

Neurology & Pain Management

JULIAN UNGAR-SARGON, M.D., Ph.D.
123 McKinley Avenue
Renssalaer, IN 47978

The Interpretation of Medical/Midrashic Narratives

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R. Eleazar said, why are the prayers of the righteous likened to a pitchfork? To teach thee that just as the pitchfork turns the corn from place to place in the barn, so the prayers of the righteous turn the mind of the Holy One, blessed be He, from the attribute of harshness to that of mercy.

Talmud Succah 24b

In listening to my own symptoms or my patient's complaints I must make certain hermeneutical moves or make use of certain rules of interpretation.

For instance when a patient says "I have headaches, especially when I am stressed out" it does not take a licensed MD to infer that the headaches may well be associated with the stress. It does, however take a lot of experience to infer that despite the stress there may well be a co-morbid pathology going on. Many patients with brain tumors also have stress! Many patients with M.S. also have psycho-somatic disorders.

How I listen and interpret has been a subject of interest to me since my existential commitment to the sacred texts of my tradition also demands a listening and an interpreting that follows certain rules and guidelines dictated by a long tradition of scholarship. The Canon as we call it, containing those books designated as "sacred" and excludes those outside the canon and thus sectarian or product of heretical views in the first to fourth century. Even the books of the canon when interpreted are subject to the rules of interpretation and therefore to limits as well. There are those outer borders beyond which tradition does not permit interpretation. There are those books not accepted within the Canon and there are those interpretations that stretch the divine-human relationship to breaking point and thus rejected as being outside the limits.

Stephen Hazan Arnoff¹ has articulated the ways of interpretation that closely parallel my approach: While midrashic texts and statements can appear illogical and random when taken out of context, they are in fact the products of a holistic system guided primarily by *middot* (rules of exegesis) within a range of favored genres:

¹ PhD candidate at JTS

There are two primary, and at times competing, assumptions about Torah that are at the core of the midrashic enterprise. While scholars tend to doubt the historicity of these schools of thought, tradition holds that second-century figures Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiba and their respective followers disagree concerning the very nature of Torah (exegetical methods) (sic.)

Rabbi Ishmael and his school hold that Torah "speaks in the language of people"--that is, the way that people normally speak--and consequently its interpreters should not make too much of every textual quirk or inconsistency. The Akiban view maintains that the Torah is a perfect composition down to every "jot and tittle"--every tiny letter such as the *yod*, and every calligraphic flourish, such as the tiny "crowns" that appear on the tops of some letters in a Torah scroll--and that only an improperly trained exegete would mistakenly deem even a letter of Torah, let alone a syntactic or grammatical anomaly, superfluous.

The viewpoints of both Akiba and Ishmael repeat throughout the midrashic canon. Despite the debate over "human" versus "divine" Torah language, Akiba and Ishmael share the vital principle that Torah is the only textual source appropriate for the continuing work of revelation. Even as it reworks, reorganizes, and reconceives Torah in radical ways, midrash grants Torah ultimate authority and endless attention.

Rabbinic tradition holds that the *middot*—collectively functioning as the exegetical rulebook of midrash--coalesce in three stages over three generations: the Seven Rules of Hillel, the Thirteen Middot of Ishmael, and the Thirty-Two Middot of Eliezer ben Yose ha-Gelili. While each *middah* (in the singular) ostensibly serves a unique role, in the interest of space only three middot will be explicated here. (The majority of the other middot bears at least some substantial relationship to these three.)

The phrase *kal v'homer* is often translated as an *a fortiori* argument, whereby a less significant statement leads to a more serious example or vice versa. A practical paraphrasing of kal v'homer reads, "if case 'X' is true, then all the more so must case 'Y' be true."

In Sifre Devarim 31 (a midrashic collection on the book of Deuteronomy), Ishmael and his descendants are portrayed using a series of kal v'omer statements to try to assert their ascendancy over Isaac and his children. "[If] Abraham was just one man and he inherited the Land and we are many men, so the Land should be given to us as an inheritance...Just as Abraham worshipped only one God and inherited the Land, isn't it logical that we who worship many gods will inherit the land?" Rabbinic terminology is so pervasive, it would seem, that even characters within rabbinic texts use it—even if their logic is faulty.

Gezerah shavah, defined as "verbal analogy," allows a midrash to infer the meaning of a word or root in Scripture based on the meaning of the same word or root in another place in the biblical text. In Tosefta Sotah 6:6 (as well as in similar versions in both Sifre Devarim and Genesis Rabbah), the ambiguous use of the verb *m'tzahek* expands the negative image of Ishmael, who is said to be *m'tzahek* with Isaac, based on varied connotations of the same verb in other biblical verses.

He is linked to idol worship as implied by parallels with Exodus 32:6, sexual impropriety following Genesis 39:17, making war as in Samuel II 2:14-16, and cunning as suggested by Proverbs 26:18-19. Like many biblical characters representing challengers to mythic Israel while sharing a common heritage, the figure of Ishmael inspires both polemic and respect.

Binyan av allows set categories of interpretation based on a shared word or phrase amongst a "family" of verses. For example, according to Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedat in the Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 1:1, 18a, all phrases that begin "And God" refer to both God and God's royal court, while statements that begin with "And He [God] said" share a common theme of pending disaster.

Midrash as a whole is highly verse-centric, preferring to atomize the meaning of words, letters and phrases, than to pursue textual cohesion across narratives, chapters, and books. The system of middot is the primary vehicle for this micro-reading and organization of Torah. Their use creates rich layers of character and subtext, connecting component parts of the biblical text in unexpected ways—and providing a certain sense of continuity, if not consistency.

It is worth noting that *halakhic* (legal) and *aggadic* (non-legal) midrash share the same traditional structures and interpretive rules, but because it is focused primarily on narrative and not law, *aggadah* generally has more freedom to take imaginative liberties with the biblical text.

Recently I realized that the 13 *middot*² or the rules (of Rabbi Ishmael) by which the Oral Law of the Talmud is derived³ from the Written Law or the Hebrew Bible are the very rules by which we interpret texts and make the hermeneutical moves from one place (*pshat* or plain meaning) to *drush* (exegesis or deeper meaning). Initially there were only seven known as the Seven Hermeneutic Rules of Rabbi Hillel the Elder (late First Century BCE to the early First Century CE). Rabbi Hillel was the first sage to write them down.⁴ Later these were expanded to 32 rules (Rabbi Eliezer).⁵

In the 2nd century CE, possibly in response to R. Akiba's attempts to use a very loose logic system to derive meaning from Torah, Rabbi Ishmael limited the methodology to 13 ways of deriving meaning for the purposes of law. His method was so accepted the list of these methods is also part of the weekday morning liturgy⁶. Here are the actual 13 rules.

I. Kal v'Chomer:⁷

² (Hebrew: "measure," or "norms"), in Jewish hermeneutics or biblical interpretation, methods or principles used to explicate the meaning of biblical words or passages to meet the exigencies of new situations. Though the rules, or norms, were probably developing in early Hellenistic Judaism, the first known *middot* were compiled by Rabbi Hillel in the 1st century BC.

³ Among the more prominent *middot* are the *kol wa-homer* ("how much more"), in which the interpreter proceeds from the minor to a major premise, and the *gezera shawa* (comparison of similar expressions, or laws), in which an inference is made by analogy. The *kol wa-homer* rule is limited by the principle of *dayyo* ("it is sufficient") so that the interpreter will not go beyond the conclusion warranted by the premise. In the New Testament, Jesus applied this rule in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7): "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more [*kol wa-homer*] will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7:11).

In addition to the rules of rabbis Hillel, Ishmael, and Eliezer, other rules were developed and found acceptance. Some of the rules, such as *notariqon* ("shorthand"), allowed for arbitrary interpretations. According to *notariqon*, each letter of a word may be regarded as the initial letter of another word, so that a word in a text might be read as an entire sentence. Another principle, *al tiqre . . . ella'* ("do not read . . . but"), allows the interpreter to exchange one vowel or consonant for another. *Gematria* (*q.v.*), in which each letter of a word stands for a number that, when added to the others, yields a meaningful sum total, was used not only by rabbis but also by early Christian theologians, such as Origen of Alexandria in the 3rd century AD. From *Britannica Encyc.*

⁴ Rabbi Hillel was one of the leading rabbinical authorities during the Second Temple Period. Hillel studied under Shemaiah and Avtalyon. He along with Rabbi Shammai constituted the last pair of the *zugot* sages. Later Rabbi Ishmael, a *tanna* from the late first and second Century CE, would expand Hillel's rules to thirteen and Rabbi Eliezer ben Yose ha-Gelili would enlarge the code to a total of thirty-two rules.

⁵ See my essay "Middot- 7.7.07" for a deeper discussion as to the esoteric correspondences of the 13 rules or Middot.

⁶ In *Birchat hashachar*.

⁷ I am indebted to Steve Litpon for the following exposition:

Kal v'chomer is a *fortiori*, or major to minor inference. This occurs when there are two connected cases, one lenient and one stringent. If the lenient case has certain restrictions, then by Kal v'chomer, the more stringent case does. Alternatively, if a stringent case has leniencies, then in the lenient case also has those leniencies. Kal v'chomer is found in both Talmud and Tanach, as in the case of Jonah(4:10-11): *And the Lord said: You pitied the Castor plant which you did not toil with and did not grow. Between a night it was and between a night it perished. Then should I not pity Nineveh the great city, more than twelve thousand people, who don't know between their right and their left and many animals?*

II Gezirah Shava:

Gezirah Shava is a verbal analogy, based on an identical word or phrase found in two passages of Tanach. If there is a rule or outcome found in one of those passages, then the rule or outcome applies to the second, and to rules applying to the second passage. The exegetical Gezirah Shava is used to understand an ambiguous expression and the constructional Gezirah Shava is used to construct laws in reference to each other. The classic example was when Hillel the elder showed that Passover sacrifices should be offered on the Sabbath by noting that the phrase *in its season* occurs for both Passover sacrifices and daily sacrifices. As the Sabbath does not overrule daily sacrifices, then the Sabbath does not overrule Passover sacrifices.

III: Binyan Av:

Binyan Av is interpretation by analogy. Unlike #2, this analogizes from theme and generalization instead of specific verbal phrase. There are types of Binyan Av. The first is simple analogy, if case A law X applies, then a similar case B law X also applies. Thus when there are certain things noted in case A then they are true too for case B. The second occurs when there is an objection to the comparison of A and B. A new case or cases are introduced linking A and B by analogy. The analogy is determined by the use of a general case expanded from a specific case, and identifying characteristics in the specific use of that case, creating case A. case B is analogous if it shares some characteristics as B, and thus shares other characteristics of A's generalization.

IV: General and Specific.

When a generalization is followed by a detail, then the Generalization is limited in scope by the detail or details. This prohibits illustration of the case by the specific example, and hence an improper analogy inference. For example *When playing a game (a general) of chess (a specific), one must follow the rules.*

V: Specific and General

When a detail is followed by a generalization, we follow the generalization, and do not limit the law to the detail as in #3 above. This allows for illustration of the case with a specific example. An example might be *Like chess (a specific), when playing any game (a general), one must follow the rules.*

VI: General, Specific and General:

This is a combination of #3&4 above, allowing for two generalizations sandwiching a particular. In this case the generalizations are limits by characteristics of the particular. For example, *When Playing a game (general), chess, checkers, Monopoly (specifics), dice (general), one must follow the rules.* In the case, the specifics are all board games. Therefore this does not apply to games that are not played on boards like baseball, or for the dice games that do not require a board, such as craps.

VII: A generalization that needs a detail, and a detail that needs a generalization,

Unlike 3-5 above, where a specific or general dominate, these are cases where the detail and generalization are dependent upon one another for meaning. In these cases, both are considered part of a whole expression.

VIII: Something that was included in a generalization, but was explicitly specified to teach something, was intended not to teach about itself but about the entire generalization.

In this case, if there is a set of rules involved in a generalization, and one of those rules has a specific point, then the point applies to all the rules, not as an illustration of the specific point.

XII: Something that was included in a generalization, but was specified to discuss a provision similar to those that apply in the generalization was intended to be lenient rather than strict.

This is to identify specific cases in the generalization where exemptions or lighter treatment might occur.

X: Something that was included in a generalization but was specified as containing a provision different from those contained in the generalization, was intended to be both lenient and strict.

Here a specific and absolute criterion or measurement is set for a case within the generalization. Depending on circumstances, that measurement may be lenient for some and strict for others.

XI: Something that was included in a generalization but was specified as something new, cannot be returned to its generalization until the Torah explicitly returns it to its generalization.

When a specific case changes a generalization radically, it is considered separate for the generalization, unless the Torah explicitly states that the Generalization is to be followed in all other ways, where the case is considered instead of a specific exception.

XII: Something learned from its context, or from its end.

Ambiguities can be explained by its context of where it appears, or in terms of the statement of the next verse.

XIII: Two verses that contradict each other.

When two verses contradict each other a resolution may be found by introduction of a third verse.

Besides these 13 rules another set of 32 rules called the **BARAITA OF 32 RULES**, to be used in the haggadic interpretation of Scripture were recorded. Rashi⁸ makes frequent use of the *Baraita of 32 Rules* in his commentaries on the Bible and Talmud, referring to it by this name or as the *Baraita* of Yose b. Eleazar, the Galilean.⁹ The *Midrash ha-Gadol* version contains the introductory statement, "These are the rules whereby the *Haggadah* is to be understood," clearly indicating that these rules were to be applied only to the *Haggadah* and not to the *halachah*. The *Baraita* deals mainly with the syntax, style, and subject matter of Scripture and after each rule gives one or more examples of its application. Although the 13 halakhic rules of R. Ishmael are included in the *Baraita*, all the examples given are taken from haggadic passages, even Ishmael's rules being applied with less rigor.¹⁰

Of interest is the fact that in sefer Yetzirah, a compact discourse on cosmology and cosmogony (a kind of *ma'aseh Bereishit*, "act of creation," in a speculative form), outstanding for its clearly mystical character. The book's strong link with Jewish speculations concerning divine wisdom is evident from the beginning, with the declaration that God created the world by means of "32 secret paths of wisdom." These 32 paths, defined as "ten *Sefirot beli mah*" and the "22 elemental letters" of the Hebrew alphabet, are represented as the foundations of all creation. The 22 letters plus the 10 sefirot or archetypes add to 32 the very rules of interpreting the Torah of Rabbi Yose ben Eleazar.

The possible connections between interpreting the Torah as a blueprint for creation and the world itself have been noted before. The way we make sense of the world and its connection to the creator via the 32 paths of wisdom and the Torah being comprised of the same 22 letters of the

⁸ I copy below a linear Rashi translation to Genesis 2:8 (Artscroll edition)

8. מִקְדָּם – TO THE EAST. בְּמִזְרְחוֹ שֶׁל עֵדֶן – In the east of Eden הֵגֵן – He planted the garden.³ וְאִם תֹּאמַר – If you will say, הֲרֵי כָבַר כָּתַב – see now, that it has already written, „וַיִּבְרָא אֶת הָאָדָם וְגוֹמֵר“ – “And [God] created man, etc.”⁴ רְאִיתִי בְּבְרִייתָא – I have looked into the *baraisa*⁵ מִשְׁלֵשִׁים – of R' Eliezer the son of R' Yose HaGelili – שֶׁל רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בְּנֵי שָׁל רַבִּי יוֹסֵי הַגְּלִילִי – about the thirty-two rules – שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נִדְרָשָׁתָּ – by which the Torah is expounded,⁶ וְזוֹ אַחַת מֵהֶן – and this, i.e., the following, is one of them: בְּלָל – “In the case of a general statement – שֶׁלֹּאֲחֶרָיו מַעֲשֶׂה – that is followed by a narrative, הוּא פְּרָטוֹ שֶׁל רֵאשׁוֹן – [the narrative] is a detailed account of the first, broad statement.” In our case this rule applies as follows: „וַיִּבְרָא אֶת הָאָדָם וְגוֹמֵר“ – “And [God] created man, etc.” – וְזוֹ בְּלָל – This is a general statement. סָתָם בְּרִיאָתוֹ מֵהֵיכָן – It was vague about where his creation was from, i.e., that passage did not say that he was created from soil, וְסָתָם מַעֲשָׂיו – and it was vague about his actions, i.e., it did not say what happened to him. חָזַר וּפִרְשׁ – It came back and explained in our passage: „וַיִּבְרָא ה' אֱלֹהִים וְגוֹמֵר“ – “And HASHEM

God formed [man of soil from the earth]. etc.”⁷ וַיַּצְמַח לוֹ גַּן עֵדֶן – and He made the Garden of Eden
⁹ Until the 19th century it was known only from being quoted in the 14th century *Sefer Keritot*, the methodological work of Samson b. Isaac of Chinon. The *Baraita* now appears at the beginning of the *Midrash Mishnat R. Eli'ezer* and at the beginning of *Midrash ha-Gadol* to Genesis (ed. by M. Margalio (1947), 22ff.). Although ascribed to Yose b. Eleazar, who lived about 150 C.E., many examples of the application of its rules are attributed to later *Tannaim* and even to the *amoraim* Johanan, and Yose b. Hanina.

¹⁰ Under *ribbui* ("addition") for instance, the example given is that the word "and" in Genesis (Gen. 21:1) teaches that all the barren women in the world were blessed with children at the same time as Sarah. The word "also" in "I also saw in my dreams" (Gen. 40:16) teaches that in addition to his own dream the chief baker saw in his dream the interpretation of the chief butler's dream.

Hebrew Alphabet plus the 10 archetypes by which the mystics understood the divine point me to a similar hermeneutic when reading and listening to my patients. Later day Hassidic Masters (including the Maggid followed by Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev) have also paralleled the 13 Middot of interpretation with the 13 Middot of Divine Mercy that God bestows upon mankind (originally evoked by Moses after the sin of the golden calf.) Here I see the close parallel between interpretation of the Torah by humans in producing the oral Law transmitted from generation to generation and the very attributes or archetypes of God's relationship with the world. The mirroring between the divine and human in the archetype of grace and mercy allows for human participation in interpreting the divine word down here in the here and now.

In a famous Talmudic passage¹¹ we are told of a Rabbi Shimon Ben Amsoni who interpreted all the *essin* those two-lettered words containing aleph and taf which have no semantic meaning per se rather signify the accusative form and object to follow. The Torah states: "The L-rd your G-d shall you fear" (Deuteronomy 10:20). The first word of this verse (in the Hebrew) is 'es' (or 'et'). 'Es' is a very common word, yet it does not translate into English because it has no English counterpart. It is a kind of simple connective, here: "Es the L-rd your G-d you shall fear." In English we would do away with the 'es' altogether: English needs no connective between "you shall fear" and "the L-rd your G-d." Yet 'es' is ubiquitous in the Torah, appearing in practically every verse. It announces the object form or accusative.

The Talmud records the following:

Shimon of Amson (according to some: Nehemiah of Amson) was able to derive a new law every time the word 'es' appeared in the Torah. However, when he reached the verse "The L-rd your G-d you shall fear" he refrained.¹² His students protested: "What about all the instances of 'es' you did expound?" He answered: "Just as I received reward for the expounding, so too will I receive reward for the refraining."¹³ This was so until R. Akiva came and inferred, "es' the L-rd... you shall fear" -- this includes Torah scholars.

R. Moshe Eisenmann¹⁴ asked: What was so difficult about R. Akiva's inference that Shimon of Amson -- the world 'es' expert -- was unable to arrive at it? How is it that R. Akiva was able to resolve a difficulty that Shimon himself was unable to solve? He explained as follows: Shimon was stumped: How could anything finite possibly be compared to an infinite G-d? So what did he do? He took his entire lifework -- the thousands of 'es's he no doubt did explain throughout his career -- and tossed them all out -- without a second thought. If it's wrong, if this isn't Torah truth, it mattered not how many years he had spent poring over every other 'es' in the Torah. If it was not the correct interpretation of Torah, it was therefore not in keeping with his life's mission to continue. Now, when R. Akiva saw such selfless devotion, such an altruistic pursuit of G-d's Torah without any concern for his own success or reputation -- he was able to say: "Now I know who can be compared to G-d." Shimon exemplified such selfless dedication to G-d's Torah; he had so totally nullified himself before his Maker, that to honor such a man was not to honor a human being at all. It was to honor the Torah and G-d Himself.

¹¹ T.B. Pesachim 22b

¹² He felt nothing could possibly be included and thereby equated to G-d Himself. And once he realized his approach was incorrect in this one instance of 'es', he concluded that one could no longer derive laws from 'es'. And therefore, he withdrew all his previous teachings from the beginning of Genesis all the way through to this verse in Deuteronomy. His whole world view collapsed. His methodology and hermeneutical interpretive method fell apart.

¹³ A beautiful metaphor for the notion that he never did it for any reward, the scholarship itself was the reward. More so the so-called reward was not for arriving at the correct interpretation but the effort and the approach. Lastly one might add that the "withdrawal" meaning the standing down before the better interpretation as a hermeneutical response in itself, the self effacement and denial is to be rewarded as much as much as the correct interpretation.

¹⁴ Rebbe in Ner Israel Rabbinical College, Baltimore,

I wanted to suggest that Rabbi Akiva's interpretation of the *es* was so fundamentally different to Shimon of Amson in the following way. If the word *es* is to mean anything it is to signify the accusative, so for instance the first verse in the Torah:

"In the beginning God created **es** the heavens and **ve-es** the earth"

In both cases the word *es* signifies the object of God's creation, heaven and earth, and also signifies the separation between creator and creation. An alternative use of the word *es* is used in the Hebrew Bible as meaning "with" so Rabbi Akiva might well have been arguing for the latter usage in this verse from Deuteronomy which would then mean the Talmid Chacham is to be feared alongside God.¹⁵ But surely Shimon knew the multiple possible translations of the word *es*!

I believe that Rabbi Akiva was, in fact resisting both these uses of the word *es*. Unlike Shimon who used the grammatical form signifying the accusative to include other possible alternative objects of inclusion, Rabbi Akiva used the word as a different grammatical signifier, that of the nominative or of identification. For Rabbi Akiva *es* is to be read in the nominative meaning total identification so that the verse "*es* The L-rd your G-d you shall fear" does not create theological problems for him since the word *es* no longer signifies another object besides God to be included in the exegesis. Rather the word *es* signifies identification and implies there being another creature that can be identified in God's creation with God Himself, that of the Talmid Chacham. The first verse of genesis then comes to mean

"In the beginning God created *es* "

Meaning identified and remained part of heaven and earth, for Rabbi Akiva God did not become absent after creation but remained intrinsic to it and immanent in it. In his martyrology his exegesis of the verse "and you shall love *es* the Lord thy God" then comes to mean God, not as an object of love, rather a total identification with, which results in sacrificing one's heart and soul if necessary and his retort to his students "all my life I worried as to when I might be able to fulfill this verse". His exegesis of the word *es* actually brings him to the very martyrdom in the flesh. Interpretation becomes risky business!

In my interpreting the stories of my patients I also make use of hermeneutical techniques of interpretation within the guidelines of my medical education.

Rabbi Akiva teaches me however not to see the patient as object rather as with total identification. Only then does the story also reflect my own and can be of use in the healing process. In my own pain and my own trials I come to identify those aspects of their stories that make them unique rather than symptoms common to a particular disease. In that way the treatment plan becomes tailored to each individual patient as a universe of their own.

In such interpretive strategies exegesis leads to a real empathy. The Talmud speaks of the qualities of some of the Rabbis we have quoted in Gittin 67a:

For so it has been taught: Issi b. Judah used to specify the distinctive merits of the various Sages. R. Meir [he said], was wise and a scribe.¹⁶ R. Judah was wise when he desired to be.¹⁷ R. Tarfon was a heap of nuts.¹⁸ R. Ishmael was a well-

¹⁵ I am indebted to my father in law for this insight.

¹⁶¹⁶ This was his profession. V. Talmud Sotah, 20.

¹⁷ I.e., when he was not too hasty, he could be even wiser than R. Meir (Tosaf.).

¹⁸ When he was asked a question, his instances came out like a heap of nuts toppling over one another.

stocked shop.¹⁹ R. Akiba was a storehouse with compartments.²⁰ R. Johanan b. Nuri was a basket of fancy goods.²¹ R. Eleazar b. Azariah was a basket of spices.²² The Mishnah of R. Eliezer b. Jacob [the Elder] was little and good.²³ R. Jose always had his reasons. R. Simeon used to grind much and let out little. A Tanna [explained this to mean that] he used to forget little, and what he let go from his mind was only the bran.²⁴ So too said R. Simeon to his disciples: My sons, learn my rules²⁵ since my rules are the cream of the cream²⁶ of R. Akiba's.

Rabbi Elimelech of Dinov the Bnei Yissaschar suggests there are two paths in *mesiras nefesh*, one being the literal martyrology of rabbi Akiva and the other the path of Rashbi, Rabbi Shimeon Bar Yochi his pupil who demanded from him Torah even while condemned to death in jail. He suggests that Rabbi Akiva wished to die the death of a martyr to fulfil the words of the verse "to love god with all ones' soul" even to the point of relinquishing it. Whereas Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai his pupil revealed a new teaching through his meditative practice. When a person is reciting the doxology of the *SHMA* he should meditate and accept on himself that whatever happens to him whether he does have an enlightened mind or not he will continue to worship with *mesiras nefesh*. And the Bnei Yissaschar adds "the law follows Rashbi! (meaning the non-literal approach.) For it is not in God's interest or desire for people to immolate themselves in self-sacrifice." Rashbi adds to his pupils in this quote that his middot or his rules of interpretation are the "cream of the cream" of those of his teacher rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Shimon himself, when he wished to encourage his students to commit his lessons to memory would tell them that his own teachings were in fact a concentrated version of what he had learned from Rabbi Akiva (Gittin 67a). However it seems as if his path would lead away from martyrology and toward the revelation of the esoteric branches of mystical Judaism. But that is for another essay!

¹⁹ Where it is not necessary to keep the customer waiting while the article required is brought from outside.

²⁰ All his learning being classified under various heads Scripture, Halachah, Aggadah, etc. like different kinds of corn in a storehouse.

²¹ Apparently this indicates that while his knowledge was well arranged like that of R. Akiba, it was not so well unified and correlated.

²² Apparently, less in quantity than R. Johanan's.

²³ Lit., 'a kab and fine'. So that wherever he gives an opinion, the halachah follows him.

²⁴ I.e., those statements which were not followed by the halachah.

²⁵ Lit., 'measures'. middot

²⁶ Lit., 'the terumah of the terumah'.