

Introduction

Body language is and has always been an important part of communication among humans. Gestures, movements, facial expressions, and physical appearance can convey information on their own or in connection with verbal expressions with which they stand in complex relationships. Rabbinic literature contains numerous references to rabbis' and their interlocutors' gestures, postures, spatial movements, eye behavior, and physique which are meaningful within the respective literary contexts and from a social-anthropological point of view. They convey information about rabbis' self-presentation within the context of Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and Christian society in late antiquity. Non-verbal communication is always culturally specific, providing "access to a shared area of knowledge, one based not on the expression of individual will but on cultural circumstances."¹ Therefore this line of inquiry is particularly suited to rabbinic literature, which is an expression of rabbinic culture rather than of individual ideas and practices. Comparisons between non-verbal communication reflected in Palestinian rabbinic sources and in Graeco-Roman and Christian literature of the period are particularly useful to reveal cultural similarities and differences.²

Roman historians and classicists have pointed out that "in late antiquity there seems to have been an increased interest in and sensitivity to nonverbal communication."³ Although earlier rhetoricians such as Cicero already stressed the importance of appropriate clothing, posture, gait, and manner of speech as expressions of social status, character, and identity, late antique writers referred to aspects of non-verbal communication much more often than writers of

¹A. Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.

²On the cultural specificity of body language see also K. Thomas, "Introduction," 1-14 in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Edited by J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 3: "modern writing on the subject starts from the assumption that gesture is not a universal language, but is the product of social and cultural differences."

³R.F. Newbold, "Nonverbal Communication and Parataxis in Late Antiquity," *AnCl* 55 (1986): 223-44, 224-5.

the first centuries CE.⁴ Not only rhetoricians but also those who aspired to religious and intellectual leadership functions had to guard their appearance in the public domain. Peter Brown has pointed to the stylized gestures of the late antique “holy man” reflected in the literary sources: the gestures were supposed to convey his spiritual power.⁵ The Christian writer Chrysostom used theatrical images and vocabulary in his writings.⁶ Gestures served as signs of identification among those who belonged to particular religious and social strata and sub-strata of late antique society.⁷

One of the reasons for the increased importance of and sensitivity to body language in late antiquity may have been the development of “a highly competitive, visually flamboyant and individualistic society” at that time.⁸ The phenomenon that few people could read and had access to written texts, relying on oral presentations, talks, rumors, and the observation of others’ behaviors, would have contributed to the significance of nonverbal signifiers of meaning.⁹ In a face-to-face society, gestures and facial expressions may have been easier to understand and memorize than words of rebuke and praise.¹⁰ Hierarchical distinctions and cultural affiliations became evident by the way people walked, dressed, and interacted in space. Gestures could lend support to one’s verbal statements and opinions to render them more obvious and meaningful. Sometimes they possessed legal power and replaced or supplemented documents.¹¹

⁴See Newbold’s comparative table *ibid.* 227. See also *idem*, “Perception and Sensory Awareness Among Latin Writers in Late Antiquity,” *CM* 33 (1981-82): 169-90, where he confirms the late antique emphasis on visual perception on the basis of a comparison of early and late antique Latin authors, see the tables *ibid.* 176-7 and 179.

⁵P. Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1989), 121.

⁶J.L. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity. John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 54.

⁷É.Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 17-8.

⁸Newbold, “Nonverbal Communication and Parataxis,” 238.

⁹See also J.-C.Schmitt, “The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries,” 59-70 in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present*. Edited by J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 60.

¹⁰See also Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 147.

¹¹Schmitt, “The Rationale of Gestures,” 59, with regard to the Middle Ages.

Popular familiarity with various forms of public spectacles, including mimes, pantomimes, and other types of theatrical performances would have raised one's awareness of body language.¹² Acting and gesticulation were highly visible and all pervasive: some theatrical scenes and gestures were even reflected in the mosaic art of Roman and early Byzantine Palestine.¹³ Despite late antique Christian leaders' negative views toward theater performances, "the similarities between performances of preachers within churches and those of actors were apparent to everyone."¹⁴ Newbold has suggested that the "greater sensitivity to nonverbal cues in personal interaction may therefore be part of a wider general trend towards more holistic modes of processing data" in late Roman times.¹⁵

Based on his study of rhetorical handbooks Gunderson has argued that proper physical self-presentation became one of the defining criteria of the *vir bonus*, the morally good, socially reliable and trustworthy male Roman citizen.¹⁶ The handbooks provided guidelines on how to conduct oneself in the company of others, how to walk, talk, dress, and gesticulate to conform to the ideal of a cultured Roman male. Boys learned these behaviors through observation and imitation of their elders. The knowledge of proper male comportment would be actualized in daily life: "*actio* and the theory of performance are vital aspects of the truth of masculine identity at Rome."¹⁷ It will be interesting to see whether and to what extent rabbis' literary self-presentation conformed to or diverged from the Roman ideal. Does rabbinic literature present an alternative, more "feminine" model of manliness, as Daniel Boyarin has maintained?¹⁸ Or did rabbis at least partly adhere to Graeco-Roman models of male self-fashioning? They would, in

¹²On the pervasiveness and attractiveness of such performances in Roman Palestine see Z. Weiss, *Public Spectacles in Roman and Late Antique Palestine* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 117-69.

¹³See *ibid.* 121: Some themes represented in the mosaics of Roman Palestine and Arabia "are precisely those employed by the mimes."

¹⁴Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication*, 54.

¹⁵Newbold, "Nonverbal Communication and Parataxis," 239.

¹⁶E. Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 7.

¹⁷*Ibid.* 27.

¹⁸D. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1997), 8.

any case, have moved and expressed themselves in an environment which was heavily affected by Graeco-Roman social and cultural mores. Within this environment they would have used body language to express specifically rabbinic power and authority recognizable and identifiable by both their Jewish and non-Jewish contemporaries.

Rabbis fashioned themselves as “sages,” that is, as intellectuals in a context in which the image of an intellectual would have been familiar to the populace at least in the major cities of Roman Palestine. As Paul Zanker has pointed out, the image of an intellectual was always time- and culture-specific, changing with intellectuals’ roles within the respective societies: “their image reflects, in equal measure, both how they see themselves and the role they play in society.”¹⁹ Intellectuals such as “prophets, wise men, poets, philosophers, Sophists, and orators in Greco-Roman antiquity did consistently occupy a special position” in their own self-consciousness and in the way others saw them.²⁰ Zanker’s study of Greek and Roman statues shows how this image and self-presentation changed over time.

Visual signifiers such as beards and hair styles, facial expressions, clothing, and gestures distinguished the statues of intellectuals from those of politicians. Yet the ways in which intellectuals were displayed varied in accordance with the ideals and concerns of the times in which the statues were set up. For example, in Roman imperial times, especially from the second century CE onwards, “the beard became *the* symbol of the philosopher’s moral integrity.”²¹ Since Hellenistic times the raised arm was “a gesture of teaching.”²² A weak body signified “the exemplary and virtuous way of life,” in contrast to the relaxed, healthy body as an “embodiment of a life of pleasure.”²³ In late antiquity, even non-intellectuals tried to represent themselves as steeped in *paideia*, appearing with book scrolls, tablets, and pens, even if they could neither read

¹⁹P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates. The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1995), 1.

²⁰Ibid. 2.

²¹Ibid. 110.

²²Ibid. 122.

²³Ibid. 122-3.

nor write.²⁴ In the eastern parts of the Empire even those who were not philosophers wore the *himation*, the traditional garb of the intellectual.²⁵ Intellectual appearance had become fashionable at least among the upper strata of society and those who imitated them, a phenomenon that continued into late antique and early Byzantine times.²⁶ In the fifth century, however, Christians were keen on showing spiritual illumination in the descriptions and depictions of “holy men”: facial expressions were intense and heads turned upward to present them as “steeped in the spiritual and the divine.”²⁷

We do not possess statues or busts or reliefs depicting rabbis in late antiquity. On the basis of literary representations of rabbis’ demeanor we may ask whether and to what extent they styled themselves to conform to current Graeco-Roman images of the cultured and learned intellectual or early Byzantine Christian images of the “holy man,” or whether these texts created an alternative, specifically Jewish image of the sage, recognizable in the way he presented himself and interacted with people. Would rabbinic body language represented in rabbinic literature clearly distinguish rabbis from Graeco-Roman intellectuals and Christian spiritual teachers or mark them as one particular type of intellectual within a whole range of possibilities within the context of late antiquity? Did rabbinic references to non-verbal communication serve to create a specifically rabbinic identity; that is, do they set rabbis apart as an identifiable subgroup within both Jewish and Graeco-Roman society? Or did rabbis try to conform to existing models of intellectual demeanor, more interested to fit in than to establish a specifically rabbinic image of a scholar’s deportment and behavior?

²⁴See *ibid.* 226-9. Greek *paideia* “had become a crucial element in the self-definition and public image” of certain sections of the population in “all parts of the Empire” (226).

²⁵See *ibid.* 232. The *himation* would have looked like the *tallit* mentioned in rabbinic sources. See J.A. Goldstein, “The Judaism of the Synagogues,” 109-59 in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, part 2: *Historical Syntheses*. Edited by J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 113, with regard to the Dura Europos synagogue murals.

²⁶Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, 268 refers to sarcophagus reliefs which depict learned couples and child prodigies; for examples see 270 fig. 145 and 271 fig. 146.

²⁷*Ibid.* 323.

Obviously, non-verbal and verbal forms of rabbinic self-expression, body language and speech are interlinked in the literary sources and need to be examined together. Models for such an examination exist in studies of non-verbal behavior in Graeco-Roman literature and modern literary texts. Barbara Korte has stressed that “body language must be recognized as an important signifying system in the literary text” and constitutes “one subsystem of the text’s entire sign repertoire.”²⁸ In texts references to body language have always been included by the authors or editors for particular purposes: “non-verbal behaviour in literature is always ‘significant’: it is integral to the text’s artistic design even when it cannot be read as a sign with a clearly defined meaning.”²⁹ Although we are unable to observe actual non-verbal communication practices of ancient times, the study of literary representations of body language is also relevant from a social-historical perspective. Gestures, facial expressions, and comportment represented in the literary sources must have been meaningful to the tradents and editors and their readers and audiences, even if the particular meanings are difficult to reconstruct from our modern perspective. Therefore social-anthropological studies, which examine the role of non-verbal behavior in social life, are also useful for the study of body language in ancient to modern literary sources. Korte maintains that, in general, “body language in fictional situations can be analyzed with the same functional categories that are used in the analysis of natural NVC” but is much more limited in its appearance and often stylized.³⁰

A study of body language in rabbinic sources can benefit from social-anthropological studies and literary studies of non-verbal behavior in Graeco-Roman texts.³¹ Whereas the social-anthropological study of non-verbal communication began in the 1960s and 70s already, literary studies focused on classical texts are much more recent and were carried out especially during

²⁸B. Korte, *Body Language in Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 4.

²⁹Ibid. 5.

³⁰Ibid. 55. She uses “NVC” as an abbreviation for non-verbal communication.

³¹A good overview of the study of non-verbal communication in different disciplines, with a focus on their usefulness for classical antiquity is provided by T. Fögen, “*Sermo Corporis*: Ancient Reflections on *gestus*, *vultus*, and *vox*,” 15-44 in: *Bodies and Boundaries in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*. Edited by T. Fögen and M.M. Lee (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), esp. 17-22.

the last two decades. A few exceptions notwithstanding, the approach has rarely been applied to ancient Jewish texts, whether biblical, Hellenistic, or rabbinic. The few studies which exist (see below) generally focus on ritual contexts only. The notion of rabbinic halakhah as verbal statement, rule, and dispute has distracted scholars' attention from the non-verbal signifiers and descriptions of behaviors and practices that are as important as the verbal expressions in their respective contexts. When focusing on such descriptions one realizes that behavior and action were as important to rabbis as statements and opinions and the observation of non-verbal behavior as relevant as the memorization of halakhic views. Rachel Neis has recently argued that Judaism took a visual turn in late antiquity.³² The image of rabbis as text scholars needs to be corrected by taking their and their contemporaries' visual orientation into account.

In her book, *Communicating. The Multiple Modes of Human Interconnection*, Ruth Finnegan has stressed that communication is a “multidimensional process.”³³ In this process the role of the “visible body” is as significant as the role of verbal messages. People “use their bodies to produce visible signals”:³⁴ They approach others or move away, change their facial expressions, move in front or behind others: “Particular stances and orientations can convey, for example, friendliness, hostility, playfulness, receptiveness, dominance, aggression or appeasement.”³⁵ Equally important are the eyes and particular ways of looking at others that can convey hostility, anger, suspicion or welcome and accessibility.³⁶ In all communicative interactions, the cultural and group affiliations, social statuses, genders, and roles of the interlocutors and the context of the encounter are crucial for understanding nonverbal cues.³⁷ Even “ways of walking communicate,” since they are “learned and culturally variable”

³²R. Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture. Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 8.

³³R. Finnegan, *Communicating. The Multiple Modes of Human Interconnection* (2nd ed. London and New York NY: Routledge, 2005), 17.

³⁴Ibid. 93.

³⁵Ibid. 95.

³⁶Ibid. 98.

³⁷See *ibid.* 99.

processes.³⁸ The body's appearance and bearing "mark differentiation, drawing on culturally-specific conventions about appropriate movement and demeanour."³⁹ By standing close to someone or keeping a certain distance, by sitting down while another person is standing people follow certain spatial conventions which constitute the "silent language" of the culture they are socialized in.⁴⁰ Social differences, gender roles, authority and hierarchy are communicated as much through body language as through verbal statements.

Finnegan's general observations on body language are very important for understanding rabbinic literature as well. For example, in the well-known story about R. Gamliel's visit to Aphrodite's bath in Acco (m. Avod. Zar. 3:4) Proklos's question implies that he has entered an inappropriate space that "belongs" to the pagan goddess ("Why are you bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite?"). In his reply Gamliel clarifies: "I did not come into her domain, she came into my domain." On the basis of Finnegan's considerations, one notices that these sentences are loaded with spatial significance. The very act of entering the bathhouse signals R. Gamliel's willingness to communicate with pagans and to deal with the issue of idolatry.⁴¹ From the pagan perspective R. Gamliel may be seen as encroaching onto the goddess's territory. Gamliel's answer suggests that he -- as a stand-in for rabbis in general -- appropriates the space of the bathhouse for his own purposes. The story resolves the conflict between visits to "pagan" bathhouses and rabbinic identity by neutralizing the seemingly hostile space.⁴²

Other examples are the many references to students walking behind their masters, junior colleagues walking while senior rabbis ride asses: all of these references express issues of

³⁸Ibid. 101.

³⁹Ibid. 103.

⁴⁰See *ibid.* 104.

⁴¹Ibid. 108 Finnegan writes: "Moving into a particular space can signal the start or development of a particular communicative phase..."

⁴²On this story see also S. Schwartz, "Gamaliel in Aphrodite's Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries," 203-17 in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, Vol. 1. Edited by Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998); *idem*, "The Rabbi in Aphrodite's Bath: Palestinian Society and Jewish Identity in the High Roman Empire," 335-61 in *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic, and the Development of Empire*. Edited by Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

subordination and hierarchy. The entire way in which students and teachers, junior and senior rabbis, rabbis and non-rabbis behave toward each other, as represented in the literary sources, are highly significant with regard to the meanings they convey. As Finnegan has pointed out, “the ‘rightful placing’ of people according to status” plays an important role in courtly and clerical circles as a symbolic marker preserving an established order.⁴³ Rabbinic behavioral patterns and conventions would have developed over time and appear in the literary sources in a solidified form.

Ancient Jewish society was very much a face-to-face society in which communication was based on the presence of and contact between the parties involved. Erving Goffman’s work has focused on “face-work,” that is, the ritual elements involved in social interaction. If a person acts “out of face,” if he or she acts against the expectations interlocutors have of a particular situation, the result will be embarrassment and possible damage to one’s reputation. In the R. Gamliel story above, R. Gamliel’s visit to the bathhouse may have been seen as inappropriate by some people. If he had not been able to resolve the conflict, or if he had outed himself as a worshiper of Aphrodite, he would have lost his “social face” among his in-group.

Social restraints and conventions are involved in all types of encounters. In any society “a system of practices, conventions, and procedural rules comes into play which functions as a means of guiding and organizing the flow of messages. An understanding will prevail as to when and where it will be permissible to initiate talk, among whom, and by means of what topics of conversation.”⁴⁴ In rabbinic sources, for example, interaction between students and their teachers is guided by such rules. Greetings are another area in which conventions need to be observed: they ensure the maintenance of a relationship and the harmonious conduct of an encounter.⁴⁵ According to Goffman, rules of conduct are basically conservative, preserving existing social

⁴³Finnegan, *Communicating*. 109.

⁴⁴E. Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour* (London: The Penguin Press, 1972), 33-4.

⁴⁵See *ibid.* 41. On greetings see also *idem*, “Relations in Public,” 202-18 in *Social Encounters. Readings in Social Interaction*. Edited by Michael Argyle (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

roles and hierarchies. They serve to confirm identities and social images. The way in which others treat a person “will express a conception of him.”⁴⁶ One could say that rabbinic literature constructs the image of the rabbi by the way he relates to others and others behave towards him.

For the study of body language Michael Argyle’s book, *Bodily Communication*, is particularly useful, not least because of his detailed treatment of the various types of non-verbal communication.⁴⁷ My synonymous use of the terms “body language” and “non-verbal communication” throughout this volume is based on his definition. Bodily or non-verbal communication “takes place whenever one person influences another by means of facial expression, tone of voice,” gestures and other bodily movements, postures, body contact, spatial behavior, clothes and other aspects of appearance, non-verbal vocalization (eg, laughter, weeping) or smell.⁴⁸ Nonverbal cues are closely linked to language and can serve to illustrate, support, or contradict what is said. They also stand alone, however, for “there is a lot which cannot be expressed adequately in words.”⁴⁹ Just as verbal messages require the participants and audience to understand the language that is used, nonverbal signifiers require de-coding. In real life situations people would have an “awareness of others as beings who understand the code which is being used.”⁵⁰ The code being culturally specific, encounters with people from other cultures can lead to misunderstandings and embarrassment: “cultural differences in NVC are a major source of friction, misunderstanding, and annoyance between cultural and national groups.”⁵¹ In rabbinic literature such misunderstandings are evident, eg, in encounters between Palestinian and Babylonian Jews.

⁴⁶Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 51.

⁴⁷M. Argyle, *Bodily Communication* (2nd ed. London and New York NY: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1988).

⁴⁸See *ibid.* 1-2.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* 2.

⁵⁰*Ibid.* 3.

⁵¹*Ibid.* 49.

Adam Kendon calls gesture a “visible action as utterance” in the title of his book.⁵² He points to the multiple ways in which gestures are related to discourse: “At times they are used in conjunction with spoken expressions, at other times as complements, supplements, substitutes or as alternatives to them.”⁵³ Within the context of rabbinic halakhic discourse the term “visible action as utterance” may be applied to the description of rabbinic actions and practices in support or contradiction to statements. Such actions are usually considered as halakhically significant as verbal statements which they support, supplement, illustrate, contradict, or replace. Kendon defines gestures as “movements seen as deliberate, conscious, governed by an intention to say something or to communicate.”⁵⁴ Such an expressive intention would always be present in literary sources where gestures, body movements, and actions never appear at random.

The fact that body language adheres to culturally specific rules that need to be de-coded makes the study of non-verbal behavior in ancient societies and literatures especially challenging.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, classicists and ancient historians have engaged in such studies since the 1990s. In a programmatic article published in 1992 Holoka has pointed to the “research opportunities” awaiting classical scholars in this field. Classical literature is full of references to bodily signals, spatial behavior, facial expressions, personal appearance, and vocal characterizers, “material largely overlooked till now.”⁵⁶ This wealth of material should be studied on the basis of a “large and growing body of modern research in nonverbal

⁵²A. Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁵³Ibid. 1.

⁵⁴Ibid. 11.

⁵⁵Ibid. 326 Kendon refers to differences between cultures, societies, and sub-groups within societies, “in how gesture is used and differences in the specific gestures employed.” He refers to Efron’s study of gestures among Jews and Italians at New York’s Lower East Side as an example, see D. Efron, *Gesture and Environment* (New York NY: King’s Crown Press, 1941) and idem, *Gesture, Race, and Culture* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1972). Efron’s work is based on direct observation and is carried out from an anthropologist’s perspective.

⁵⁶J.P. Holoka, “Nonverbal Communication in the Classics: Research Opportunities,” 237-54 in: *Advances in Nonverbal Communication. Sociocultural, Clinical, Esthetic and Literary Perspectives*. Edited by Fernando Peyatos (Amsterdam and Philadelphia PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992).

communication.”⁵⁷ Holoka advocates the use of social-anthropological studies in the analysis of body language in classical texts.

Since Holoka wrote his article, studies of nonverbal behavior mentioned in Greek and Roman texts have proliferated. Before I turn to them, however, an important precursor needs to be mentioned: Carl Sittl’s study of the gestures of Greeks and Romans was published at the end of the nineteenth century already.⁵⁸ His definition of gestures is rather broad, including “all non-mechanical movements of the human body,” whether they are carried out intentionally or instinctively.⁵⁹ His definition includes not only the Latin *gestus* (*gestatio*, *gesticulatio*) but also facial expressions called *vultus*. Similarly broad is his thematic focus, which ranges from non-verbal expressions of emotions to mourning, greeting, and prayer rituals, legal gestures, expressions of reverence, and the body language of stage performers. The distinction between emotional expressions, mourning rituals, and “symbolic gestures,” to which a separate chapter is dedicated, is not entirely clear, since some of the “symbolic gestures” also express emotions such as antipathy. Nevertheless, the work constitutes the basis of more recent studies of body language in classical literature which use social-anthropological studies not available at Sittl’s time.

Especially numerous are studies which focus on gestures mentioned in ancient rhetorical handbooks.⁶⁰ This is the most obvious type of literature referring to various forms of non-verbal communication. The studies point to connections between the representation of gestures and the social functions of body language in republican and imperial Rome. As van der Blom and Steel have already stressed with regard to republican times, in Roman oratory “debate and the

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸C. Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1890). Interestingly, already before Sittl’s work was published, I. Goldziher’s study of nonverbal communication among Arabs came out, see idem, “Über Gebärden- und Zeichensprache bei den Arabern,” *ZVPs* 7 (1886): 369-86.

⁵⁹Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer*, 1; my translation from the German.

⁶⁰For an overview of ancient theories see T. Fögen, “Ancient Theorizing on Nonverbal Communication,” 203-16 in *LACUS Forum XXVII: Speaking and Comprehending*. Edited by R.M. Brend *et al.* (Fullerton CA: Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States, 2001).

changing of minds very much took second place to the display of power and the articulation of predetermined demands.”⁶¹ In his book on *Acclamations in Ancient Rome*, Aldrete has pointed to the conservative nature of behavioral rules and the significance of oratory in the socialization of members of the aristocracy.⁶² The primary goal of Roman upper-class education was “to prepare young men for public life,” that is, “to produce effective public speakers” who were in control of both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of their presentations.⁶³ Cicero had already pointed out that the *sermo corporis*, the “language of the body,” was as important as the orator’s words.⁶⁴ Quintilian provided detailed instructions on proper body movements, covering the entire body from the head to the feet.⁶⁵ At the same time, rhetorical teachers warned against excessive gesticulation, which was seen as counterproductive and harmful to the speaker’s ambition to persuade his audience.

Was gesticulation limited to rhetorical handbooks and Roman oratory then? Aldrete strongly argues against such an assumption: the gestures described in the handbooks were actually used by orators and many of them were widespread in Roman society, even among the poor.⁶⁶ People would see orators, legal advocates, and actors use body language in public that they themselves commonly used and imitated. The evaluation of speakers and actors was a popular form of entertainment.⁶⁷ The lack of technology to amplify speech and aid hearing is also crucial when dealing with communication in antiquity.⁶⁸ In a crowded and noisy environment it would have been difficult to hear and understand what a speaker said. Body

⁶¹H. van der Blom and C. Steel, “Introduction,” 1-7 in *Community and Communication. Oratory and Politics in Republican Rome*. Edited by C. Steel and H. van der Blom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2-3.

⁶²G.S. Aldrete, *Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁶³Ibid. 3.

⁶⁴Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.222: “est enim actio quasi sermo corporis, quo magis menti congruens esse debet.”

⁶⁵Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, books 3-11.

⁶⁶Aldrete, *Acclamations in Ancient Rome*, 50.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid. 74. Aldrete refers to Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 9.34.1-2, who would use a freedman to read out his texts while he himself focused on body language; this reference “implies that some orators actually do have others read their works while they themselves follow along performing the gestures.”

language provided a visual aid. On the basis of constant experience the public would have been well-trained in interpreting the gestures and responding to them.

During the last decades a number of classicists have expanded the study of body language in Greek and Roman literature beyond rhetorical texts. These studies are usually more limited in their scope and more specific thematically. For example, Lateiner has studied the representation of social space and distance in the *Odyssey* and stressed that all such references are meaningful in Homer's texts: "Social distance and body position, especially in its vertical plane (e.g., standing tall, hovering over, crouching, and groveling) emphatically signal status and/or disposition."⁶⁹ He has shown how use of space and territory constitute an important semiotic code within the plot structure of the *Odyssey*.⁷⁰ In another study he has analyzed the nonverbal representation of emotions in Greek epic poetry.⁷¹ Barton's interesting study focuses on the blush in Greek and Roman literature and concludes: "The blush and sensitivity to shame were so inextricably linked in Roman thought that the words *pudor* and *rubor*, "shame" and "redness," were often used together or interchangeably."⁷² In his introduction to a joint volume on tears and crying, Thorsten Fögen stresses the importance of investigating the literary and social contexts of these phenomena in Graeco-Roman antiquity.⁷³ These and other such studies can provide inspiration for the study of these phenomena in rabbinic literature of the first five centuries.⁷⁴

A broader approach to body language which explores its significance in various contexts of Roman society is Anthony Corbeill's study, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome*.⁷⁵

⁶⁹D. Lateiner, "Heroic Proxemics: Social Space and Distance in the *Odyssey*," *TPAPA* 122 (1992): 133-63, 135.

⁷⁰See *ibid.* 137.

⁷¹See D. Lateiner, "Affect Displays in the Epic Poetry of Homer, Vergil, and Ovid," 255-69 in *Advances in Nonverbal Communication*. Edited by Fernando Poyatos (Amsterdam and Philadelphia PA: John Benjamins, 1992).

⁷²C.A. Barton, "The Roman Blush: The Delicate Matter of Self-Control," 212-34 in *Constructions of the Classical Body*. Edited by J.I. Porter (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 212. On the blush see also D. Lateiner, "Blushes and Pallor in Ancient Fictions," *Helios* 25: (1998) 163-89.

⁷³T. Fögen, "Tears and Crying in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: An Introduction," 1-16 in: *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*. Edited by T. Fögen (Berlin and New York NY: de Gruyter, 2009).

⁷⁴See also D. Lateiner, "Nonverbal Communication in the Histories of Herodotus," *Arethusa* 20 (1987): 93-119; R.F. Newbold, "Nonverbal Communication in Tacitus and Ammianus," *AncSoc* 21 (1990): 189-99.

⁷⁵Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*.

His study analyzes body language in a number of areas such as Roman religious rituals, medicine, mourning, and walking styles. Based on Bourdieu, Corbeill stresses the immense political and social significance of body language in Rome society.⁷⁶ He argues that body language constituted a veritable “cultural system” reflected in the ancient literary texts: “Gestures provide access to a system of thought and prejudice otherwise not accessible to us -- and one often only dimly perceived by contemporaries.”⁷⁷

In Roman society, personal predispositions and moral values were believed to be “visible, easily detectable signs.”⁷⁸ Body notions served to “create and reinforce social distinctions”: they helped the political, socio-economic, and intellectual elites to differentiate themselves from other strata of society.⁷⁹ Especially suspicious were so-called “foreign” gestures which diverted from the behavioral rules governing the elite’s body “and, as a result, the physical demeanor of the right-thinking citizen.”⁸⁰ People were immediately judged by their contemporaries on the basis of their walking styles, posture, voice, and manner of gesticulation. Even within medicine the *gestus*, from *gerere*, “to carry,” was considered revelatory: “this carriage can be read by observers as an indication of internal disposition.”⁸¹ The human body and its comportment were seen as a text that could be read.⁸²

Gleason and Gunderson have brought the gender issue into this discussion by emphasizing the performative aspects of maleness in Roman society. One’s self-presentation as a respectable male Roman citizen required a great amount of role-play: gesture, carriage, facial

⁷⁶See, eg, *ibid.* 38, 70-1, 109, and 135 with reference to P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and *idem*, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

⁷⁷Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 2.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.* See also M.W. Gleason, *Making Men. Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), xxi, who refers to *paideia* as a “symbolic capital” that had to be displayed in public.

⁸⁰Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 4 with reference to Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 8.14.4: “It has been established since antiquity that we should learn from our elders not only with our ears but also with our eyes the things that we must ourselves do and, in turn, pass on to our descendants.”

⁸¹*Ibid.* 17.

⁸²See *ibid.* 115.

expression, and voice control, “all the arts of deportment necessary in a face-to-face society where one’s adequacy as a man was always under suspicion and one’s performance was constantly being judged.”⁸³ Masculinity was expressed in body language: “Masculinity ... constituted a system of signs. It was a language that anatomical males were taught to speak with their bodies.”⁸⁴ Those who diverted from this system would risk being considered androgynous.⁸⁵ In Hellenistic and Roman times rhetoric was central in defining masculinity under constant scrutiny in public and private contexts. Women “had no place whatever in this performance culture” -- except for serving as a negative foil for male demeanor.⁸⁶

The Roman concern with appearances found its artistic expression in statues and busts of more or less famous males. Since the 1960s art historians have studied how gestures and body language displayed in Greek and Roman art and coinage connote social status.⁸⁷ Paul Zanker has shown how Roman representations of the intellectual reflected the ideals of their respective time periods.⁸⁸ The statues, busts, and relief depictions of intellectuals served as icons that displayed the social values of those who commissioned them. In their muteness, their postures, facial expressions, gestures, clothing, and accoutrements were meant to give visual expression to *kalokagathia* in the sense of both physical and spiritual perfection that others could emulate.⁸⁹ How influential these public displays of social values were becomes evident in ordinary people’s attempts to imitate them: funerary monuments and sacrophagus reliefs of the middle strata of society depict the deceased as learned, even if he or she was illiterate or semi-literate in real life.⁹⁰

⁸³Gleason, *Making Men*, xxii. See also Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity*, 27: “*actio* and the theory of performance are vital aspects of the truth of masculine identity at Rome.”

⁸⁴Gleason, *Making Men*, 70.

⁸⁵See *ibid.* 62-5 on signs of androgyny understood in a negative sense in Roman society.

⁸⁶*Ibid.* 160.

⁸⁷See especially R. Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art. The Use of Gestures to Denote Status in Roman Sculpture and Coinage* (New Haven CT: The Academy, 1963) and G. Neumann, *Gesten und Gebärden in der griechischen Kunst* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965).

⁸⁸Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*.

⁸⁹See *ibid.* 10.

⁹⁰See *ibid.* 267.

As Eliav has already pointed out, “[a]nyone walking in a typical city in Palestine during this period -- such as Caesarea Maritima, Scythopolis, Samaria, Paneas and Eleutheropolis -- would encounter Roman sculpture every step of the way, and there is no reason to believe that major cities in regions heavily populated by Jews, such as Sepphoris or Tiberias, were any different.”⁹¹ Such publicly displayed art would have consisted of cult statues and emperors’ statues, whereas busts and (statue-)heads of intellectuals would usually be displayed in the private villas and libraries of wealthy patrons to display the householder’s *paideia* to his guests.⁹² A few portraits of Hellenistic philosophers and classical Greek writers have been found in cities of Roman Palestine such as Caesarea.⁹³ These variants of earlier Greek and Hellenistic prototypes have been dated to the first to third centuries CE and were probably imported from overseas.⁹⁴ Another indication of the valuation of *paideia* among the non-Jewish population of the Hellenistic cities of Syria-Palestine in the first four centuries CE is the book scroll (*formula*) held by the deceased (usually bearded older men or non-bearded younger men) in funerary busts and portraits.⁹⁵ These examples show that rabbis’ non-Jewish contemporaries did not hesitate to present themselves as learned and used visual markers or “props” such as scrolls to indicate Greek learning.

⁹¹Y.Z. Eliav, “Viewing the Sculatural Environment: Shaping the Second Commandment,” 411-33 in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 415.

⁹²J. Geiger, *Hellenism in the East: Studies on Greek Intellectuals in Palestine* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 30, points to the “well-known” library of Eusebius at Caesarea as an example. On this library see also A. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2003); A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁹³Eight busts and heads (originally belonging to statues) of intellectuals have been published so far; on these see R. Gersht, “Roman Copies Discovered in the Land of Israel,” 433-50 in *Classical Studies in Honor of David Sohlberg*, Edited by Ranon Katzoff *et al.* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1996), 445-6; M.L. Fischer, *Marble Studies: Roman Palestine and the Marble Trade* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz., 1998), fig. nos. 138-140, 178, 186; I. Skupińska-Lovset, *Portraiture in Roman Syria. A Study in Social and Regional Differentiation Within the Art of Portraiture* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1999), 57-9.

⁹⁴See Gersht, “Roman Copies”, 445-6; Skupińska-Lovset, *Portraiture in Roman Syria*, 57-9.

⁹⁵See the examples from Gadara in T.M. Weber, *Gadara-Umm Qēs I: Gadara Decapolitana: Untersuchungen zur Topographie, Geschichte, Architektur und der Bildenden Kunst einer “Polis Hellenis” im Ostjordanland* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), eg. fig. 63 A-C, 74A, 75C, 76C, 79A.

Studies of nonverbal communication in the Hebrew Bible and in ancient Jewish literature are still rare.⁹⁶ As far as biblical texts are concerned, the only comprehensive studies are two doctoral dissertations: Heinrich Vorwahl's work, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (1932), and Mayer I. Gruber's work, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (1980).⁹⁷ Vorwahl's work evinces a certain bias toward the alleged prevalence of gesturing among "Oriental" people.⁹⁸ Gruber's perspective is broader, including not only biblical but also Akkadian and Mesopotamian texts. His methodological approach is linguistic. He examines and compares the terminology used for various types of body language in Hebrew and other ancient Near Eastern languages. Accordingly, the references are not studied in their respective literary and social contexts but dealt with cursorily in connection with similar formulas elsewhere. The broad thematic scope of his work (ranging from prayer gestures to greeting postures and expressions of emotions) and the many textual references he provides constitute a basis for future more detailed studies of particular types of body language and nonverbal communication in specific biblical writings. Paul E. Kruger has moved into this direction with a few articles published during the last two decades.⁹⁹

For rabbinic literature studies of nonverbal communication are similarly scarce. The only scholar who has published a book-length study on this subject, with a focus on prayer rituals, is Uri Ehrlich.¹⁰⁰ In his book, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer: A New Approach to Jewish Liturgy*, Ehrlich deals with aspects of body language associated with the *Amidah* prayer in

⁹⁶P.E. Kruger, "'Nonverbal Communication' in the Hebrew Bible: A Few Comments," *JNWSL* 24 (1998): 141-64, 142, points to the "logocentric" bias of scholars as a possible reason for the neglect of this area.

⁹⁷H. Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Dr. Emil Ebering, 1932); M.I. Gruber, Mayer *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Studia Pohl 12/1 [Dissertationes Scientifcae de Rebus Orientis Antiqui]. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980).

⁹⁸Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache*, 5; already noted by Kruger, "'Nonverbal Communication'," 141.

⁹⁹P.E. Kruger, "Nonverbal Communication and Symbolic Gestures in Psalms," *BiTr* 45 (1994): 213-22; idem, "The Face and Emotions in the Hebrew Bible," *OTE* 18 (2005): 651-63.

¹⁰⁰ See also the unpublished study of S. Fogel, *The Orders of Discourse in the Study House in Rabbinic Literature of the Land of Israel: Ritual, Organizing Space, and Discipline* (Hebr., Ph.D. thesis submitted to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva, 2014) on the use of space in the context of the study house.

Jewish liturgical texts.¹⁰¹ Individual chapters are devoted to the bowing gesture as well as to facial expressions, voice, clothing, and shoes. Ehrlich stresses the “holistic nature” of prayer, which includes a variety of nonverbal elements.¹⁰² He notes that variations in prayer rituals existed between Palestine and Babylonia but downplays the impact of neighboring religions.¹⁰³ Individual prayer gestures are traced in their development from tannaitic sources to the Talmuds and aggadic Midrashim of the early Byzantine period (5th to 6th c. CE). Ehrlich believes that the literary texts “also bear witness to their *realia*,” that is, the way in which the *Amidah* was actually recited and ritually enacted by ancient Jews: “Taken together, they reflect differences between periods and places, and even between schools of thought or individuals.”¹⁰⁴ Besides the “normative rabbinic ideal” Ehrlich believes that the texts also reflect “actual practice.”¹⁰⁵ His approach is both philological and historical, taking other non-rabbinic and non-Jewish sources into account.

Ehrlich highlights one particular problem which a study of nonverbal communication in rabbinic texts encounters: rabbis rarely explain the significance of the gestures reflected in rabbinic texts.¹⁰⁶ The meaning of a gesture may have been evident to the ancient tradents, editors, audience, and readers but is difficult for modern scholars to extrapolate. The literary contexts and comparative non-rabbinic sources need to be examined carefully to reveal the gestures’ significance in the particular frameworks in which they appear. Most importantly, Ehrlich suggests that the body had a much larger role and significance in Jewish worship and rabbinic halakhah than is commonly assumed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹U. Ehrlich, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer: A New Approach to Jewish Liturgy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

¹⁰²Ibid. 3.

¹⁰³See *ibid.* 5 and 199.

¹⁰⁴Ibid. 5.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid. 6.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. 8.

This conclusion also accords with Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's programmatic article on "The Corporeal Turn" in *Jewish Studies*: "... those who took the corporeal turn never left the text behind. Rather, they brought a concern with the body to the text and found new ways to read and think about these texts."¹⁰⁸ Anthropological models and approaches should be combined with careful historical-critical studies using "a wide variety of sources, textual, visual, and artifactual."¹⁰⁹ Besides Ehrlich's monograph on prayer rituals and two articles on other rituals this combined approach has not been applied to body language in ancient Judaism until now.¹¹⁰

When studying references to nonverbal communication in rabbinic texts Barbara Korte's methodological considerations in her book, *Body Language in Literature*, are especially useful.¹¹¹ In literature body language appears in textualized form and is part of the text's signifying system. Words can never fully describe actual performances. Due to a text's limitations, only a selection of the body language that accompanies conversation in real life can be mentioned. Therefore all of the references that do appear must be considered carefully chosen and meaningful.¹¹² References to body language mainly appear in narrative texts and in introductions and comments on speech. Especially in rabbinic texts they tend to be brief and stylized. Sometimes repetitive formulas are used which reappear in various tractates. Body language in texts is not a mere transcription of a performative act. As Gunderson has pointed out, texts "act to construct and to socialize a certain kind of body"; they create a "discursive body" as part of the entire signifying practice of a text.¹¹³

This study shall investigate the forms and functions of body language in mostly Palestinian rabbinic texts. If the Mishnah and especially the Talmud and Midrashim are seen as

¹⁰⁸B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Corporeal Turn," *JQR* 95 (2005): 447-61, 447.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. 453.

¹¹⁰See U. Ehrlich, "Verbal and Non-Verbal Rituals of Leave-Taking in Rabbinic Culture - Phenomenology and Significance," *JSQ* 8 (2001): 1-26; idem, "The Ritual of Lending Shoulders: Distribution and Significance in Talmudic Times," *HUCA* 75 (2004): 23-35.

¹¹¹Korte, *Body Language in Literature*, mentioned above.

¹¹²See ibid. 5-7.

¹¹³Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity*, 4.

“handbooks” for future generations of scholars, do they provide performative models reinforcing a vision of the ideal sage, how he should walk, talk, and conduct himself? One may argue that just as Roman rhetorical literature was “a full participant in the dialectic of the production, reproduction, maintenance, and recognition of good men and their authority,”¹¹⁴ rabbinic literature created the image of the rabbi in late antique and early Byzantine society, an image that depended as much on visual recognition as on verbal discourse.

Rabbinic texts’ construction of the *habitus* of the rabbi does not allow us to reconstruct the actual body language of rabbis in real life. Nevertheless, rabbinic references to nonverbal communication must have been meaningful to the tradents, editors, and their audiences. The shorthand references to rabbis and disciples of sages sitting or standing, keeping a distance, hiding, walking ahead or behind other rabbis, blushing, weeping, and remaining silent would have been understood in the cultural context the tradents lived in. Accordingly, not only the literary but also the social context becomes significant. Body language is used in texts to convey the respective characters’ -- and through them the tradents’ and editors’ -- values and attitudes, social status, power relations, attractions and repulsions.¹¹⁵

In this study both the literary and the social contexts of body language mentioned in Palestinian rabbinic sources shall be taken into consideration. As far as the literary context is concerned, the function of a reference to nonverbal communication within its textual context shall be examined: such references can, for example, function as illustrators of verbal statements; they can serve to express the interpersonal relations of the characters involved; or they can stand by themselves as an expression of a halakhic view, sometimes in contradistinction to a verbal rule. Besides the specific literary context, the repetitive use of specific formulas as a kind of shorthand for particular rabbinic behaviors is important. For example, the formulas “X sat before Y,” or “X came before Y,” are used to denote specific contexts in which conversations should be

¹¹⁴Ibid. 9.

¹¹⁵Korte, *Body Language in Literature*, 115 writes: “... the portrayal of body language can be strongly influenced by a focalizer’s [i.e., narrator’s] values.”

understood. This, then, leads us to the social contexts, power relations, and hierarchies expressed by the use of body language and space. What do the tradents and editors attempt to tell us about group relations, identity and authority? How do they use references to body language to create the impression of affiliation or hostility? How is nonverbal behavior used emblematically to indicate cultural misunderstandings (eg, between Palestinians and Babylonians, rabbis and Romans)? Is there a development in the use of body language from tannaitic to amoraic texts and a particular affiliation to certain literary forms and genres?

The main sources on which this study is based are Palestinian rabbinic documents from the early third to the fifth century CE, that is, literature from late Roman and early Byzantine times. Amoraic documents, especially the Talmuds and Midrashim, mention body language more than tannaitic documents. This may partly be the case because they are more discursive and contain more narrative material. It may also be due to the already mentioned general increase in the importance of body language in late antiquity. Babylonian talmudic texts are sometimes used as comparative material, to investigate cultural differences in nonverbal communication. The main cultural context of the Palestinian rabbinic texts is Graeco-Roman culture. Therefore the body language displayed in rabbinic texts is examined within the context of nonverbal behavior reflected in Graeco-Roman literature to determine whether and in what regards rabbis fashioned themselves as similar to and, at the same time, different from Hellenistic, Roman, and Christian intellectuals.

My focus will be on the body language associated with the social interaction of rabbis in Palestinian rabbinic documents of late antiquity. I shall not be dealing with prayer and liturgical rituals, an area already covered by Ehrlich;¹¹⁶ with purity rituals, some of which have been dealt with by scholars who studied women's purity in ancient Judaism;¹¹⁷ with legal rituals which will

¹¹⁶See Ehrlich, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer*.

¹¹⁷See, eg, L.A. Cook, "Body Language: Women's Rituals of Purification in the Bible and Mishnah," 40-59 in *Women and Water. Menstruation in Jewish Law and Life* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999).

hopefully elicit separate comparative studies in the future;¹¹⁸ and with mourning rituals which need to be studied within their own context.

I shall analyze references to the kind of body language that forms part of rabbis' communication among themselves and with others and is intrinsic to rabbinic halakhic discourse. This nonverbal communication is represented in relations among rabbinic colleagues, rabbis and their students, rabbis and non-rabbinic Jews, and rabbis and non-Jews. These relations function in a system of concentric circles ranging from social relations among the in-group to relations with increasingly distant out-groups or "others." The types and functions of the body language reflected in the literary encounters are likely to have varied from one envisioned social context to the next. At the same time, the overall character of rabbinic literature as in-group literature, composed by rabbinic scholars for rabbinic scholars has to be taken into account.¹¹⁹ In this context rabbinic body language would serve as a model for later generations of scholars to emulate. The audience and readership were expected to learn from and approximate the ideal of the rabbi constructed by these texts, just as young Roman aristocrats were expected to strive to become a *vir bonus*.

The chapters of this book are arranged thematically. The sequence of chapters moves from external appearance (chapter 1), to full body positioning (chapter 2), to gestures that involve some body parts (chapter 3), to the emotions shown on one's face (chapter 4), that is, from the most external to the most internal and intimate movements and from the full body to its limbs and smaller parts. Each of the chapters emphasizes a different aspect of rabbinic culture: in the first chapter, one's appearance conveys identity; in the second chapter, the use of space indicates social class and hierarchy; in the third chapter, gesture becomes an act of

¹¹⁸See, eg, R. Rollinger and H. Niedermayr, "Von Assur nach Rom: Dexiosis und 'Staatsvertrag' - Zur Geschichte eines rechtssymbolischen Aktes," 135-78 in *Rechtsgeschichte und Interkulturalität: zum Verhältnis des östlichen Mittelmeerraums und "Europas" im Altertum*. Edited by R. Rollinger *et al.* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2007). Rollinger/Niedermayr (2007) 135-78; D. Sperber, "Flight and the Talmudic Law of Usucaption: A Study in the Social History of 3rd Century Palestine,," *RIDA* 19 (1972): 29-42.

¹¹⁹On this issue see D.C. Kraemer, "The Intended Reader as a Key to Interpreting the Bavli,," *Prooftexts* 13 (1993): 125-40.

communication in itself; in the fourth chapter, one's face becomes an intimate form of non-verbal expression. Altogether, the chapters highlight the various ways in which rabbinic texts focus on the body and its parts to provide insights into aspects of rabbinic culture and society.

The first chapter focuses on the appearance of rabbis in the sense of Goffman's "presentation of self."¹²⁰ Do rabbinic sources suggest that rabbis were recognizable by the way they walked, talked, and clothed themselves? Were descriptions of rabbis' demeanor -- the use of the *tallit*, *tefillin* and *tzitzit*, the beard, hair style, and grey hair -- meant to reflect their lifestyle, social values, and identity? How do the described Palestinian rabbinic appearances compare with those of Graeco-Roman intellectuals and Christian clerics? Graeco-Roman authors have emphasized the significance of a man's self-presentation in the public sphere.¹²¹ Literary descriptions of rabbis' demeanor will be investigated in this context.

The second chapter deals with rabbinic postures and spatial movements. Spatial behavior consists of the maintenance of proximity or distance and the arrangement of the body in relation to others with whom one shares a space.¹²² Standing or sitting, sitting in front or behind others, rising in front of and walking behind someone -- all of these postures and movements are highly significant and form patterns in rabbinic literary sources. Often power relationships and hierarchies are expressed by the semiotics of space and territoriality. Proximity is linked to intimacy and friendship, whereas keeping a distance may indicate aversion or fear. Hierarchical seating arrangements are mentioned in a number of contexts in ancient sources. Rabbinic postures and uses of space need to be examined in connection with conventions established in Graeco-Roman and ancient Christian society.

¹²⁰Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 77 describes demeanor as "that element of the individual's ceremonial behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress, and bearing, which serves to express to those in his immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities." On demeanor as a useful research area in the classics see Holoka, "Nonverbal Communication," 239-41.

¹²¹See, eg, J. Bremmer, "Walking, Standing, and Sitting in Ancient Greek Culture," 15-32 in *A Cultural History of Gesture. From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Edited by J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 107-39.

¹²²Korte, *Body Language in Literature*, 39.

Chapter three investigates rabbinic communication through gestures. Gestures were an important aspect of Roman rhetoric and stage acting and followed certain conventions. Besides kneeling and prostration, nodding and spitting, they also include touching behaviors such as embracing, kissing, and supporting someone.¹²³ Gestures are used to denote the relationship between the interlocutors, whether subordination and dominance or equality and friendship. In halakhic contexts gestures can be used to indicate rabbis' agreement with or rejection of certain views and practices. Since gestures are always linked to cultural norms, rabbinic gestures need to be compared with Graeco-Roman and early Christian gestures to determine similarities and differences.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the analysis of facial expressions. Rabbis are occasionally said to have changed face color, for which various explanations are offered in the texts. In real life the blush is an automatic bodily reaction, but in literature it is always mentioned intentionally and has a specific literary function. Similarly, weeping and laughter appear in particular literary contexts that need to be compared with Graeco-Roman and Christian analogies.

The concluding chapter assesses the use of body language from a broader literary and compositional perspective. Can one detect a chronological development and patterns in the use of body language in Palestinian rabbinic texts? Do particular forms of non-verbal communication have particular functions within the respective literary contexts? Are particular literary forms more likely to employ nonverbal communication than others? What is the significance of nonverbal behavior within rabbinic halakhic discourse? The examination of these issues will lead us to a better understanding of the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication, words and actions in rabbinic sources. Both were part and parcel of rabbinic self-fashioning and the creation of a rabbinic group identity in late Roman-Byzantine Palestine.

¹²³On kinesics and haptics see *ibid.* 38-9.

The study attempts to introduce scholars of rabbinic texts to a new area of investigation. As such, it should be considered a first step rather than a comprehensive treatment of rabbinic nonverbal communication. Hopefully, other scholars will take up this line of investigation in the future and extend it to other areas such as symbolic actions in legal rituals.