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## Shamma Friedman on b. Yebamot 88a-B

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### iii. Shamma Friedman on b. Yebamot 88a-b

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I take Friedman's comments on the pericope at b. Yebamot 88a-b as illustrative of his overall program of exegesis. To understand his method, it is necessary to know not only the sorts of questions he asks, but also why he asks them. Although I am interested in the answers Friedman gives to his questions, I prefer to know what, for him, constitutes a proper answer and solid evidence of proof. As earlier, this exercise begins with a translation of the text, followed by an outline, a summary of Friedman's comments, and a critique.

#### 1. Translation of the Text

- Mishnah 10:1
- A. The woman whose husband went overseas,
  - B. and whom they came and told, "Your husband has died,"
  - C. and who remarried,
  - D. and whose husband afterward returned,
  - E. goes forth from this one [i.e., the second husband] and from that one [i.e., the first].

#### *b. Yebamot 88a-b*

- I. A. Said Rab, "They taught [that the woman must leave both her first husband and her second husband] only with reference to a case in which she married [the second husband] on the basis of a single witness [who testified that her first husband was dead]. But if she married [the second husband] on the basis of two witnesses' [testimony], she need not leave."
- B. They laughed at this (so Friedman, p. 331, n. 2) in the West [i.e., in the Land of Israel, saying], "[Her first] husband comes [back], and stands [immediately in front of her], and yet you say that she does not leave [her second husband]?"
- C. [In support of Rab's statement, A, one may reply:] The objection [at B] is not necessary, [for we speak of a case in which] no one recognizes [the man who returned and claimed to be her first husband]. [Since no one knows this man, Rab is correct that the woman need not leave her second husband.]

[This witness knows whether or not he has sinned, for he knows whether or not his testimony was true. As a result, he need not bring a conditional guilt-offering.]

K. [Rab's statement that the woman need not leave her second husband still is a problem.] [For even if the second husband is not liable to bring a conditional guilt-offering], the woman herself is liable to bring a conditional guilt-offering. [She cannot know which pair of witnesses tells the truth, and so cannot verify whether or not she has sinned.]

L. [This problem created by Rab's ruling is solved if we refer to a case] in which [the woman] says, "It is clear to me [that the man who claims to be my first husband is not my first husband]." [Since she is certain that she has not sinned by remaining with the second husband, she need not bring a conditional guilt-offering. Rab's ruling therefore remains valid.]

II. A. If this is the case [that the woman is certain the man who claims to be her first husband is not her first husband], what purpose does [Rab's] statement [IA] serve? [That is, why does Rab restate the obvious, that the woman need not leave her second husband?]

B. Even R. Menahem b. R. Yose [who holds, as we shall see at C-D, that the woman must leave her second husband], refers only to a case in which the witnesses [who testify that the first husband still is alive] come forward first, and then the woman marries [a second husband, despite their testimony]. But if she marries [a second husband on the basis of witnesses who testify that her first husband is dead], and then [other] witnesses come forward [and state that her first husband still is alive, Menahem b. Yose holds that] she need not leave [her second husband]. [In cases of conflicting testimony, we maintain the *status quo*. The woman, therefore, remains with the second husband if she remarried before witnesses testified that her first husband still was alive. The question, then, is why Rab states what already is obvious, that the woman remains with her second husband.]

C. [C and D do not advance the argument, but present the source of Menahem b. Yose's position.] [His position] is in accordance with what is taught [at Babli Ketubot 22b and Babli Baba Batra 31b]: Two witnesses state that [her first husband is] dead, yet two state that he is not dead, [or] two witnesses state that she has been divorced, yet two state that she has not been divorced—lo, this woman may not marry [a second husband]. But if she does remarry, she need not leave [the second husband]. R. Menahem b. R. Yose says, "She must

- D. [Rab's statement still is a problem, for] if [we speak of a case in which] no one recognizes [the man claiming to be the first husband], why [does Rab rule that the woman] does leave [both husbands, if she remarried on the basis of] one witness's [testimony]? [That is to say, since it cannot be established that the man who returned actually is the first husband, the woman need not leave her second husband under any circumstances. Rab rules, however, that she must leave her second husband if she remarried on the basis of one witness's testimony.]
- E. [Again in support of Rab, one may reply]: The objection [at D] is not necessary, [for the case is as follows]: Two witnesses came [with the man who returned]. They testified, "We have been with this man from the time he left and until now. It is you who do not recognize him." [Thus it is established that the man who returned in fact is the first husband and, as Rab ruled, the woman does leave her second husband if she remarried on the basis of a single witness's testimony.]
- F. [F and G do not advance the argument, but prove that it is possible for a person to go abroad and not be recognized when he returns.] For it is written [in Scripture], "And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him" [Gen 42:8].
- G. Said Rab Hisda, "This teaches that the man left without any sign of a beard, and returned with a beard."
- H. [We now return to the argument. Rab's opponents state that] the outcome [of the case at B-E] is that there are two [witnesses who state that the first husband is dead and that the woman is permitted to remarry], against two [witnesses who say that the first husband still is alive and that the woman should leave her second husband]. [The result is that no decision should be possible. Nevertheless, Rab contends that the woman need not leave her second husband.]
- I. [The result of the problem spelled out at H is that] he who has intercourse with her [i.e., according to Rab, the second husband], is liable to bring a conditional guilt-offering, [for it cannot be determined whether or not a sin has been committed]. [Two witnesses testify that the first husband is alive, and that a transgression has occurred. Two other witnesses, however, state that the first husband is dead, and so no sin has taken place. Rab's ruling must be invalid, for it leads to this absurdity.]
- J. Said Rab Sheshet, "[Rab's ruling does not create this problem, for we speak of] a case in which the woman married one of the witnesses [who testified that her first husband was dead].

leave [her second husband].”

D. Said R. Menahem b. R. Yose, “Under what circumstances do I rule that she must leave [her second husband]? [I say this] in a case in which witnesses come forward [and testify that her first husband still is alive], and then she goes and marries [a second husband, despite their testimony]. But if she married [a second husband, on the basis of witnesses who said that her first husband was dead], and then [other] witnesses come forward [and stated that her first husband still was alive]—lo, she need not leave [her second husband].”

E. [We now return to the question posed at the end of IIB, why Rab repeats an obvious rule.] [This repetition is not a problem], for Rab also [i.e., just like Menahem b. Yose] refers to a case in which the witnesses come first [testifying that the woman’s first husband still is alive], and then the woman marries [a second husband]. [Rab rules that she does not separate from her second husband] to refute the opinion of R. Menahem b. R. Yose [who in this case rules that she must leave her second husband]. [Rab’s rule does not repeat an established point of law, but has its own specific purpose. It therefore remains valid.]

F. Yet some say that the reason [Rab taught that the woman need not leave her second husband] is because she married [the second husband], and then witnesses came forward [to testify that her first husband still is alive]. [Rab’s ruling then simply maintains the *status quo*.] But if witnesses had come forward [first, and testified that the first husband still was alive], and then the woman married [a second husband, Rab would have ruled that] she must separate [from her second husband].

G. According to whose [view is this latter interpretation, F]? It is in accordance with the position of R. Menahem b. R. Yose [spelled out above at IIB–D]. [The purpose of Rab’s statement, then, is to reinforce Menahem b. Yose’s ruling.]

III. A. Raba replied [the following to Rab’s statement, IA]: “[Let us assume that the woman’s second husband is a priest.] How do we know that if he does not wish [to follow the laws regarding forbidden marriages for the priesthood, Lev 21:1–8, and wishes to remain married to a woman whose first husband two witnesses had declared dead, but now two other witnesses declare to be alive], that we force [the priest to obey the laws, and to divorce her]?”

B. “Scripture states, ‘And you shall sanctify him’ [Lev 21:8], even against his will.

C. "What case do we imagine? If you say that she did not marry one of her witnesses [who was a priest], nor did she state 'I am certain [that the man who claims to be my first husband is not my first husband],' would the statement that we force [the priest to divorce her] be necessary? [That is to say, if her marriage to the priest results in a liability to bring a conditional guilt-offering, it should be obvious that we do not allow the marriage to remain in effect.]

D. "[Since the statement that we force the priest not to marry her does occur], we must refer to a case in which the woman does marry one of her witnesses [who was a priest], and in which the woman states, 'I am certain [that the man who claims to be my first husband is not my first husband].' [That is, we must refer to a case in which it appears that the priest should be allowed to remain married to the woman, for the marriage does not result in a liability to bring a conditional guilt-offering.]

E. "[And from] the statement that we force [the priest, even though we might assume that the marriage is valid], we conclude that we take the woman away from him [i.e., make her leave the priest, her second husband]."

[The problem posed by Raba, IIA-E, then, is as follows: Although Lev 21:1-8 indicate that we cause the woman to leave her second husband if he is a priest, Rab, IA, rules that she need not leave him. To this problem, Rab may reply with one of the following three responses, F, G, or H]: (1) The prohibitions regarding the priesthood are different, [and Rab's ruling is not based upon them]. [While the woman might have to leave her husband if he is a priest, she need not leave if he is an ordinary Israelite. This is the case to which Rab refers, and so his ruling is valid.]

(2) Or if you wish, [Rab may reply]: What does [the statement that] we force [the priest] mean? [It means that] we force him by [close examination of] the witnesses. [That is to say, we require the court to search for witnesses whose testimony might disallow the marriage. If no such witnesses can be found, the marriage is permitted, and the woman need not leave the priest, as Rab rules (cf. Rashi, ad loc.).]

(3) Or if you wish, [Rab may reply]: [Lev 21:1-8] refer to a case in which] witnesses come forward [and testify that the first husband is alive], and then the woman marries [the priest]. [Because she remarried despite this earlier testimony, the woman must leave the priest. Rab's statement that the woman need not leave nonetheless is valid, for he refers to the

opposite case, in which the marriage takes place before witnesses testify that the first husband in fact is alive.]

- I. This [last explanation, H.] is the position of R. Menahem b. R. Yose [IIB-D].
- IV. A. Rab Ashi says, "What is the meaning of Rab's statement [that if the woman married a second husband on the basis of two witnesses' testimony] 'She need not leave [IA]'? [It means that] she does not leave her initial permitted [status, i.e., she returns to her first husband].
- B. "And Rab previously has stated this! As it is taught [at Babli Yebamot 91a]: If the woman marries [a second husband] without the permission of a court, she is allowed to return [to her first husband] [Mishnah Yebamot 10:1S]. And Rab Huna quoted Rab, 'This is the law.'" [Since Ashi's interpretation of Rab's statement is consistent with another of Rab's rulings, Ashi's explanation is correct.]
- C. One statement is made by inference from the other.

## 2. Outline of the Argument

Mishnah 10:1A-E: A woman's husband has been declared dead. She remarries a second husband. If the first husband returns, she must leave both her first and her second husbands.

Rab [IA]: This rule applies only if the woman remarried on the strength of a single witness who testified that the first husband was dead. If she remarried on the strength of two witnesses' testimony, she need not leave.

- I. The Palestinian Rabbis object to Rab's ruling. He defends his rule by narrowing the circumstances to which it applies. This, in turn, draws another objection from the Palestinian Rabbis. This cycle continues through four exchanges:
  - A. 1. Palestinian Rabbis [IB]: The first husband has returned, and now stands directly in front of the woman. How can Rab claim that she need not leave the second husband?
  2. Rab [IC]: The woman need not leave her second husband, for we speak of a case in which no one recognizes the man claiming to be the first husband. Rab's statement is valid, for it provides the proper rule in this case.
  - B. 1. Palestinian Rabbis [ID]: Let us assume that no one recognizes the first husband. In a case in which the woman remarried on the basis of one witness's testimony, why does Rab rule that the woman must leave the second husband?

2. Rab [IE-G]: We assume that the first husband brings two witnesses who confirm his identity, and so the woman must leave her second husband. Again, Rab's statement provides the proper rule in this case, and so is valid.
- C.
1. Palestinian Rabbis [IH-I]: The result of Rab's supposition at B2 is that two witnesses confirm the identity of the first husband, while two other witnesses testify that the first husband is dead. The testimony therefore is inconclusive. This means that the second husband, with whom Rab says the woman should remain, becomes liable to bring a conditional guilt-offering when he has intercourse with her. This is because it cannot be determined whether or not the second husband has transgressed. Since Rab's ruling leads to this liability to offer a sacrifice, it must be invalid.
  2. Rab [IJ]: Let us assume that the second husband is one of the witnesses who testified that the first husband is dead. He knows whether or not he has sinned, and so need not bring a conditional guilt-offering. [Conditional guilt-offerings are brought only if the defendant is uncertain if he has sinned.] Rab's ruling still is valid, for no liability to bring a sacrifice is incurred through it.
- D.
1. Palestinian Rabbis [IK]: The woman herself cannot verify whether or not she has sinned, and so she must bring a conditional guilt-offering. Rab's ruling therefore must be invalid.
  2. Rab [IL]: We assume that the woman is certain that the man who has returned is not actually her first husband. The woman need not bring a conditional guilt-offering, for she is certain she has not sinned. Rab's ruling remains valid.

What purpose does Rab's ruling serve?

- A. It excludes the ruling of Menahem b. Yose [IIA-E]. Both Rab and Menahem b. Yose deal with a case in which the woman remarried after witnesses have testified that her first husband actually is alive. Rab states that the woman may remain with the second husband, in contradiction to Menahem b. Yose, who states that she must return to the first husband.
- B. It confirms Menahem b. Yose's position [IIF-G]. Both Menahem b. Yose and Rab treat a case in which the marriage occurs before witnesses testify that the first husband is alive. They agree that, in this case, the woman need not leave her second husband.
- Raba presents a case in which Rab's ruling is improper: The woman marries a priest as her second husband. According to Lev



21:1-8, we should force the priest to divorce her, in order to preserve the sanctity of the priesthood. Rab's ruling that she may remain with the second husband, the priest, contradicts Scripture and so must be invalid [IIIA-E].

A. Rab may reply one of three answers:

1. Rab's ruling is based on practices for ordinary Israelites [IIIF]. Prohibitions regarding the priesthood, Lev 21:1-8, are more stringent.
2. According to Lev 21:1-8 we need not force the priest to divorce the woman [IIIG]. Rather we force him not to enter into a prohibited marriage. That is, before the marriage takes place, we carefully examine the witnesses who testify that the first husband is dead, to assure that they tell the truth.
3. Lev 21:1-8 implies that we force the priest to divorce the woman only in a case in which the marriage took place after witnesses already had testified that the first husband still was alive [IIIH-I]. Rab's ruling, however, deals with a case in which the marriage took place before the witnesses testified that the first husband in fact was alive. This is the position of Menahem b. Yose (see above, IIB-D).

IV. Ashi says that Rab's ruling, "She need not leave if she remarried on two witnesses' testimony," means that the woman need not leave her first husband [IVA].

A. This is in line with another ruling by Rab, from which it is stated by inference [IVB-C].

### 3. Summary and Critique

Friedman's goal is to compare what he deems to be two distinct types of sayings within the pericope. He distinguishes statements attributed to named authorities as one type, and anonymous sayings as another. To accomplish this division, Friedman removes the pericope's anonymous sayings, leaving behind amoraic ones. These amoraic materials, Friedman says, have their own meanings, independent of their present context. He claims that the meanings were changed when the amoraic sayings were combined with anonymous materials. For Friedman, the result of removing the unattributed sayings is to recover the original meanings of the Amora'im (pp. 283, 333). Friedman now has in hand what he supposes to be the original meaning of the amoraic material and the meaning imputed to it by the anonymous context. His substantive comments attempt to show that these are entirely distinct by demonstrating that each type of statement, amoraic and anonymous, treats M. 10:1 differently. Since the amoraic and anonymous sayings

impute to the Mishnah different meanings, Friedman claims that they are distinct from each other.

With this outline of Friedman's goals and analysis behind us, let us turn to the details of his comments. Friedman begins by dividing the passage into three units (on our outline, I-II, III, IV). He says,

The foundation of the passage is Rab's statement (IA), upon which are based three amoraic sayings. These sayings, together with the explanatory material following them, constitute the three sections of the pericope. Each of these stands independently, and is not connected to the others. (p. 332)

Solid evidence supports Friedman's claims. Each of the amoraic statements he identifies is interested in a different aspect of Rab's rule. As we recall, the first unit (I-II) treats the Palestinian rabbis' objection that the woman should return to her first husband. In the second section (III) Raba presents a case in which the woman remarries a priest, and so should not remain with him if the first husband returns. Finally, Ashi (IV) refers back to Rab's ruling and claims that Rab actually holds that the woman should return to her first husband. Friedman is justified in separating these three units, for indeed they take up distinct issues.

Friedman next turns to each of these units and attempts to isolate what he regards as its original amoraic statement (p. 333). Let us briefly summarize his results. The first unit (I-II) presents only one saying attributed to a named authority, Sheshet (IJ). Sheshet's lemma presents a problem for Friedman, for it is an integral part of the anonymous material that both precedes and follows it. This seems to disprove Friedman's notion that amoraic and anonymous statements are entirely unrelated. Friedman solves this problem by asserting that Sheshet's lemma does not belong in the present pericope, but has been moved here from b. Ketubot 22b. On the basis of this claim, he concludes that the entire first unit is anonymous, and contains no amoraic material at all (p. 333). We must note that Friedman's solution is completely unsubstantiated. It relies solely upon Albeck's comment, "It [i.e., Sheshet's lemma] has been moved here from Babli Ketubot 22b" (cf. *Tarbiz* 9, p. 170). Unfortunately, neither Albeck nor Friedman provides any evidence for this assertion. The second and third units (III, IV) present a different problem for Friedman's attempt to identify the amoraic material. In both cases, Friedman is faced with an amoraic statement followed by what appears to be explanatory (and anonymous) material. Friedman merely excises these explanations, leaving behind statements by Raba (IIIA-B) and by Ashi (IVA). He justifies this move by noting that explanatory materials mask the original meanings of the Amoraim (p. 333). But these explanations, as I shall suggest in my critique, are our only clue to the argument of the passage as a whole. Removing them

ignores the Talmud as a coherent piece of literature. Within the entire pericope, then, Friedman isolates only two amoraic sayings, those of Raba and Ashi.

After identifying this amoraic material, Friedman poses two substantive questions: Do the Amoraim, Raba and Ashi, hold the same view of M. 10:1 as Rab? Do the anonymous sayings impute to the Mishnah a different meaning from the amoraic ones? Friedman claims that none of the Amoraim explicitly cites M. 10:1 as contradicting Rab. Since they are silent in this regard, Friedman reasons, they do not disagree with Rab's interpretation of the Mishnah (p. 335). He concludes therefore that all of the Amoraim, Rab included, hold a single view of the Mishnah. Furthermore, he claims that this "amoraic" interpretation of M. 10:1 is in sharp contrast to the view presented by the anonymous materials. In order better to understand these claims, let us spell out these two possible interpretations of M. 10:1.

Friedman claims that the amoraic materials present the same view of M. 10:1 as Rab. According to Friedman, Rab interprets the Mishnah's two cases as follows:

- (1) A woman remarries on the basis of one witness and the permission of a court (M. 10:1A-R). When her first husband returns, she is married simultaneously to two men, and so must leave both.
- (2) A woman remarries on the basis of one witness, but without the permission of a court (M. 10:1S). If the first husband returns, she must go back to him, for she never was validly married to the second.

For Rab, the difference between the two rulings turns only on the question of a court's permission. He assumes that in both cases the number of witnesses is the same (one). This, says Friedman, is the simplest possible interpretation of M. 10:1 (p. 283).

Friedman claims that the two amoraic sayings share Rab's interpretation of the Mishnah. With regard to Raba's lemma (IIIA-B) he says,

Without the anonymous material (i.e., IIIC-E), Raba's question, derived from a *baraita* (Sifra Emor 1:13), is simple: "Rab has ruled that 'If she remarried on two witnesses' testimony, she need not leave her second husband,' even if she had remarried a priest. How can the court permit a priest to remain in such a marriage . . . , for the woman certainly is another man's wife . . . ?" (p. 334)

Friedman first notes that this *baraita* is completely unrelated to M. 10:1. Raba's question, then, deals only with a pericope in Sifra, not with the Mishnah. Friedman now mounts an argument from silence. Since Raba does not explicitly object to Rab's interpretation of M. 10:1, Friedman claims that these two Amoraim are in total agreement with regard to the

Mishnah (p. 333). Of course, this claim is weaker than it might be, for as Friedman himself agrees, Raba is not concerned with the Mishnah. Such an argument from silence would be effective only if Raba was dealing with M. 10:1 and still said nothing in contradiction to Rab's interpretation.

Ashi's statement (IV A) poses a greater problem for Friedman. Read in context, Ashi rules that the woman who remarried on two witnesses' testimony must return to her first husband. Rab, however, has stated that she need not leave her second husband. It appears, then, that Ashi and Rab explicitly differ in their interpretations of M. 10:1. As we recall, Friedman has already isolated Ashi's lemma from the explanatory material at IV B-C. He therefore turns away from this context, and focuses instead on the meaning of Ashi's statement, "she need not leave her initial permitted status." This same phrase occurs in two other passages, b. Yebamot 117b and b. Ketubot 23a. In those cases, Friedman says, its plain meaning is that the woman need not leave her second husband, whom she was initially given court permission to marry. On the basis of these passages, Friedman claims that Ashi and Rab agree in their interpretation of M. 10:1. Both rule that the woman need not leave her second husband. It appears that Friedman's argument here is sound. He quite reasonably expects Ashi's use of the phrase "her initial permitted status" to correspond to the Talmud's other uses of the same phrase.

We now turn to the interpretation of M. 10:1 presented in the anonymous materials. Unfortunately, Friedman never systematically deals with the anonymous statements within our passage. Instead he discusses the anonymous explanations of M. 10:1 contained in the previous pericope (b. Yebamot 87a-b; cf. pp. 323-30). This entails the assumption that the anonymous materials in both the previous passage and the present pericope make a single point. This assumption, it appears, is unsubstantiated by empirical study. Nevertheless, let me spell out the view Friedman imputes to the anonymous sayings. Once again I summarize the Mishnah's two cases:

- (1) A woman remarries on the basis of one witness's testimony and the permission of a court (M. 10:1A-R). When her first husband returns, she is married simultaneously to two men. This is not allowed, so the woman must leave both husbands.
- (2) A woman remarries on the basis of two witnesses' testimony. Since their testimony is deemed conclusive, the woman does not require a court's permission to remarry (M. 10:1S). When the first husband returns, the woman realizes that her second marriage was conducted in error. She validly is married only to the first husband, and therefore must return to him. (see b. Yebamot 87a; Friedman, p. 287)

Friedman states that the latter interpretation is "forced" (pp. 287, 335).

It reads into the second of the Mishnah's cases the complicating factor of two witnesses. The Mishnah itself never speaks of the number of witnesses involved in each case, but only of the court's giving permission.

According to Friedman, then, there are two possible interpretations of M. 10:1. The Amoraim uniformly hold the simplest view, while the anonymous statements represent a more complex interpretation. These two layers are substantively separate, just as Friedman wishes to prove (p. 283). But it appears that Friedman intends to justify a further claim, made in his methodological introduction:

Viewed *chronologically*, . . . we are able to distinguish three separate sources in pericopae in the Babylonian Talmud. These are:

- (1) amoraic sayings,
- (2) anonymous statements,
- (3) later additions. (p. 283; italics supplied)

His point is that the anonymous statements derive from later periods than do the amoraic ones because they are more complex.

Before turning to my critical comments, let us briefly review Friedman's analysis. He proposes to divide the passage into distinct layers, and then to place these layers in chronological order. He attempts to separate the pericope's amoraic materials from its anonymous ones and, on that basis, to argue that the two types of statements are substantively and temporally distinct from one another.

Friedman's entire project rests upon his separation of amoraic sayings from anonymous ones and thus his determination of the original meanings of amoraic statements. He believes that by so dividing the text he can recover an early (amoraic) stratum and a later (anonymous) one. This argument depends on the undemonstrated supposition that these two distinct layers, amoraic materials and anonymous explanatory statements, constitute historically separate strata. Friedman surely is correct that explanatory materials by definition are formulated in response to earlier rules. But, in itself, this claim is of limited significance for historical purposes. We know nothing of the span of time between the composition of the amoraic sayings and the formulation of their explanations. Such responses may have been composed five minutes or five hundred years after the statements of the Amoraim. Even if Friedman's division is correct at every point, therefore, he will have established nothing that might support any claim about the history of the text.

The basic assumption undergirding Friedman's historical claims is that simple ideas and interpretations precede complex ones. In his view, the amoraic sayings were formulated early because they impute to M. 10:1 a simple meaning. The anonymous materials offer a more complex view of the Mishnah, and thus derive from a later period. Two flaws diminish the effect and utility of this assumption. First, the categories of "simplicity"

and “complexity” are undeniably subjective and, therefore, arbitrary. As tools of literary analysis, they are hopelessly imprecise. Second, Friedman merely imposes this evolutionary model on Talmudic texts. He supplies no argument for its superiority over other models, nor does he document its accuracy with rigorous demonstrations of literary dependency in particular cases. In the absence of such argumentation and demonstration, it is difficult to find compelling reasons to adopt his theory.