Introduction

> Aristotle trained young men ... that they might be able to uphold either side of the question in copious and elegant language. He also taught the Topics ... a kind of sign or indication of the arguments from which a whole speech can be formed on either side of the question.[1]
>
> R. Yose from Mamleh, R. Yehoshua of Sikhnin in the name of R. Levi: Children during the time of David, even before they tasted sin, knew how to interpret the Torah [by adducing] forty-nine [arguments that something is] impure and forty-nine [arguments that the same thing is] pure.[2]
>
> Said R. Yoḥanan: One who does not know how to derive that a reptile is pure and impure in one hundred ways, may not investigate [testimony] in merit [of the defendant].[3]

Rhetoric, the art of public persuasive speaking, formed the basis of education throughout the Roman Empire for anyone privileged enough to continue his[4] studies past childhood.[5] Professional orators performed in theaters for public entertainment and were venerated like today's

[1] Cicero, *Orator*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), xiv.46. See also Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory: or, Education of an Orator in Twelve Books*, trans. John Selby Watson (London: George Bell & Sons, 1892), 12.2.25 cited on p. 233.

[2] Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, *Parah 'adumah, pis. 4:2*, to Num 19:2 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:56). See also Lev Rabbah 26:2.

[3] Y. Sanhedrin 4:1, 22a. The number one hundred here may simply be a rounding up of the forty-nine plus forty-nine interpretations mentioned in parallel sources; see Qorban ha-`Edah to this Yerushalmi passage, s.v. "*me'ah pe`amim*." See further analysis of this source on pp. 198, 233–36, and 278–80; and see parallels cited and analyzed elsewhere: pp. 277–84 on Pesikta Rabbati 21; p. 191 on Y. Pesaḥim 6:1, 33a; p. 233 on B. Sanhedrin 17a; and pp. 280–4 on B. Eruvin 13b, which makes reference to both 48 and 150 for the number of ways students could purify the impure.

[4] I will be using masculine pronouns throughout this book considering that both rhetorical and rabbinic advanced education was available almost exclusively to boys; see p. 131 n. 2.

[5] See Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 190–239.

rock stars. A skilled lawyer could make all the difference in deciding a jury's verdict. Political, religious, and military leaders alike relied on rhetorical skill to inspire, motivate, and influence their followers. The rabbinic authors of the midrash and the Talmud lived, studied, and taught within this culture. Whether or not they attended nearby schools of rhetoric in Palestine and its environs, and whether or not they ever read Aristotle, Cicero, or Quintilian, the rabbis[6] certainly witnessed legal orations in courts and epideictic orations in ceremonial public gatherings. A rhetorical culture suffused the atmosphere in which the rabbis lived and breathed in the Greek East.

This interaction prompts us to ask several questions: What happens when the biblical presentation of prophetic truth comes into contact with human reason and endless argumentation? How deeply did classical rhetoric impact rabbinic literature and thought? How did the rabbis view professional orators and the use of rhetoric? How does the rabbis' attitude compare with that of the ancient schools of philosophy and that of Christianity? How does the role of the rabbis as public orators, teachers, judges, and legislators compare with the similar set activities undertaken by professional rhetors? This book seeks to answer these questions by analyzing relevant texts and genres from both legal and homiletic parts of the Talmud and midrash.

The epigraphs at the beginning of the chapter, which compare the value of arguing both sides of an issue in both classical and rabbinic thought, present just one indication of the depth of the interrelationship between these two worldviews. For the classicist, the Talmud provides a good case history for how rhetoric resonated in a particular minority community in the Greek East. Reciprocally, the study of classical rhetoric in the Talmud reveals a new appreciation and understanding of essential aspects of rabbinic activity.

THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

The rabbis of the first centuries CE flourished in an era that late antique writers already called the Second Sophistic. In order to understand the role that oratory and the art of persuasion played during this period of renaissance, we must begin with the first blossoming of sophistic activity centuries earlier. The first stages of classical Greek rhetoric developed hand in hand with the birth of democracy in ancient Greece. From the

[6] The term rabbis throughout this book refers to the sages of the Mishnah, Talmud, and midrash who flourished from the first to seventh centuries CE. See further p. 8.

fifth century BCE onwards, legislative power in the Athenian government lay with the Assembly of adult citizens, some 25,000 men.[7] Several thousand Athenians would attend regular meetings where political speakers – rhetors[8] – would seek to persuade the crowd towards one policy or another. Courts also consisted of hundreds of jurors who decided both the law and facts of the case; the litigants or their representatives had limited time to convince the mass of jurors with formal speeches before the dies were cast.[9] In this environment, the ability to speak effectively could not only bring prestige, power, and influence to the presenter, but could also sway a verdict between life and death.

It was for this reason that those who could afford secondary education sought out rhetorical training from sophists – itinerant teachers who would charge great sums with the promise of producing future politicians and lawyers. These sophists would instruct students to argue for both sides of any controversy. One rhetorical work from ancient Greece called *Dissoi Logoi* (two arguments), for instance, provides dozens of examples proving that good and bad are subjective since they differ dramatically from one culture and context to the next.[10] The sophistic curriculum was designed to teach students wisdom and virtue as well as the ability to think critically and communicate clearly.[11] This training prepared the student for the three types of speeches delineated by Aristotle: judicial orations to convince a jury concerning what happened in the past, deliberative orations to persuade an assembly to vote on a policy or law that would affect the future, and epideictic speeches in praise or blame of a person or figure, or to honor special occasions.[12]

[7] Robin Lane Fox, *The Classical World: An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 88.

[8] On the ancient usage of this term, see Jeffrey Arthurs, "The Term Rhetor in Fifth- and Fourth-Century B.C.E. Greek Texts," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 23, no. 3/4 (1994): 1–10.

[9] George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15–16.

[10] Thomas Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments: An Edition of the Dissoi Logoi* (Salem, NH: Ayer, 1979); and Edward Schiappa, "Dissoi Logoi," in *Classical Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources*, ed. Michelle Ballif and Michael Moran (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 146–8.

[11] See, *Dissoi Logoi*, chapter 6; and William Grimaldi, "How Do We Get from Corax-Tisias to Plato-Aristotle in Greek Rhetorical Theory?," in *Theory, Text, Context: Issues in Greek Rhetoric and Oratory*, ed. Christopher Johnstone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 19–44.

[12] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), I.3; and Cicero, *On Invention*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), I.7.

Albeit with some variations in emphasis and application, the use and importance of rhetoric continued into the Hellenistic period and throughout the Roman Republic.

With the rise of the Roman Empire, local governors replaced juries as court decisors and this more autocratic government meant less practical need for the art of rhetoric.[13] Nevertheless, this change did not significantly diminish the status of the sophists – even if their job description was now somewhat modified. On the contrary, rhetoric dominated Greco-Roman education for all of the classical period and beyond. As Graham Anderson writes: "Throughout the Imperial period rhetoric itself enjoyed a paramount prestige and those who stood at the top of the rhetoricians' profession could expect a paramount influence over the education and literature they themselves did so much to condition."[14] Teachers declaimed not only for their students but also performed before larger public audiences and could thereby achieve great stardom.[15] The first two and a half centuries CE therefore became known as the Second Sophistic, a term coined c. 235 CE by Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists* to refer to the great renaissance in the Roman East of Greek culture, especially rhetoric. Military and political disruptions diminished this activity somewhat during the third century, but rhetoric once again flourished in the fourth century and continued into the fifth and sixth centuries in the form of Christian sermons.[16]

During the Second Sophistic, orators still played a significant if slightly diminished role as lawyers in jury courts,[17] arguing cases before government officials, traveling as envoys to represent communities and getting involved in politics. However, rhetorical skill became much more focused on epideictic speeches: presenting encomium, offering funeral orations, entertaining audiences in theaters, engaging in philosophical debates, and teaching pupils in rhetorical schools.

The Second Sophistic upheld the pride of classical Greek culture against the power of Roman political domination. As Timothy

[13] Elaine Fantham, "The Contexts and Occasions of Roman Public Rhetoric," in *Roman Eloquence: Rhetoric in Society and Literature*, ed. William Dominik (New York: Routledge, 1997): 112.
[14] Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 240.
[15] See William Reader, *The Severed Hand and the Upright Corpse: The Declamations of Marcus Antonius Polemo* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 26–8.
[16] Kennedy, *New History*, 230.
[17] See Marcus Annaeus Seneca, *Declamations*, trans. M. Winterbottom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), I.ix and p. 221–22 on the continued prominence of lawyers in Roman courts.

Whitmarsh explains: "Oratory was not just a gentle pastime of the rich: it was one of the primary means that Greek culture of the period, constrained as it was by Roman rule, had to explore issues of identity, society, family and power."[18] While the ancient sophists were the radical thinkers of their time, those of the Second Sophistic upheld tradition and "encouraged belief in inherited values of religion and morality."[19] These orators from the Greek East imitated and revived the Attic grammar, vocabulary, and style in order to connect themselves with the classical age from centuries back.

In these respects, the Second Sophistic bears affinities with its contemporary rabbinic movement. The rabbis also pushed to uphold their own distinctive Jewish identity and pride in the face of Roman dominance and they too studied and taught inherited religious traditions from antiquity. Amram Tropper analyzes the similarities between Mishnah Avot and works such as Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, and goes on to note parallels between the movements that each work embodies: "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."[20] In other words, in order to uphold their own identity and pride in the face of Roman political power and Greek cultural dominance, the rabbis adopted the strategies and values of the Second Sophistic itself and adapted them to their own needs. In particular, as this book will demonstrate, the Talmudic sages also – like the Greek

[18] Timothy Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1. There is some scholarly debate over the extent to which the Second Sophistic was associated with opposition to the Roman Empire and a fundamental antagonism between Greek and Roman culture. Christopher Jones, "Multiple Identities in the Age of the Second Sophistic," in *Paideia: The World of the Second Sophistic*, ed. Barbara Borg (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004): 13–21, argues for a more complex overlapping set of allegiances. This very range of views towards Rome is neatly summarized in the rabbinic discussion recorded at B. Shabbat 33b, indicating that the modern scholarly debate may simply reflect various ancient points of view. For our purposes, it suffices to point out that the Second Sophistic spread a message of pride in classical Greek culture – independent of its attitude towards Rome.

[19] George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Traditions from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 48.

[20] Amram Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148. See also Elias Bickerman, "La chaine de la tradition Pharisienne," *Revue Biblique* 59 (1952): 44–54; and Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 C.E.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 92–5.

orators – studied, codified, and lectured about their own past traditions and in a similar way used this as a strategy for upholding their culture and values.

SCHOOLS OF RHETORIC: FROM GAZA TO THE GALILEE AND FROM ANTIOCH TO ELUSA

Before delving into the range and extent of overlap between classical rhetoric and rabbinic literature, let us map out the geography of the rhetorical schools with an eye towards their proximity to centers of rabbinic activity. My claim is not that the rabbis attended these schools but rather that their proximity serves as a gauge of the possibility and likelihood of their interaction. Rhetorical training began in antiquity in the study circles[21] of the sophists and continued in schools of rhetoric for many centuries thereafter. While the leading school of rhetoric resided in Athens, smaller schools dotted the Roman Empire and included important centers of study in and near Palestine that flourished during the Talmudic period (50–400 CE).[22] There are some indications of rhetorical instruction in Jerusalem during the Herodian period.[23] Fourth-century letters mention the names of sophists who were active in various cities in Palestine – one of whom even held a chair.[24] Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine and an important center of rabbinic activity, was a deeply Hellenized city that was known to have "compensated sophists lavishly."[25] Further south, in the Negev, Elusa maintained a school and an official teacher of rhetoric.[26] Gaza boasted a prominent school of rhetoric that flourished under Procopius and Choricius in the late fifth and sixth centuries but had its roots in the early fourth

[21] See p. 79 n. 11.

[22] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 149, writes: "Rhetorical schools were common in the Hellenized cities of the East" in the first century CE. Yosef Geiger, "No'amim Yevanim be-Ereṣ Yisrael," *Cathedra* 66 (1992): 47–56, especially n. 3, further documents the activity of the Second Sophistic in Palestine.

[23] See Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 54–61; and Andrew Pitts, "Hellenistic Schools in Jerusalem and Paul's Rhetorical Education," in *Paul's World*, ed. Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 19–50.

[24] Raffaella Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 76–7.

[25] Ibid., 76; and see Lee Levine, *Caesarea Under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1975); Saul Lieberman, *The Talmud of Caesarea* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1968); and Lea Roth, "Cappadocia," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007).

[26] Cribiore, *The School of Libanius*, 76; Hagith Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 80; and Michael Avi-Yonah and Shimon Gibson, "Elusa," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007).

century.[27] While there is no evidence of any rabbis ever attending the school of Gaza, it was very likely to have had direct or indirect influence through students (perhaps some Jews) who studied there and then travelled throughout Palestine speaking in public or arguing in courts.[28]

Famous centers of education also flourished just north of Palestine. There were teachers of rhetoric at Cappadocia, a city with a large Jewish population that maintained regular contact with Palestinian rabbis.[29] Berytus hosted perhaps the most prominent law school in the Roman Empire.[30] In Antioch, Libanius headed one of the most important rhetorical schools in the fourth century.[31] He was not only a prolific writer and Antioch's official rhetor, but also the most famous rhetor of his time. Significantly, Libanius was a friend of the Jewish patriarch, perhaps Rabban Gamaliel V, with whom he corresponded. In fact, as a letter from Libanius to the patriarch written in 393 CE informs us, the son of the patriarch went to Antioch to study with Libanius, having already had rhetorical training from a previous teacher.[32] It so happens that this student ran away from the school, but Libanius encouraged the patriarch not to be angry with the boy. That a member of the foremost rabbinic

[27] See ibid, 77; George A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 169–77; and Fotios Litsas, "Choricius of Gaza: An Approach to His Work" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1980), 2–5. See also p. 274 on Zacharias Scholasticus.

[28] The rabbis certainly maintained contact with Gaza. For example, the Bavli discusses whether one may bathe in the water of Gerar, a city likely to have been south of Gaza (B. Shabbat 109a). Rabbis also discuss how fat the birds in Gaza are (B. Shabbat 145b), they mention a leprous house there (B. Sanhedrin 71a), and they refer to the bazaar and marketplace of the city (B. Aboda Zara 11b). More significantly, R. Isaac bar Naḥman, a third-century sage, was sent to Gaza to serve as a sage and a judge, which indicates that there was also a sizable Jewish community in Gaza during late antiquity. Thus, there were Jews and rabbis who lived in and visited Gaza and who could possibly have participated in its school.

[29] Cribiore, *The School of Libanius*, 69–71.

[30] Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000), 173–4. On the presence of Jews in Berytus see Linda Hall, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 185–6.

[31] Cribiore, *The School of Libanius*; and Kennedy, *New History*, 428–51.

[32] See Menachem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), 580–99; Wayne Meeks and Robert Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 62; Burton Visotzky, "Midrash, Christian Exegesis, and Hellenistic Hermeneutics," in *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*, ed. Carol Bakhos (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 120–1; and Moshe Schwabe, "The Letters of Libanius to the Patriarch of Palestine," [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 1, no. 2 (1930): 85–110. Cribiore, *The School of Libanius*, 76 and 321, raises doubts that this letter is addressed to the Patriarch; see, however, Stern, ibid., 596, and also p. 104.

family formally studied rhetoric opens the possibility that other Jews and even rabbis did so as well.

The geography and time period in which these rhetorical schools flourished coincided with the era of the Talmudic sages. These rabbis consisted of two groups: the Tannaim and the Amoraim. The Tannaim (plural of Tanna, literally reciter) lived in Judea and the Galilee (50–220 CE) and composed the Mishnah, Tosefta, and tannaitic midrashim. The Amoraim (plural of Amora, literally speaker) in the Galilee (220–400 CE) generated the Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud) and the amoraic midrashim. The amoraic midrashim further divide into two: earlier works such as Genesis Rabbah and Leviticus Rabbah, redacted in the early fifth century CE at around the same time as the Yerushalmi; and later works such as Exodus Rabbah, Numbers Rabbah, Deuteronomy Rabbah and Tanḥuma, which also consist of amoraic material but were redacted in the Palestinian yeshivot that were active into the ninth century. Finally, the teachings of the Amoraim in Babylonia formed the basis of the Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), whose redaction likely continued into the seventh century.[33] All of these works went through many stages of redaction by anonymous editors who lived long after the named sages and whose voices sometimes loom large over their source material.[34] Through careful source-critical analysis, one can often dig down to recover the various layers that undergird the final product and we will pay special attention to these redactional issues throughout this book.[35] Nevertheless, because the culture of rhetoric was so widespread throughout the Roman and Persian Empires[36] and lasted throughout all of late antiquity and beyond, the exact date of a given text matters less when performing comparative rhetorical analyses.[37]

[33] Yaakov Elman, "The Babylonian Talmud in Its Historical Context," in *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, ed. Sharon Lieberman Mintz and Gabriel Goldstein (New York: Yeshiva University Museum, 2005): 19, opts for a date, "no later than c. 542." David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26, dates the latest layer of the Bavli to "about the middle of eighth century CE." Charlotte Fonrobert and Martin Jaffee, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xvi, provide a date of 620 CE.

[34] See further at H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Marcus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); and p. 83.

[35] For this methodology see the seminal studies by Shamma Friedman, "Pereq ha-isha rabbah ba-Bavli, be-ṣeruf mavo kelali `al derekh ḥeker ha-sugya," in *Mehkarim u-mekorot*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977): 275–442; and Halivni, *Formation*.

[36] See pp. 108–114.

[37] Although the history of rhetoric covers many centuries and dozens of writers and handbooks, certain fundamental principles and tools remained fairly constant. The

Clearly, there were large swaths of time and space in which rabbis and rhetors had opportunities to interact. Starting with Alexander the Great's conquest of the East, Hellenism penetrated deeply into every corner of life in Palestine, and rhetoric was a significant part of this cultural movement.[38] Evidence shows that at least some Jews received rhetorical training during the late Second Temple period and later on as well.[39] Philo and Josephus employed rhetoric in their writings.[40] The use

rhetorical model of the Attic orators and of Aristotle persisted as the basis for Roman rhetoric in Latin as well as for the Second Sophistic and its renaissance in the fourth century, even if some local variations occur in various periods and geographies. See Edward Corbett and Robert Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 493; and Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, 52–103. This makes it difficult to pinpoint a single author as particularly influential during the rabbinic period. While Libanius may be closest to the rabbis in time and space, and may even have corresponded with the patriarch (see p. 9), no rhetorical treatise by Libanius is extant. The progymnasmata of Libanius and his student Aphthonius discuss various elements of declamation but do not mention the arrangement of elements in a full speech, even though Libanius clearly utilized such arrangement in his own orations. That the rhetorical model described by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian continued to thrive in later centuries in the East is evident from various later Greek handbooks that summarize their system. See Kennedy, *New History*, 208–29; and Mervin R. Dilts and George A. Kennedy, *Two Greek Rhetorical Treatises from the Roman Empire: Introduction, Text and Translation of the Arts of Rhetoric Attributed to Anonymous Segeurianus and to Apsines of Gadara* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). Most significant in this regard is *On Invention* attributed to Hermogenes but probably written in the third or fourth century; see Kennedy, *Invention and Method*, xvi. I have, therefore, utilized all of the classical authors whose aggregate teachings best approximates the common rhetorical culture of late antiquity.

[38] A few representative titles from the vast literature on this topic are: Elias Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Lee Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999); Louis Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); John Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture: Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); and Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[39] Jews participated and even excelled in this training. Caecilius of Calacte, who is identified as Jewish, was an important rhetorician in Rome during the reign of Augustus; see W. Rhys Roberts, "Caecilius of Calacte," *American Journal of Philology* 18, no. 3 (1897): 302. Closer to the end of the Talmudic period, the Byzantine encyclopedia *Suda* (Z 169) mentions the sophist Zosimus "of Gaza or Ascalon" who lived "in the time of the emperor Anastasius." See Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, 169–77; and Malcolm Heath, "Theon and the History of the Progymnasmata," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 43, no. 2 (2002/3): 150 n. 57.

[40] See Thomas Conley, "Philo's Rhetoric: Argumentation and Style," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II, 21/1*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1984): 343–71; Stanley Porter, ed. *Handbook of Classical*

of rhetoric in the New Testament similarly indicates widespread presence of rhetoric in Palestine during the first century CE.[41] This historical backdrop sets the stage for the subject of this book, which focuses on the rhetoric of the rabbis from the first to the seventh centuries CE.

It is certainly possible that Jewish students of rhetoric shared their training with the rabbis or even became rabbis themselves. However, even barring rabbinic formal training in rhetoric, rabbis certainly came into regular contact with professional oration in law courts, theaters, and public spaces throughout Palestine where lawyers and traveling sophists were active. Rhetoric permeated the Hellenistic culture in which the rabbis were entrenched and so they could hardly have remained insulated from it. We should therefore expect parallels to rhetorical thought and style throughout rabbinic literature. What remains to be seen is what resulted from these manifold and complex interactions. What were the attitudes of the rabbis towards the world of the sophists, and to what extent did rabbinic sermons, lectures, and argumentation reflect classical rhetorical modes?

RABBINIC ATTITUDES TO GREEK LANGUAGE AND WISDOM

The attitude of the rabbis towards classical rhetoric closely relates to their attitude towards Greek language. Rabbinic literature includes thousands of Greek words, and it is clear that the rabbis knew Greek well enough to make Greek puns.[42] They appreciated the beauty of

Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.–A.D. 400 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 695–713 and 737–54; Steve Mason, ed. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Volume 9: Life of Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), xxxvi–xli; and Denis Saddington, "A Note on the Rhetoric of Four Speeches in Josephus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58, no. 2 (2007): 228–35, who concludes: "It is apparent that Josephus could deploy the full range of rhetorical technique as sophisticatedly as the Greek and Latin writers of his time."

[41] Paul's letters exhibit elements of classical arrangement and other techniques of rhetorical reasoning. See Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 149–51; and Mark Nanos, ed. *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), chapters 1–11. Other books of the New Testament similarly "employ some features of classical rhetoric" for the benefit of their Greek audience, "many of whom were familiar with public address in Greek or had been educated in Greek schools" (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 143). See also Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 258–9; and more extensively at James Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 57–100. See further pp. 268–77.

[42] Samuel Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwoerter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1899); Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942); Daniel Sperber, *A Dictionary of Greek*