

Learning instead of fighting: the impact of rabbinic theory on Jewish identity

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Rabbinic Judaism was a reaction to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the disaster of the Bar-Kochba uprising in the 1st and 2nd century CE. The rabbinic movement concentrated on the teaching and learning of the Torah, the uttering of God's will, which was intensively interpreted by the Rabbis. Not success in war, not political independence in a Jewish state, not political power or an imminent eschatological expectation should save and rescue Jewish identity, but the ambitious effort of learning and keeping the Torah up to date as a "wandering homeland". Often being a minority group, Judaism had to come to terms with majorities or other minorities finding a position of acculturation, openness and self-assurance. New approaches and solutions were based on old experiences and traditions and enriched with actual necessities and ideas, developing an intellectual Judaism in a diasporic context.