# SUMMARIES

## THE PRE-DAVIDIC PERIOD IN CHRONICLES

by Gershon Galil (pp. 1–26)

This article reexamines two main questions: to what extent is the description of the pre-Davidic period in the Book of Chronicles different from that presented in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets; and what is the significance attached by the Chronicler to the central events in the period prior to the coronation of David. The author takes issue with the view of G. von Rad, who argues that the Book of Chronicles contains no mention of the election of Israel, and that, instead of the Sinaic covenant, we find a covenant which had always existed; and also with Sara Japhet, who argues that in the view of the Chronicler, there was never any departure from the land nor a return to it, and that 'the Chronicler presents a concept of people and land which is autochthonic in its basic feature'.

The author points out that the main part of the Book of Chronicles purposely opens with the coronation of David for two reasons: (a) In the view of the Chronicler, the period of David and his sons was not properly described in his sources; (b) The age of David and Solomon was regarded by him as the 'jewel in the crown' in the relationship between Israel and God. By contrast the Chronicler did not find it appropriate to rewrite the history of the pre-Davidic period, not because he did not have a different understanding of the importance of this period, but because he had no intention of arguing with the facts of Israel's history which are presented in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.

According to the Chronicler the land was promised to the patriarchs. At that time the land was in the hands of other peoples and the patriarchs were living there only as a minority in the shadow of the autochthonic inhabitants. In the days of Moses, God 'redeemed' Israel out of Egypt and made them his people forever (1 Chronicles 17:21–22). God made a covenant with the sons of Jacob 'his chosen' – 'an everlasting covenant' at Horeb, and gave them 'the statutes and judgements' through Moses His servant. The God of Israel brought His people to the promised land whose inhabitants He dispossessed. When the Children of Israel came from Egypt, they 'destroyed' a part of the local population, though not all the Canaanites were wiped out and not all the land was subdued. The conquest was completed only in the days of David and many inhabitants of the land continued to live in it side by side with the Israelites, as a separate community, at least until the time of Solomon.

In the Chronicler's eyes the Exodus was not an event lacking significance. However, in his view, greater importance was to be attached, for example, to the divine justice, the sanctity of the Temple mount, or the covenant which God made with David.

The Chronicler did not draw a different picture of the pre-Davidic period. Rather he shifted the emphasis from the election of the people of Israel to the choice of the Temple site, the city and the dynasty; and from the Exodus and the Lawgiving at Sinai in the days of Moses to the Kingdom of the House of David and the Temple which Solomon built in Jerusalem.


# THE OTTOMAN SYSTEM OF *SÜRGÜN* AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE JEWISH SOCIETY IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

by Joseph R. Hacker (pp. 27–82)


The Ottoman practice of *sürgün* served a dual purpose. On the one hand it was a system of punishment by banishment invoked against individuals and groups who had broken the law, as well as against those deemed threatening or constituting a political risk. On the other hand it also served as a means for carrying out policies of colonization, with populations transferred from one part of the kingdom to another not as a result of any transgression on their part, but in order to achieve the goals set out by the central authorities. The government's considerations in the latter instance might have been to further economic development, to ensure national security or to meet some other political or national interest. The system was applied primarily during periods of conquest and expansion, with the populations of the conquered areas transferred to internal portions of the kingdom, while the existing population – of all religions – was moved to the newly-acquired districts. The system was applied over a lengthy period of time and on a large scale for the purpose of populating and developing Istanbul.

This policy and its effect on the history of the Ottoman Empire has been researched for some time, especially in the studies of Ö. L. Barkan, H. Inalcik, N. Beldiceanu, and recently H. Lowry. These studies succeeded in demonstrating that the *sürgün* policy had a decisive impact on the demographic, social, economic and religious life of the Empire. However, while the Jewish population was subjected, like all other groups, to this policy, the degree to which it influenced their life has yet to be adequately examined, and the various studies devoted to their history have failed to address this issue.

The present study, therefore, sets out to investigate the influence exerted by the *sürgün* policy on the life of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire over a period of two hundred years, from the conquest of Constantinople to the second half of the 17th century.

The results of this study demonstrate to what extent and how profoundly the Jews were

affected by the system, to a degree exceeding that of other sections of the population. The resettlement of the Jews appears to have been a frequent occurrence. The reason for this may lie in their abject obedience and their lack of power to either oppose or evade the decrees on the one hand, as well as their perception in the eyes of the government as a positive colonizing element. In any case, recent discoveries have revealed that there were at least a number of massive removals of the Jewish population during the period under discussion. This article deals at length with descriptions of the resettling of the Jews from all parts of the Empire in Istanbul during the 15th century, based on contemporary sources which include the writings of Jews who themselves underwent the process of *sürgün*. The study also takes up the transfer of Jews from Egypt to Istanbul following its conquest by the Ottomans in 1517, the removal of Jews from Salonika to Rhodes following its conquest in 1522, and the transfer of the Jews of Buda from Buda in Hungary to the Balkan cities following the battle of Mohács in 1526. Similar removals of the Jewish population are also discussed, as well as attempts that were not realized, such as the plan to resettle the Jews of Safed on Cyprus in 1576. Analysis of all the above data also provides us with important information on the status of the *sürgün* in the Jews' new locations, their reactions towards their removals and their attitude towards the authorities and the state as a result of their experience.

The second portion of this article establishes the decisive influence exerted by the *sürgün* on the character of Jewish society in the Ottoman Empire during the 15th to 17th centuries. The following are some of the major conclusions:

1. The impact of the *sürgün* system was felt throughout the period. Based on new documents in manuscript published in the article, it appears that both the fate of the individual Jew as well as his legal status were determined as late as the 17th century on the basis of his origins as a *'sürgün'*, notwithstanding the fact that those exiled were his forefathers from as far back as the 15th century.

2. Due to the fact that the majority of Byzantine Jews were rendered *sürgün* and transferred to Istanbul, there concurrently emerged areas in the empire bereft of any Jewish population by the end of the 15th century. At the same time a large and powerful Byzantine Jewish community developed in Istanbul on the eve of the 16th century. When the exiled Jews of Spain, Portugal and other lands arrived in the Ottoman Empire, they were able to establish communities with relatively minor tension, opposition or competition from the established element of the Jewish population, who by this time had been concentrated in a limited number of centers. This situation enabled the emigrés of the Iberian peninsula to assume rapid control and influence throughout the Jewish communities of the Empire, with the process being more complex and drawn-out in those communities that had been settled by large numbers of Byzantine Jews' such as Istanbul, Edirne and other centers.

3. Paradoxically, the status of the established Byzantine Jewish residents of the empire, most of whom had become *'sürgün'* by virtue of the government's decrees, would now be inferior to that of the new immigrants. They were now bound to their new locations, were forced to

pay a double share of taxes if they abandoned their place of residence (with or without the permission of the authorities) and frequently encountered numerous personal difficulties relating to marriage and other issues. This led to yet a further weakening of their position as compared to that of the new immigrants.

4. It appears that the system of *'sürgün'* led to the emergence of a unique type of communal organization of Jews centered around the *'kehalim'*, which constituted a sub-division within the civic communities of the Ottoman Empire. The first such organization appeared in Istanbul, where those exiled from the other cities of the Empire now banded together in *'kehalim'* established along the lines of origin. When the new emigrés arrived, they too embraced this system of organization throughout the Empire.


# AN UNCLARIFIED EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF THE HATAM SOFER: THE ALEXANDERSOHN AFFAIR

## by Jacob Katz (pp. 83–126)


Jonathan Alexandersohn, a young rabbi of German origin, was appointed in 1833 by the small community of Hejocsaba near Miskolc, Hungary, following the recommendation of his compatriot Eljakim Götz Schwerin, the rabbi of Baja. Part of the community being negligent in certain religious observances, the strong-willed, self-assured and impassioned rabbi soon came into conflict with it.

Disregarding the advice of Rabbi Eleazar Low, a noted Halakhic authority, on a matter of halakhic praxis, he fell into the sage's disfavour. Aware of this, his enemies in Hejocsaba accused their rabbi before Low of being careless in his religious conduct and unreliable in his halakhic decisions. A rabbinical court of three appointed by Low took the testimonies of witnesses in Hejocsaba on the basis of which Low and two other authorities declared Alexandersohn to be unworthy of serving as a rabbi. Following his appeal to the local authorities, the rabbi's case was submitted to the Hatam Sofer in Pressburg, who in view of the court's findings emphatically confirmed his colleagues' decision. Consequently, Alexandersohn was removed from his post. Convinced of his innocence, the latter began to fight for his rehabilitation. He found support among leading members of the Pest community, on whose initiative the Hatam Sofer consented to the appointment of a new court of inquiry. On the basis of their findings, this Bet Din, headed by Alexandersohn's first mentor, Rabbi Götz Schwerin, acquitted him of all the accusations and declared him worthy of serving as a rabbi. Hatam Sofer accepted this verdict rather reluctantly, and made his public support of it dependent on the condition that Alexandersohn retire for a year or two and devote himself to the study of Tora as an act of repentance. Being strongheaded, Alexandersohn rejected this, as well as any other compromise, hoping to achieve absolute

rehabilitation by publishing the documents concerning his case. He collected subscriptions for his prospective book throughout Europe, having found favour with the enlightened elements in the Jewish communities who regarded him as the victim of religious zealotry. The orthodox, on the other hand, to whom he belonged by conviction, condemned him, and he thereby manouvered himself into a dubious situation. By the end of half a decade he succeeded in publishing his book, but by then his case had been forgotten by the public. He, on the other hand, became accustomed to the life of a wandering scholar or schnorer. He died in 1865 in the Jewish hospital in Obuda near Pest. A victim of his own character, his life nonetheless reflects the prevailing conditions of his time, characterized by the deep dissension between the traditionalists and the innovators.