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PREFACE

Although the Sages proclaimed Mishnah to be the "Iron Pillar" of Oral Law study (Vayikra Rabbah 21:5), the direct study of Mishnah was largely supplanted, over the course of many generations, by the diligent study of Talmudic and post-Talmudic texts derivative from Mishnah. The importance of these "derivative" studies in maintaining Jewish life and fostering creative halachic and aggadic thinking is immense and indisputable. The premise underlying the founding of this journal of Mishnah study is that careful, intensive, and creative study of the foundation text of the Oral Law is both important in its own right and a vital contribution to the healthy development of other Torah studies.

We have endeavored in this journal to cover a broad range of emphases and

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approaches in the field of Mishnah study. We perceive the careful attention to the many facets and nuances of the Mishnah to be a response to the internal needs and demands of the Torah study in a modern traditional Beit Midrash. We believe that the organic growth of a field of Torah study is like a vibrant plant, rooted in traditional belief and thought-structures, while putting out branches in new directions and sprouting new and innovative fruits. The name NETUIM, taken from Hagigah 3b, reflects this metaphor for Mishnah study.

SURVEY OF CONTENTS

Y. Shaviv examines the order and structure of Tractate Rosh Hashana, combining halachic, structural, literary, and conceptual tools in an attempt to fathom the thinking that underlies the redaction of this tractate. Y.K. Reinitz marshals Tannaitic parallels, as well as discussion in Talmudic and post-Talmudic literature, in an attempt to understand what "repair of a social breach (tikkun ha-olam)" is involved in Gittin 4:5.

A. Walfish demonstrates the widespread use of "envelope structures" in Mishnah, and suggests ways of understanding the role of this literary tool in the redaction of Mishnah, as well as the conceptual significance of this phenomenon. This is the first article of a series. In subsequent articles, the author hopes to examine other literary phenomena in Mishnah, such as wordplays, parallel structures, and mote.

Y. Epstein also examines the principles of Mishnah's redaction, adducing examples where the order in which halachot are mentioned in the Mishnah reflects a decision in favor of one side of a Tannaitic halachic dispute.

The following two articles deal with methods of teaching Mishnah. Y. Schwartz surveys the history of Mishnah instruction in the State Religious School system, as reflected in books, pamphlet, and articles that have been published in the field since the establishment of the State. E. Rosset demonstrates the use of "in-depth" methods of Mishnah instruction, as a means of overcoming the "dryness" and boredom of Mishnah study.

The issue is brought to a close with a survey of recent articles and books which deal with different facets of Mishnah study.

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