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SUMMARIES

A NEW LOOK AT THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH

by Gershon Galil (pp. 5–19)

The chronology of the last kings of Judah is reexamined in this article. The discussion itself is preceded by a critical survey of the various methods suggested by scholars. None of the methods proposed is consistent with all the information we possess.

The article begins with a discussion of the system of intercalation in Babylon, reexamining R.A. Parker and W.H. Dubberstain's study: *Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C. – 75 A.D.* (1956) in the light of the catalogues of more than thirty-five thousand economic documents from the city of Sippar published recently by E. Leichty (1986–1988). The present author reaches the following conclusions: In the 7th–6th centuries B.C. a flexible intercalation cycle evolved. In the course of this cycle, which numbered nineteen years on average, between six and seven years were intercalated (a table of all the intercalary months in Babylon in the years 633–501 is appended to the article). While most of Parker and Dubberstain's findings are still valid, two points require emendation: (1) Following A. Goetze, Parker and Dubberstain assumed that the 19th year of Nabopolassar was intercalated. But in the sole document on which this assumption was based (NCBT 1156), the king's name is not specified. It is more likely that this document is from the time of Kandalanu, the 19th year of whose reign was definitely intercalated. (2) It can now be established that the first year of Nabopolassar was intercalated (BM 54209), and consequently the number of intercalated years in the cycle beginning in 633 was at least six.

In contrast to the detailed information regarding the Babylonian calendar, our knowledge of the calendar of Judah is sparse. Yet it may be reasonably assumed, as is accepted in scholarly literature, that the calendar in Judah was lunar-solar, and that in Judah as well there was some sort of mechanism for adjusting the 12-month lunar year to the solar one by means of intercalation cycles.

All scholars to date have assumed that the Babylonian calendar corresponded to that of Judah, and that the date of the surrender of Jehoiachin, 2 Adar in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar – a date undoubtedly given in the Babylonian chronicle according to the Babylonian calendar – fell on 2 Adar according to the calendar of Judah. But it can be positively established that there is no proof for the presumed correspondence between the calendars. On the contrary, since there was no fixed intercalation of years in Babylonia at

that time, it is certainly possible that at times the calendars diverged. In the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar the possibility of divergence was more likely than the possibility that the calendars corresponded.

Based on our knowledge of the Babylonian calendar and the calendar of Judah, the author is of the opinion that Zedekiah counted his years from his coronation, shortly after the surrender of Jehoiachin, which occurred – according to the Babylonian calendar – at the beginning of the month of Adar, but according to the calendar of Judah, at the beginning of Nisan. Zedekiah's first year began on 1 Nisan 596 and Jerusalem was destroyed on 7 or 10 Av 586.

This proposal resolves the biblical and chronological data for the period under discussion and provides an opportunity for the possible reconstruction of the events in the last years of the kingdom of Judah. An outline of the chronological framework of this period according to this proposal follows the main discussion.

THE DISPUTATION OF TORTOSA, VINCENTE FERRER AND THE PROBLEM OF THE CONVERSOS ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONY OF ISAAC NATHAN

by Ram Ben-Shalom (pp. 21–45)

Isaac Nathan was the most prominent leader of Provencal Jewry and the community of Arles in the 15th century. In his work 'Me'ametz Qoah' he describes the disputation of Tortosa and the events surrounding it. From his account it is evident that the author was familiar with what was taking place in Spain at the time. He cites the names of people and places, and strives to place the circumstances in their proper chronological framework. The author begins his story with the flight of Pope Benedict XIII from Avignon to Aragon and the proclamation of the '*Soustraction d'obedience*'. He does not elaborate on the ideological content of the disputation, but goes on to describe its results, including the decrees, persecution and flight of the Jews, their apostatization and the subsequent return of the conversos to the Jewish faith. This article sets out to examine the historical veracity of the 'facts' presented in the work.

A central part of the narrative is devoted to the anti-semitic activity of Vincente Ferrer. In his sermon the Christian preacher addresses the conversos, describes the hideous image of the Jews and accuses them of a ritual murder libel. There are signs in the sermon that suggest a transition from 'hatred of faith to hatred of race', and similar tendencies are exhibited during the 15th century in Castilian chronicles and the '*Estatutos de Limpieza de Sangre*'.

Isaac Nathan lauds the preaching style of Vincente Ferrer. These praises have led to the suggestion that early in life Nathan met Ferrer. The latter's visit to Arles in 1400 was described in the chronicle of Bertrand Boysset, who notes that the Jews of the town attended

all of Ferrer's sermons. By establishing the year of Nathan's birth and his place of residence, it is apparent that he was eyewitness to the events surrounding Ferrer's visit to Arles.

The motives for the conversos' decision to continue living as Christians are justified by Isaac Nathan. The superlatives he attaches to them are particularly conspicuous in light of other sources that were most critical of their behavior. Nathan's attitude must be understood in light of the period, his social status, his wealth and the relations between Jews and converts to Christianity in Arles and the communities of Provence.

In concluding this article the author examines the possible sources of the testimony. It appears that Arles served as a city of refuge for the communities of Aragon. The flight of the conversos brought many of them to this city, and a distinct Catalanian group emerged. This process led to a heightened awareness in Arles of the events in Spain, and it would seem that Isaac Nathan relied on the testimony of Catalanian conversos who reached Arles. The possibility is also raised (in light of a critical comparison of the material at hand) that some of his sources of information already existed in writing.

R. SAMUEL MOHILEVER – THE RABBI OF *HOVEVEI ZION*

by Yoseph Salmon (pp. 47–78)

Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, the rabbi of Bialystok from 1883 to 1898, was one of the great rabbinic luminaries of his day in Russia-Poland, and played a major role in the founding and subsequent leadership of the *Hovevei-Zion* movement. He lived to see the establishment of the World Zionist Organization, and in its early days lent it crucial support.

The present study examines the process through which one of the renowned traditional rabbis of the day came to support the national-Zionist idea. This stand was met with growing hostility within the traditional camp, which suspected that the national movement continued to propagate many of the tendencies of the earlier *haskalah* movement. A close examination of Mohilever's public and spiritual biography indeed suggests that a willingness to introduce some of the *haskalah*'s ideas into a traditionalist setting played a part in shaping his position towards the national idea.

Mohilever was not alone among the rabbis of his generation in espousing such views, but his steadfastness and prestige rendered his story unique. He paid no heed to the scoffers, and was able to check to a great degree the opposition to the *Hovevei-Zion* movement raised by the traditional leadership of the day.

In many ways it was R. Samuel Mohilever who founded religious Zionism as an organized movement known as the Mizrahi. The original idea was to create a spiritual center for the *Hovevei-Zion*, and later for the Zionist movement, but in effect what emerged was a political party. Mohilever was in many ways a successor to R. Zvi Hirsch Kalisher and a predecessor to Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines. Special attention is given in this study to his relations with other rabbis and to his reactions to public affairs of the times.

DOCUMENTS AND SOURCES

AN ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMIC OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

by Alexander M. Shapiro (pp. 79–85)

We possess scant information on Jewish attitudes towards Christians and Christianity in the period of rehabilitation following the devastation of the first Crusades. The present article contains part of a heretofore unknown anti-Christian polemic composed by Rabbi Eliezer bar Nathan (RaBaN), one of the important Jewish leaders of the period. The text was originally included in RaBaN's 'Even ha-Ezer', but was deleted from the printed editions by internal censors fearful of gentile reaction. The text contributes to our knowledge of the RaBaN as well as to the history of the Jews in the twelfth century. The polemic text was preserved in an early manuscript of RaBaN's book, apparently one of the earliest extant manuscripts from Ashkenaz. Although the manuscript was known in the nineteenth century it was not examined critically and therefore remained unpublished. A portion of the text is also found in *Sefer Nizahon Yashan*, and the two versions are arranged in this article alongside one another.