
12		•		
13				•
14		•		
15		•		
16				
17	•			
18	•			
19	•	•		
20	•		•	•
21		•		
22		•	•	
23				

Figure 4

While the theme of God is the most frequently used in Avot, it is distributed throughout the document in such a way that it is focused upon more in 1:17-4:5 and 4:10-5:9. Avot begins, rather, with a greater focus on study and Torah, a theme that continues strongly through chapters one through four, and wanes (without disappearing altogether) in chapter five. Hence when focusing also upon the distribution of its key topics, Avot displays a progressive form, determined by repetition. On the level of topical content, Avot begins with a greater focus on the idea of Torah and study, and later connects this idea more and more with the notion of revelation and the ancient cult to YHWH alluded to in Avot 1:1. Finally by chapter five, discipleship, study and Torah are minor topics, while Avot focuses more on God and the Jews' history and practice of cult to Him. This is striking when we note that, in contrast, Avot's listing rhetoric begins by arguing for the ancient pedigree (and therefore the legitimacy) of the rabbis (i.e., through the list of Torah-receiving rabbis), and ends by engaging in more detailed explorations of the methods of rabbinic study (i.e., lists). In this regard, then, Avot does represent a kind of basic chiasm, represented in the figure below:

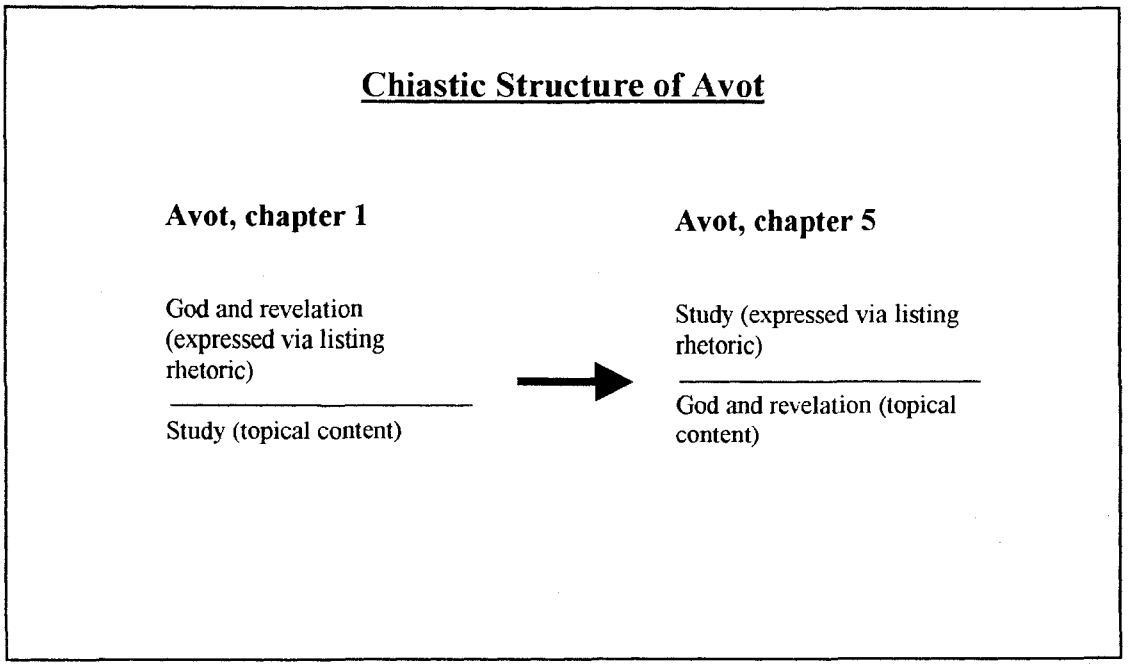

Figure 5

Another prominent technique used by Avot to connect the rabbis to Torah, God, and revelation is the direct citation of scriptural quotations as proof texts for rabbinic statements, a total of 28 times. Using the typically mishnaic formula שנאמר ("as it is said"), Avot quotes directly from scripture three times in chapters one and two combined (1:18; 2:9, 13), seventeen times in chapter three (3:2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 17), four times in chapter four (4:1, 19), and finally reappearing four times near the end of chapter five (5:4, 18, 19). The peak of the use of this formula appears in chapter three, almost immediately following the episode of Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciples. It is also in this chapter where we noted that the use of the notion of rabbinic reception from Torah disappears; all sages here are placed in seemingly random order. It could therefore be said that in chapter three, the operating rhetorical principle becomes the demonstration of the (proper) use of scriptural quotes as proof texts. For example, Avot 3:6 (notice, too, how these proof texts are used here in combination with a numbering exercise):

רבי חלפתא בן דוסא איש כפר חנניה אומר עשרה שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה. שכינה שרויה ביניהם. שנאמר (תהלים פב). אלהים נצב בעדת אל. ומנין אפילו חמשה. שנאמר (עמוס ט). ואגודתו על ארץ יסדה. ומנין אפילו שלשה. שנאמר (תהלים פב). בקרב אלהים ישפוט. ומנין אפילו שנים. שנאמר (מלאכי ג). אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וישמע וגו'. ומנין אפילו אחד. שנאמר (שמות כ). בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך:

R. Halafta ben Dosa, a man of Kefar Hananiah says,
"Among ten who sit and work hard on the Torah the Presence comes to rest,
as it is said [שנאמר],
God stands in the congregation of God (Ps. 82:1).
And how do we know that the same is so even of five?
For it is said [שנאמר],
And he has founded his group upon the earth (Am. 9:6).
And how do we know that this is so even of three?
Since it is said [שנאמר],
And he judges among the judges (Ps. 82:1)
And how do we know that this is so even of two?
Because it is said [שנאמר],
Then they that feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard (Mal. 3:16).
And how do we know that this is so even of one?
Since it is said [שנאמר],
In every place where I record my name I will come to you and I will bless you (Ex. 20:24)."[209]

Here, not only is Avot's common topic of Torah present, but so, too, is a combination of two of the document's major rhetorical strategies in order to both demonstrate as well as legitimate the use of each: citations of scriptural proof texts, and the use of numbering and listing. In chapter five, the reliance on direct scriptural quotes is for the most part entirely replaced with indirect allusions to scripturally based Jewish myth.

Once the use of scripture wanes near the beginning of chapter four, we are presented with something else. Chapter four contains a diverse collection of rhetorical and literary structures, held together only loosely by the "Rabbi X says" formula. Chapter four seems anomalous at first, since the use of both numerical and attributional formulae diminish. As stated above, Avot in general—and chapter four as a particularly apposite

example—uses several rhetorical techniques that are comparable in certain, important ways to both Mishnah and wisdom literature. Therefore, below we will review Avot in comparison to each genre on its own. But since these genres—Mishnah and wisdom—are each appropriate to a particular type of social institution—the guild and the school, respectively—we will also examine something of the social character of these groups, as well as the means by which outsiders became members. Once this is done we can begin to hypothesize about the usefulness that the text's flexible use of these genres would have afforded Avot's authors.

III.2. Avot as a Recruitment and Training Text for Rabbinic Neophytes

I submit that *Avot can be understood to function as a recruitment and training tool for the rabbinic guild in the mid-third century CE.* We have seen so far how Avot uses lists, and promotes listing language as paradigmatic in the world of the rabbis. We have also seen how so much of the content in Avot is geared towards an environment of masters and disciples. As Avot begins, it places more simple wisdom language into the voices of individual sages, all arranged and structured according to a chain of masters and disciples. But as it goes on, increasingly complex wisdom language is finally joined by longer lists, comparable more closely with mishnaic *Listenwissenschaft*. Both types of listing rhetoric aid in memory retention through mnemonic forms. Hence, the very structure of Avot endorses the social relationship of master and disciple; its list of sages in a chain of tradition implies the value of transmitting knowledge through discipleship, while its lists, wisdom sayings, or *Listenwissenschaft*-like language promote mnemonic language as the rabbinic ideal.

The hypothesis that emerges, and to which I have alluded before, is that Avot was meant as a sort of training manual. But, also as stated before, we can be even more specific than that. If we attempt to understand Avot as an attempt at rhetoric, then we can use rhetorical as well as social-scientific theory as aids in reconstructing the circumstance—or exigency—under which Avot's rhetorical strategies and structures were called for. In the remainder of this chapter it will be argued that Avot represents a liminal text; Avot's progressive structure—which moves from focusing on a list of sages to focusing on listing language itself, and from more common wisdom language to more culturally specific mishnaic rhetoric—was *meant to model and mirror a social transition process*.

I put forth, and aim to demonstrate, that *Avot was likely intended for an audience of Jewish scribes who had been recruited as rabbinic neophytes*. The best fit of Avot's rhetoric to a social situation would be to that of a transition between statuses, from a non-rabbinic Jewish scribe to a specifically rabbinic disciple within the guild. Avot therefore represents what we can call a "liminal" text, meaning that it is meant for an audience of liminal people, or the "neophyte." Liminality is a period of "mid-transition,"[210] while a neophyte is a "transitional-being" or "liminal *persona*," engaged in the process of transformation between his or her old and new social roles or statuses.[211]

There were several plausible alternative intended audiences for Avot, including already initiated disciples within the rabbinic guild, members of the *havura* (the group of loyal non-rabbis mentioned several times in Mishnah), or perhaps even the so-called *amme ha'aretz* (the term used by the Mishnah for the general Jewish community of Palestine). However, I submit that the analysis above rules them all out as intended

audiences of the document. Instead, the only type of audience that seems to make sense for Avot consists of Jewish scribes residing in northern Palestine. Moreover, both the Mishnah and Avot portray members of the rabbinic guild as men; hence as with most public institutions of the era, like guilds or philosophical schools, the audience intended for Avot was also male.[212] According to Goodman (as referenced by H. Gregory Snyder), there were a "'large number' of biblical texts current in Palestine ('many thousands'), and... that 'all adult male Jews had regular access to at least a Pentateuch scroll, since they could expect to hear it read aloud in synagogues at least once a week, on the Sabbath.'" But the question then posed by Snyder is relevant: "Even if true [that adult male Jews had regular access to scripture]... what percentage of Jewish males could read Aramaic, let alone Hebrew? And would they have been empowered to interpret it on their own behalf?" In the Greco-Roman world, "[l]anguage was a problem even for relatively educated people."[213] For an average Jewish, northern Palestinian audience of Aramaic or Greek speakers, "...the difficulties posed by Hebrew would have rendered scripture even more inaccessible to the average Aramaic-speaking auditor."[214]

Therefore Jewish scribes had a certain amount of "social leverage" within Palestine since "they were (presumably) able to read Hebrew, though fluency in the language, even among relatively educated students, may not have been universal."[215] In the northern Palestinian context, "the right to pronounce authoritatively on texts was the prerogative of a limited number of text-brokers. Some... of these figures would have gone under the name of a "scribe."[216] Palestinian scribes were "textual experts" who "carried out the reading and explication of scripture."[217] Epigraphic sources demonstrate that "in Greco-Roman society generally, scribes were typically attached to

institutions...," including, "in some cases temples, in others, political bodies. Fraternities and *collegia* also list the *grammateis* ["scribes"; sg., *grammateus*] as officers."[218] Snyder also comments that much of what we think we know of Greco-Roman scribes seems to come from the Gospels' portrayal of them as adversarial Jewish communal and textual authorities. But while the early Christian portraits may be exaggerated, even "caricatured,"[219] and are somewhat "anomalous"[220] in the context of Greco-Roman culture, their "deformation in character rendition suggests an underlying tension over the office and role of the scribe."[221] This is because scribes, as a particular class of professional textual readers, writers, and interpreters, could attain a certain amount of power in a society such as the Jewish community of Palestine, which highly valued dependable means for the transmission of their own body of scripture. Moreover,

> It would have been in the interest of such textual experts to control the dissemination of written texts of or about scripture and to restrict the prerogative of interpreting scripture to select caste of individuals... [Further], it was not simply the written text, but the traditions that grew up around it that were also closely guarded. Experts in "the traditions of the Fathers," those oral interpretations which grew up around the written law, would serve a similar function.[222]

As we will see, Avot seems to be authored by rabbis exercising their particular role as scribal "text-brokers," as "trained specialist[s]" in and "mediat[ors]" of texts.[223] These authors' particular task with Avot was to train its readership to be such "text-brokers," too; Avot promotes list making as the technology by which a rabbinic disciple can attain master status.

The range of topics and the sophistication of Avot's language (not to mention Mishnah's) required a higher education, something to which most Roman citizens,[224] Jews included, did not have access. Scribes, however, were essentially professional

readers and writers. Both Mishnah and wisdom texts—the genres from which Avot takes most of its techniques or content—in general imply scribal roles for their own intended audiences. In fact, since both genres suggest a scribal audience to begin with, it would require greater effort to argue for a wider or different intended audience other than scribes.

But Avot suggests not only a scribal audience, but, like wisdom literature, the context of a scribal *school*. Avot's topical focus and its rhetorical structure are each determined by the notion of Torah learned within a school (that is, master-disciple) environment. I submit that Avot does not make sense in terms of an intended audience if that audience were already a part of the guild. Avot tries so hard to legitimate rabbinic Judaism itself, that it would be a case of overcompensation. For example, the Mishnah—an intra-guild text—does *contain* the notion of rabbinic succession in it; but this is only mentioned in that document in passing, and only a handful of times. Avot, rather, makes this notion central, and to centralize an apology for Mishnah for members who are already part of the guild makes less sense. Moreover, Avot's school-focused form and content also betray the unlikelihood of "the Jewish community" or any average outsider (Jewish or otherwise) as the intended audience for Avot. The interpretation of Avot that follows will reveal that Avot has further qualities that suggest an intended audience not only of Jewish scribes, but one of Jewish scribal neophytes in the process of becoming disciples within the particularly rabbinic guild of scribes in northern Palestine.

III.3. Social Transition and Liminality in the Context of the Greco-Roman World

In the Mediterranean world, groups and group-focused identities were central; individualism as we understand it today was neither practicable nor expected. Individuals were identified according to the group to which they belonged, so if an individual were judged to act either honourably or shamefully, the judgment would extend to the group with which the individual was identified. Therefore such an identity had to be safely assigned and defined. In this culture, whether one was moving from household to household, city to city, or group to group, one's status as either outsider or insider had to be properly ascertained, and this was done by ritual means, whether formal or informal. Hence one's identity was group-centered: one was thought of as either insider or outsider; anything in between was potentially dangerous. But when joining a group, whether as a member or a guest, this middle phase between insider and outsider was a necessary mechanism that proved the safe transition from one status to another.

Arnold van Gennep, in his *Rites of Passage* (1960 [1909]) called this the "liminal" phase of transition, that stage after segregation from the individual's old identity, and before aggregation into the individual's new one. This is a stage of transformation marked by seclusion or segregation of neophytes within a ritual setting of some kind, and marked by lessons and trials or tests used to guide neophytes in the worldview and way of life of the group.[225]

That liminality was important in the ancient Mediterranean world has already been noted. For example, Thomas M. Finn's study of conversion rituals of ancient religions has taken the social importance of liminality into account,[226] as has Bruce J. Malina's study of ancient Mediterranean hospitality.[227] Liminal space and rituals were

important because of the widely acknowledged group-centeredness within Greco-Roman culture, commonly utilized to assign new identities. These processes communicated a social transformation from one status to another, marking, whether exclusively or not, the individual's undertaking of a new role, state, or status in society.

In his seminal study of liminality,[228] Victor W. Turner notes that "*[r]ites de passage* are found in all societies." He continues, "[s]uch rites indicate and constitute transitions between states... [including] in its meaning such social constancies as legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree."[229] Moreover,

> *Rites de passage*... also concern entry into a new achieved status, whether this be a political office or membership of an exclusive club or secret society. They may admit persons into membership of a religious group where such a group does not include the whole society, or qualify them for the official duties of the cult, sometimes in a graded series of rites.[230]

According to Turner, "initiation rites... best exemplify transition, since they have well-marked and protracted marginal or liminal phases."[231] Turner furthermore explains the dyadic character of the neophyte-instructor/master relationship. Turner himself stresses this relationship, and it can also serve as a useful analogue to the disciple-master relationship promoted by Avot:

> ...it must be understood that the authority of the elders over the neophytes is not based on legal sanctions; it is in a sense the personification of the self-evident authority of tradition. The authority of the elders is absolute, because it represents the absolute, the axiomatic values of society in which are expressed the "common good" and the common interest... complete obedience characterizes the relationship of neophyte to elder, [and] complete equality usually characterizes the relationship of neophyte to neophyte, where the rites are collective... [There is a] structural simplicity... [to] the liminal situation...[232]

Finally, another feature of Turner's model of liminality that can prove useful in comparison with Avot is his explanation of the communication of "*sacra.*" These are

materials (or, symbols) by which the core values and beliefs of the group are communicated, and which Turner singles out as "the heart of the liminal matter."[233] Based on Jane Harrison's studies of "the Greek Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries,"[234] Turner notes that *sacra* can be communicated as "(1) exhibitions, 'what is shown'; (2) actions, 'what is done'; and (3) instructions, 'what is said.'"[235] And it is striking when compared with Avot that:

> Among the "instructions" received by neophytes may be reckoned such matters as... *the main outlines of the theogony, cosmogony, and mythical history of their societies or cults... [I]nstruction is also given in ethical and social obligations, in law and in kinship rules, and in technology to fit neophytes for the duties of future office* [emphasis added]... [T]he communication of *sacra* both teaches the neophytes how to think with some degree of abstraction about their cultural milieu and gives them the ultimate standards of reference. At the same time, it is believed to change their nature, transform them from one kind of human being into another. It intimately unites man [*sic*] and office.[236]

The means by which *sacra* instruct are by breaking down the symbolic vocabulary of a society and recombining them in new ways that are in better accord with the particular worldview and way of life of the smaller group. *Sacra*, "presented with a numinous simplicity, stamp into the neophytes the basic assumptions of their culture."[237]

There is an amount of play at work in *sacra*, in order to reform the individual according to the new role or status into which he or she is transitioning. As Turner puts it, "[l]iminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence... there is a promiscuous intermingling and juxtaposing of the categories of event, experience, and knowledge, with a pedagogic intention."[238] Once such exploration has been conducted, and the liminal period is over, the individual can return to society with a new state or status, and with the understanding that they have "enhanced knowledge of how things work..."[239] As neophytes, these

individuals were "told... that they... [were] being filled with mystical power by what they... [saw]... and what they... [were] told about it... [T]his power confers on them capacities to undertake successfully the tasks of their new office..."[240]

From an anthropological perspective, then, I put forth that Avot can, in basic terms, be seen as a rabbinic version of what Turner calls *sacra,* a liminal instructional text designed to form members of the rabbinic guild out of neophytes. I reiterate that on a basic level Avot does three basic things that instructional *sacra* tend to do, which is to say that:

1. Avot includes "...the main outlines of..." rabbinic "...*cosmogony, and mythical history* of..." Jewish "...societ[y and cult]..." as Avot's authors understood it.
2. In Avot, "*instruction* is also given in ethical and social obligations, in law and in kinship rules..." according to the norms of the closed group of rabbinic sages.
3. And, Avot models for, and aims to impart to, its reader the list-making "...*technology* to fit neophytes for the duties of future..." rabbinic "...office."[241]

The text plays with various literary forms (such as wisdom or *Listenwissenschaft*) with an apparently pedagogical aim. Avot also stresses both implicitly and explicitly the simple master-disciple dyad as the standard relationship and power structure within the rabbinic movement. And at Avot's core is a gradual—that is, transitional—rhetorical structure, one formed around list-making, which is presented as the central feature of rabbinic speech and activity. The aim of Avot is both to legitimate for the reader the authority of

rabbinic masters, and to demonstrate and in some way impart the efficacy of rabbinic list-making language, by which their tradition (as Avot claims) is upheld. Avot seems geared ultimately towards preparing one for membership within the closed guild of rabbinic sages. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to exploring in greater detail just how Avot accomplished its apparent initiatory function within a rabbinic neophyte's period of liminal transition.

III.4. Avot's Intersection with Mishnah

Avot is a document that follows the Mishnah, and this must be kept in mind when comparing the two documents. Whatever internal literary correlations can or cannot be made between Mishnah and Avot, we must recognize the chronology of the documents. The Mishnah (*c.* 200 CE), being an early product of the classical rabbinic period (*c.* 200-700 CE), is also a product of the Greco-Roman world, but in general its literary character is anomalous in the context of the period's literature. The oral or mnemonic quality of Mishnah is not in itself that unusual in context of the ancient world. But, still, Mishnah "possesses some characteristics so unusual that one can approach it most realistically by defining what it is not."[242] While Mishnah bases itself loosely on the legal portions of the Hebrew Bible, it is not held together by a narrative framework; it does not attempt to be a historiography, presenting mostly legal cases almost randomly. Moreover, Mishnah "does not specify the audience for which it is intended. It does not indicate its own authorship."[243]

Although the Mishnah has been traditionally understood as a collection of legal rulings that were applied by rabbis to their Jewish communities at the time of their

composition, there is little substantial, external evidence to corroborate this.[244] That they claimed legal authority is observable, but if we cannot make the connection between this claim and actual application, then instead we can ask questions about what Mishnah actually did in its intended context, and how it did it. Usually dated to the early third or late second century CE (*c.* 200), Mishnah is the first evidence we have for the existence of anything that can be called rabbinic Judaism. Lightstone argues that, at the time of the Mishnah, rabbinic sages seemed to come from a general scribal background, forming their own guild of scribes in service of the administration of Judah I the Patriarch—the Mishnah was a training tool for these men.[245]

Neusner describes mishnaic rhetoric overwhelmingly as an example of what he calls *Listenwissenschaft* ("the science of listing"), "the 'paratactic' (to use W.S. Green's term) presentation of arrays of cases and their ordering and classification with respect to whether one or another rule applies."[246] Lightstone expands on this notion, describing mishnaic rhetoric as, "lyrical, permutative, list-like concatenation of cases and rulings, in which the inner logic remains ever implicit and in which 'lyrical' completeness is sometimes in itself sufficient, implicit justification for including a case in a list."[247] In other words, if a case is not necessarily concluded in a logical way, but it simply has the *feel* of closure, then mishnaic rhetoric conveys to the reader authors' "aspirations toward complete, well-patterned wholes."[248] Given its rhetoric, then, the purpose of Mishnah is less likely to be a legal guidebook. Rather, it inculcates a kind of expertise in approaching situations, one where various permutations and outcomes are played out. This is done in a way heavily reliant upon mnemonics and aids more in memorizing the fashion of

thinking rather than, necessarily, any particular opinions, conclusions or rulings. Therefore,

> The likely purpose of this was to inculcate in [the reader] the expertise—the mode of thinking—to understand cases in various permutations and as solvable problems in his job as a scribal functionary in local [Patriarchal] administration. The Mishnah therefore implies a small group of such scribes in the government of Judah the Patriarch, the Mishnah's acknowledged aristocratic patron. For a disciple to become a "master," he must "master" the authoritative expertise that is embodied in Mishnah's rhetoric.[249]

Tropper notes that, "[t]hough Avot may be viewed primarily as a wisdom composition, it is inextricably entwined with rabbinic law. The wisdom sayings... extol the study and observance of rabbinic law and are explicitly attributed to the recognized experts in this law."[250] Tropper continues:

> ...the Roman legal context of the second and third centuries seems to illuminate numerous facets of the broad historical setting of Avot. The similar interests and emerging prominence of rabbis and (eastern) jurists apparently reflected overarching trends of the time. Both groups not only interpreted law, but also summarized past legal traditions and reconstructed the history of jurisprudence.[251]

Although Avot is found as a tractate within the Mishnah, scholarly consensus is that it is a later composition, a position defended by various means but mostly on the grounds of the two documents' different literary styles.[252] Neusner even goes so far as to state that "Abot does not recognize a single topic that occurs in the Mishnah."[253] Hence the comparison of Avot to Mishnah is most often done in fact by contrast. However, while we can demonstrate these dissimilarities rather easily, their correspondences are also important, approximate as they may be. Avot, after all, is at the very least the first written apology for rabbinic Judaism, the first textual evidence for which is the Mishnah. But a positive comparison is also warranted considering the rhetoric of Avot, especially in its latter and usually more ignored sections.

Despite the general consensus that Avot is unlike Mishnah, if we compare the two documents we find places where this is truer, and others where it is less true. In fact it is the distribution of the passages in Avot that are more or less like Mishnah that is important when we take into account Avot's progressive structure. One of the more typical Mishnah sections, according to Lightstone, is M. Gittin 1:1-2:2[254]:

המביא גט ממדינת הים, צריך שיאמר בפני נכתב ובפני נחתם.
רבן גמליאל אומר, אף המביא מן הרקם ומן החגר.
רבי אליעזר אומר, אפילו מכפר לודים ללוד.
חכמים אומרים, אינו צריך שיאמר בפני נכתב ובפני נחתם
אלא המביא ממדינת הים והמוליך.
והמביא ממדינה למדינה במדינת הים, צריך שיאמר בפני נכתב ובפני נחתם.
רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר, אפילו מהגמוניא להגמוניא:
(Gittin 1:1)

a. One who brings a writ from a mediterranean province—
b. it is required that he should say: In my presence it was written and in my presence it was signed [by the witnesses].
c. R. Gamaliel says: also one who brings [a writ] from Rekem and from Heger [must be able to so declare].
d. R. Eliezer says: Even [one who brings a writ] from Kefar Luddim to Lud [must be able to so declare].
e. And sages say: It is not required that he should say: In my presence it was written, and in my presence it was signed [by the witnesses]—
except him who brings [a writ] from a Mediterranean province
and him who takes [a writ to a mediterranean province].
f. And one who brings [a writ] from province to province in the Mediterranean provinces—
g. it is required that he should say: In my presence it was written and in my presence it was signed [by the witnesses].
h. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel says: Even from district to district [within a single Mediterranean province must make such a declaration].[255]

This passage is part of the presentation of a particular case, some of the deliberation of which is attributed to individual rabbinic sages, and in which we see the logic of one particular circumstance played out in various permutations. And it goes on like this throughout the section, with the conclusion coming not because of the logic inherent in the case itself (in other words, not because of logical deduction), but more because the

rhetoric of the document—its uses of word patterns and mnemonics—seems to come to an aural, lyrical conclusion. The purpose is to imprint upon the disciple the language and therefore the intellectual expertise of parsing out cases in multiple permutations. In the case of Mishnah, its content is mostly legal (*halakhic*), but that content is inextricable from the rhetoric in which it is embedded.

Avot, while not a legal document, uses certain types of wisdom rhetoric, especially concentrated in chapter four, that more closely than other forms of wisdom rhetoric serves to examine "cases" in multiple permutations. However here, the substance of these "cases" is closer to typically pedagogical or ethical wisdom lessons than to the actual exercise of law. We will concern ourselves below (III.5) with understanding just how these *mishnayot* are akin to wisdom literature. But for now, let us briefly consider their similarities to Mishnah.

If we compare our mishnaic example above to Avot, we see definite dissimilarities over similarities at the beginning of Avot (those sections most commonly interpreted by scholars). Simple tripartite sayings held together by a chain of tradition are quite different than this passage from Gittin whose logic includes, but is not reliant upon, the attribution of sayings to rabbis. In Mishnah, certain sayings are attributed to rabbinic sages, but, unlike in Avot, the names are not the backbone of the document. In *mishnah*, it is the cases and their limited stock of forms that constitute the backbone of the document. Moreover, the observational character of the sayings at the head of Avot, revolving around Torah study, seems quite different from a legal case whose variations are minutely permutated. However, observe M. Gittin 1:1 again, this time side by side with selected later *mishnayot* from Avot:

המביא גט ממדינת הים, צריך שיאמר בפני
נכתב ובפני נחתם. רבן גמליאל אומר, אף המביא מן
הרקם ומן החגר. רבי אליעזר אומר, אפילו מכפר
לודים ללוד. וחכמים אומרים, אינו צריך שיאמר בפני
נכתב ובפני נחתם אלא המביא ממדינת הים
והמוליך. והמביא ממדינה למדינה במדינת הים, צריך
שיאמר בפני נכתב ובפני נחתם. רבן שמעון בן
גמליאל אומר, אפילו מהגמוניא להגמוניא:
(Gittin 1:1)

a. One who brings a writ from a mediterranean province—
b. it is required that he should say: In my presence it was *written* and *in my presence it was signed [by the* witnesses]
c. R. Gamaliel says: also one who brings [a writ] from Rekem and from Heger [must be able to so declare].
d. R. Eliezer says: Even [one who brings a writ] from Kefar Luddim to Lud [must be able to so declare].
e. And sages say: It is not required that he should say: In my presence it was written, and in my presence it was signed [by the witnesses]—
except him who brings [a writ] from a Mediterranean province
and him who takes [a writ to a mediterranean province].
f. And one who brings [a writ] from province to province in the Mediterranean provinces—
g. it is required that he should say: In my presence it was written and in my presence it was signed [by the witnesses].
h. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel says: Even from district to district [within a single Mediterranean province must make such a declaration].[259]

רבי חלפתא בן דוסא איש כפר חנניה אומר
עשרה שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה. שכינה
שרויה ביניהם. שנאמר (תהלים פב). אלהים
נצב בעדת אל. ומנין אפילו חמשה. שנאמר
(עמוס ט). ואגודתו על ארץ יסדה. ומנין
אפילו שלשה. שנאמר (תהלים פב). בקרב
אלהים ישפוט. ומנין אפילו שנים. שנאמר
(מלאכי ג). אז נדברו יראי ה איש אל רעהו
ויקשב ה וישמע וגו . ומנין אפילו אחד.
שנאמר (שמות כ). בכל המקום אשר אזכיר
את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך:
(Avot 3:6)

R. Halafta ben Dosa of Kefar Hananiah says,
"Among ten who sit and work hard on the Torah the Presence comes to rest,
as it is said [שנאמר],
God stands in the congregation of God (Ps. 82:1).
And how do we know that the same is so even of five?
For it is said [שנאמר],
And he has founded his group upon the earth (Am. 9:6).
And how do we know that this is so even of three?
Since it is said [שנאמר],
And he judges among the judges (Ps. 82:1)
And how do we know that this is so even of two?
Because it is said [שנאמר],
Then they that feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard (Mal. 3:16).
And how do we know that this is so even of one?
Since it is said [שנאמר],
In every place where I record my name I will come to you and I will bless you (Ex. 20:24)."[256]

הוא היה אומר הילודים למות.
והמתים להחיות. והחיים לדון. לידע להודיע
ולהודע שהוא אל. הוא היוצר. הוא הבורא. הוא
המבין. הוא הדין. הוא עד. הוא בעל דין. והוא
עתיד לדון. ברוך הוא. שאין לפניו לא עולה ולא
שכחה ולא משוא פנים ולא מקח שוחד. שהכל
שלו. ודע שהכל לפי החשבון. ואל יבטיחך יצרך
שהשאול בית מנוס לך. שעל כרחך אתה נוצר.
ועל כרחך אתה נולד. ועל כרחך אתה חי. ועל
כרחך אתה מת. ועל כרחך אתה עתיד לתן דין
וחשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך
הוא:
(Avot 4:22)

...[R. Eleazar Haqqappar] would say,
"Those who are born are [destined] to die,
and those who die are destined for resurrection.

And the living are [destined] to be judged—
so as to know, to make known, and to confirm
that
(1) he is God,
(2) he is the one who forms,
(3) he is the one who creates,
(4) he is the one who understands,
(5) he is the one who judges,
(6) he is the one who gives evidence,
(7) he is the one who brings suit
(8) and he is the one who is going to make
the ultimate judgment.[257]

כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר. בטל דבר.
בטלה אהבה. ושאינה תלויה בדבר. אינה
בטלה לעולם. איזו היא אהבה התלויה
בדבר. זו אהבת אמנון ותמר. ושאינה
תלויה בדבר. זו אהבת דויד ויהונתן:
(Avot 5:16)

[In] any loving relationship that depends upon
something,
when that thing is gone, the love is gone.
But any love that does not depend upon
something will never come to an end.
What is a loving relationship that depends
upon something?
That is the love of Amnon and Tamar [II Sam.
13:15].
And one that does not depend upon
something:
That is the love of David and Jonathan.[258]

We see that the "cases" here deal with essentially academic (in the literal sense) or ethical topics, which are explored in a limited way. But when Avot uses terse, mnemonic language, in which ideas are explored from multiple perspectives, in combination with the use of increasingly complex listing language (noted in II.3 above), it in essence brings the audience closer to the type of *Listenwissenschaft* that one encounters in the Mishnah. Again, this type of rhetoric peaks in prominence within the document in chapter four, following chapter three's greater focus on scriptural quotations, and preceding chapter five's focus on explicitly numbered lists.

Moreover, one striking feature of Mishnah is that while it attributes many of its statements to individual rabbinic sages, those attributions almost never form the core of

any case or unit. In Mishnah, the names of the individuals to whom each opinion or ruling is attributed is happenstantial, not central. In the example from M. Gittin above, the discussion is determined by stating a hypothetical legal case ("One who brings a writ from a mediterranean province..."), not by the names of any particular sages. Those names hold no weight in determining the flow of the Mishnah's text; the case would remain the same were these names replaced with others. Avot begins, however, by using names to determine the progressive structure of the document. But as it continues, the names lose their original narrative function, removed from the explicit chain of tradition. Finally, named attributions almost disappear completely from Avot. Therefore as Avot's narrative and argument progress, not only does Avot gradually resemble Mishnah in its increasingly complex use of listing language, but it also gradually loses its reliance on the list of sages, thereby appearing gradually more like Mishnah in this respect, too.

Avot, particularly as it progresses towards the end, includes rhetoric that can be called simpler versions of Mishnaic type of rhetoric and reasoning. Avot does not replicate *Listenwisseschaft*, rather it focuses on its own "science of listing." Avot molds wisdom rhetoric in such a way that the list form is increasingly complicated for and introduced to the imagined reader. As Avot progresses, rhetorical techniques more common to wisdom or philosophical schools give way to the introduction of what could be described as primitive versions of mishnaic rhetoric. Avot blurs the boundaries between wisdom and Mishnah, and therefore between the social worlds to which each was associated.

III.4.a. Joining Guilds in the Greco-Roman World

Since Lightstone understands the Mishnah as a text representing a "guild," or *collegium*, of rabbinic sages, it would first be helpful to understand how one joined guilds in the ancient world. At the time right before the creation of the Mishnah, Shaye J.D. Cohen observes, the rabbis "had little inclination and availed themselves of few opportunities to propagate their way of life among the masses... The rabbis were but a small part of Jewish society, an insular group which produced an insular literature."[260] The Mishnah, according to Lightstone, represents a period of "major reformation of the Patriarchate at the time of Judah I and the formation or reformation of the rabbinic guild as a retainer class within the Patriarchate of Judah I near the end of the second century."[261] The function of Mishnah, then, according to this theory, is to create "at both levels of the judicial branch and of court agent/functionary, the rabbinic class or guild of retainers... a cadre of persons with appropriate 'professional' expertise."[262] Cohen continues, stating that "[t]he social standing of the rabbinic movement changed dramatically under the leadership of Judah [I] the Patriarch. In this time the rabbinic movement expanded its base socially, economically, and politically. The rabbis moved into the cities of the Galilee, Judea, and the coast..."[263]

For the most part, however, Mishnah is not a document concerned with proselytizing, nor on preserving a chain of transmission as Avot later would be. Mishnah takes for granted the notion that masters and disciples form the core social arrangement of the guild, only sporadically mentioning (but not focusing upon) the idea of rabbinic reception of Torah through Moses and his disciples.[264] Moreover, it also takes for granted that Judah I the Patriarch is a member and the sponsor of the rabbinic movement and the

Mishnah itself. But Mishnah was not a document intended to be read outside the rabbinic guild. Its rhetoric and content require preexisting membership and training as a disciple within the guild to comprehend the text as intended. Its content suggests that the rabbis were the spiritual heirs of the Aaronid priesthood, convening over a utopian Temple-centered Jewish society. But Mishnah's own form and rhetoric suggest that these Temple-centered laws were meant as exercises to train disciples into rabbinic masters capable of wielding the necessary legal and administrative expertise under the auspices of the Patriarchate.

Ancient Roman *collegia* are often defined as types of small, "voluntary associations," understood according to the function they performed, usually funerary, cultic, or professional. Understanding the social processes by which an individual became a *collegium* member is dependent on first understanding something of the social character of these groups. *Collegia* were well known types of groups in the ancient world, "a formal, social unit."[265] In the ancient world what we call "associations" went by many different names: besides the Latin *collegium* were a multitude of Greek terms "*koinon, sunedrion, thiasos, heranos, sunagoge*;" as well as "names referring to membership" including *thiasotai, heranistai,, horgeones, sunthutai, thusiastai*; and "names derived from the deity worshipped" such as *agathodaimonistai, bacchistai, artemisiastai*, and so on.[266] We use the word "association" as a tool that allows us to describe in English the social character of all these groups, thereby implying some social similarities between them. Their features, with emphases placed on certain ones depending on the group, all included at least the following: the benefaction of someone higher up in social hierarchy,

including deities; cult to deities; communal rituals, including meals; and regulated internal social structures.

These groups, whenever possible, proclaimed their presence in urban locales through the act of monumentalizing, as well as in prominent public meeting houses. The placement of monuments, in addition to the content of the inscriptions or art upon them, all served to communicate to both outsiders and group members alike positive messages about the group responsible for them. Such monuments might mention the benefaction of a particular patron, honouring him or her in that way. Or the monuments might depict visually the image of a member of their group. They might also have reserved seating for them in a public stadium, the physical placement of which might indicate the understanding of the group's place in the local social order. Hence both discursively and non-discursively, *collegia* attempted to communicate that they were vital forms of social organization. Occasional imperial edicts might attempt to limit the powers or rights of associations, and this is the kind of evidence which is normally focused upon by scholars who paint a countercultural portrait of associations. But these do not account for the more abundant evidence of these groups living symbiotically within their urban locales. The evidence points to integration, not marginalization.[267]

Traditionally, scholars have also looked at associations according to the main goal of a group, towards the accomplishment of which their social features seemed to be geared: either occupational, cultic, or funerary/burial.[268] However, Philip A. Harland has recently arranged a more presently germane typology, based not on the purpose of these groups but on the membership profile of them. This typology is based on the means of access, in other words the social networks, which enabled one to join a particular type of

group. According to this typology there are five types of association: based on household, on ethnic/geographic location, on neighbourhood, on occupation, or on cultic social connections.[269] Though this is simply intended as a heuristic guide, and none of these types were ever mutually exclusive in the ancient world, the point is that a group's character was based as much, if not more, on the social character of its intended membership than on the purpose which it claimed for itself. This typology also puts under the microscope the adjective that usually goes along with "association" when discussing these groups, namely "voluntary." Although it was true that it was voluntary to join or not join a particular association, in the strictest sense of the word, there were both expectations for which people might choose to join groups, and expectations about which kinds of groups were suited to which kinds of people—based on their social location. Hence, "*collegia* members were socially homogeneous."[270] Each *collegium* created a world within the larger society in which those who decided to join would have their respective needs met, be it for solidarity, knowledge, or privileged access to some form of the divine.

Small "voluntary" groups in the Greco-Roman world tended to focus on the act of joining itself as something central. This is because membership had to be strictly defined in order to ensure both the survival and the relative homogeneity of each group. In each group some form of ritual marks the transition of a neophyte from outsider to insider. Each group, in fact, would be inconceivable without this strict definition between outsider and insider defining their existence; for each group is defined if not by exclusivity then by its conspicuousness as a group. In other words, the identity associated with a *collegium* or a philosophy was dependent on its recruiting and enlisting new

members. New members were initiated and defined by social and ritual processes in each group.

All scholars seem to agree that the major benefit perceived by those who wished to join a *collegium* was that it "gave men [*sic*] a sense of identity and comradeship."[271] Regardless of whence such an individual came, he or she would see the type of association which was considered appropriate for his or her social status and location to be a way to attain such an "identity and comradeship." So, for instance, membership in the occupational guild of dyers in a particular city would be considered an appropriate way for a dyer to maintain, attain, or legitimate his social identity as a dyer, and to establish both psychologically and socially his attachment to fellow dyers.[272] This, as mentioned above, is the almost so-called "natural" quality of *access* to *collegia*, so often noted by scholars. What happened following this stage—between having access to the group and being a part of it—is less certain.

Evidence of the processes utilized to join new individuals to such groups is often indirect and scanty. Such groups were more ready to advertise their status in society with grand monuments than they were to detail the mechanics by which an outsider became an insider of their group, at least in any way as permanent—and therefore still extant—as a monument or a mythic history. Consequently, assumptions underlie much about what we think we know about these joining processes. For instance, if such a group was a professional group, then some scholars might assume that all that was needed was employment in the particular profession, and enough money for the initiation fee, to ensure membership in the guild. The social implications of this are rarely, if ever, taken seriously. Moreover, this assumption is less frequently manifestly stated as it is either

implicit in discussion about guilds, or ignored as an issue completely. And it is true that much of the dearth of documentary evidence tends to mention little more than an initiation fee when it comes to how individuals became guild members. But the texts from which we base our assumptions were often meant to be read by outsiders, or were even written by outsiders about other groups. In general, the limited evidence for professional guilds in the Roman period shows that *collegia* defined members as those who pay fees, and so payment of a fee did not only represent a financial transaction, but it also marked the social transition from outsider to insider, as did continual financial, administrative, or ritual obligations within the life of the group. When compared with Turner's model of liminality, the payment of a fee marked the transition of the neophyte from outsider to a new member of the guild.

But it is not this kind of liminality that is suggested by Avot. Avot more directly suggests for its context a period of initiation and training within a master-disciple environment. Membership in professional guilds was dependent on social networking, and on one's profession and social location. Therefore, the rabbis of the mid-third century would have most likely turned to other, local scribes, whose eventual allegiance to the rabbis' own scribal guild would add to the rabbis' number and therefore their power, too. Therefore, the language used in Avot and the social structures that it promotes were more common to the institution of a school, the typical institution to which scribes were recruited, and in which scribes were trained. Although the rhetoric of Mishnah suggests the context of a professional guild of scribes, Avot's rhetoric and topical foci seem to suggest the context of an educational institution—a school—devoted to training those scribes. We must therefore examine the processes by which individuals tended to join and

become members of schools within the context of the eastern Roman Empire of the third century CE.

III.5. Avot's Intersection with Wisdom and Philosophical Literature

While Avot can be relatively loosely compared to Mishnah, as above, it is more certainly part of, or at least closer in affinity to, the genres of Jewish wisdom and Greco-Roman philosophy, which are genres associated with the institution of the ancient school. Since the mid-twentieth century, wisdom literature has been recognized by most scholars as a distinct genre identifiable in some way by comparable literary features.[273] Originally, "wisdom literature" referred to biblical texts whose use of the word "wisdom" (חכמה), "wise" or "sage" (literally, "wise one," חכם) was both abundant and thematically central, which therefore included Proverbs, Qoheleth (or Ecclesiastes), and Job. The Hellenistic and apocryphal books of Ben Sira (also called Sirach or Ecclesiasticus) and Wisdom of Solomon (Book of Wisdom) use the Greek translation of the Hebrew "wisdom," *sophia*.[274] But it has been noted that these texts not only have themes but also formal and stylistic commonalities that allow us to refer to wisdom literature as a genre not only defined by its content but also by literary and rhetorical features.

What, therefore, is characteristic of wisdom literature? What literary features, both in form and content, define a text as part of the wisdom genre? Norman K. Gottwald describes wisdom literature in this way:

> "Wisdom" typifies a way of viewing the world based on close observation and careful reflection in an effort to discern the substantial harmony and order that is sensed to be constitutive of it. The characteristic wisdom style does not, however, stop with observation and reflection, since its goal is to develop life strategies that *will integrate the individual's existence with the perceived order of the world.* Wisdom aims for a practical and comprehensive ethic and behavioral style... [275]

This description contains several of the elements common in scholarly definitions of the wisdom genre. Firstly, biblical wisdom texts, as distinct from other biblical books, reflect a "way of viewing the world" that is not reliant upon the history of Israel or the Law of Moses, but instead on the intelligence and observation of the individual. Often, these texts are pseudepigraphically attributed to the authorship of the ancient Judean king Solomon. Secondly, wisdom texts do not only contain observations but also recommend *ethoi* based on this expert human experience. This is therefore a more anthropocentric genre than other biblical or extra-biblical books. It is also a genre suited to aiding in the reader's reorientation to the new way of life modeled by the text.

At the core of the wisdom genre is the form of the proverb, which are "short, artfully constructed binary sentences... eventually assembled in collections such as those found in Proverbs... selected and then arranged according to formal, literary, and thematic criteria... [and] organized to ease memorization."[276] For example, the book of Proverbs begins:

> The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
> for attaining wisdom and discipline;
> for understanding words of insight;
>
> for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
> doing what is right and just and fair;
>
> for giving prudence to the simple,
> knowledge and discretion to the young-
>
> let the wise listen and add to their learning,
> and let the discerning get guidance-
>
> for understanding proverbs and parables,
> the sayings and riddles of the wise.
>
> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
> but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
They will be a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.

My son, if sinners entice you,
do not give in to them.

If they say, "Come along with us;
let's lie in wait for someone's blood,
let's waylay some harmless soul;

let's swallow them alive, like the grave,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;

we will get all sorts of valuable things
and fill our houses with plunder;

throw in your lot with us,
and we will share a common purse"-

my son, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths;

for their feet rush into sin,
they are swift to shed blood.

How useless to spread a net
in full view of all the birds!

These men lie in wait for their own blood;
they waylay only themselves!

Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the lives of those who get it.[277]

Biblical wisdom is also a more cosmopolitan genre in that its observations and proscriptions for ways of life often can transcend one social or historical context. Dating or contextualizing biblical wisdom texts is therefore notoriously difficult. Hence scholars have tended to prefer to hypothesize social origins for wisdom texts in the absence of evidence for historical provenance.

These hypothesized origins are based on comparative techniques, which almost invariably rely on comparison to literarily similar "wisdom" texts from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, whose social and cultural origins are clearer.[278] The context for these texts seems to have been educational, with the likely aim of training officials within the royal courts. Sometimes in these texts, this context is clear. But with Israelite texts this social locus is deduced not only by comparison, but also by both the content of wisdom books, which tend to promote teacher-student dyads, or at least superior-inferior kin dyads, as well as by the often-mnemonic rhetorical character of the texts. This latter aspect of wisdom texts suggest a context in which the transmission of these teachings constituted a tradition (i.e., a reception) from generation to generation. In the ancient world the most logical social setting for this type of literature was the school, which meant "a relationship between a teacher and some number of students who are not his actual children."[279]

Mesopotamian and Egyptian wisdom texts seem oriented, moreover, to the more specific task of training scribes. As John J. Collins notes of biblical wisdom:

> The kingdoms of Israel and Judah also had need of scribes, and the eventual production of the corpus of biblical literature shows that there was demand for scribes for religious purposes.[280]

This theory is common, but it is also based on "general probability—that is, the likelihood that a royal court would need the special talents of sages."[281] This hypothesis must be reviewed critically because, as James L. Crenshaw notes, "[n]othing within these [wisdom] texts... requires the assumption that the references have a special class of sages in mind."[282] The view expressed by Collins is only the "probable" view, but it is generally accepted and defended, in the absence of more direct evidence, because "...it is

difficult to imagine how... a [wisdom] tradition could be sustained without the institutional underpinning of a school tradition."[283]

But while this view is speculative, there are hints that Israelite as well as the later Greco-Roman Jewish wisdom literature, too, was a genre specific to the social institution of the scribal school. Not only does the production of the Hebrew Scriptures seem to have required a professional class of scribes, but moreover, since wisdom texts themselves "testify to studied composition and arrangement," then, "such accomplishment demands a unified worldview and ample leisure to master sapiential traditions."[284] Wisdom texts also tend to emphasize "the wise" or "the sages" as a "distinct group."[285] Often, wisdom and folly (and therefore sages and fools) are contrasted, and especially in Hellenistic Jewish wisdom texts (and in Avot), the pursuit of wisdom is compared and contrasted with other forms of labour (usually favouring the pursuit of wisdom as the more ultimately valuable task) (see, for example, Ben Sira 38:24-39:11).[286] Moreover, the topical content of wisdom documents often expresses the understanding that "[o]nly those who have ample free [leisure] time can afford to concentrate on intellectual pursuits."[287] If this was so, then wisdom may have been the province of an elite class, one which "advises rulers."[288] Wisdom texts express the belief that a sage is someone who "studies sacred literature," which in Hellenistic and then Greco-Roman Jewish wisdom texts was defined as a "Torah" or canon of scriptures (Ben Sira cites the "Law," "Prophets," and "Writings" as his "sacred literature")[289]; this was also the occupation of a scribe. Based only on a rough reconstruction, then, the ultimate goals of a "sage," therefore, were to interpret and preserve a received body of literature or tradition, to cultivate and master an (elite and closed) way of life geared towards the pursuit of

"wisdom," and to pass their teachings down to subsequent generations of sages by means of the wisdom texts (whether written or oral) that they created amongst and (at least originally) for themselves.

Scholars of wisdom literature commonly look for signs of wisdom rhetoric in other texts as well, and many have turned to Avot as a later example of a generally more ancient Jewish phenomenon.[290] Herford said of Avot: "It at once suggests comparison with the biblical books of Proverbs and Koheleth, and with the extra-biblical book of Ben Sira, all three of which were purely ethical in their contents."[291] More recently I. Gottlieb performed a comparison between Avot and the conventions of wisdom literature based on the premise that, "[i]t seems obvious to include [Avot] in a comprehensive discussion about Hebrew Wisdom."[292] Saldarini states that Avot, "is similar to Biblical wisdom literature in that it is a collection of disparate sayings with some unity given by form and theme."[293] Finally, Crenshaw observes that Avot "has often been compared to the book of Proverbs and Qoheleth because of its high number of ethical admonitions and occasional aphorisms."[294]

By the Hellenistic period authors began to change or add to the conventions for writing Jewish wisdom, many of which are shared with Avot. Hellenistic wisdom literature developed out of its biblical predecessor; as Tropper notes, "...the *didactic* rather than speculative nature of these [Hellenistic wisdom] texts demonstrates that didactic wisdom, in the spirit of Proverbs, served as the primary paradigm for the post-biblical wisdom imagination."[295] The most prominent Jewish wisdom text from this era is the book of Jeshua ben Eleazar ben Sira (*c.* 1st century BCE-1st century CE).[296] The central theme of Ben Sira, in contrast with biblical wisdom, is not wisdom itself but

rather the particular topic popular in biblical wisdom, the "fear of God."[297] This work also "...introduc[es] the Torah of Moses into the wisdom school, and thereby attempt[s] to combine two educational traditions."[298] Ben Sira "...envisaged his own book as comparable to the ancestral writings,"[299] But the rabbis of the Mishnah seem to have banned amongst themselves (and presumably for anyone over which they claimed power) the use or study of Ben Sira and any other Hellenistic Jewish texts, as they were seen as having been created after the time of prophecy, and therefore falls outside of God's revelation.[300] Ben Sira, both in the original Hebrew and the more common Greek translation, is indeed heavily reliant on Greco-Roman culture. For example, the text "endorses... Greek culture," and uses "the Greek form of praise, encomium..."[301] Nevertheless, Ben Sira still remained "the most widely used" of those banned books by the rabbis.[302]

It seems a matter of consensus that, "[b]y the time of Ben Sira... the particular features of Jewish law and history penetrated the wisdom tradition." Tropper elaborates, stating that Hellenistic wisdom texts, "all synthesize universal wisdom themes with Torah and Jewish history"[303], as Avot does as well. Ben Sira also introduces scriptural quotations, as well as frequent pentateuchal allusions, which reflect that "the distinctive piety of the sages has succumbed to the powerful influence of Yahwism as it manifests itself outside the canonical wisdom literature."[304] Collins observes about Ben Sira that, "[t]he most striking formal departure from biblical wisdom is found in the Praise of the Fathers (chapters 44-50), which uses the history of Israel as instructional examples."[305] Ben Sira also makes heroes out of biblical figures or ancient archetypes, such as priests (Aaron, Phineas), prophets (understood as "miracle workers") or Moses. Moses in Ben

Sira "is described as the recipient of the law rather than as a lawgiver."[306] Like Avot's authorship, "...when Sirach clearly draws on scriptures, he does so with considerable freedom. He is not merely transmitting what he found in the Torah, but drawing from it to create his new work of wisdom."[307] Ben Sira does not only tack covenantal authority onto the wisdom genre, however; rather, he "...subsumes the Law under the rubric of wisdom, as its supreme example."[308]

Ben Sira understands the pursuit of wisdom to be concomitant with the study of Torah, and to be the province of the figure of the scribe:

> How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High!
>
> He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. He serves among the great and appears before rulers; he travels in foreign lands and learns what is good and evil in the human lot. He sets his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and to petition the Most High; he opens his mouth in prayer and asks pardon for his sins.
>
> If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge, as he meditates on his mysteries. He will show the wisdom of what he has learned, and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant.
>
> Many will praise his understanding; it will never be blotted out. His memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. Nations will speak of his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise. If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him. (Ben Sira 38:34-39:11 [NRSV])

For Ben Sira, the ideal scribe was a hero: "...a man of piety, devoted to the study of the Law and to prayer, but also concerned with the wisdom of the ancients."[309] Ben Sira also represents "the earliest clear reference to a school in a Jewish text,"[310] in the context of a concluding call to recruitment to that school ("Draw near to me, you who are uneducated,

and lodge in my house of instruction [*oikoi paideias*]."[311]) Ben Sira was "a wisdom teacher, who [made] extensive use of the Torah..."[312] Wisdom texts such as Ben Sira were most likely associated in their original contexts with the function of training scribal disciples. As Ben Sira proposes to his reader:

> Stand in the company of the elders. Who is wise [*sophos*]? Attach yourself to such a one. Be ready to listen to every godly discourse, and let no wise proverbs escape you. If you see an intelligent person, rise early to visit him; let your foot wear out his doorstep. Reflect on the statutes of the Lord, and meditate at all times on his commandments. It is he who will give insight to your mind, and your desire for wisdom will be granted. (Ben Sira 6:34-37 [NRSV])

Therefore Ben Sira advocates a) discipleship, and b) the study of Torah as the path to "wisdom."[313] But if the guild of rabbinic scribes forbade or limited the use of Hellenistic wisdom texts like Ben Sira—the kind perfect for training scribes—then this would have most likely necessitated the creation of their own wisdom book like Avot, at a time when recruitment and training became concerns.

Tropper notes that Avot seems, in fact, to have been related to the greater philosophical movement of the Greco-Roman east during the third century, called by Philostratus (*Lives of the Sophists*) in 230 CE (and still today by scholars) the Second Sophistic (*c.* 50-250 CE), in which the pursuit of ancient Greek rhetoric and philosophies became a kind of intellectual vogue at the time.[314] Firstly, many writers of this movement—such as Philostratus, Diogenes Laertius, or Herodes Atticus—were interested, as Avot is, in connecting their intellectual lineages with ancient authorities. Secondly, "the years of the Second Sophistic roughly coincide with the tannaitic period outlined in Avot. Avot portrays Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai as the bridge between the Pairs of the Second Temple times and the tannaim."[315] And thirdly,

> Just as the members of the Second Sophistic considered the study of rhetoric and Greek literary classics to be a worthwhile activity in and of itself, Avot presents Torah study not as a pragmatic skill needed for the definition of halakhic obligations but as an elevated religious experience.[316]

Tropper argues that because of the usual aristocratic status of members of the Second Sophistic, that the author of Avot must therefore be Judah the Patriarch, the Mishnah's aristocratic patron. However, we must not allow our general model of the Sophist to overwhelm the evidence at hand. I disagree that the level of expertise required to create Avot was the sole province of the Patriarchal family. Rabbinic writings—and even the internal portrayals of rabbis within these writings—belie a culture of well-educated professional scholars. It seems to me less unlikely than Tropper thinks for a group of well-educated scribes to have caught wind of a very public intellectual movement that had already by the time of Avot's composition been popular in the east for 200 years.

Avot is certainly aware and makes use of the arsenal of rhetorical conventions that were common to wisdom literature during the Hellenistic and then Roman periods. It quotes wisdom literature in the form of four rather scattered citations of verses from Proverbs.[323] This is the entirety of Avot's direct reliance on a previous wisdom text. Otherwise, its reliance on wisdom is in its use of the genre's literary conventions. As Tropper further notes,

> ...the hallmark of Hebrew wisdom, the bipartite proverb, leaves many traces throughout Avot. The Avot proverbs are terse and, in proper wisdom tradition, they employ literary techniques such as riddles, numerical sayings, lists, anadiplosis, dialogue, and metaphor.[324]

Tropper includes in his study a valuable dissection of the wisdom techniques used by Avot, arranged according to each technique, and with examples from Avot used in order to demonstrate them. These methods, mixed throughout Avot, include "*parallelism*,"

"*syntactic*" (e.g. 1:6, 10; 3:13-14; 4:1-3), "*synonymous*" (e.g. 1:4-5, 7; 2:2, 5, 15; 3:7, 11, 12; 4:5, 14; 5:20)[325], "*antithetic*" (e.g. 1:10, 14, 15; 2:10, 15-16; 3:1, 15; 4:2, 15; 5:20), and "*interlinear*" (e.g. 3:5, 9-10; 4:6, 9, 11; 5:16-19)[326]; the "*list*" (see chapter I above)[327]; "*command and justification*" (e.g. 3:7; 4:4, 8, 13);[328] "*word pairs*" (e.g. 1:10; 4:4, 15; 5:20)[329]; "*consequential*[s]" (e.g. 2:7, 11, 16; 3:13; 4:5, 10, 16, 21)[330]; as well as an "added third leg" to certain binaries or parallelisms (e.g. 1:3, 5-7, 10, 12, 14-15, 18; 2:5; 3:1, 12; 4:4, 11, 15).[331] Avot makes use of rhetorical techniques typical of wisdom such as proverbs, instructions, repetition, analogy, numbers, assonance, attribution, mnemonics, and so on.[332] Rabbinic texts, including Avot, call rabbinic masters "sages," just as the authors of wisdom texts are referred to as "sages." Gottlieb further notes that, "the eight essential wisdom themes, including such topics as the search for life's secrets and a social responsibility for justice, are well represented in Avot."[333] Avot therefore represents a highly sophisticated and educated authorship, one very well acquainted with the conventions for the writing and editing of wisdom texts. This authorship most certainly wanted to present Avot to its audience as a wisdom text.

Lawrence M. Wills, notes, for example, that Avot's heavy use of the wisdom technique of antithetical parallelism might also indicate the interest of Avot's authors in training scribes.[335] An antithetical parallelism is a simple statement of contrast: "There is *x* and *not-x*."[336] For example (Avot 3:9):

כל שמעשיו מרובין מחכמתו.
חכמתו מתקימת.
וכל שחכמתו מרובה ממעשיו.
אין חכמתו מתקימת:

Everyone whose works are greater than his wisdom,
His wisdom endures.
And everyone whose wisdom is greater than his works,
His wisdom does not endure.

Firstly, such a simple, terse saying, which uses only a minimal vocabulary, would make a useful mnemonic training tool for scribes. Secondly, Wills observes that "...many of the sayings in *Abot*, as in [the Gospel of] Matthew, utilize precise antithetical parallelism in sayings that distinguish those who are righteous from those who are not."[337] He thereby suggests that the content of these sayings also imprint upon the reader clear, binary ethical proposals:

> ...what is emphasized in these antithetical sayings in Matthew and *Abot* is the radical demand of a certain lifestyle and the imposition of a sectarian, segregated consciousness. The sayings attempt to simplify an approach to religious life that is based on a single ethos.[338]

Moreover, Avot's authorship "was likely schooled in the same techniques"[339] as Matthew's. And since Matthew suggests scribal training for its own authorship,[340] Wills, "propose[s] that a form that, in Matthew, emphasized inclusion and exclusion has also been used in *Abot* as the means of discerning the person with the proper ethical lifestyle."[341] But while this conclusion is tenuous, it can still be observed that,

> In neither Matthew nor *Abot* are the traditional wisdom motifs presented as they had been for centuries. Rather, what is common to the two is an orientation to wisdom that is transmuted into an all-embracing demand for a righteous ethos and lifestyle... The wisdom aspect in all of these cases is not *traditional* wisdom, but the *new* experience of the scribe and sage.[342]

Jewish wisdom texts of the Greco-Roman era tended to reorient the wisdom genre towards more particularly Jewish topics, as well as to an educational context. Avot does this too, by focusing so overwhelmingly on discipleship, on study of "Torah," and on connecting their statements with the ancient revelation from God at Sinai.

Although Avot focuses mostly upon the list, in one form or another, the text clearly does belong mostly to the wisdom genre. Wisdom literature is a genre with many conventions, only one of which is listing. Yet Avot's authors not only chose to focus on

this particular form among the many available, but they also complicate the listing process in gradually complex ways. As such, Avot comes closer to resembling something like the Mishnah to a novice of the rabbinic movement, as the text is read progressively. We noted above (III.4) that many of Avot's *mishnayot* resemble in a more primitive way the more complex type of list-based language found in the Mishnah, especially concentrated more towards the end of Avot. As observed above, Avot represents a progressive trajectory. Simpler tripartite sayings similar to wisdom binaries (with the typical Hellenistic added "third leg") appear mostly towards the beginning of Avot, mostly in the sections dominated by the chain of tradition argument. But as Avot continues, it adds not only greater reliance on scripture in chapter three, but then a greater concentration on more complicated wisdom sayings (similar in some ways to more complex mishnaic lists, as noted above [III.4]), and finally lists of greater numbers and complexity.

The Second Sophistic "thrived in a scholastic setting,"[347] and Avot's content and style overwhelmingly insinuate a scribal school setting for the document. This is not a new suggestion; Avot's wisdom language, its affinities with contemporaneous philosophical writings, and the bulk of its discursive content immediately suggests an educational context, as does its use of rhetorical techniques such as mnemonic language, or linking the school to an ancient tradition. Given the progressive structure of the document we can begin to answer a question that has still been left unanswered by critical scholarship: What particular function or usefulness within a rabbinic school setting would Avot have had? *How did Avot work within its intended school context?* To

answer this question, we must first understand something of the means by which individuals joined and lived in Greco-Roman schools.

III.5.a. Joining Schools in the Greco-Roman World

Philosophical schools in the ancient world were dissimilar to what either the word "philosophy" or "school" might indicate in contemporary parlance, and this fact is important when considering how individuals joined these groups. To join a philosophy was to adhere to a particular group—a school—with the aim of getting one closer to Truth or the Divine, as that school defined it. A philosophy was not merely a way of thinking, but a way of life which was represented by the living model of the school's teacher, who was either the school's founder itself or who presented himself as the direct successor of the founder. Philosophical schools, even by the second century BCE, were presenting themselves as "successions" (*diadochai*); recruiting and training disciples was necessary to transmit the school's teachings, ensuring the survival of the school and thereby its privileged or sacred knowledge.[366] Most often, a school by this definition organized itself in small groups consisting most basically of a master and several disciples, often in a household setting, but sometimes in a dedicated study house (cf. I.1 above). Like *collegia*, philosophical schools were small, "voluntary" associations of individuals from comparable social locations, interacting on a face-to-face basis, sharing rituals inside the group.[367]

Philosophical schools defined members as masters, so gradually learning how to be a master through discipleship marked their extended transition from outsider to full insider. Joining these groups involved what A.D. Nock famously called "conversion," in the "religious sense"[368]; as Steve Mason puts it, "a radical break with one's previous way

of living and the resolute adoption of a new path."[369] As is often noted, philosophical schools, because of this character, were more analogous to modern notions of religions than to modern philosophies, requiring immersion within a particular way of life and adherence to a particular worldview. Those attracted to the way of life and worldview offered by a philosophical school in the ancient Roman world were typically educated men,[370] the type "who sought the keys to life's mysteries though reasoned analysis"[371] and therefore whose previous education was at a high enough level to facilitate the endeavor.[372]

The recruiting process often began with the use of the group's *logos protreptikos* (meaning "persuasion,"[373] or, "exhortation or initiation"[374]), an exhortatory form of apologetic.[375] The *logos protreptikos*, or protreptic, was a Greek genre, "a lecture or tract designed to attract converts... a recognized class of philosophical writing throughout [this] period."[377] Mason states that, "writers of protreptic try to persuade interested parties, who are still vulnerable to persuasion by others, of a higher level of commitment to their own schools."[378] As Dennis C. Duling explains,

> ...the *logos protreptikos* was a recruiting genre, sometimes addressed to crowds, sometimes written to individuals, in which a philosopher argued for the superiority of his particular philosophical school... a lecture or pamphlet designed to recruit "seekers" who have not made up their minds.[379]

But this seems not to have been an inflexible genre, as "the *logos protreptikos* contained an element of fluidity between oral and written discourses and was comprised of different written forms, such as discourses, letters, and dialogues."[387] (The *logos prospektikos* will be discussed in further detail below, and in comparison with Avot [III.6].) The goal was to convince the reader or hearer of the validity of the way of life and worldview propounded by the authorship and the group to which that authorship was associated.

Once persuaded, newly recruited neophytes would begin to live as disciples, "often liv[ing] with their master as they studied with him."[388] At this stage the disciple is fully immersed in the world of the school. The first step would be to learn "a few general ideas about the history of philosophy… from entirely unoriginal text-books."[389]

Second, "came a course, still fairly general, on the school's own doctrine."[390] This was only a general orientation of the rudimentary precepts of the school to the commonly known philosophies in the general culture.[391]

Third, "it was only after this that the school's real teaching began," says H.I. Marrou.[392] This stage comprised of "studying the school's own classics" and the teacher's personal and "unbiassed" [*sic*] version of the school's philosophy: his interpretation.[393]

Fourth, after or concurrent to this stage "personal conversations between the master and his disciple" were allowed, "either alone or in the company of a friend and colleague."[394] Marrou stresses the personal nature of the master-disciple relationship at this point because of the result: that the disciple became personally and psychologically attached to the master, both his person and the way of life which he both taught and embodied.[395] By the end of this education as a disciple the individual would ideally him or herself become a master of the school.

It is important to note the social process through which one changed from an outsider to a member in philosophical schools in general. One, the individual is a relatively qualified and interested outsider who is inclined to join a small group. Two, the individual is recruited by the group. Three, the individual exists as a neophyte in a period between statuses as a disciple, no longer a full status holder on the outside (from the

individual's and the school's perspective, at least), gradually becoming closer to the master and more acquainted with the school's teachings and way of life. Four, one becomes a full status-holding "master," the school's "head" (*scholarches*), "who was duly appointed by his predecessor."[396] But even with this last step in mind, the understood character of a philosophical school was for a group of individuals to spend most of the remainder of their lives as disciples, gradually getting closer to the "inner circle," existing throughout their tenure in the group not as a master but as a disciple—a perpetual student. Hence, existing between the state of a full outsider and full insider was the practical social circumstance for the majority of those who chose to join a philosophy; the process of joining itself, if not the ideal goal, was the social focus, and was protracted sometimes over the remainder a lifetime.[397]

III.6. Avot's Function within the Setting of the Third Century Rabbinic School

Avot seems to share some basic ideas current to the Greco-Roman world about joining groups that is more akin to philosophical groups of the time than to *collegia*, not only focusing on the master-disciple relationship, on study, and on ethical or cultic topics, but also emphasizing a gradual transition from the status of outside to insider (neophyte to disciple to rabbinic master). All groups in the ancient Mediterranean world required integration through either explicit or implicit liminal rituals to join it both legitimately as well as safely, since so many groups also claimed a certain kind of special access to the divine. In the case of Avot, this claim is reflected in Avot's claim of Mosaic lineage for the rabbis, most prominent at the beginning of the text.

Avot represents an "apologetic" work,[398] or at least it certainly begins as one. Connecting recent (that is, from the perspective of the intended audience) sages with accepted Jewish leaders, going as far back as Moses, serves as an attempt to collapse the accepted ethnic history and the more novel (and hence, to many, unusual) rabbinic guild. The purpose of the opening unit of Avot is to legitimate rabbinic Judaism by connecting it both to an accepted past—history from Moses onward—and an accepted present—the more socially recognizable ethos and language of wisdom or philosophical schools in general. Both of these factors are intended to make the rabbinic guild at first appear both legitimate and attractive. At least this unit is comparable to the first stage of joining philosophical groups as outlined above, since this section is the most apologetic, arguing implicitly for the legitimacy of the rabbis' discipleship-based perpetuation, and implicitly against any other groups' (the Patriarchate's?) claims to ascribed (hereditary) authority, or by claims to different types of achieved authority than the rabbis'.

But Avot 2:8-14 then contains another important narrative, as noted above (II.2). This brief and relatively rudimentary narrative represents a peak in both forms of listing rhetoric most common in Avot. It also happens to depict R. Yohanan ben Zakkai and his five disciples engaged in learning in a master-disciple, small-group, school environment. We will use this explicit, discursive narrative within the text in order to briefly demonstrate and confirm some the above reconstructions of Avot's social setting.[399]

The setting of the Yohanan ben Zakkai narrative is given first: "Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai received [the Torah] from Hillel and Shammai... He had five disciples, and these are they: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus [etc.]..." The narrative then progresses steadily. First ben Zakkai "would list [or, enumerate] their good qualities," inevitably

judging them all and favouring the first listed disciple, Eliezer ben Hyrcanus ("a plastered well, which does not lose a drop of water"). Following the "listing" of their "good qualities," another rabbinic master enters the scene, Abba Saul, favouring (but "in his [ben Zakkai's] name"; משמו), instead, the final disciple, Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh ("a surging spring").

Ben Zakkai then proposes a problem for his disciples, "Go and see which is the straight path to which someone should stick." Again, after each disciple is given his due attention, Eleazar ben Arakh is again preferred, this time for responding "Goodwill." A second, opposite, problem is then introduced by ben Zakkai, "Go out and see which is the bad road, which someone should avoid." For the second consecutive time, ben Arakh's opinion ("ill will") is preferred. The first and second problem, then, are related in two basic ways; firstly, they examine opposite ends of the same issue, and, secondly, Eleazar ben Arakh is judged to be the superior disciple. Finally, immediately following this judgment, the disciples "each said three things."[400]

Avot, in its largest narrative, and the section in the document which contains the greatest concentration as well as interaction between Avot's two core listing rhetorics, depicts the school environment in an idealized way. This idealized depiction is pertinent to our present examination because it is progressive. Here, Avot models in small scale three stages of an ideal academic dialogue within life as a disciple, as Avot wants its intended audience to understand that life. A disciple is first judged by a rabbinic master to be suitably ethically oriented; a disciple then involves himself in more general questions of ethics (that is, behaviour); and, finally, the disciple is himself allowed to practice

tripartite, list-like speech (which, as I have argued, was heretofore modeled by Avot's rhetoric to be usually tripartite).

The narrative is simple and should not be overanalyzed to the point of doing violence to the text. However, we can note the basic underlying assumption of the narrative, that life as a disciple at the very least requires the acquisition of different types of academic skills and qualities, that those skills and qualities are evaluated by rabbinic masters, and that those skills and qualities are introduced in a gradual manner through tests. Within their most complex narrative section, Avot's authors want to portray to their audience a (brief and idealized) version of life as a rabbinic disciple that follows, in broad, the typical stages of philosophical training current to the Greco-Roman world. This section of Avot seems to aid in confirming the above hypothesis that Avot's rhetorical structure mirrors a school-like social transition process, since such a process is the one singled out and portrayed by the document's own authorship as ideal.

I put forth that Avot 1:1-2:14 can be understood as a Hebrew *logos protreptikos*, as it attempts to persuade the reader to adhere to a school of thought and a way of life particular to the closed world of the rabbis. Mark D. Jordan's study of the ancient protreptic[401] not only provides a description of the genre that seems in many significant ways comparable to Avot, but it is also a masterfully critical literary inquiry. As Jordan notes, "[t]here has been a debate among contemporary readers whether philosophic protreptic is a [*sic*] properly spoken of as a genre at all[402]... The structure of a protreptic genre cannot be discerned by finding a rhetorician-founder who set down explicit rules for it."[403] Moreover, the word "protreptic" was "...not originally a technical term in philosophical writing... Terms such as *protropê* or *protreptikon* do appear regularly in

the [rhetorical] manuals, but only with their ordinary sense of persuasion."[404] There are also few structural or formal similarities between various self-professed protreptics:

> Protreptics to philosophy are written by very different authors in each of the major schools[405]... [A]n inductive survey of materials will yield no clear sense of the rhetorical character of the protreptics[406]... the variety of forms and the variation within apparently similar forms suggest that there is in the writing of protreptics little binding by generic antecedents[407]... This might be due to weak institutional continuities [between different schools]... but it is also due to the persistent conflicts among schools about the ends of philosophic teaching[408]... [P]rotreptic cannot be a genre in the ordinary poetic sense, that is, as dictating a certain combination of form, diction, and subject-matter."[409]

Therefore, noting that, "...the structural characteristics [of protreptics] may vary with the end in view,"[410] Jordan considers the goal, rather than the genre, of the protreptic to be its defining factor:

> ... no rhetorical analysis could work by comparing rhetorical devices from different philosophical protreptics without considering the end in each... Practically, this means that analysis must process not so much by abstract schemata as by the reading of the whole texts in terms of their differing ends."[411]

Although he notes that there are, therefore, some, "...difficulties of definition,"[412] Jordan defines protreptics as "just those works that aim to bring about the firm choice of a lived way to wisdom—however different the form of those works and their notions of wisdom might be."[413]

Jordan observes that "...there are many works that persuade to philosophy under some other title than 'protreptic,'..." many of which "...clearly serve as introductory persuasions to philosophy."[414] Protreptics were also "...by no means confined to philosophy," they were also used to promote and encourage the mastery of the arts such as music or rhetoric, in athletic events, or preceding battle.[415] Philosophers "...must compete not only against other philosophers, but [also] against the claims of rhetoric,

medicine, and the other arts."[416] Therefore, "...every [ancient] school must be concerned with protreptic—since every school continues to exist just by virtue of such choices having been made."[417] Within the realm of ancient philosophies, "...the need for some protreptic was almost universally felt in the ancient schools."[418] Moreover, "... there is ample evidence that the practice of offering persuasions to study much preceded Plato, since it seems to have been the common practice of the teachers of rhetorical wisdom contemporary with Socrates—and perhaps even of their teachers."[419] Philosophical protreptics occurred in many types, such as orations, letters, hymns, biographies; and (perhaps most notably when compared with Avot) dialogues, anthologies, aphorisms, and "anecdotes of classroom teaching."[420]

Thus, when considering Greek or Roman schools, there is a "bewildering array of protreptic examples..." because,

> Each school sees a 'recurring situation' calling for discourse, but the schools disagree fiercely on the norms governing that situation. They disagree on the exigencies. The schools also disagree, therefore, on the character of the audience and the appropriate motives, hence on the appropriate structures and motives, not to speak of the archetypal images.[421]

Some protreptics cited by Jordan, are those by Aristippus of Cyrene (whose *Protreptic* was the first work to bear this title), Monimus of Syracuse, Theophrastus, Demetrius of Phaleron, Ariston of Chios, Persaeus of Citium, Cleanthes, Chrysipus, Posidonius, and the famous Latin example, *Hortensius* by Cicero.[422] Jordan himself analyzes "...four obvious and influential protreptics..."[423]: Plato's *Euthedemus*, Aristotle's *Protreptikos*, Seneca's 90th letter, and the *Protreptikos* of Iambilchus. Although "[t]hese protreptics do not agree on the hearer's condition or how to approach it... they do agree in wanting the

hearer's whole self for an ongoing pedagogy."[424] Every school's protreptic has at its core the goal of "...the winning of a student for philosophy."[425]

The situation that called for the creation of a protreptic was that of "radical choice"[426]: "...each author confronts a hearer whose choice is the target of many other persuasions. The unity of philosophic protreptic—would seem to lie in this 'exigence,' in the hearer's moment of choice before ways-of-life."[427] Therefore, the situation of "radical choice" might also be the one for which Avot was created, as it complicates wisdom literature in ways that enable to reader to more smoothly transition into rabbinic thought and its attendant way of life: "The circumstances of the [neophyte's] original choice remain, intensified or refined, as the steady background of the entire teaching."[428] It is important to note that "...the protreptic does not seek so much to arouse a desire as to connect an admitted desire with its object..."[429] The particular social function of the rhetoric of protreptics, "...is to produce a choice, an action—the passionate pursuit of a wisdom now thought to be obtainable..."[430] The argument's

> ...hinge is desire... [and therefore] the argument relies... on showing that access to the desired objects is provided only by a master-good, by wisdom. Indeed the whole argument, from beginning to end, plays upon the given question, how to get what one wants."[431]

Avot 1:1-2:14 seems to represent a rabbinic *logos protreptikos*, while the remainder of the document continually adds to and plays with listing rhetorics, complicating them in order to begin to teach them more practically to the neophyte reader. In a protreptic, "[t]he student must be won at different levels..."[432], all of which Avot's authorship, too, seems to have been aware of:

1. "...for the love of wisdom generally..."
2. "...for the choice of a particular school..."
3. "...for full commitment to the rigors of an advanced discipline."

Finally, Jordan suggests two types of protreptic based on rhetorical exigency: "...*exoteric* protreptic by which members would be won in the marketplace, so to speak, and then an *esoteric* protreptic by which members of the school would advance in learning."[433] While this aspect of the model is still only conjectural, we can with some caution observe that Avot seems at least to be an esoteric protreptic, or, it transitions between being first an exoteric and then an esoteric protreptic. Avot 1:1-2:8 seems to represent something closer to an exoteric protreptic, while the Yohanan Ben Zakkai dialogue, which is reminiscent of Socratic philosophical texts,[434] could represent the next step, an idealized portrait of discipleship, Avot's esoteric protreptic. The text's apologetic force is strongest at the beginning of the text, and the idea of rabbinic reception of Torah from Moses has a history, if not any prominence, in the Mishnah as an already well-established concept within the inner-guild world of the rabbis. Therefore a minimalist interpretation would at least view Avot 1:1-2:14 in its entirety as a possible esoteric protreptic. For it is especially in combination with Avot's latter sections (2:8-5:23)—which begin to introduce further or more complex models for rabbinic language—that this first section could be viewed as an esoteric protreptic. (If one were inclined to a source critical approach with Avot, it might be possible to understand Avot 1:1-2:14 [or some part of it] as originally an exoteric protreptic, and therefore originally, perhaps, a separate text.)

But perhaps by extension the entire document could even be seen as a protreptic, too, since "...the protreptic never seems to end. The choice to be made is not a choice

that can be made once and for all. The philosophic end seems to be indefinitely postponed. *Hence there is a constant confusion between protreptic and the corpus it is meant to introduce.*"[435] When considered as a whole document, then, Avot represents the perfect tool within the cultural context of the Greco-Roman world for the recruitment and then the training of neophytes as rabbinic disciples in schools.

III.7. Conclusions

Rituals, or ritualized social actions or language, were understood to be necessary in the Greco-Roman world in order to ensure the legitimacy of an individual's presence within a group. This is especially true in groups that considered themselves to have special access, in some way, to the divine. *Collegia* performed public acts of piety that only members of the *collegia* as *collegia* members could perform. Meanwhile, philosophical schools educated their respective circles of disciples based on the principle that the knowledge they taught was indeed the privileged knowledge of the order of the cosmos.

Collegia did not tend to demand exclusive membership, while philosophical schools often did. *Collegia*, though they were internal worlds of their own, consisting of their own laws and social structures, were "after-hours" clubs. The members were still defined by the outside group from which they came. So a member of a professional guild of silversmiths would be called a guild member in situations where he functioned as one, but would be considered simply a silversmith while doing his job. A philosophical disciple, on the other hand, devoted him or herself totally to the new group and completely identified him or herself as a member of the group. So while both shared

similar social characteristics (small groups, face-to-face interaction, religious functions, etc.) as well as a focus on joining new members to the group, the *collegium* was the type of group which did not usually demand total transformation.

The Mishnah is relatively silent about recruitment, probably because at the time of its composition this simply was not a concern. But as this group continued beyond its first generations, group boundaries as well as reliable means of integration of new members needed to be defined. This was done in order to perpetually regenerate a way of life and worldview that was increasingly revolving itself around Mishnah and an idealized oral culture, in which memorization skills were paramount. At the time of Mishnah's composition, the rabbis were likely a guild of masters and disciples, but the text did not emphasize this theme overall, it was merely the assumed background.

Mishnah, for whatever reasons, barely touches on the popular literary form of wisdom. Yet by perhaps a generation or two later, members within that guild, while still revering the Mishnah, chose to author their own wisdom text, employing a genre common to the formation of scribal experts. In Avot, the master-disciple relationship is brought to the forefront. It is study and discipleship that is the central topic emphasized by Avot, both explicitly though its content, and implicitly through its rhetorical strategies (which emphasize mnemonics, memorization, repetition, listing, etc.). Therefore Avot's authors intended Avot to fit better within the context of a philosophical school than within a *collegium*.

Hence, while Mishnah implied a guild context, Avot portrays the rabbis as existing within a school context, and the use of wisdom literature and other techniques common to Greco-Roman literature was a chief strategy. There is no evidence that

rabbinism at this time was or was not in actuality a traditional wisdom school instead of a guild of governmental bureaucrats. But since Avot deliberately leads itself into something like Mishnaic rhetoric, this likely signifies that training in Mishnah, *not* expertise in wisdom, was still the central means of becoming a rabbinic master at the time. Avot attempts to convince new recruits of the legitimacy of rabbinism by making it seem at first like a standard school of Jewish wisdom, though not centered around Solomon but around Moses instead—and therefore around revelation instead of empiricism. Put another way, Avot served as a way to "wean" the neophyte off of more typical and familiar wisdom techniques, and into the more exclusive study of mishnaic rhetoric and rabbinic expertise. Therefore, Avot can be understood as a "handbook," not only because of its ethical admonitions or scholastic themes, but *also because its very structure makes Avot an ideal tool for a rabbinic recruit entering into a rabbinic master's school.*

As we have seen, wisdom texts in their original contexts tended to be associated with schools, as they aided in inculcating both scribal expertise as well as the topic of scribal works, generally called "wisdom." Avot begins (1:1-2:7) with rudimentary wisdom language placed in the mouths of mishnaic sages. Moreover, since the "chain of tradition" in which those sages participate is the foundational structure of that section, we see that Avot begins as an attempt to make rabbinic speech look like, for the most part, typical wisdom language, of the kind that could have been found in many Jewish or philosophical groups of the period.

Although its exact character is not known, there existed the institution of the scribal school within the rabbinic movement for new recruits to join, as Avot seems to

evince. As a social phenomenon, it is not the master-disciple school itself that is a novelty here. Rather, the novelty of Avot from a social perspective is that it is the first extant text from the early rabbinic period to a) fit so absolutely within the particular institution of the rabbinic school, and b) betray an apparent desire by some within the rabbinic movement to *recruit new disciples*.

I reiterate that this does not mean that rabbinic Judaism was no longer organized as a guild. Rather, Avot implies that, in addition to organization as a guild, the educational institution—and based on the master-disciple model—was rising in prominence. Avot is the result of its authors' aim to both recruit new members and to train them within the institution of the rabbinic school. Hence, if the Mishnah was authored to train rabbis out of disciples within the institution of the guild, then *Avot seems to have been created to train disciples out of neophytes within the institution of the school.*

Following Avot's "protreptic" section in 1:1-2:14, however, the apologetic nature of Avot wanes. But interestingly, the loose narrative that both overlaps and follows the apologetic focus of Avot 1-2 is striking in its resemblance to the stages of initiation that tended to follow the successful use of a protreptic on a new recruit. As Mason notes, a recruit's life as a new disciple "often" began with "liv[ing] with their master as they studied with him."[437] At this stage the disciple is fully immersed in the world of the school. The first step would be to learn "a few general ideas about the history of philosophy... from entirely unoriginal text-books" Second, "came a course, still fairly general, on the school's own doctrine."[438] This was only a general orientation of the rudimentary precepts of the school to the commonly known philosophies in the general

culture.[439] Avot's initially more concentrated topical focus on Torah and life as a disciple could be seen to reflect this stage. As could the Yohanan ben Zakkai narrative, which could be seen to serve, as a "play within a play," as this "fairly general" course on the guild's "own doctrine," and introducing the reader to a simulation of life as a disciple.

Third, "It was only after this that the school's real teaching began," says Marrou.[440] This stage comprised of "studying the school's own classics" and the teacher's personal and "unbiassed" [*sic*] version of the school's philosophy: his interpretation.[441] It seems to me that the increased focus upon scriptural citations as proof texts in chapter three, immediately following the ben Zakkai narrative, serves as an introduction to the study of "the school's own classics" filtered through the interpretation of rabbinic masters.

Fourth, Marrou stresses the personal nature of the master-disciple relationship at this point because of the result: that the disciple became personally and psychologically attached to the master, both his person and the way of life which he both taught and embodied.[442] Following the heavy use of scriptural proof texts in chapter three, we are presented with a list of sayings attributed to (seemingly) random rabbinic sages. As argued above, it is the increased complexity of these statements that are allowed to take to the fore here. One could argue that, with "the basics" now behind them, the audience is at this point allowed to concentrate further on *how* to do what had heretofore been legitimated. The assumption is that apologetics or legitimation of authority are, at this point, less significant. Therefore the text engages the reader in more complicated types of wisdom, whose complexity comes closer to that of mishnaic *Listenwissenschaft*.

Finally, in chapter five, the complex counting and listing that dominates the chapter, almost completely removed from any rabbinic attribution, shifts the listing into the voice of the author/narrator. Removing these more complex lists from any narrative framework (even one as relatively flimsy as Avot's "chain of tradition") allows the reader to understand these sections almost as "do-it-yourself" exercises. These "exercises," as argued above, come closer to rudimentary forms of typically mishnaic rhetoric—the mastery of which marked a member of the guild as a rabbinic master—than the content or forms found within Avot's earlier chapters. Avot ends by implicitly inviting the reader to participate in oral list-making. Hence, at least *within the imagined world of the text*, the reader comes closer to becoming a full status-holding rabbinic master of *Listenwissenschaft*, "who was duly appointed by his predecessor."[443]

Avot is, therefore, an ideal training manual for new recruits, because in the imagined world created by the narrative of Avot, there is a transition that mirrors the type of social transition a neophyte would have undertaken in order to become a member of a closed school, social movement or institution at the time. Avot is structured in a progressive manner, which presents to the reader an idealized progression from an outsider to an insider within the guild, beginning with a *logos protreptikos*, and ending in exercises in more complex, *Listenwissenschaft*-like language.

It is not possible to measure the time frame over which a disciple would utilize Avot in his training. But regardless, Avot seems to be an attempt to make mishnaic rhetoric appear as though it follows varying kinds of wisdom conventions, which thereby makes the early rabbinic guild look like a wisdom or philosophical school. Using wisdom conventions in the way that it does serves to legitimate and teach Mishnah to a particular

kind of audience, the same as the chain of transmission attempts to accomplish. As Avot moves away from simpler wisdom sayings, to longer or more complex ones, or from implied number lists to explicit ones, and when understood in relation to the mishnaic context whence Avot derived, the function of the document becomes apparent. Avot does not progress randomly from random types of wisdom conventions to others; rather it generally progresses from more familiar and basic forms of wisdom rhetoric, into forms that are more easily comparable to simple versions of the language found in the Mishnah.

The effect of this progression is to make mishnaic rhetoric appear, by the end of Avot, like exemplary wisdom literature, and vice-versa; the two are amalgamated for the reader of Avot. In basic terms, Avot begins as a relatively simply constructed "advertisement" (or, "apology") for the rabbinic movement, but it ends (again, after a *gradual transition*), as "exercises" in the way that rabbis were expected to learn and practice Mishnah in their training as a disciple. Avot begins by looking like a wisdom text couched in a chronological list of masters expounding their "wisdom," while slowly moving away from that form and into the more unique and abstruse language of rabbinic sages. Therefore, Avot is oriented towards the function of a) recruiting new initiates (or, "neophytes") and, then, b) beginning to train them as disciples of rabbinic masters.

None of this is to say that the authors of Avot invented the idea or processes of disciple-training within the guild; as we have seen, the Mishnah in the earlier third century CE had already portrayed a master-disciple relationship as the ideal internal power structure. And while the Mishnah's homogenized and rabbinized portrayals of masters and disciples of the past may not give us much historical information about the individuals, groups, or events being described in the narratives, they do tell us something

about the authors of the text. The Mishnah may not be very useful as a repository of accurate historiographical narratives, but it is a repository of the ideal reality that its authors wished to create: an ideal Jewish Temple state, officiated by rabbinic sages, who were not portrayed as government functionaries, but instead as a model of leadership based on mastery of "Torah," attained through discipleship. But Mishnah simply assumed and depicted this as the general background of its discursive content, the text did not focus on it assumedly because its social conditions that engendered its creation in the early third century CE did not necessitate a strong focus on the theme of discipleship.

Avot brings the idea of discipleship to the forefront, not only in the variety of school-related topics it discusses, but by structuring Avot in such a way that it becomes an ideal aid in the preparation of disciples. Avot may not represent the first evidence from the early rabbinic movement of the types of form (such as the use of lists) or content (such as a focus on Torah or law) found within the document. But Avot, in the mid- to late-third century CE, does represent *the first extant rabbinic document that seems tailor-made for recruiting and training neophytes to become disciples.*

Since the Greco-Roman world was group-centered, strong group boundaries were typically defined and enforced whenever necessary or appropriate. Liminal transition periods between statuses were therefore very important to groups like the guild of rabbinic sages. *Figure 6* below illustrates a map of the social hierarchy of the early rabbinic movement, as implicitly promoted by the authorship of Avot:

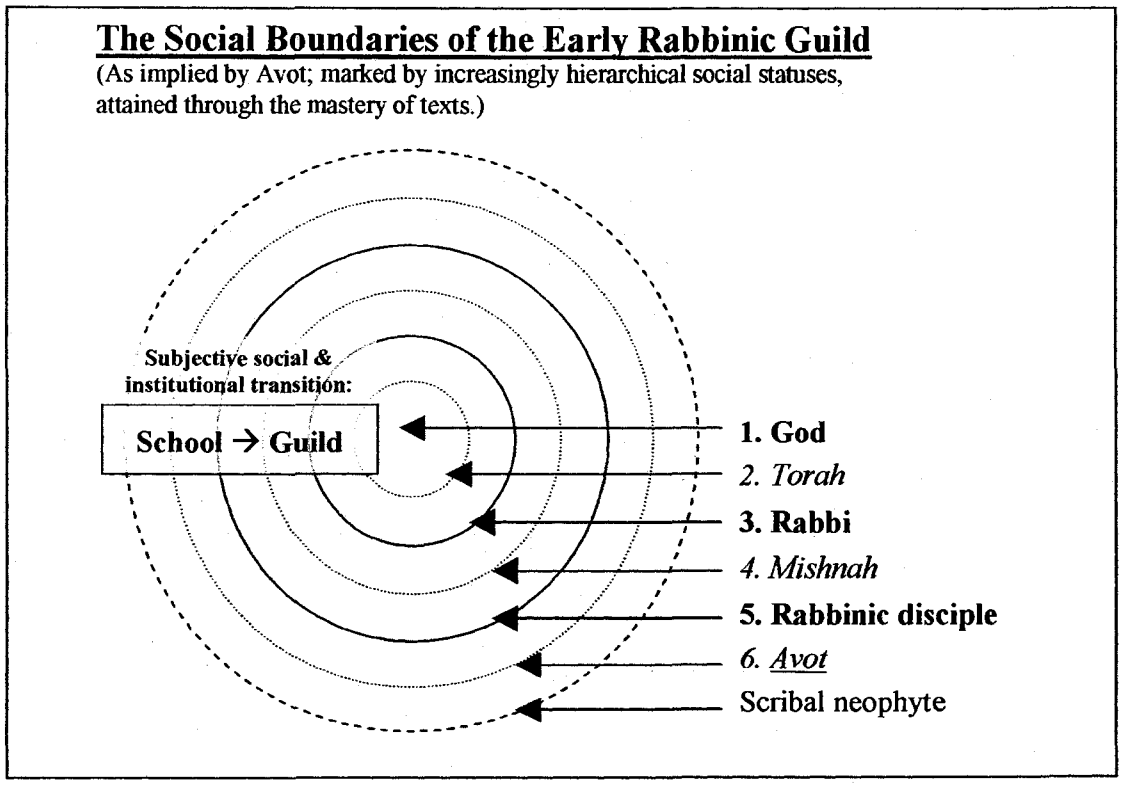

Figure 6

Pictured as a series of concentric circles, the map of the rabbinic social structure, as implied by Avot, consists of a series of increasingly authoritative statuses (according to the rabbinic viewpoint), the achievement of each attained through mastery of a text or body of texts. Firstly, God (the most frequently mentioned topic in Avot [see III.1 above]) is at the center of the world envisioned by Avot, as he is at the center of all social maps understood by the many Jewish groups in antiquity. "Torah," God's revelation to humanity, provides access to God, by Jewish understanding. Since one cannot, of course, become God, mastery of "Torah" becomes the ultimate goal, and is seen as the only direct way to encounter Him. Secondly, according to Avot, rabbis "transmit" Torah through masters and disciples starting at Sinai, thereby implying that rabbis are the sole and legitimate trustees to God's wisdom, and that their own wisdom is likewise divinely

inspired. Hence access to Torah requires, thirdly, attaining the rank of rabbinic master, according to both Avot and Mishnah; this is accomplished by mastery of, fourthly, mishnaic expertise. Fifthly, mishnaic expertise is attained through what was conceivably a long process of discipleship under a master. *Sixthly, Avot, in its time, added to the social map at this point, now implying that to enter into the rabbinic movement a newly recruited neophyte must also be trained, or prepared, for life as a disciple.* In the latter part of the third century CE, to become a disciple who could participate within the rabbinic guild, one first had to be recruited, and then initiated and trained within Avot's school. From the point of view of the neophyte for whom Avot was intended, then, a Jewish scribe would be recruited as a particularly rabbinic disciple, and Avot would aid in his transition from the liminal status of neophyte, to an initiated insider of the group in the form of a disciple-in-training.

The rabbis were beginning with Avot to present themselves (at least in the extant evidence) to a wider public as the only truly legitimate guild of Jewish scribes. Scribes were trained in school contexts whether they were rabbinic scribes or not, so it does not seem unexpected that a school was instituted by the guild of rabbis in their early period. This particular school—as many philosophical schools of the time did—presented itself as an historically and ethically legitimate, and hermetic, worldview and way of life. Fifty to 100 years after the Mishnah was created, therefore, Avot was doing what philosophical groups of the Second Sophistic were doing to recruit members to their own schools. By inserting themselves into the farthest reaches of Jewish history, and associating their guild with revelation itself, Avot's rabbinic authors attempted to expand beyond their role

as a guild of scribes under the patronage of the Patriarch, from a small class of bureaucrats, to a significant institution of learning and leadership in northern Palestine.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The idea that Avot was intended as a training manual is not a new one. Scholars and lay readers have often felt that Avot was created to make rabbis, or at least better Jews, out of its readers. But all of this has been merely impressionistic; Avot *feels* like some kind of instruction manual. But not even Neusner has, in my view, demonstrated *given the nature of the text* why it should be that Avot was intended for use in training or instruction. Neusner seems to jump from "observation A" (noting Avot's aphoristic and apologetic rhetoric) to "conclusion C" (that Avot was therefore meant as a training manual) without "hypothesis B"—in other words, without actually connecting his analysis to his concluding social interpretation of it. Put simply, filling in this gap has been the basic project of the preceding monograph. The remainder of this final chapter will summarize that project, and I will conclude with some remarks about the relevance of Avot, and of the critical study of it and other early rabbinic literature.

IV.1. Summary

I have attempted to understand Avot, based on observing the fact of its rhetoric, what its purpose was, and in what context it was meant to execute that purpose. But this project first depended on a re-analysis of Avot's rhetoric, or, rather, on a re-focus on one aspect of its rhetoric that had heretofore gone unexplored: the repetitive, progressive structure of its language of listing and counting. Avot begins by appearing like a list of "rabbis" who speak aphoristically, beginning with Moses and continuing through the sages of the early rabbinic period. As the text progresses, its focus on these rabbis dissipates and the list-like and numbered quality of the aphorisms come to dominate the

text. I attempted to demonstrate that, besides whatever other rhetorical features Avot may have, it is held together by a rhetoric that seemingly intentionally plays with the use of lists and litanies, using two main rhetorical structures and slowly shifting from the dominance of the one to that of the other, from beginning to middle to end.

With this observation in place, the question became, Why and whence this trajectory of listing language? In other words, notwithstanding whatever units, pericopes, sources, or *mishnayot* may have been used by the authors of Avot, why did they choose this structure in which to present this material? What strategic use and social purpose did this structure serve? In what context would it have been, or hoped to have been, persuasive? This was the central question of the entire project, and its answering required the implementation of literary-analytical, historical-comparative, and social-scientific methods.

Firstly, Avot's structure had to be demonstrated, yielding the observation that Avot progresses from the dominance of its "Rabbi says" formula at the beginning, to the dominance of its listing and numbering exercises by the end. Avot then had to be understood in relation to its antecedent document, in fact the first extant document of the rabbinic guild, the Mishnah. This comparison yielded a basic observation, and not a novel one in broad, which is that Avot and Mishnah seem to be more dissimilar than similar. However, the more crucial observation was that, at least it in its form, much of Avot—especially its latter sections—could be compared to Mishnah more easily, constituting an almost primitive (even though later) version of mishnaic rhetoric. Therefore, the observation was made that as Avot is structured in order to slowly and intentionally shift focus from the apology of rabbinic lineage to the use of numbers and lists, it is

simultaneously shifting focus from introducing the legitimacy (as Avot's authors understood it) of the rabbinic system to an application of a primitive version of Mishnah's so-called *Listenwissenschaft*. This was a literary observation.

The task then became to contextualize this observation in an historical and social circumstance, and to understand its function within that circumstance. So the question then became, "Why would Avot's authors consciously employ this argument? Why would they intentionally and subtly shift the audience's focus from rabbinic apology to an in-text application of proto-mishnaic language?"

Answering this question required a literary and social comparison of Avot with the wisdom literature, and ancient genre of ancient Near-Eastern literature with which it has much in common, perhaps more than with Mishnah. It was observed that Avot begins using language more familiar to audiences of wisdom literature, in other words, more familiar to the social world of ancient Jewish scribes. It also uses types of wisdom literature more comparable to more complicated types of wisdom-based rhetoric, which also happened to prove more amenable to inculcating primitive[459] modes of rabbinic thinking into the disciple. Further, Avot's shift in focus also, and therefore, represents a shift from language appropriate to the more general (though still closed) world of Jewish scribal guilds, to the language appropriate to the more narrow and (at the time) novel context of the guild of particularly rabbinic scribes. Therefore, we moved here from a literary observation to a social one: that as Avot intends to progress from the apology and simple aphorism to aphorism and simple *Listenwissenschaft*, it at the same time progresses from scribal to rabbinic social context. Put another way, the language of Jewish scribes subtly shifts to that of the exclusive and new rabbinic guild.

Since it was observed that Avot's rhetoric seems to bespeak a transition between social worlds, Gennep's theories and Turner's elaborations on social transition were applied to this case in the hope of better understanding the purpose of Avot's rhetorical strategy. Using this model, it was hypothesized that Avot had a quite narrow and intended place in the social map drawn by the rabbis of the mid- to late-third century CE. In short, while the guild had been using Mishnah to create rabbinic masters out of disciples since at least the early third century, by the middle to end of the same century they were also using Avot to create disciples out of outsider, Jewish scribes. The rabbis, like other ancient, intentional associations, used stages of transition akin to Gennep's model, using stages of separation, liminality, and re-aggregation. To indicate the transition between social statuses, the rabbis employed the marker of the mastery of particular texts. So, to become a rabbinic master meant to master Mishnah's language; and, as I argue, to become a disciple required a mastering of Avot's language. Or, stated another way, a scribe could read and (it was hoped) be convinced by Avot's apology for legitimacy, and would then, as the text progressed, be exposed to a primitive application of the peculiar mishnaic language to which he would become more familiar once accepted by the group as a disciple.

The rabbis were increasingly seeing themselves as an authoritative and autonomous social and political institution, and as time went by they required the numbers to perpetuate themselves—they required disciples. Increased membership would further demonstrate the rabbis' prestige as the local guild of scribes par excellence, and such authority would aid in the rabbis attaining a greater measure of control or influence over the practice of Hebrew scribalism in northern Palestine.

Avot implicitly denigrates the idea of authority through natural heredity—both through their portrayal of the (ultimate) irrelevance of Patriarchal lineage, as well as their positive portrayal of their own "spiritual" pedigree—favouring instead the handing down of both Scripture-based *and* Mishnah-based instruction and ethos (what would later be called the "written" and "oral" Torah) to philosophical disciples. This closed guild needed to open itself up in order both to survive over time, and to expand their ranks in numbers that would correspond to their increasingly sharper vision of themselves as the true heirs of Moses' law, and therefore as the most legitimate form of Jewish leadership. The formation of a rabbinic "school," in which Avot and the expertise it inculcates were taught, aided the rabbis in bolstering their social status and political influence. In sum, the rabbis wanted to survive, expand, and lead; and their vision of themselves in relation to the world in which they existed required them to recruit and train new disciples. Avot was the tool they created in order to fulfill this drive.

IV.2. Concluding Remarks

Because Avot was a wisdom text produced by a movement which, generally, shunned wisdom rhetoric, it might be tempting to surmise that perhaps Avot was composed eccentrically within the rabbinic guild (or even from without!), and therefore that its perspective was in some way deviant, heretical, or at the very least less accepted from the perspective of the rabbinic guild. While, of course, this is possible, it is not plausible or likely. It seems that Avot was created by some within the movement with a considerable degree of influence because the document was almost immediately promulgated by the movement, soon included as part of the Mishnah, and regarded as

both an ethical treatise as well as the ultimate evidence of the legitimacy of Oral Torah. For example, Avot de Rabbi Nathan (ARN), while difficult to date (Neusner dates the document roughly to *c.* 500 CE), and existing in two known versions, is still an ancient example of the reception of Avot. ARN takes the basic structure of the list of names of rabbis, and expands upon it by giving those sages biographical narratives (or even hagiographies), increasing Avot's size roughly eightfold.[460] Sifra, an early *midrashic* exegesis on Leviticus, quotes Avot (Sifra 1:6), although "the descent of Oral Torah from Sinai to the Rabbis... is ignored."[461] Finally, the Jerusalem Talmud (or Yerushalmi, the Talmud of the Land of Israel; *c.* 400 CE) quotes Avot 1:1 in passing (J. Sanhredrin 10:1), and elsewhere regards Avot as both a part of the Mishnah's order Nezikin (where it can still be found today), and as an ethical work of a high order (J. Baba Kama 30a[462]).

Avot seems to not have been an eccentric part of the rabbinic movement, as it was fairly quickly regarded as a core document by several early rabbinic authors. Moreover, the context of a school implies training for group membership; if such a school were considered "heretical" by mishnaic-minded rabbis, then Avot and its ideas would have been ignored by the rabbis like so many other texts, and would not have infiltrated the subsequent rabbinic traditions so significantly. But Avot reflects and enhances a theory of transmission of rabbinic teachings from Moses that was already present, but inconspicuous, in Mishnah. Avot represents the first evidence not of the invention but of the rise in prominence of the institution of the (particularly rabbinic) school—centralized due to the implied need for new disciples, and therefore for the recruitment- and training-based text that is Avot.

Many scholars might at this point object, noting the mishnaic tradition that Yohanan ben Zakkai himself instituted a system of rabbinic academies (*yeshivot*) headquartered at Yavneh following the destruction of the Second Temple, and over a century before the creation of the Mishnah. But by this reckoning, Pharisees or any other historical body of Jewish leaders favoured by the rabbis might also have instituted "rabbinic" schools, since there is very little discontinuity between the depictions of any of them in the Mishnah (and in Avot). But beyond Talmudic tradition, the Yavneh narrative holds no historical weight, as it remains uncorroborated. Rather, in tracing the chronology and functions of the early rabbinic texts, we observe in Avot (created in order to recruit and train new members of the movement) an early consolidation of the rabbinic institution of the school—this is historical information.

Fragmentary reconstructions of the nascent rabbinic movement have generally been relatively "atomistic," that is, they focus on a particular document or set of documents in isolation, sometimes at the expense of wider knowledge of the early rabbinic movement. Schwartz has recently critiqued what he views as an increasing tendency towards pseudo-Neusnerian tunnel vision. He argues that we are losing our focus on the origins of the rabbis and their movement in favour of learning as much as possible about each individual rabbinic document.[463] Yet I aimed above to demonstrate that we can glean something of the larger picture when this and other such hypotheses and evidences are viewed together. In this case, learning about Avot's particular literary makeup and social origins can tell us something in comparison to similarly focused studies by other scholars of early rabbinic documents, such as Mishnah, Tosefta, or ARN.

As noted above, Lightstone hypothesizes that the Mishnah in the early third century (*c.* 200 CE) was created as a tool to train new rabbis out of disciples within the newly forming "guild" of "rabbis" by inculcating in them the expertise of the Patriarch's administrative functionaries. Meanwhile, Tosefta (meaning "addition"), likely written towards the end of the third century CE, uses the Mishnah itself as the basis for its own content and style. Avot, created in the mid- to late-third century CE, serves as an historical "missing link" in investigating the nascent rabbinism of the third century. As Mack observes, myths are created in times of social formation. Avot, too, was created at a time when the rabbis were redefining their own identities. The power and authority that we now frequently take for granted as having always been a part of rabbinic Judaism actually grew out of what I have argued is a traceable socio-cultural circumstance.

Even for a minimalist, a lack of evidence other than early rabbinic documents need not be understood as a lack of evidence for early rabbinic Judaism. Far from it, the rabbinic documents can be used as historical evidence when they are understood as cultural products. These documents are valuable artifacts that, first and foremost, record instances of communication within cultures very different from our own, cultures whose contexts must therefore be rigorously reconstructed, however fragmentary the results may be. Employing a method such as socio-rhetorical interpretation provides a social-scientific model for understanding a text like Avot as such an artifact. The choice to use this type of model does not derive from wanton academic zeal; rather, to analyze a document's rhetoric by scientific means is to provide a data set that is reproducible by others. This is why the present work should not be regarded as an Avot commentary, despite its topic, since a commentary is a genre of its own with its own rhetorical rules

and conventions that, moreover, usually do not make allowances for the understanding of Avot as such an artifact. In the above study, I submitted to the need to simply interpret the evidence at hand with minimal reliance upon ethnocentric or anachronistic views of Avot, of early rabbinic culture, or of ancient Judaism. I therefore made every effort to understand the culture behind Avot's creation in the ancient context, to avoid eisegesis, and to delineate personal opinions about Avot or the early rabbis as immaterial.

All the same, I would like to conclude with a few brief remarks about what I perceive to be the value of the preceding monograph, at the core of which were two principal aspirations. The first was to demonstrate the usefulness of a socio-rhetorical method as a way to historically approach early rabbinic documents, with Avot as a startlingly under-examined example. Scientific methods are simply devices, tools that allow us to process our data, to interpret the documents as human products. The value of a scientific approach lies not in its institutional affiliations, but rather in its usefulness in interpreting evidence of human cultures that the passage of time has allowed us to forget.

And, secondly, in writing this monograph I aspired to understand the culture and history behind the creation of Avot as a way to celebrate it as part of our own culture. The coldness of the above discussion derives solely from the nature of the type of analysis, and from the expected rhetorical conventions of doctoral dissertations. Avot's beauty lies in its language, in its imagery, and in the way that it still inspires deeds of loving kindness in Jews and non-Jews alike. Avot may be useful to scholars and historians as a relic to decipher, but we must also respect that Avot is still very much a living text. We can appreciate Avot as the inspiring work of sacred literature that it is, and we can at the same time recognize this document as a rare and valuable artifact of a

culture long forgotten by history; a work worthy of both our reverence and admiration, as well as our critical scrutiny.

NOTES

[1] As will be illustrated below (III.4), the consensus that Avot was not originally meant as part of the Mishnah, and is only included in later manuscripts, seems to be warranted.

[2] Although the document has been known by many (related and similar) titles throughout the centuries ("Pirkei Avot," "Chapters of the Fathers," "Ethics of the Fathers," etc.), I will refer to it as "Avot" simply for the sake of convenience. R. Travers Herford discusses the history of the titles of the tractate (*Pirke Aboth. The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers* [New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1962 (1925)] 3-5).

[3] I will be using the term "group" in the sociological sense of "[a] number of individuals, defined by formal or informal criteria of membership, who share a feeling of unity or are bound together in relatively stable patterns of interaction" (Gordon Marshall, *A Dictionary of Sociology*, 2nd ed. [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998] 266).

[4] *Halakhah* is usually translated to mean "rabbinic law," but more literally means "the way," or "the path."

[5] There is, however, a current within scholarship that looks to compare too closely early Christian works and early rabbinic works. However, this is often a case of *eisegesis*, since each of these bodies of literature, at least in their early periods, is nearly silent on the subject of the other group.

[6] Jack N. Lightstone, *Mishnah and the Social Formation of the Early Rabbinic Guild: A Socio-Rhetorical Approach*, Studies in Christianity and Judaism. Vol. 11 (Waterloo, ON: The Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion [Corporation canadienne des sciences religieuses] by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002) 192.

[7] "'Patriarch' seems to have been the Greek title given to the *nasi* not by the Romans but by the Jews..." (Martin Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century," *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine [New York (Cambridge, MA): Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 1992] 123).

[8] Lee I. Levine, "The Patriarchate and the Ancient Synagogue," *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction During the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London, GB; New York, NY: Routledge, 1999) 87.

[9] Levine, "The Patriarchate and the Ancient Synagogue" 89.

[10] Levine, "The Patriarchate and the Ancient Synagogue" 97. The Theodosian Code (438 CE) contains—or purports to contain—earlier Roman legal codes, including some which mention the Patriarchate, but only beginning in the fourth century.

[11] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 128.

[12] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 128.

[13] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 129. See also David M. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity* (Tübingen, DE: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1994) 141. Seth Schwartz notes, however, that there remains no extant material evidence for the reputed wealth of the patriarchs (Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. To 640 C.E*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001] 120).

[14] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 131.

[15] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 134.

[16] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 132.

[17] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 130.

[18] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 136.

[19] Goodblatt, *Monarchic Principle* 146.

[20] Goodman, "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century" 135.

[21] Aharon Oppenheimer, "Roman Rule and the Cities of the Galilee in Talmudic Literature," *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York, NY [Cambridge, MA]: Jewish Theological Seminary of America [Distributed by Harvard University Press], 1992) 125.

[22] Goodblatt, *Monarchic Principle* 146.

[23] Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick, eds., *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999) 23.

[24] Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough and Jacob Neusner, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (Bollingen Series, Abridged ed., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). The Mishnah calls this general Jewish population the *amme ha'aretz* (peoples of the land), and shows a general "disdain" for them (Shaye J.D. Cohen, "The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century," *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine [New York, NY (Cambridge, MA): Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 1992] 173). Moreover, as Lightstone points out, the presence of variations of the title Rabbi ("*rby*, *brby*, *ryby*, and *bryby*") in synagogue inscriptions reveals simply that this was an honourific title current in Greco-Roman Jewish society, one that the rabbinic sages also used for themselves within the text of the Mishnah. (Lightstone, *Mishnah*195-6).

[25] Schwartz, 120.

[26] Jack N. Lightstone, "The Rabbis' Bible: The Canon of the Hebrew Bible and the Early Rabbinic Guild," *The Canon Debate*, pre-publication copy, eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002) 325-73.

[27] Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1991) 129, 130.

[28] Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986) 117.

[29] Segal 117.

[30] Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* (Waco,TX: Baylor University Press, 2007); Lightstone, *Mishnah* 186.

[31] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 71-4.

[32] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 194.

[33] Dan Urman, "Jewish Inscriptions from the Village of Dabbura in the Golan," *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem, IL: Academic Press and the Israel Exploration Society, 1981) 155; "The Talmudic Age," *Golan Archaeological Museum*, 21 May, 2008 <http://museum.golan.org.il/etalmud.htm>. Moreover, the appearance of the term "rabbi" in funerary or synagogue inscriptions is not necessarily an indicator of the presence of the rabbinic guild. The term *rabbi* literally means "my master" and was an honourific title commonly used in the Greco-Roman world, not unlike the modern "sir" or "my lord." See Lightstone, *Mishnah* 193-5.

[34] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 192.

[35] Donald Harmon Akenson notes that "the borders of the Rabbinic literature of the classical era... have never been precisely defined" (*Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* [Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998] 607).

[36] Akenson 612, emphases added; while there may be no such direct evidence, the argument below depends on demonstrating that there is legitimate, indirect, that is, non-discursive, evidence for Avot's origins within the document's own rhetoric.

[37] Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London, GB; New York, NY: Routledge, 1995) 2. Brettler cites from Moshe David Herr, "The Conception of History among the Sages," *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies,* vol. 3 (Jerusalem, IL: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1977) 129-42.

[38] And even if they did, they would not have been modern historiographers using modern methods or ideas. Moreover, even history writers of the ancient period had less interest in recording events "accurately" as they did in promoting particular agenda through their deliberately crafted historiographies.

[39] "The Epistle of Rav Sherira Gaon ['Excellency']," 988 CE. The rabbinic Judaism in which Sherira Gaon participated in the early Middle Ages—centered around the, by then, longstanding Babylonian academies (*yeshivot*)—was of a much different and more heavily institutionalized kind than the nascent rabbinic Judaism of the second and third centuries. See Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 14, 266-7.

[40] William Scott Green, "Reading the Writing of Rabbinism: Toward an Interpretation of Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983).

[41] Jack N. Lightstone, *The Rhetoric of the Babylonian Talmud: Its Social Meaning and Context* (Waterloo, ON: The Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion [Corporation

canadienne des sciences religieuses] by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994) 5 (emphasis added).

[42] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 7.

[43] Robert Goldenberg, "B.M. Lewin and the Saboraic Element," *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud: Studies in the Achievements of Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Historical Literary-Critical Research*, edited by Jacob Neusner (Eugene, OR [Leiden, NL]: Wipf and Stock Publishers [E.J. Brill], 2003 [1970]) 51.

[44] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 9 (emphasis in original).

[45] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 12-3.

[46] Akenson 610-1; Lightstone, *Mishnah* 14-6; Gabriele Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002) 27; Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. To 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) 8-9.

[47] See especially Jacob Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library, 1st ed, New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994).

[48] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* (1994), *Mishnah* (2002).

[49] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 4.

[50] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 4.

[51] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 7.

[52] Lightstone, *Babylonian Talmud* 7. I suppose it is possible that these texts could be understood if filtered through other types of empirically tested theory other than social-scientific. But at the moment I am hard pressed to think of another field of study more appropriate to explaining how an object (and a text is an object) worked in the context of

the humans who created, accepted, used, and promulgated it. It seems to me that in any conceptual basis other than a social-scientific one would remove the text even further from its original context, thereby reducing its worth as an historical source.

[53] Neusner defines *Listenwissenschaft* as "natural history: classification of things in accord with their intrinsic taxonomic traits, and (concomitantly) the hierarchization of the classes of things, that is, species of the same genus" (*Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* 101).

[54] This is Neusner's term, too (*Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* 571), but other scholars have interpreted Avot as having a similar purpose. However, as I will argue below, I do not think that any analyses have thus far yielded a sufficient explanation as to why or how Avot functioned as a handbook or training manual. It will be my contention that only through a thorough rhetorical analysis that takes into account Avot as a whole and intentionally formed document can this hypothesis be demonstrated fairly.

[55] Segal 117.

[56] For examples of evidence contrary to early rabbinic claims to power in, for example, the synagogue see Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*; Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (Brown Judaic Studies 36; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982). In addition, Shaye J.D. Cohen notes that, "Aside from the synagogue of Rehov, with a piece of the Yerushalmi [Palestinian Talmud] spelled out in mosaic tile on its floor, not a single synagogue excavated in the land of Israel is demonstrably rabbinic. Synagogue inscriptions do not place rabbis in positions of leadership; neither does the Theodosian code, which refers to the patriarch, patriarchs, archisynagogues, and various other officials" (Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Were

Pharisees and Rabbis the Leaders of Communal Prayer and Torah Study in Antiquity? The Evidence of the New Testament, Josephus, and the Early Church Fathers" (Kee and Cohick) 104.

[57] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 188.

[58] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 185.

[59] Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996) 217.

[60] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 106-7; Frank J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies: Interpreting the Synoptics through Their Passion Stories* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1986) 5, 6.

[61] Robbins, *Exploring* 107.

[62] Akenson 608-9.

[63] Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997 [1981]) 150. See also Said's *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, 1st American ed. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1994).

[64] I draw this concept of the received view from Malina (219), who uses it to rather bitingly criticize the traditional ways of studying early Christian history.

[65] Cf. Malina, 222, 227. Of course, not all "faith-based" studies are biased in this way, nor should it be said that critical studies cannot be motivated by faith. My concern here is not primarily with motivations, however, but with how motivations can influence methodology and thus results and conclusions as well.

[66] Burton L. Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins" (presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, PA, 1995). See also Mack's *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth* (1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1995) 5.

[67] Jack N. Lightstone, "Whence the Rabbis? From Coherent Description to Fragmented Reconstructions," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 26.3 (1997) 276 (emphasis in original).

[68] Moreover these works frequently disregard either the chronology of the textual sources themselves, or the general lack of external corroborating evidence for the early rabbinic movement.

[69] Lightstone, "Whence the Rabbis?" 277.

[70] Daniel Bernard, "The Rhetorics and Social Meanings of the Avot Commentary: Toward the History of a Genre" (presented at the 36th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Chicago IL, 2004).

[71] Akenson 330.

[72] Safrai 279 (author's emphasis removed).

[73] Philip Blackman, *Ethics of the Fathers: Pirkei Avot* (Gateshead, England; New York, NY: Judaica Press, 1985).

[74] Joseph H. Hertz, *Sayings of the Fathers. Pirke Aboth: The Hebrew Text, with English Translation and Commentary* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1986).

[75] Avie Gold, Andras Halasz, and Michael Horen, *Artscroll Youth Pirkei Avos* (Artscroll Youth Series, Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1998).

[76] "Pirkei Avos - Illustrated Youth Edition / Fully illustrated, with the complete text, simplified translation and comments." *Artscroll.com*. 13 May 2008 <http://www.artscroll.com/Books/piyh.html>.

[77] For instance, even among the most strictly orthodox circles, where Jewish women are forbidden by rabbis access to the Mishnah or the Talmuds they are authorized to read Avot on account of the traditional view of the text as a moral rather than a *halakhic* (legal) work.

[78] Akenson 609.

[79] However I am not sure that those who composed Avot had any theory of "Oral Torah" in mind. I elaborated on this further in "Mishnah Avot 1:1: Jewish Identity in Social Context and through History," presented at the American Academy of Religion Eastern International Regional Conference, St. Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario, on 7 April, 2002. For related comments see Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, *Rabbinic Judaism: Structure and System* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995) 50-4; and Lightstone, *Mishnah* 6.

[80] Shmuel Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages. First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum. Assen, NL [Philadelphia PA]: Van Gorcum [Fortress Press], 1987) 263-81.

[81] Safrai 264.

[82] Kee notes that "...the synagogue is depicted... in pre-70 Jewish writings as a gathering rather than as a distinctive type of religious structure" (Kee and Cohick 20), and only becomes identifiable as buildings following this date (Kee and Cohick 20-3). The fact

that we use the word "synagogue" to refer to a particular type of building (as well as to a quite different modern organizational structure from the ancient version), divulges something of the comfortable anachronism found in so many Avot commentaries.

[83] Safrai 265.

[84] Safrai 267.

[85] Hertz 7.

[86] Hertz 13.

[87] Hertz 14.

[88] A *mishnah* (*mishnayot* in the plural) is a sub-unit of a chapter in the Mishnah (or Avot); more or less equivalent to a biblical verse. The Hebrew word משנה (*mishnah* or Mishnah) can be translated into English—not insignificantly given the present argument—as "repetition."

[89] Hertz 14.

[90] Lightstone, "Whence the Rabbis?" 277.

[91] Lightstone, "Whence the Rabbis?" 278.

[92] At the time Goshen-Gottstein held a position at the Institute for the Study of Rabbinic Thought, Bet Morasha of Jerusalem.

[93] The Abstract for Responses which I received was not paginated.

[94] Personal communication, November 2002.

[95] To put all this into wider academic perspective, consider for a moment those scholars whose focus is the hypothetical document dubbed "Q" (*Quelle* is German for "source"), which is assumed to be a common but now lost source for the gospels of both Matthew and Luke. Just as with Q scholarship, where the primary focus is not Luke or Matthew,

and where those texts are simply used as evidentiary routes to a hypothetical source text, Avot scholarship tends overwhelmingly to bypass investigation of the document as a whole, seeing its only or primary value as a means to uncovering alleged source material (i.e. earlier strata). Yet in scholarship on early Christianity there is much more study of Matthew or Luke than there is of Q, outside of the narrow field of Q scholarship itself; and this can provide a balance for the relatively contentious focus on a hypothetical text such as Q. In that case, the body of secondary literature about Luke or Matthew, from which Q scholars can gain insights, is incalculable in size. But I contend that there is no analogous focus on Avot in the critical study of early rabbinic documents; rather, the pursuit of or trust in its hypothetical sources still dominates.

[96] cf. Lightstone, *Mishnah* 14-16.

[97] Boccaccini, as an apposite example, focuses only (and briefly) on, "The ordained and well-constructed structure of the opening chapters of *'Abot,*" ignoring the rest of the document (1-2).

[98] 1st ed. Chappaqua, N.Y.: Rossel Books, 1983.

[99] Neusner, *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol* 31-56.

[100] Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* 571-90.

[101] Neusner and Green, *Rabbinic Judaism* 50-4.

[102] cf. Lightstone, *Mishnah* 14.

[103] Neusner, *Introduction* 571.

[104] Neusner, *Introduction* 572.

[105] Neusner, *Introduction* 571.

[106] Neusner recounts that he was commissioned to write this commentary by Seymour Rossel of Rossel Books (19).

[107] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 17.

[108] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 4.

[109] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 4-5.

[110] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 8.

[111] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 173-87.

[112] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 180-1.

[113] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 181-3.

[114] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 183-4.

[115] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 5.

[116] Brown Judaic Studies, vol. 14, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

[117] Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism* 9-23.

[118] Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism* x, 1.

[119] Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969) 4.

[120] Perelman and Oblrechts-Tyteca 5.

[121] Robbins, *Exploring* 106 (emphasis added).

[122] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 3.

[123] Robbins, *Exploring* 1.

[124] Robbins, *Exploring* 107.

[125] Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988); *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress

Press, 1990); *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995); *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2001); Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1989).

[126] Robbins, *Exploring*; *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London, GB; New York, NY: Routledge, 1996). See also, Vernon K. Robbins, et al., *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

[127] Robbins, *Exploring* 132.

[128] Akenson 80-1.

[129] Brettler 2-7.

[130] Brettler 1.

[131] Luther H. Martin, "History, Historiography and Christian Origins," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 29.1 (2000) 69.

[132] Mack, *The Lost Gospel.*

[133] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 18.

[134] Herford 1.

[135] Neusner, *Torah From Our Sages* 5.

[136] Amram D. Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[137] Saldarini 109.

[138] Saldarini 109 (emphases added).

[139] Saldarini 109 (emphases added).

[140] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 151.

[141] Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford, GB: The Clarendon Press, 1933) 446, n. 1.

[142] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 152.

[143] Robbins, *Exploring* 21.

[144] Robbins, *Exploring* 21.

[145] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 3.

[146] Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* 575.

[147] Robbins, *Exploring* 21.

[148] Robbins, *Exploring* 23 (emphasis added).

[149] Robbins, *Exploring* 10 (emphasis added).

[150] Robbins, *Exploring* 8.

[151] Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* 576.

[152] Daniel Bernard, "Tractate Avot: Defining Outsider and Insider in the Third Century Rabbinic Guild," *Cahiers d'Histoire: Sphères publiques, sphères privées* XXIII.2 (2004).

[153] That the rabbinic movement and Avot specifically represent a male culture will be discussed below. Moreover, the use of "himself" should not be taken literally here; I do not necessarily mean to rule out the possibility of a group editorial or authorship process. Thinking of the creator of Avot as "an author" or "an editor" is simply shorthand that is useful for the discussion, even if it may not be an accurate anthropological description. This is similar to scholars who refer to various Christian gospel authors as, for example,

"Mark" or "John," while still arguing that each work was the product of a communal process quite removed from the lifetimes of those particular individual disciples.

[154] Miguel Perez Fernandez, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew* (Leiden, NL [New York, NY]: Brill, 1997) 10; Hermann Leberecht Strack and Gunter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992) 141.

[155] Tropper 17.

[156] Akenson 330-1 (emphasis in original).

[157] Lightstone, Jack N. "Urban (Re-)Organization in Late Roman Palestine and the Consolidation of the Early Rabbinic Guild: What the Toseftan Evidence Indicates." *Society of Biblical Literature* (Atlanta, GA, 2003).

[158] Perez Fernandez; Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew," *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York [Cambridge, MA]: Jewish Theological Seminary of America [Distributed by Harvard University Press], 1992) 225-40.

[159] Danby 446, n. 1.

[160] Akenson 330; 444, n. 5. See also Tropper 21.

[161] Tropper 18.

[162] M.B. Lerner (S. Sharvit), "The Tractate Avot," in Safrai, *Literature of the Sages 1*, 277-81.

[163] David Kantrowitz, *Judaic Classics Library*, version 2.2 (Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Computers in Jewish Life, Davka Corporation, Judaica Press, 2001).

[165] Even if this introductiory *mishnah* were meant originally as an introduction of only one unit, as it might be argued, it is still noteworthy that the author-editor of Avot in its final form chose to place it at the introduction to the complete text as well.

[166] Saldarini 6.

[167] Saldarini 7.

[168] Saldarini 17-22.

[169] Neusner is well known for his rearrangement of his English translations of early rabbinic documents according to their inner rhetorical traits. For example, in his 1988 translation of the Mishnah (Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988]), Avot 1:1 and 1:4a appear like this:

> **1:1** A. Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets.
> **I** B. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly.
> C. They said three things:
> (1) "Be prudent in judgment.
> (2) "Raise up many disciples.
> (3) "Make a fence for the Torah."
>
> **1:4** **I** A. Yose b. Yoezer of Seredah and Yose b. Yohanan of Jerusalem received [it] from them
> B. Yose b. Yoezer says,
> (1) "Let your house be a gathering place for sages.
> (2) "And wallow in the dust of their feet.
> (3) "And drink in their words with gusto."

The tripartite nature of each *mishnah* comes through, even though Avot 1:4 only implies a three-part structure to its saying, while Avot 1:1 explicitly outlines it.

[170] This figure is based on lines per *mishnah* on the spreadsheet, and therefore not taking into consideration the actual length of each *mishnah*. Moreover, except for four times, no *mishnah* is composed of more than 80% other content. This is because the listing formula

"Rabbi X says" is almost always present. This also accounts for the fact that only three *mishnayot* are 100% composed of other content (as their words are still attributed to the previous *mishnah's* sage). One could take *figure 1's* 80% as 100% if removing from consideration Avot's listing of sages. Finally, *figure 1* does not take into consideration the size of each *mishnah*, some being quite long, while others are only a few lines long. It also does not take into consideration that many *mishnayot* carry over from previous ones (i.e., are still attributed to the previously named sage), in these cases not representing relatively isolated content.

[171] שנאמר ("as it is said") in Rabbinic Hebrew is "a frequent way of introducing a quotation from Scripture to back up or exemplify a statement...," Perez Fernandez 54.

[172] Robbins, *Exploring* 15.

[173] Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures,* Library of Ancient Israel, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 89-106.

[174] It seems plain that the text resumes the original genealogy with Hillel, framing the Patriarchal section as relatively autonomous. Nevertheless, there is some controversy on whether this Hillel is intended by the author to be the same Hillel of 1:12-14 or whether it is a later Hillel in the family of the Patriarch. See Tropper 107-16.

[175] Alfred J. Kolatch, *Masters of the Talmud: Their Lives and Views* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 2003) 438. Kolatch's encyclopedia of ancient rabbinic masters is in fact a perfect example of the result of using rabbinic texts as historical records. Each biography is presented as historical fact, yet they are all anachronistically culled from various rabbinic texts of different eras, from frequently legendary or

hagiographic narratives, which are mostly unsupportable. As such, he adds enthusiastically that ben Zakkai's "...foresight and courageous action... allowed for the continuation of Jewish scholarship in Yavneh, [and] was a prime factor in the rejuvenation of Jewish life following the destruction of the Temple" (438).

[176] Tropper 24.

[177] It has also been argued that these are later additions (Tropper 21).

[178] Tropper 22, 24.

[179] Robbins, *Exploring* 15.

[180] Robbins, *Exploring* 18.

[182] It is interesting to note an ambivalence in Scripture to "enumerating" or "counting" people, which was considered a sin at times, and is commanded by God at other times. Moreover, "until recently there was a feeling that knowing a person's 'number' was equivalent to knowing his essence, and such knowledge ultimately was a divine prerogative (e.g., knowing when 'someone's number was up')" (Ernest Neufeld, "The Sins of the Census," *Judaism* 43.170 [1994] 196-204).

[183] Translation by Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 73.

[184] Translation by Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 73.

[185] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 91.

[186] Tropper 31.

[187] Tropper 31.

[188] Tropper 31.

[189] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 157.

[190] Translation of תלמוד based on Perez Fernandez 24.

[191] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 152.

[192] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 152.

[193] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 152.

[194] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 165.

[195] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 169.

[196] Neusner, *Torah from Our Sages* 169 (emphasis added).

[197] Tropper 26.

[198] Akenson 331.

[199] Akenson 331.

[200] Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)* (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1974); Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors, Vol. I: Historians* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

[201] Eupolemus, for example, boasted that "Moses was the first wise man, and that he gave the alphabet to the Jews first; then the Phoenicians received it from the Jews, and the Greeks received it from the Phoenicians. Also, Moses was the first to write down laws, and he did so for the Jews" (Holladay 113).

[202] Burton L. Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1995), 281

[203] Mack, 11

[204] Tropper, 86.

[205] Tropper 51.

[206] Saldarini 21

[207] Saldarini 21-2

[208] Robbins, *Exploring* 21.

[209] Translation, Neusner 1994, 582

[210] Victor Witter Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*," *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967) 110.

[211] Turner 95, 96.

[212] Elsewhere I have argued that Avot's few but seemingly unsympathetic passages mentioning women actually represents part of the more general goal of the opening sections of Avot (in which most of these passages are found) to disavow other and potentially competing (as well as more widely acknowledged) sources of power or authority. The household was the social space in which Greco-Roman women commonly had more power or authority. But Avot's authors wished to portray and claim the household as space for rabbinic learning; therefore the disparaging portrayal of women in Avot stems from rabbinic attempts to remove from the neophyte's mind notions of any legitimate source of authority other than that of the rabbis. (Daniel Bernard, "The Status of Women According to the Worldview of Tractate Avot," *Blurred Boundaries: Status in Judaic Law* [University of Toronto, 2002].)

[213] H. Gregory Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews, and Christians*, Religion in the First Christian Centuries (London, GB [New York, NY]: Routledge, 2000) 186.

[214] Snyder 187. This phenomenon also accounts for the appearance of the *targum* genre, which are often idiosyncratic biblical translations (and reinterpretations) into Aramaic.

[215] Snyder 186.

[216] Snyder 190-1.

[217] Snyder 181.

[218] Snyder 185.

[219] Snyder 186.

[220] Snyder 181.

[221] Snyder 186.

[222] Snyder 187.

[223] Snyder 11.

[224] In 212 CE, Rome granted citizenship to all residents of the Empire.

[225] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960 [1909]).

[226] Thomas M. Finn, *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity* (New York, NY [Mahwah, NJ]: Paulist Press, 1997).

[227] Malina 228-41.

[228] Turner, "Betwixt and Between."

[229] Turner 93 (emphasis in original).

[230] Turner 95 (emphasis in original).

[231] Turner 95.

[232] Turner 99-100, 102.

[233] Turner 102.

[234] Jane E Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (London, GB: Cambridge University Press, 1903) 144-60.

[235] Turner 102.

[236] Turner 103, 108.

[237] Turner 108.

[238] Turner 106.

[239] Turner 106.

[240] Turner 108.

[241] Adapted from Turner 103.

[242] Akenson 298.

[243] Akenson 298-302.

[244] The seminal text dealing with this issue of rabbinic claims and external corroboration is Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough and Jacob Neusner, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Bollingen Series, Abridged ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[245] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 183-99.

[246] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 62.

[247] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 26.

[248] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 64.

[249] Bernard, "Tractate Avot" 10-1; cf. Lightstone, *Mishnah* 177-200.

[250] Tropper 198.

[251] Tropper 207.

[252] Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder* 328-39.

[253] Neusner, *Introduction* 48.

[254] Lightstone, *Mishnah* 37-59.

[255] Translation and rhetorical "scoring" by Lightstone, *Mishnah* 35.

[256] Translation by Neusner, *Introduction* 582.

[257] Translation by Neusner, *Introduction* 586.

[258] Translation by Neusner, *Introduction* 589.

[259] Translation and rhetorical "scoring" by Lightstone, Mishnah 35.

[260] Cohen (in Levine) 173.

[261] Lightstone, Mishnah, 188.

[262] Lightstone, *Mishnah*, 191.

[263] Cohen (in Levine) 173.

[264] Mishnah mentions the chain of tradition, basically in passing, only four times: Rosh Hashanah 2:9; Yadayim 4:3; Edduyoth 8:7; and Pe'ah 2:6 (cf. Akenson 302-4).

[265] Alison Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, Aspects of Greek and Roman Life (London, GB: Thames and Hudson, 1972) 162.

[266] John S. Kloppenborg, "Edwin Hatch, Churches and *Collegia*," *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd*, eds. John Coolidge Hurd and Bradley H. McLean, 86 ed., Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series (Sheffield, GB: JSOT Press, 1993) 231.

[267] Onno van Nijf, *The Civic World of Professional Associations in the Roman East*, Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology, vol. 17 (Amsterdam, NL: J.C. Gieben, 1997).

[268] Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Pre-Publication Manuscript) (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003) 25.

[269] Harland 4, 22, 25-7.

[270] Kloppenborg 223, 234.

[271] Robert L. Wilken, "Collegia, Philosophical Schools, and Theology," *The Catacombs and the Colosseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity*, eds. Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1971) 281; cf. Burford 159.

[272] Cf. Kloppenborg 222.

[273] Amram D. Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman near East*, Oxford Oriental Monographs (Oxford, GB; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004) 55-56.

[274] John Joseph Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, The Old Testament Library, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY.: Westminister John Knox Press, 1997) 1.; Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985) 563-4; Tropper 56.

[275] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985) 566 (emphasis in original).

[276] Tropper, 56-7.

[277] Proverbs 1:1-19 (NIV).

[278] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* 205-26.; Murphy, *Tree of Life* 5.

[279] Collins 38.

[280] Collins 6.

[281] Crenshaw 20.

[282] Crenshaw 21.

[283] Collins 6; cf. Crenshaw 21.

[284] Crenshaw 21.

[285] Crenshaw 22.

[286] Gottwald, *Hebrew Bible* 568-69.; Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography* 59.; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* 20-6.

[287] Crenshaw 22.

[288] Crenshaw 22.

[289] Crenshaw 22; Ben Sira (Greek prologue).

[290] For example: James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Rev. and enl. ed. (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 5, 179-80.; Roland Edmund Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1990) x.; Isaac B. Gottlieb, "Pirqe Abot and Biblical Wisdom," *Vetus Testamentum* XL.2 (1990).

[291] Herford, *Ethics of the Talmud.*

[292] Gottlieb, "Pirqe Abot and Biblical Wisdom," 152.

[293] Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism* 18.

[294] Crenshaw 179.

[295] Tropper 54 (emphasis added).

[296] Ben Sira is unique as a wisdom text because its author is actually identified within the text (Collins 23).

[297] Crenshaw 144.

[298] Collins 54.

[299] Collins 44.

[300] Cf. Lightstone, "The Rabbis' Bible" 365.

[301] Crenshaw 149.

[302] Collins 42.

[303] Tropper 54. Cf. Collins 2-3, 41; Crenshaw 140.

[304] Crenshaw 140.

[305] Collins 44.

[306] Crenshaw 142-3.

[307] Collins 57.

[308] Collins 45.

[309] Collins 23.

[310] Collins 36.

[311] Ben Sira 51:23; NRSV translation.

[312] Collins 37.

[313] Collins 56.

[314] Tropper, 136-56

[315] Tropper 147

[316] Tropper 148

[323] Avot contains 28 scriptural quotations, only four of which are from wisdom texts, and all of which are from Proverbs at 3:14 (Prov. 4), 4:1 (Prov. 16), 4:19 (Prov. 24), and 5:19 (Prov. 8).

[324] Tropper 61.

[325] Tropper 64-7.

[326] Tropper 70- 5.

[327] Tropper, 67-8.

[328] Tropper 68.

[329] Tropper 68-9.

[330] Tropper 69-70.

[331] Tropper 75-80.

[332] See Tropper 32-50 for another catalogue of literary techniques employed throughout Avot.

[333] Tropper, 58; referring to Gottlieb 160-2.

[335] Lawrence M. Wills, "Scribal Methods in Matthew and *Mishnah Abot*," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63.2 (2001): 241-57.

[336] Wills 257.

[337] Wills 252.

[338] Wills 253.

[339] Wills 252.

[340] Wills 254.

[341] Wills 255.

[342] Wills 256 (emphases in original).

[347] Tropper 147

[366] Steve Mason, "*Philosophiai*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian," *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, eds. John S. Kloppenborg and Steven G. Wilson (London, GB [New York, NY]: Routledge, 1996) 31-58, 31-2, 38.

[367] Cf. Kloppenborg 223.

[368] Cf. H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb, Wisconsin Studies in Classics (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982 [1956]) 206;

Mark D. Jordan, "Ancient Philosophic Protreptic and the Problem of Persuasive Genres," *Rhetorica* 4.4 (1986) 333; Snyder 9-10.

[369] Mason 33.

[370] Marrou 206. Although Snyder notes that certain philosophical groups, such as the Epicureans, were more "gender-balanced" and that "...it may be that part of the audience for such literature consisted of women, who were routinely denied the benefits of education offered to men" (Snyder 219).

[371] Mason 38.

[372] Snyder 8.

[373] Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries* (London, GB [New York, NY]: Routledge, 2005) 24.

[374] M. Gilbert, "Wisdom Literature," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. Michael E. Stone, Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum, Section 2: Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud (Assen, NL [Philadelphia, PA]: Van Gorcum [Fortress Press], 1984) 307.

[375] Rhee 24.

[377] Mason 40; cf. Marrou 206-7.

[378] Mason 40.

[379] Dennis C. Duling, "Recruitment to the Jesus Movement in Social-Scientific Perspective," *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, eds. Bruce J. Malina, John J. Pilch and the Context

Group, Biblical Interpretation Series, v. 53 (Leiden, NL; Boston, MA: Brill, 2001) 149, 153.

[387] Rhee 24.

[388] Mason 39.

[389] Marrou 208.

[390] Marrou 208.

[391] Marrou 208.

[392] Marrou 208.

[393] Marrou 208.

[394] Marrou 209.

[395] Marrou 209.

[396] Marrou here is discussing the first of three types of philosophical school that he has isolated, the "actual 'schools'...organized as confraternities" (207). The second type was the school established by "isolated teachers working on their account," but not necessarily continuing the teachings of a previous philosopher. The third were "wandering philosophers," whose specialty was public lectures and *diatribes*. These other two types, according to his schema, though they too warrant fair examination, are not of concern to us presently. Indeed, given the harsh dismissal Marrou gives them ("I only mention this third class as a reminder," he says, "for obviously these tub-thumpers can hardly be looked upon as professors of higher learning." [207]), they deserve more attention than they can be given here.

[397] Cf. Wilkins 12.

[398] Akenson 330

[399] To be clear, I am not using this narrative as a proof of the existence or organization of Yohanan ben Zakkai's academy, as Lerner does (see 1.2 above). Rather, I see this narrative only as reflective of a reality that, through narrative and rhetoric, Avot's authors wished to portray to its audience as ideal and (hopefully) legitimate.

[400] Translation by Neusner, *Introduction* 581

[401] Mark D. Jordan, "Ancient Philosophic Protreptic and the Problem of Persuasive Genres," *Rhetorica* 4.4 (1986): 309-33.

[402] Jordan 327.

[403] Jordan 316.

[404] Jordan 314, 312.

[405] Jordan 328.

[406] Jordan 314.

[407] Jordan 328-9.

[408] Jordan 329.

[409] Jordan 328.

[410] Jordan 328.

[411] Jordan 318.

[412] Jordan 313.

[413] Jordan 330.

[414] Jordan 313.

[415] Jordan 312.

[416] Jordan 330.

[417] Jordan 330.

[418] Jordan 309.

[419] Jordan 315-6.

[420] Jordan 328.

[421] Jordan 331.

[422] Jordan 310-1.

[423] Jordan 319.

[424] Jordan 332-3.

[425] Jordan 309.

[426] Jordan 333.

[427] Jordan 330.

[428] Jordan 332.

[429] Jordan 320.

[430] Jordan 320.

[431] Jordan 320.

[432] Jordan 309.

[433] Jordan 330 (emphases added).

[434] Cf. Jordan 319-20.

[435] Jordan 332 (emphasis added).

[437] Mason 39.

[438] Marrou 208.

[439] Marrou 208.

[440] Marrou 208.

[441] Marrou 208.

[442] Marrou 209.

[443] Marrou 207.

[459] "Primitive" does not apply to Avot's dating, rather it is a literary observation.

[460] Interestingly, there seems to me a scholarly consensus that the absence of the Gamalielan patriarchs in the version of Avot's genealogy in ARN indicates that ARN is earlier than Avot, rather than a later extrapolation of it. Yet, based on my analysis above I must argue against this position. The argument is that "since [ARN] adheres to the structure of the chain of transmission but omits the dynastic lineage of the House of Gamaliel, scholars have correctly deduced that [ARN] was based on an early version of Avot which preceded the interpolation of the house of Gamaliel" (Tropper 19). Firstly, this argument depends on the aforementioned focus on Avot's sources rather than on Avot itself, positing a chronology of source interpolation into Avot. But my analysis above suggests that, regardless of the provenance of its sources, ARN is dependent on Avot for the basic frame of its structure as well as the core of its content. If ARN is based upon Avot, then *its* editors chose to omit what by that time had indeed become part of Avot. This represents, therefore, an editorial choice in ARN.

[461] Akenson 350.

[462] "R. Judah said, he that would become pious should fulfill the words of 'Nezikin.' Raba said, 'The words of Avot.'"

[463] Schwartz 9.

REFERENCES

Pirkei Avos - Illustrated Youth Edition / Fully Illustrated, with the Complete Text, Simplified Translation and Comments. 2008. Artscoll.com. Available: http://www.artscroll.com/Books/piyh.html. 13 May 2008.

The Talmudic Age. 2008. Golan Archaeological Museum. Available: http://museum.golan.org.il/etalmud.htm. 21 May 2008.

Akenson, Donald H. *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.

Aune, David. "Romans as a *Logos Protreptikos* in the Context of Ancient Religious and Philosophical Propoganda." *Paulus Und Das Antike Judentum: Tübingen-Durham-Symposium Im Gedenken an Den 50. Todestag Adolf Schlatters (19. Mai 1938)*. Eds. Martin Hengel, Ulrich Heckel and Adolf von Schlatter. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, 58. Tübingen, DE: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1992. 91-121.

Bernard, Daniel. "Mishnah Avot 1:1: Jewish Identity in Social Context and through History." *The American Academy of Religion Eastern International Regional Conference*. St. Paul University, Ottawa, ON, 2002.

---. "The Status of Women According to the Worldview of Tractate Avot." *Blurred Boundaries: Status in Judaic Law*. University of Toronto, 2002.

---. "The Rhetorics and Social Meanings of the Avot Commentary: Toward the History of a Genre." *The 36th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies*. Chicago, IL, 2004.

---. "Tractate Avot: Defining Outsider and Insider in the Third Century Rabbinic Guild."

Cahiers d'histoire: Sphères publiques, sphères privées XXIII.2 (2004): 9-18.

Blackman, Philip. *Ethics of the Fathers: Pirkei Avot*. Gateshead, GB; New York, NY: Judaica Press, 1985.

Boccaccini, Gabriele. *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002.

Brettler, Marc Zvi. *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*. London, GB (New York, NY): Routledge, 1995.

Brooten, Bernadette J. *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues*. Brown Judaic Studies. Vol. 36. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

Burford, Alison. *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*. Aspects of Greek and Roman Life. London, GB: Thames and Hudson, 1972.

Cohen, Shaye J.D. "The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century." *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. Ed. Lee I. Levine. New York, NY (Cambridge, MA): Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 1992. 157-73.

---. "Were Pharisees and Rabbis the Leaders of Communal Prayer and Torah Study in Antiquity? The Evidence of the New Testament, Josephus, and the Early Church Fathers." *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress*. Eds. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999. 89-105.

Danby, Herbert. *The Mishnah*. Oxford, GB: The Clarendon Press, 1933.

Davies, Philip R. *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*.

Library of Ancient Israel. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Duling, Dennis C. "Recruitment to the Jesus Movement in Social-Scientific Perspective." *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*. Eds. Bruce J. Malina, John J. Pilch and Context Group. Biblical Interpretation Series, V. 53. Leiden, NL; Boston, MA: Brill, 2001. 132-75.

Finn, Thomas M. *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity*. New York, NY (Mahwah, NJ): Paulist Press, 1997.

Gennep, Arnold van. *The Rites of Passage*. Trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960 (1909).

Gilbert, M. "Wisdom Literature." *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Ed. Michael E. Stone. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum. Section 2, Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud ; 2. Assen, NL (Philadelphia, PA): Van Gorcum (Fortress Press), 1984. 283-324.

Gold, Avie, Andras Halasz, and Michael Horen. *Artscroll Youth Pirkei Avos*. Artscroll Youth Series. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1998.

Goldenberg, Robert. "B.M. Lewin and the Saboraic Element." *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud: Studies in the Achievements of Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Historical Literary-Critical Research*. Ed. Jacob Neusner. Eugene, OR (Leiden, NL): Wipf and Stock Publishers (E.J. Brill), 2003 (1970).

51-60.

Goodblatt, David M. *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity*. Tübingen, DE: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1994.

Goodenough, Erwin Ramsdell, and Jacob Neusner. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*. Bollingen Series. Abridged ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Goodman, Martin. "The Roman State and the Jewish Patriarch in the Third Century." *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. Ed. Lee I. Levine. New York, NY (Cambridge, MA): Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 1992. 127-39.

Gottwald, Norman K. *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985.

Green, William Scott. "Reading the Writing of Rabbinism: Toward an Interpretation of Rabbinic Literature." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983).

Hadas, Moses. *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*. New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1974.

Harland, Philip A. *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*. (Pre-Publication Manuscript). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003.

Herford, Robert Travers. *Pirke Aboth. The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1962 (1925).

Herr, Moshe David. "The Conception of History among the Sages." *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*. Vol. 3. Jerusalem: World Union of

Jewish Studies, 1977. 129-42.

Hertz, Joseph H. *Sayings of the Fathers. Pirke Aboth: The Hebrew Text, with English Translation and Commentary*. West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1986.

Holladay, Carl R. *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*. Vol. I: Historians. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983.

Jordan, Mark D. "Ancient Philosophic Protreptic and the Problem of Persuasive Genres." *Rhetorica* 4.4 (1986): 309-33.

Kantrowitz, David. *Judaic Classics Library*. Vers. 2.2. Computer software. Institute for Computers in Jewish Life, Davka Corporation, Judaica Press, 2001.

Kee, Howard Clark, and Lynn H. Cohick, eds. *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999.

Kloppenborg, John S. "Edwin Hatch, Churches and *Collegia*." *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd*. Eds. John Coolidge Hurd and Bradley H. McLean. 86 ed. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series. Sheffield, GB: JSOT Press, 1993. 212–38.

Kolatch, Alfred J. *Masters of the Talmud: Their Lives and Views*. Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 2003.

Lerner, M.B. "The Tractate Avot." *The Literature of the Sages. First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*. Ed. Shemuel Safrai. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum. Assen, NL (Philadelphia, PA): Van Gorcum (Fortress Press), 1987. 263-81.

Levine, Lee I., ed. *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. New York, NY (Cambridge, MA):

Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 1992.

---. "The Patriarchate and the Ancient Synagogue." *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction During the Greco-Roman Period.* Ed. Steven Fine. London, GB (New York, NY): Routledge, 1999. 87-100.

Lightstone, Jack N. *The Rhetoric of the Babylonian Talmud: Its Social Meaning and Context.* Waterloo, ON: The Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion (Corporation canadienne des sciences religieuses) by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994.

---. "Whence the Rabbis? From Coherent Description to Fragmented Reconstructions." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 26.3 (1997): 275-95.

---. "The Rabbis' Bible: The Canon of the Hebrew Bible and the Early Rabbinic Guild." *The Canon Debate*. Pre-Publication Copy. Eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001. 325-73.

---. *Mishnah and the Social Formation of the Early Rabbinic Guild: A Socio-Rhetorical Approach.* Studies in Christianity and Judaism. Vol. 11. Waterloo, ON: The Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion (Corporation canadienne des sciences religieuses) by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002.

---. "Urban (Re-)Organization in Late Roman Palestine and the Consolidation of the Early Rabbinic Guild: What the Toseftan Evidence Indicates." *Society of Biblical Literature*. Atlanta, GA, 2003.

Mack, Burton L. *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988.

---. *Rhetoric and the New Testament*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990.

---. *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.

---. *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1995.

---. "On Redescribing Christian Origins." *Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature*. Philadelphia, PA, 1995.

---. *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2001.

Mack, Burton L., and Vernon K. Robbins. *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1989.

Malina, Bruce J. *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*. London, GB (New York, NY): Routledge, 1996.

Marrou, H.I. *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Trans. George Lamb. Wisconsin Studies in Classics. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982 (1956).

Marshall, Gordon. *A Dictionary of Sociology*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Martin, Luther H. "History, Historiography and Christian Origins." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 29.1 (2000): 69-89.

Mason, Steve. "*Philosophiai*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian." *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*. Eds. John S. Kloppenborg and Steven G. Wilson. London, GB (New York, NY): Routledge, 1996. 31-58.

Matera, Frank J. *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies: Interpreting the Synoptics through Their Passion Stories*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1986.

McGlynn, Moyna. *Divine Judgement and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe, 139. Tübingen, DE: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

Neufeld, Ernest. "The Sins of the Census." *Judaism* 43.170 (1994): 196-204.

Neusner, Jacob. *Torah from Our Sages: A New American Translation and Explanation*. 1st ed. Chappaqua, NY: Rossel Books, 1983.

---. *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985.

---. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.

---. *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. 1st ed. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994.

Neusner, Jacob, and Bruce Chilton, eds. *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007.

Neusner, Jacob, and William Scott Green. *Rabbinic Judaism: Structure and System*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.

Nijf, Onno van. *The Civic World of Professional Associations in the Roman East*. Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology. Vol. 17. Amsterdam, NL: J.C. Gieben, 1997.

Nock, Arthur Darby. *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. London, GB: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Oppenheimer, Aharon. "Roman Rule and the Cities of the Galilee in Talmudic Literature." *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. Ed. Lee I. Levine. New York, NY (Cambridge, MA): Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by

Harvard University Press), 1992. 115-25.

Perelman, Chaim, and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969.

Perez Fernandez, Miguel. *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*. Leiden, NL (New York, NY): Brill, 1997.

Rendsburg, Gary A. "The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew." *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. Ed. Lee I. Levine. New York, NY (Cambridge, MA): Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 1992. 225-40.

Rhee, Helen. *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries*. London, GB: Routledge, 2005.

Robbins, Vernon K. *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996.

---. *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology*. London, GB (New York, NY): Routledge, 1996.

Robbins, Vernon K., et al., eds. *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003.

Safrai, Shemuel, ed. *The Literature of the Sages. First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*. Assen, NL (Philadelphia, PA): Van Gorcum (Fortress Press), 1987.

Said, Edward W. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. 1st American ed. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1994.

---. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of*

the World. Rev. ed. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997 (1981).

Saldarini, Anthony J. *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. Brown Judaic Studies. Vol. 14. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

Schwartz, Seth. *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. To 640 C.E.* Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Segal, Alan F. *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Snyder, H. Gregory. *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews, and Christians*. Religion in the First Christian Centuries. London, GB (New York, NY): Routledge, 2000.

Strack, Hermann Leberecht, and Gunter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Trans. Markus Bockmuehl. 2nd ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992.

Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*. 1st ed. New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1991.

Tropper, Amram D. *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman near East*. Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Turner, Victor Witter. "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites De Passage*." *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967. 93-111.

Urman, Dan. "Jewish Inscriptions from the Village of Dabbura in the Golan." *Ancient*

Synagogues Revealed. Ed. Lee I. Levine. Jerusalem, IL: Academic Press and the Israel Exploration Society, 1981. 154-56.

Wilken, Robert L. "Collegia, Philosophical Schools, and Theology." *The Catacombs and the Colosseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity*. Eds. Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1971. 268-91.

Wills, Lawrence M. "Scribal Methods in Matthew and *Mishnah Abot*." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63.2 (2001): 241-57.

APPENDIX

This appendix represents the spreadsheet referred to above (II.1), in which Avot's rhetoric is "scored" according to the different types of techniques that it favours, most notably listing techniques (in columns A-G). See II.2 above for the methodology used to arrange Avot according to this grid.

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	**Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)**	**Items in Explicit List**	**Explicit Counting & Listing**	**Implied List**	**Sage's name (object)**	**Torah Transmission**	**"say" (אמר)**	**Sage's name (subject)**	
								משה	1:01
						קבל תורה			
					מסרי.				
						ומסרה			
					ליהושע.				
								ויהושע	
					לזקנים.				
								וזקנים	
					לנביאים.				
								ונביאים	
						מסרוה			
					לאנשי כנסת הגדולה.				
								הם	
							אמרו		
			שלשה דברים.						
		הוו מתונים בדין. והעמידו תלמידים הרבה. ועשו סיג לתורה:							
								שמעון הצדיק	1:02
						היה משירי כנסת הגדולה.			
								הוא	
							היה אומר		
			על שלשה דברים העולם עומד.						
		על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים:							
								אנטיגנוס איש סוכו	1:03
						קבל			
					משמעון הצדיק.				
								הוא	
							היה אומר		
				אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס. אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס. ויהי מורא שמים עליכם:					
								יוסי בן יעזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים	1:04
						קבלו			
					מהם.				
								יוסי בן יעזר איש צרדה	

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
							אומר		
				יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים. והוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם. והוי שותה בצמא את דבריהם:					
								יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים	1:05
							אומר		
				יהי ביתך פתוח לרווחה. ויהיו עניים בני ביתך. ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה.					
	באשתו אמרו. קל וחומר באשת חברו. מבאן אמרו הכמים. כל זמן שאדם מרבה שיחה עם האשה.								
				נורם רעה לעצמו. ובוטל מדברי תורה. וסופו יורש גיהנם:					
								יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבלי	1:06
						קבלו			
					מהם.				
								יהושע בן פרחיה	
							אומר		
				עשה לך רב. וקנה לך חבר. והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות:					
								נתאי הארבלי	1:07
							אומר		
				הרחק משכן רע. ואל תתחבר לרשע. ואל תתיאש מן הפורענות:					
								יהודה בן טבאי ושמעון בן שטח	1:08
						קבלו			
					מהם.				
								יהודה בן טבאי	
							אומר		
				אל תעש עצמך כעורכי הדינין. וכשיהיו בעלי דינין עומדים לפניך.					
	יהיו בעיניך כרשעים.								
				וכשנפטרים מלפניך.					
	יהיו בעינך כזבאין. כשקבל עליהם את הדין:								
								שמעון בן שטח	1:09
							אומר		

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
				הוי מרבה לחקור את העדים.					
				והוי זהיר בדבריך. שמא מתוכם ילמדו לשקר:					
								שמעיה	1:10
								ואבטליון	
						קבלו			
					מהם.				
								שמעיה	
							אומר		
				אהוב את המלאכה.					
				ושנא את הרבנות. ואל תתודע לרשות:					
								אבטליון	1:11
							אומר		
	חכמים הזהרו בדבריכם.								
				שמא תחובו חובת גלות ותגלו למקום מים הרעים. וישתו התלמידים הבאים אחריכם וימותו. ונמצא שם שמים מתחלל:					
								הלל	1:12
								ושמאי	
						קבלו			
					מהם.				
								הלל	
							אומר		
				הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן. אוהב שלום ורודף שלום. אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה:					
								הוא	1:13
							היה אומר		
				נגד שמא.					
				אבד שמה.					
				ודלא מוסיף.					
				יסיף.					
				ודלא יליף.					
				קטלא חייב.					
				ודאשתמש בתגא.					
				חלף:					
								הוא	1:14
							היה אומר		
				אם אין אני לי.					
				מי לי.					
				וכשאני לעצמי.					
				מה אני.					
				ואם לא עכשיו.					
				אימתי:					
								שמאי	1:15
							אומר		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Sage's name (subject)	"say" (אמר)	Torah Transmission	Sage's name (object)	Implied List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Items in Explicit List	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Scriptural Quotation
					עשה תורתך קבע. אמור מעט ועשה הרבה. והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות:				
1:16	רבן גמליאל	היה אומר							
					עשה לך רב. והסתלק מן הספק. ואל תרבה לעשר אמדות:				
1:17	שמעון בנו	אומר							
								כל ימי נדלתי בין החכמים.	
					ולא מצאתי לגוף טוב				
								אלא שתיקה.	
					ולא המדרש הוא העקר.				
								אלא המעשה.	
					וכל המרבה דברים.				
								מביא חמא:	
1:18	רבן שמעון בן גמליאל	אומר							
						על שלשה דברים העולם עומד.			
							על הדין ועל האמת ועל השלום.		
									שנאמר (זכריה ח) אמת ומשפט שלום שפטו בשעריכם:
2:01	רבי	אומר							
								איזוהי דרך ישרה שיבור לו האדם. כל שהיא תפארת לעושיה ותפארתלו מן האדם. והוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה. שאין אתה יודע מתן שכרן של מצות. והוי מחשב הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה. ושכר עברה כנגד הפסדה.			
						והסתכל בשלשה דברים			
								ואי אתה בא לידי עברה.	
							דע מה למעלה ממך. עין רואה ואזן שומעת. וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבין:		
2:02	רבן גמליאל								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
								בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא	
							אומר		
	יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ. שניעת שניהם משכחת עון. וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה. סופה בטלה וגוררת עון. וכל העמלים עם הצבור. יהיו עמלים עמהם לשם שמים. שזכות אבותם מסיעת וצדקתם עומדת לעד.								
	ואתם. מעלה עליכם שכר הרבה אני כאלו עשיתם:								
	תנו חיורין ברשות. שאין מקרבין לו לאדם אלא לצורך עצמן. נראין כאוהבין בשעת הנאתן. ואין עומדין לו לאדם בשעת דחקו:								2:03
								הוא	2:04
							היה אומר		
				עשה רצונו כרצונך. כדי שיעשה רצונך כרצונו. בטל רצונך מפני רצונו. כדי שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצונך.					
								הלל	
				אל תפרוש מן הצבור. ואל תאמן בעצמך עד יום מותך. ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו. ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמוע שסופו להשמע. ואל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה.			אומר		
	שמא לא תפנה:								
								הוא	2:05
							היה אומר		
				אין בור ירא חטא. ולא עם הארץ חסיד. ולא הבישן למד. ולא הקפדן מלמד. ולא כל המרבה בסחורה מחכים.					
	ובמקום שאין אנשים.								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
	השתדל להיות איש: שהוא ראה גלגלת אחת שצפה על פני המים.								2:06
	לה. על דאמפת. אמפוך. וסוף ממיפי ימופון:						אמר		
							היה אומר	הוא	2:07
				מרבה בשר. מרבה רמה. מרבה נכסים. מרבה דאגה. מרבה נשים. מרבה כשפים. מרבה שפחות. מרבה זמה. מרבה עבדים. מרבה גזל. מרבה תורה. מרבה חיים. מרבה ישיבה. מרבה חכמה. מרבה עצה. מרבה תבונה. מרבה צדקה. מרבה שלום. קנה שם טוב. קנה לעצמו. קנה לו דברי תורה. קנה לו חיי העולם הבא:					
						קבל		רבן יוחנן בן זכאי	2:08
					מהלל ומשמאי.				
							היה אומר	הוא	
				אם למדת תורה הרבה. אל תחזיק טובה לעצמך. כי לכך נוצרת.					
			חמשה תלמידים היו לו						
					לרבן יוחנן בן זכאי.				
			ואלו הן.						
		רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס. ורבי יהושע בן חנניה. ורבי יוסי הכהן. ורבי שמעון בן נתנאל. ורבי אלעזר בן ערך.							

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
			הוא היה מונה שבחן.						
		רבי אליעזר בן הורקנום.							
				בור סוד שאינו מאבד טפה.					
		יהושע בן חנניה. רבי							
				אשרי יולדתו.					
		רבי יוסי הכהן.							
				חסיד.					
		שמעון בן נתנאל. רבי							
				ירא חטא.					
		אלעזר בן ערך. ורבי							
				מעין המתגבר.					
								הוא	
							היה אומר		
	אם כל חכמי ישראל יהיו בכף מאזנים. ואליעז בן הורקנום בכף שניה. מכריע את כולם.								
								אבא שאול	
							אומר		
	משמו. אם יהיו כל חכמי ישראל בכף מאזנים ורבי אליעזר בן הורקנום אף עמהם. ורבי אלעזר בן ערך בכף שניה. מכריע את כולם:								
							אמר		2:09
	לחם. צאו וראו אימתי דרך ישרה שידבק בה האדם.								
								רבי אליעזר	
							אומר		
				עין טובה.					
								רבי יהושע	
							אומר		
				חבר טוב.					
								רבי יוסי	
							אומר		
				שכן טוב.					
								רבי שמעון	
							אומר		
				הרואה את הנולד.					
								רבי אלעזר	
							אומר		
				לב טוב.					
							אמר		
	לחם רואה אני את דברי אלעזר בן ערך מדבריכם.								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
	שבכלל דבריו דבריכם.								
							אמר		
	להם צאו וראו איזוהי דרך רעה שיתרחק ממנה האדם.								
								רבי אליעזר	
							אומר		
				עין רעה.					
								רבי יהושע	
							אומר		
				חבר רע.					
								רבי יוסי	
							אומר		
				שכן רע.					
								רבי שמעון	
							אומר		
				הלוה ואינו משלם. אחד הלוה מן האדם. כלוה מן המקום ברוך הוא.					
שנאמר (תהלים לז) לוה רשע ולא ישלם. וצדיק חונן ונותן.									
								רבי אלעזר	
							אומר		
				לב רע.					
							אמר		
	להם. רואה אני את דברי אלעזר בן ערך מדבריכם. שבכל דבריו דבריכם:								
								הם	2:10
							אמרו		
			שלשה דברים.						
								רבי אליעזר	
							אומר		
	יהי כבוד חברך חביב עליך כשלך. ואל תהי נוח לכעום. ושוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך. והוי מתחמם כנגד אורן של חכמים. והוי זהיר בגחלתן שלא תכוה. שנשיכתן נשיכת שועל. ועקיצתן עקיצת עקרב. ולחישתן לחישת שרף. וכל דבריהם כגחלי אש:								
								רבי יהושע	2:11
							אומר		

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
		עין הרע. ויצר הרע. ושנאת הבריות.							
	מוציאין את האדם מן העולם:								
								רבי יוסי	2:12
							אומר		
		יהי ממון חברך חביב עליך כשלך. והתקן עצמך ללמוד תורה.							
	שאינה ירושה לך.								
		וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים:							
								רבי שמעון	2:13
							אומר		
		הוי הזיר בקריאת שמע ובתפלה.							
		וכשאתה מתפלל.							
	אל תעש תפלתך קבע.								
	אלא רחמים ותחנונים לפני המקום ברוך הוא.								
שנאמר (יואל ב) כי חנון ורחום הוא ארך אפים ורב חסד ונחם על הרעה.									
		ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך:							
								רבי אלעזר	2:14
							אומר		
		הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה. ודע מה שתשיב לאפיקורוס. ודע לפני מי אתה עמל.							
	ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעולתך:								
								רבי טרפון	2:15
							אומר		
				היום קצר והמלאכה מרובה. והפועלים עצלים. והשכר הרבה. ובעל הבית דוחק:					
								הוא	2:16
							היה אומר		
	לא עליך המלאכה לגמור. ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה. אם למדת תורה הרבה. נותנים לך שכר הרבה. ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעולתך. ודע. כתן שכרן								

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Sage's name (subject)	"say" (אמר)	Torah Transmission	Sage's name (object)	Implied List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Items in Explicit List	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Scriptural Quotation
								של צדיקים לעתיד לבוא:	
3:01	עקביא בן מהללאל								
		אומר							
						הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה.			
						דע.			
							מאין באת.		
							ולאן אתה הולך.		
							ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין והשבון.		
							מאין באת.		
							מטפה סרוחה.		
							ולאן אתה הולך.		
							למקום עפר רמה ותולעת.		
							לפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון. לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא:		
3:02	רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים								
		אומר							
								הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות.	
								שאלמלא מוראה. איש את רעהו חיים בלעו.	
	רבי חנניא בן תרדיון								
		אומר							
						שנים שושבין ואין ביניהן דברי תורה.			
								תרי זה מושב לצים.	
									שנאמר (תהלים א). ובמושב לצים לא ישב.
						אבל שנים שושבין ויש ביניהם דברי תורה.			
								שכינה שרויה ביניהם.	
									שנאמר (מלאכי ג). אז נדברו יראי יי איש אל רעהו ויקשב יי וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי יי ולחשבי שמו.
						אין לי אלא שנים.			
								מנין שאפילו אחד שושב ועוסק בתורה. שהקדוש ברוך הוא קובע לו שכר.	
									שנאמר (איכה ג). ישב בדד וידם כי נטל עליו:
3:03	רבי שמעון								

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Sage's name (subject)	"say" (אמר)	Torah Transmission	Sage's name (object)	Implied List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Items in Explicit List	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Scriptural Quotation
		אומר				שלשה שאכלו על שולחן אחד ולא אמרו עליו דברי תורה.		כאלו אכלו מזבחי מתים.	שנאמר (ישעיה כה). כי כל שולחנות מלאו קיא צואה בלי מקום.
						אבל שלשה שאכלו על שולחן אחד ואמרו עליו דברי תורה.		כאלו אכלו משולחנו של מקום ברוך הוא.	שנאמר (יחזקאל מא). וידבר אלי זה השולחן אשר לפני ה׳:
3:04	רבי חנינא בן חכינאי								
		אומר			הנעור בלילה והמהלך בדרך יחידי והמפנה לבו לבטלה.				
								הרי זה מתחייב בנפשו:	
3:05	רבי נחוניא בן הקנה								
		אומר						כל המקבל עליו עול תורה. מעבירין ממנו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ. וכל הפורק ממנו עול תורה. נותנין עליו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ:	
3:06	רבי חלפתא בן דוסא איש כפר חנניה								
		אומר				עשרה שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה.			
								שכינה שרויה ביניהם.	שנאמר (תהלים פב). אלהים נצב בעדת אל.
						ומנין אפילו חמשה.			שנאמר (עמוס ט). ואגודתו על ארץ יסדה.
						ומנין אפילו שלשה.			

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
שנאמר (תהלים פב). בקרב אלהים ישפוט.			ומנין אפילו שנים.						
שנאמר (מלאכי ג). אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וישמע וגו'.			ומנין אפילו אחד.						
שנאמר (שמות כ). בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך:								רבי אלעזר איש ברתותא	3:07
							אומר		
	תן לו משלו. שאתה ושלך שלו. וכן בדוד הוא אומר (דברי הימים א כט) כי ממך הכל ומידך נתנו לך.								
								רבי שמעון	
							אומר		
	המהלך בדרך ושונה ומפסיק ממשנתו ואומר מה נאה אילן זה ומה נאה ניר זה. מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו:								
								רבי חמתאי כרבי יאי	3:08
	משום				רבי מאיר				
							אומר		
	כל השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו. מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו.								
שנאמר (דברים ד). רק לך ושמור נפשך מאוד פן תשכח השמר את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך.									
	יכול אפילו תקפה עליו משנתו. תלמוד לומר (שם) ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך. הא אינו מתחייב בנפשו עד שישב וימירם מלבו:								
								רבי חנינא בן חמא	3:09
							אומר		

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
	כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו. חכמתו מתקימת. וכל שחכמתו קודמת ליראת חטאו. אין חכמתו מתקימת.							הוא	
							היה אומר		
	כל שמעשיו מרובין מחכמתו. חכמתו מתקימת. וכל שחכמתו מרובה ממעשיו. אין חכמתו מתקימת:							הוא	3:10
							היה אומר		
	כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו. רוח המקום נוחה הימנו. וכל שאין רוח הבריות נוחה הימנו. אין רוח המקום נוחה הימנו.							רבי יוסא בן הרבינס	
							אומר		
	מוציאין את האדם מן העולם:			שנה של שחרית. ויין של צהרים. ושיחת הילדים. וישיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ.				רבי אלעזר המודעי	3:11
							אומר		
	אף על פי שיש בידו תורה ומעשים טובים. חלק לעולם הבא: אין לו			המחלל את הקדשים. והמבזה את המועדות. והמלבין פני חברו ברבים. והמפר בריתו של אברהם אבינו עליו השלום. והמגלה פנים שלא בתורה כהלכה.				רבי ישמעאל	3:12
							אומר		
	הוי קל לראש ונוח לתשחורת. וחוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה:							רבי עקיבא	3:13

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
							אומר		
	שחוק וקלות ראש.								
	מרגילין לערוה.								
	מסורת.								
	סיג לתורה.								
	מעשרות.								
	סיג לעשר.								
	נדרים.								
	סיג לפרישות.								
	סיג לחכמה.								
	שתיקה:								
								הוא	3:14
							היה אומר		
	חביב אדם								
	שנברא בצלם.								
	חבה יתרה נודעת								
	לו שנברא בצלם.								
שנאמר									
(בראשית ט).									
כי בצלם אלהים									
עשה את האדם.									
	חביבין ישראל								
	שנקראו בנים								
	למקום.								
	חבה יתרה נודעת								
	להם שנקראו								
	בנים למקום.								
שנאמר									
(דברים יד).									
בנים אתם לה'									
אלהיכם.									
	חביבין ישראל.								
	שנתן להם כלי								
	חמדה.								
	חבה יתרה								
	נודעת להם שנתן								
	להם כלי חמדה								
	שבו נברא העולם.								
שנאמר (משלי ד).									
כי לקח טוב נתתי									
לכם. תורתי אל									
תעזובו:									
	הכל צפוי.								3:15
	והרשות נתונה.								
	ובטוב העולם נדון.								
	והכל לפי רוב								
	המעשה:								
								הוא	3:16
							היה אומר		
				הכל נתון בערבון.					
				ומצודה פרוסה על					
				כל החיים.					
				החנות פתוחה.					
				והחנוני מקיף.					
				והפנקס פתוח.					
				והיד כותבת.					
				וכל הרוצה					
				ללוות יבוא וילוה.					
				והגבאים מחזירים					
				תדיר בכל יום.					
				ונפרעין מן האדם					
				מדעתו ושלא					
				מדעתו.					

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
				ויש להם על מה שיסמוכו. והדין דין אמת. והכל מתוקן לסעודה:					
								רבי אלעזר בן עזריה	3:17
				אם אין תורה. אין דרך ארץ. אם אין דרך ארץ. אין תורה. אם אין חכמה. אין יראה. אם אין יראה. אין חכמה. אם אין בינה. אין דעת. אם אין דעת. אין בינה. אם אין קמח. אין תורה. אם אין תורה. אין קמח.			אומר		
								הוא	
							היה אומר		
	כל שחכמתו מרובה ממעשיו. למה הוא דומה. לאילן שענפיו מרובין ושרשיו מועטין. והרוח באה ועוקרתו והופכתו על פניו. שנאמר (ירמיה יז). והיה כערער בערבה ולא יראה כי יבוא טוב ושכן חררים במדבר ארץ מלחה ולא תשב.								
	אבל כל שמעשיו מרובין מחכמתו. למה הוא דומה. לאילן שענפיו מועטין ושרשיו מרובין. שאפילו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו אין מזיזין אותו ממקומו. שנאמר (שם). והיה כעץ שתול על מים ועל יובל ישלח שרשיו ולא יראה כי יבוא חום. והיה עלהו רענן. וכשנת בצורת לא ידאג. ולא ימיש מעשות פרי:								
								רבי אליעזר	3:18

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
								בן חסמא	
							אומר		
	קנין ופתחי נדה.								
	הן הן גופי הלכות.								
	תקופות								
	וגמטריאות.								
	פרפראות להכמה:								
								בן זומא	4:01
							אומר		
	איזהו הכם.								
	הלומד מכל אדם.								
שנאמר (תהלים קיט). מכל מלמדי השכלתי כי עדותיך שיחה לי.									
	איזהו גבור.								
	הכובש את יצרו.								
שנאמר (משלי מז). מוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר.									
	איזהו עשיר								
	השמח בחלקו.								
שנאמר (תהלים קכח). יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך ומוב לך.									
	אשריך.								
	בעולם הזה.								
	ומוב לך.								
	לעולם הבא.								
	איזהו מכובד.								
	המכבד את הבריות.								
שנאמר (שמואל א ב). כי מכבדי אכבד ובוזי יקלו:									
								בן עזאי	4:02
							אומר		
	רץ למצוה קלה כבחמורה.								
	ובורח מן העברה.								
	שמצוה גוררת מצוה.								
	ועברה גוררת עברה.								
	ששכר מצוה.								
	מצוה.								
	ושכר עברה.								
	עברה:								
								הוא	4:03
							היה אומר		
	אל תהי בז לכל אדם.								
	ואל תהי מפלית לכל דבר.								
	שאין לך אדם שאין לו שעה								
	ואין לך דבר שאין								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
	לו מקום:							רבי לויטס איש יבנה	4:04
							אומר		
	מאוד מאוד הוי שפל רוח. שתקות אנוש רמז.								
								רבי יוחנן בן ברוקא	
							אומר		
	כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר. נפרעין ממנו בגלוי. אהד שוגג ואחד מזיד בחלול השם:								
								רבי ישמעאל בנו	4:05
							אומר		
	הלומד תורה על מנת ללמד. מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד. והלומד על מנת לעשות. מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות.								
								רבי צדוק	
							אומר		
	אל תעשם עטרה להתגדל בהם. ולא קרדום לחפור בהם. וכך								
							היה		
								הלל	
							אומר		
	ראשתמש בתגא. חלף. הא למדת. כל הנהנה מדברי תורה. גורע חייו מן העולם:								
								רבי יוסי	4:06
							אומר		
	כל המכבד את התורה. גופו מכובד על הבריות. וכל המחלל את התורה. גופו מחולל על הבריות:								
								רבי ישמעאל בנו	4:07
							אומר		
	החושך עצמו מן הדין. פורק ממנו איבה וגזל ושבועת שוא. והגס לבו בהוראה. שוטה רשע וגס רוח:								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
								הוא	4:08
							הידה אומר		
	אל תהי דן יחידי. שאין דן יחידי אלא אחד. ואל תאמר קבלו דעתי. שה רשאין ולא אתה:								
								רבי יונתן	4:09
							אומר		
	כל המקים את התורה מעוני. סופו לקיימה מעשר. וכל המבטל את התורה מעשר. סופו לבטלה מעוני:								
								רבי מאיר	4:10
							אומר		
	הוי ממעט בעסק. ועסוק בתורה. והוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם. ואם בטלת מן התורה. יש לך בטלים הרבה כנגדך. ואם עמלת בתורה. יש לו שכר הרבה לתן לך:								
								רבי אליעזר בן יעקב	4:11
							אומר		
	העושה מצוה אחת. קונה לו פרקליט אחד. והעובר עברה אחת. קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים. כתרים בפני הפורענות.								
								רבי יוחנן הסנדלר	
							אומר		
	כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים. סופה להתקים. ושאינה לשם שמים. אין סופה להתקים:								
								רבי אלעזר בן שמוע	4:12
							אומר		
	יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך. וכבוד חברך כמורא רבך. ומורא רבך כמורא שמים:								
								רבי יהודה	4:13

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
							אומר		
	הוי זהיר בתלמוד. ששגגת תלמוד עולה זדון.								
								רבי שמעון	
							אומר		
			שלשה כתרים הם.						
		כתר תורה							
		וכתר כהונה							
		וכתר מלכות.							
	וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן:								
								רבי נהוראי	4:14
							אומר		
	הוי גולה למקום תורה ואל תאמר שהיא תבוא אחריך. שחבריך יקימוה בידך. ואל בינתך אל תשען:								
								רבי ינאי	4:15
							אומר		
	אין בידינו לא משלות הרשעים אף לא מיסורי הצדיקים. ואל בינתך אל תשען:								
								רבי מתיא בן חרש	
							אומר		
	הוי מקדים בשלום כל אדם. והוי זנב לאריות. ואל תהי ראש לשועלים:								
								רבי יעקב	4:16
							אומר		
	העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא. התקן עצמך בפרוזדור. כדי שתכנס לטרקלין:								
								חוא	4:17
							חיה אומר		
	יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה. מכל חיי העולם הבא. ויפה שעה אחת של קורת רוח בעולם הבא. מכל חיי העולם הזה:								
								רבי שמעון בן אלעזר	4:18
							אומר		
				אלתרצה את					

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Sage's name (subject)	"say" (אמר)	Torah Transmission	Sage's name (object)	Implied List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Items in Explicit List	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Scriptural Quotation
					חכרך בשעת כעסו. ואל תנחמנו בשעה שמתו מוטל לפניו. ואל תשאל לו בשעת נדרו. ואל תשתדל לראותו בשעת קלקלתו:				
4:19	שמואל הקטן								
		אומר							
									(משלי כד) בנפול אויבך אל תשמח ובכשלו אל יגל לבך. פן יראה יי ורע בעיניו והשיב מעליו אפו:
4:20	אלישע בן אבויה								
		אומר							
								הלומד ילד למה הוא חומה. לדיו כתובה על ניר חדש. והלומד זקן למה הוא חומה. לדיו כתובה על ניר מחוק.	
	רבי יוסי בר יהודה איש כפר הבבלי								
		אומר							
								הלומד מן הקטנים למה הוא דומה. לאוכל ענבים קהות ושותה יין מגתו. והלומד מן הזקנים למה הוא דומה. לאוכל ענבים בשולות ושותה יין ישן.	
	רבי								
		אומר							
								אל תסתכל בקנקן. אלא במה שיש בו. יש קנקן חדש מלא ישן. וישן שאפילו חדש אין בו:	
4:21	רבי אלעזר הקפר								
		אומר							
					הקנאה התאוה והכבוד				
								מוציאין את האדם מן העולם:	
4:22	הוא								
		היה אומר							
					הילודים למות. והמתים להחיות. והחיים לדון.				
								לידע להודיע ולהודע שהוא אל.	
					הוא היוצר.				

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
				הוא הכורא.					
				הוא המבין.					
				הוא הדין.					
				הוא עד.					
				הוא בעל דין.					
				והוא עתיד לדון.					
	ברוך הוא.								
	שאין לפניו								
				לא עולה					
				ולא שכחה					
				ולא משוא פנים					
				ולא מקח שוחד.					
	שהכל שלו.								
	ודע שהכל לפי החשבון.								
	ואל יבטיחך יצרך שהשאול בית מנוס לך.								
				שעל כרחך אתה נוצר.					
				ועל כרחך אתה נולד.					
				ועל כרחך אתה חי.					
				ועל כרחך אתה מת.					
				ועל כרחך אתה עתיד לתן דין					
				וחשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא:					
			בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם						5:01
	מה תלמוד לומר והלא במאמר אחד יכול להבראות אלא להפרע מן הרשעים שמאבדין								
			את העולם שנברא בעשרה מאמרות						
	לתן שכר טוב לצדיקים שמקיימין								
			עשרה דורות מאדם ועד נח.						5:02
	להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו. שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין ובאין עד שהביא עליהם את מי המבול								
			עשרה דורות מנח ועד אברהם.						
	להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו. שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין ובאין עד שבא אברהם וקבל עליו שכר כולם:								
			עשרה נסיונות אבינו עליו נתנסה אברהם						5:03
	ועמד בכולם. להודיע כמה חבתו של אברהם אבינו								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
	עליו השלום:		עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו במצרים ועשרה על הים. עשר מכות הביא הקדוש ברוך הוא על המצריים במצרים ועשר על הים. עשרה נסיונות נס אבותינו את המקום ברוך הוא במדבר						5:04
שנאמר (במדבר יד). ינסו אותי זה עשר פעמים ולא שמעו בקולי:									
			עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש.						5:05
		לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר הקדש. ולא הסריח בשר הקדש מעולם. לא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחים. ולא עמוד העשן. לא נמצא פסול בעומר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים. עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים. ולא הזיק נחש ועקרב בירושלים מעולם. ולא אמר אדם לחברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים:							
			עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות. ואלו הן.						5:06
		פי הארץ. ופי הבאר. ופי האתון. והקשת. והמן. והמטה. והשמיר. והכתב. והמכתב. והלוחות.							
	יש אומרים אף המזיקין. וקבורתו של משה. ואילו של אברהם אבינו. יש אומרים אף צבת בצבת עשויה:								

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
			שבע דברים בגולם						5:07
			ושבעה בחכם.						
		חכם אינו מדבר בפני מי שהוא גדול ממנו בחכמה ובמנין.							
		ואינו נכנס לתוך דברי חברו.							
		ואינו נבהל להשיב.							
		שואל בענין ומשיב כהלכה.							
		ואומר על ראשון ראשון ועל אחרון אחרון.							
		ועל מה שלא שמע. אומר לא שמעתי.							
		ומודה על האמת.							
	חלופיהן בגולם:								
			שבעה מיני פורעניות באין לעולם על שבעה נופי עבירה.						5:08
		מקצתן מעשרין ומקצתן אינן מעשרין. רעב של בצורת באה.							
		מקצתן רעבים ומקצתן שבעים. גמרו שלא לעשר.							
		רעב של מהומה ושל בצורת באה.							
		ושלא לטול את התלה. רעב של כליה באה.							
		דבר בא לעולם על מיתות האמורות בתורה שלא נמסרו לבית דין.							
		ועל פרות שביעית. חרב באה לעולם על ענוי הדין. ועל עוות הדין. ועל המורים בתורה שלא כהלכה:							
			חזה רעה באה לעולם על שבועת שוא.						5:09
		גלות באה לעולם על עובדי עבודה זרה. ועל גלוי עריות. ועל שפיכות דמים. ועל השמטת הארץ.							
			באדבעה פרקים הדבר מתרבה.						
		ברביעית.							
		ובשביעית							
		ובמוצאי שביעית ובמוצאי החג שבכל שנה ושנה.							
		ברביעית. מפני מעשר עני שבשלישית.							
		בשביעית. מפני							

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
		מעשר עני שבששית. וכמוצאי שביעית. מפני פרות שביעית. וכמוצאי החג שבכל שנה ושנה. מפני גזל מתנות עניים:							
			ארבע מדות באדם.						5:10
		האומר שלי ושלך שלך. זו מדה בינונית. שלי ויש אומרים זו מדת סדום. שלי שלך ושלך שלי. עם הארץ. שלי שלך ושלך שלך. חסיד. שלי שלי ושלך שלי. רשע:							
			ארבע מדות בדעות.						5:11
		נוח לכעוס ונוח לרצות. יצא שכרו בהפסדו. קשה לכעוס וקשה לרצות. יצא הפסדו בשכרו קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות חסיד. נוח לכעוס וקשה לרצות רשע:							
			ארבע מדות בתלמידים.						5:12
		מהר לשמוע ומהר לאבד. יצא שכרו בהפסדו. קשה לשמוע וקשה לאבד. יצא הפסדו בשכרו. מהר לשמוע וקשה לאבד. חכם. קשה לשמוע ומהר לאבד. זה חלק רע:							
			ארבע מדות בנותני צדקה.						5:13
		הרוצה שיתן ולא יתנו אחרים. עינו רעה כשל אחרים. יתנו אחרים והוא לא יתן. עינו רעה בשלו. יתן ויתנו אחרים. חסיד. לא יתן ולא יתנו אחרים. רשע:							
			ארבע מדות בהולכי לבית המדרש.						5:14
		הולך ואינו עושה. שכר הליכה בידו. עושה ואינו הולך. שכר מעשה בידו. הולך ועושה. חסיד.							

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
		לא הולך ולא עושה. רשע:							
			ארבע מדות ביושבים לפני חכמים.						5:15
		ספוג.							
		ומשפך.							
		משמרת.							
		וגפה.							
		ספוג.שהוא סופג את הכל.							
		משפך. שמכניס בזו ומוציא בזו.							
		משמרת. שמוציאה את היין וקולטת את השמרים.							
		ונפה. שמוציאה את הקמח וקולטת את המולת:							
	כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר.								5:16
	בטל דבר								
	בטלה אהבה. ושאינה תלויה בדבר.								
	אינה בטלה לעולם. איזו היא אהבה התלויה בדבר. זו אהבת אמנון ותמר. ושאינה תלויה בדבר. זו אהבת דוד ויהונתן:								
	כל מחלוקת שהי לשם שמים.								5:17
	סופה להתקים. ושאינה לשם שמים.								
	אין סופה להתקים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים. זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים. זו מחלוקת קורח וכל עדתו:								
	כל המזכה את הרבים.								5:18
	אין חטא בא על ידו.								
	וכל המחטיא את הרבים.								
	אין מספיקין ביחד לעשות תשובה.								
	פשה זכה וזכה את הרבים.								
	זכות הרבים תלוי בו.								
שנאמר (דברים לג). צדקת ה' עשה ומשפטיו עם ישראל.									

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
	ירבעם חטא והחטיא את הרבים. חטא הרבים תלוי בו.								
שנאמר (מלכים א טו). על חטאות ירבעם בן נבט אשר חטא ואשר החטיא את ישראל:									
			כל מי שיש בידו שלשה דברים הללו.						5:19
	מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו.								
			ושלשה דברים אחרים.						
	מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע.								
		עין טובה.							
		ורוח נמוכה.							
		ונפש שפלה.							
	מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו.								
		עין רעה.							
		ורוח גבוהה.							
		ונפש רחבה.							
	מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. מה בין תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו לתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. אוכלין בעולם הזה ונהנין בעולם הבא.								
שנאמר (משלי ח). להנחיל אוהבי יש. ואוצרותיהם אמלא.									
	אבל תלמידיו של בלעם הרשע יורשין גיהנם וזורדין לבאר שחת.								
שנאמר (תהלים נה). ואתה אלהים תורידם לבאר שחת. אנשי דמים ומרמה לא יחצו ימיהם. ואני אבטח בך:									
								יהודה בן תימא	5:20
							אומר		
				הוי עז כנמר. וקל כנשר. ורץ כצבי. ונבור כארי					
	לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים.								
								תנא	

I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	
Scriptural Quotation	Other Content (not dependent on A+B or F)	Items in Explicit List	Explicit Counting & Listing	Implied List	Sage's name (object)	Torah Transmission	"say" (אמר)	Sage's name (subject)	
							היה אומר		
	עז פנים לגיהנם. ובשת פנים לגן עדן. יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו שתבנה עירך במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך:							הוא	5:21
							היה אומר		
				בן חמש שנים למקרא. בן עשר למשנה. בן שלש עשרה למצות. בן חמש עשרה להלמוד. בן שמונה עשרה לחופה. בן עשרים לרדוף. בן שלשים לכח. בן ארבעים לבינה. בן חמשים לעצה. בן ששים לזקנה. בן שבעים לשיבה. בן שמונים לגבורה. בן תשעים לשוח. בן מאה כאלו מת ועבר וכלל מן העולם:					
							אומר	בן בן בן	5:22
				הפך בה והפך בה. דכולא בה. ובה תחזי. וסיב ובלה בה.					
	ומנה לא תזוע. שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה.								
							אומר	בן הא הא	5:23
	לפום צערא אגרא:								