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TWO JEWISH MERCHANTS IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY

by Y. Dan (pp. 1-26)

The Christian propaganda book known as "*Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati*" affords us information on the activities of Jews in the sea-trade during the first half of the seventh century. The author of this article clarifies the biographical data contained in the book regarding two Jewish merchants — Jacob and Justus.

The majority of the biographical facts are mainly concerned with two periods in the life of Jacob — the central figure of the book. Jacob most probably born in Eretz Yisrael moved at a young age to Constantinople. From the information known about him during the time of Phocas and the beginning of the reign of Heraclius, we learn that he traveled much, sailing between Constantinople and Acre. Though he is described as one whose main purpose in travelling to these various places is to attack Christians, his travels to Constantinople and back where most probably done for business reasons. It could be that while on his journey's Jacob was involved and participated in the disturbances taking place in various cities of the East during this time. In a later period he traveled with a cargo of expensive garments, as the agent of a wealthy businessman from Constantinople to Africa, where Heraclius imposed the forced conversion of the Jews. While in Carthage, his Jewishness was revealed and he converted to Christianity. The biographical data on Justus is scarce. Among what is known, is that he lived with his family in Eretz Yisrael.

The two merchants, though apparently not belonging to the group of wealthy merchants, participated in the sea-trade between the cities of the Byzantine State. From a remark stating the possibility of Jacob reaching Gaul, it can be assumed that Jews participated in international commerce between Byzantium and Merovingian Gaul.

From these details it is possible to learn of the types and ways of commerce employed during this period, the activities of financiers and their agents, and the intense movement and mobility of merchants.

CONCERNING THE FIRST CONTROVERSY ON THE WRITINGS OF MAIMONIDES

by A. Shohat (pp. 27-60)

On the basis of recently published letters, the author attempts to reconstruct anew the course of this controversy. He concludes that R. Solomon of Montpellier didn't impose any ban on the Maimonists and that it was the French Rabbis who used the ban; though it is possible that they were influenced to use it by R. Jonah of Gerona sent to them by R. Solomon.

From the new letters it becomes clear beyond any doubt, that the ban was directed against the Rationalists who were termed heretics and epikurians. The ban also castigates Maimonides and R. David Kimhi who was possibly excommunicated. The

study of Maimonides' work, *Sefer HaMada* and his "Guide" were forbidden. Also forbidden was the preoccupation with secular knowledge (*Chochmat Yevanit*), which included most likely even the study of Medicine. In order to bar the penetration of Rationalist thought, only reliance on Rashi's commentaries was permitted. The author doesn't negate the possibility that the Rabbis of Paris burned the few copies in their possession of the banned works of Maimonides.

In retaliation for the ban by the Rabbis of France, the Maimunists in Lunel, followed by other communities of Provence issued a counter ban against R. Solomon of Montpellier and his colleagues claiming heresy in their works and accusing them of anthropomorphism.

Protest letters were sent to the Rabbis of France which caused among some of them doubts in the justice of imposing the ban. To influence the Spanish communities to associate with the ban against R. Solomon and his colleagues, R. David Kimhi, along with a few other people, set out for Spain.

The author, turning to the controversy in Spain, points to the fact that the ban imposed on R. Solomon in the communities of Aragon was of a conditional nature — depending on whether they degraded Maimonides or not. The author attempts to show that R. David Kimhi's mission to Spain failed due to the active participation of Nahmanides, and through him others, in defending R. Solomon.

On the other hand, the author draws our attention to the cancellation of the ban by the Rabbis of France brought about by Nahmanides' letter to them. The hoped for conciliation between the two camps wasn't forthcoming owing to the refusal by the Maimunists in Lunel to revoke their ban on R. Solomon. This led to the denunciation of the Maimunists before the Inquisition.

The author attempts to substantiate the opinion of Y. Baer that the Inquisitors didn't burn the works of Maimonides but rather, most probably, burned only those paragraphs from the "Guide" thought to be heretical.

The conflict between the camps continued even after the informers were punished and had their tongues cut out. Among the Rabbis of France there were some who again wanted to act against the Maimunists; while the Maimunists in Lunel requested assistance from their supporters in one of the Spanish communities (probably Saragosa). For this purpose a collection of selective documents concerning the controversy was prepared and sent to R. Abraham, the son of Maimonides, who agreed to support the Maimunists against their opponents. The preoccupation by Nahmanides with Kabbalah was attacked, while in a letter sent from Narbonne it was demanded to destroy all his Kabbalistic works since they articulate heresy.

On the basis of a few expressions found in the writings of the Maimonists, the author, at the conclusion of the article, states that one of the factors in their struggle for "pure faith" was their belief that as a result of this, the redemption of Israel will begin. He draws our attention to the book of R. Jacob Anatoli, *Malamad HaTalmidim*, where a type of "rationalistic righteousness" is to be found and which in the author's opinion is representative of the attitudes of this rationalist circle.

THE *UMAN* PERIOD IN THE LIFE OF R. NAHMAN OF BRAZLAV AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRAZLAV HASIDIC THOUGHT

by M. Piekarz (pp. 61-87)

R. Nahman of Brazlav in some of his sermons, strongly rejected the concepts accepted in Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages. The problem of faith and heresy pre-occupied R. Nahman in particular, because he was imbued with the conviction that "secular knowledge" was the greatest enemy of the Jewish faith. His fierce opposition to these external influences manifests itself in his well known reaction to the Russian legislation of 1804 concerning the Jews. In the literature of Brazlav Hasidism these laws were known as "*Gezerot HaPunktin*". In his opinion, that part of the legislation promoting the study of secular knowledge and languages among the Jews, bore with it grave dangers.

A critical study of the biographical-historical sources of R. Nahman's life, and in particular the *Uman* period of his life, seem to reveal a complete contradiction of his fundamental position opposing *Haskalah*. Reference is made of his settling in *Uman* during the last six months of his life and of his dealings with the local *Maskilim* and of his living in the home of one.

It would seem that this affair, despite its narrow chronological limit in R. Nahman's life is nevertheless apt to teach us a great deal about his intellectual stature, as it is explicitly described in direct Brazlav testimony and from some illusions in the literature of that movement.

The tenet of the "Descent of the Zaddik", which represents throughout the generations, the very foundation of the teachings of Hasidic leaders, has due to its bearing the personal imprint of its precursor, a very specific significance in the teachings of Brazlav Hasidism. The recurring stress by R. Natan of Nemirov, the disciple and scribe of R. Nahman, in his great book "*Likhute Halachot*", on the descent of the wondrous Zaddik to redeem the sinful are actually based on concrete descriptions from this paradoxical affair.

This affair naturally gave rise to accusations on the part of R. Nahman's opponents and was received with misgivings and even open resentment by several of his pupils. But in the eyes of R. Natan and other influential Brazlav leaders after him, the deeds of their Rabbi in *Uman* were interpreted as a tragic mission by a great soul which was destined for a decisive messianic role. More than anything else they stressed this aspect of his revelation to them; which is his actual descent to the sinful and his proximity and closeness to them.

The author describes R. Nahman's contacts with the *Maskilim of Uman* and the significance of this contact in the tradition of Brazlav teachings.

SYRO-PALESTINIAN SITES IN A NEW MARI TIN DOCUMENT

by A. Malamat (pp. 102-109)

A recently published Mari document (see G. Dossin, *Revue d'Assyriologie* 64, 1970, pp. 97 ff.), of great historical importance for Syria and Palestine, is an account of consignments for tin found at the Mari palace. The record, apparently dates from the

first half of the reign of Zimri-Lim (ca. 1780—1760 or 1715—1695 B.C., according to the middle or low chronology, respectively). The document includes many names of persons and places in the West:

Aleppo — in a context of direct (commercial) ties with Hammurabi of Babylon; *Ugarit* (mentioned twice), a significant addition to the few references in the Mari corpus (where mention is made of a *targamannum*, “dragoman” — one of the earliest occurrences of this rare term — as well as of overseas merchants: one a *Caphtorite*, undoubtedly from the region of Crete, and another, possibly a *Carian*, from the western seaboard of Asia Minor); *Amud-pi-El*, king of Qatna, a powerful ruler in Middle Syria; *Muz/šunnum*, a toponym otherwise unknown in cuneiform sources, is identified by the author with the town *Mḏn* of the Egyptian sources, to be located in southern Syria or northern Trans-jordan; *Hazor* and *Laish*.

The Palestinologist and Bible scholar will find special interest in the latter two places. The king of Hazor, specified as *Ibni-Adad* (or *Ibni-Addu*), is mentioned as the recipient of three relatively large tin shipments. *Laish*, later *Dan*, occurs here for the first time in the Mari archives, and one *Wari-taldu*, apparently its ruler, bears a Hurrian name (this name is now attested in another new Mari text). That these two cities appear in this context is indicative of their stature and is in accord with the prosperous settlements enclosed within rampart-fortifications, as uncovered in recent excavations on both sites.

The significance of this document is enhanced by the framework it provides for the historical-chronological correlations among *Ibni-Adad* of Hazor, *Wari-taldu* of *Laish*, *Amud-pi-El* of Qatna, *Yarim-Lim* of Aleppo, Hammurabi of Babylon and Sheplarpak of Susa (besides Zimri-Lim of Mari, indirectly).

AN EARLY JEWISH TRADITION ON THE DATE OF THE END OF THE BYZANTINE RULE IN ERETZ YISRAEL

by E. Fleischer (pp. 110-115)

As is known, there is no existing original Jewish tradition regarding the date of the Arab conquest of Eretz Yisrael. Jewish Chroniclers of the Middle Ages accepted the dates taken from non-Jewish historiography which determines approximately the year 636 as the time of the end of Byzantine rule in Eretz Yisrael.

Nevertheless, from *piyutim* texts, from the Genizah, (some already have been published, though misinterpreted) it seems that there existed a Jewish tradition — probably *Midrashic* — that regarded the period of Roman rule in Eretz Yisrael existing only 550 years after the destruction of the Temple.

The author of the article brings five *piyutim* where this tradition is repeated and appears in identical form. The author shows that these quoted texts are relatively early; the latest of them from the end of the tenth century.

TO WHOM WAS MENDELSSOHN REPLYING IN HIS "JERUSALEM"

by J. Katz (pp. 116-117)

This is a note on my article on the subject published in *Zion* vol. 29, no. 1-2, 1964. A new source — the rare booklet by Cranz, "Die Ehre Hamburgischer Staats-Bürger ohne Unterschied der Nationen nebst einem Anhang: Herr D. Niemann gegen die Juden" — demands a revision of the above article's conclusion. In this pamphlet Cranz publicly declared his authorship of *Forschen nach Licht und Recht*, thus settling the bibliographical problem contrary to what I maintained in my article, where I attributed it to Sonnenfels. Still, there is the bona fide testimony of Munter that the appeal to Mendelssohn to convert to Christianity stemmed from Sonnenfels, supported by the fact that the pamphlet was signed by "Wien, S. .". These are two contradictory facts. There are two possible explanations: one, that Cranz wrote the pamphlet but did so at the request of Sonnenfels. If so, the analysis of the situation presented in my original article can be retained fully. But there is a more likely explanation that Cranz pretended to act on behalf of Sonnenfels, and Mendelssohn had been taken in, at least initially, thinking that the appeal that he should convert to Christianity stemmed from high quarters in Vienna.