

PREFACE

The present study hopes to make a contribution to our knowledge of the Tannaitic period in the history of Judaism. For reasons discussed in Chapter One, the study focuses on one man, the Tanna, R. Ishmael. When completed, our investigation will cover all the rabbinic traditions attributed to our sage and all which contain comments by others about him. Ishmael's importance is somewhat obscured by the present state of the materials before us. Since his traditions were for the most part not preserved or transmitted by his own students, we have a picture of him drawn by the students of his greatest contemporary, R. 'Aqiba. However, if the importance of the man is unclear, that of this study is not. From our research we shall learn a great deal about the process whereby Tannaitic statements were preserved and transmitted. By studying this process, we shall have a clearer picture of the way in which the raw material for Rabbinic Judaism came into being.

My teacher, Professor Jacob Neusner, has read and re-read each page of this manuscript many times. His comments and insights are found on every page. His kindness and help as a teacher and a friend have made this study possible.

Some of the material contained herein also appeared in my doctoral dissertation for the Department of Religious Studies at Brown University. Professors Horst Moehring and Ernest Frerichs were members of my dissertation committee, and I wish to thank them for their advice and help. Professor Wendell Dietrich was graduate advisor during my tenure at Brown; I am appreciative of his constant help.

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My wife, Fraeda, has sacrificed much over the past few years so that I might complete my graduate work and this manuscript. I was engaged in my graduate studies for the first five years of our marriage, and her help made my studies possible. Although her help and support can never be fully acknowledged, I have dedicated this manuscript to her. This study is as much the fruit of her love as it is of my labor.

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