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SUMMARIES

REMNANTS OF QUMRANIC LORE IN TWO LAWS OF THE KARAITE BENJAMIN AL-NIHĀWANDĪ CONCERNING DESIRED MEAT

by Yoram Erder (pp. 5–38)

In order to remove corporeality from God, Benjamin al-Nihāwandī suggested that the biblical godhead, the creator, is a secondary divinity. According to Karaite and Muslim sources, Benjamin based his ideas on the writings of a sect dating back to antiquity. The name of the sect was unknown at that time but it was designated as ‘The Sect of the Caves’ for its writings were discovered in caves. The calendar of this sect demanded that the beginning of the year always takes place on a Wednesday, since it was on this day that the luminaries were created. It appears that this calendar was a solar one. It should be of no surprise that with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it became common among scholars to assume that the data about the Sect of the Caves indicates an earlier discovery of some Dead Sea Scrolls during the Gaonic period, and it was from here that Qumranic influence on the Karaites derived. There are however scholars who doubted the identification between the two sects leaving the issue still unresolved.

In this article the author unravels Qumranic influence on two halakhic rulings of Benjamin al-Nihāwandī dealing with desired meat. The rulings are: (a) The requirement to slaughter desired meat (בשר תאווה) at the altar, designated in Karaite literature ‘The Gates Altar’ (מזבח שערים). (b) The requirement to cover the blood of desired meat with dust.

He presents the Karaite debate of these two rulings, since the Karaites who were active after the days of Benjamin al-Nihāwandī rejected them. Simultaneously, the ruling of Mīshawayh al-‘Ukbarī, an outstanding disciple of Qumranic law, helps unravel the connection between the ruling of Benjamin and ancient sectarian law.

Regarding the second ruling mentioned above, namely the covering of the blood of desired meat, mention of it appears in the Qumranic Temple (11QT) Scroll. The Hebrew Bible requires that the blood of game animals and fowl be covered with dust (Leviticus 17: 13). The author of the Scroll had no qualms in applying this biblical injunction to the issue of desired meat as well (11QT 53: 5–6). The redactor of this text assumed that the laws of desired meat and the laws of game and fowl are based on the same principle. This fact illuminates the ruling of Mīshawayh who permitted the use of desired meat fat, comparing it to the fats of game and fowl meat. Daniel al-Qūmisī who was,

as is well known, under Qumranic influence, also connected the laws on both these types of meat. The rabbinic halakhah, on the other hand, deduced the rulings of desired meat from those of the sacrifices.

Benjamin al-Nihāwandī was no blind disciple of the Dead Sea Sect. He forbade the use of desired meat fat. As for the blood, his fidelity to the Masoretic biblical text could not allow him to rule unequivocally in favour of covering desired meat's blood with dust. He, therefore, assumed that Deuteronomy 12:16 refers to the pouring out of the washed blood (דָּם שֻׁטֵּף), which he ruled should be covered with dust while the blood of the slaughter should be burnt on the altar.

This last ruling leads to a discussion on the obligation to slaughter desired meat at the 'Gates Altar'. The story at Michmash (1 Samuel 14: 32–5) served as evidence for Benjamin's ruling. The sin of eating the blood (ibid., 33) indicates that it is forbidden to slaughter desired meat in the absence of an altar. The sin was expiated when Saul built one. Yefet ben Eli adopted the notion prevalent in rabbinic circles that the altar erected by Saul was intended for the sacrifice of peace offerings.

A study of Yefet's interpretations indicates that behind the specific disagreement a broader issue is at stake, namely the prohibition or permission of desired meat and peace offerings in the ensuing generations. This disagreement had a practical aspect, since the 'Mourners of Zion', of whom Yefet was a member, forbade desired meat for their times, while Mīshawayh permitted it. According to Yefet, the commandment regarding desired meat is applicable in the Land of Israel alone, and only when a Temple is standing and the independence of Israel is attained. He produced evidence for the prohibition of desired meat in the days of the Patriarchs, during the exile in Egypt and while Israel was wandering in the wilderness, after the foundation of the Tabernacle. In contrast, he produced much evidence for the sacrifice of peace offerings outside the Tabernacle, within the Land of Israel and abroad. The story of Michmash is brought as evidence for the construction of a peace offerings' altar outside the Tabernacle. Yefet identified this altar with the 'stone altar' (Exodus 20:22).

Mīshawayh, with whom Yefet was at odds, maintained that during the above mentioned period, including the period of wandering in the wilderness, until the construction of the Temple, all sacrifices were prohibited. This is true for all cases except for the specific indications in Scripture for sacrificial activity such as Passover in the wilderness (Numbers 9), which was, in his opinion, a singular event. On the other hand, there was no prohibition on the slaughter of desired meat before the construction of the Temple or while it stood or even after its destruction, within the country or abroad. Therefore Mīshawayh permitted it. He may have also assumed the existence of an obligation for a 'Gates Altar', but unlike Benjamin, he did not instruct that fat to be burnt on it, as he permitted the fat. Even those who assume the necessity of a 'Gates Altar' for desired meat maintain that it is described in the Torah as a 'stone altar' (Exodus 20:22).

As is well known, the Dead Sea Sect, which designated itself 'the desert exile' (גִּלְתָּהּ)

המדבר) (War of Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness 1: 2) banned the sacrificial service in the Temple in Jerusalem. It appears that Mīshawayh's ruling concerning the prohibition of sacrifices outside the Temple, deduced from the precedent of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness, reflects Qumranic law. The author maintains that it is in Qumran that one should search for the origin of Mīshawayh's claim that Passover in the desert was a unique event, which did not include the obligation to eat unleavened bread for seven days as this commandment was contingent on residence in the Land of Israel. Consistent in his perspective, Mīshawayh demanded the cessation of the festivals outside the Land of Israel, and this seems to have also been the practice of the 'desert exile'. In this context it is important to point out that, according to the Muslim scholar al-Bīrūnī, the Cave Sect claimed that only those residing in the Land of Israel were obligated to celebrate Passover.

Benjamin's discussion of the Michmash episode and Mīshawayh's permission of desired meat provide evidence for the way in which the Qumran Sect enjoyed cattle and sheep meat, even though they completely prohibited sacrifices. They permitted desired meat and its fat, and covered the blood of the meat with dust and from the Michmash story they learnt of the obligation to construct an altar for the slaughter of such meat. Here is further evidence that the law of Qumran served a group which resided in a desert outside Jerusalem, and not, as stated recently, that Dead Sea Scrolls originated in Jerusalem.

THE DRAGON AROUND THE BEE-HIVE: JUDAH LEIB MARGOLIOTH AND THE PARADOX OF THE EARLY HASKALAH

by Shmuel Feiner (pp. 39–74)

The analysis of the life and writings of the Polish rabbi and preacher Judah Leib Margolioth (1751–1811) offers a fascinating case study of the characteristics and development of the early Haskalah of the 18th century. In contrast to the usual descriptions of Margolioth, which see him as one of the forerunners of the East European Jewish Enlightenment, a new interpretation is suggested: Margolioth is presented as a typical early Maskil who belongs to a central historical phenomenon – the emergence of the modern intellectual Jewish elite. This phenomenon should be dealt with independently and with no causal connection to the later Haskalah.

The study of Margolioth systematically reveals his constant confrontation with the intellectual dilemmas of religion and science and of religion and philosophy. On one hand, Margolioth was an authentic representative of the traditional rabbinical elite, but

on the other hand, he was also a curious intellectual who encouraged the study of science and philosophy. He struggled with the question of the benefits and dangers of religious rationalization and openness to 'external knowledge' and whether the exposure to science and philosophy would improve the quality of Judaism or simply encourage a decline in belief.

The paradox in Margolioth's attitude became apparent when he reached the conclusion that the rejection of science and philosophy leads to an incorrect perception of religious belief, while the surrender to the temptations of European culture and its rationalistic approach, even in a Hebrew or Jewish form, leads to atheism and libertinism. In his 1786 edition of 'Beit Midot', Margolioth appears deeply threatened by the force of secularization even to the point of its penetrating the rabbinic elite. Margolioth was thus determined to fight the demonic 'dragon' of secularization by rejecting rationalism (including the study of science and philosophy) altogether.

A harsh criticism of the book was published in 'Ha-Measef,' the major organ of the Berlin Haskalah, presenting it as anachronistic and reactionary. In turn, Margolioth, who knew and appreciated Mendelssohn personally but rejected the main ideas of 'Jerusalem', argued that Mendelssohn's readers could be lead to believe that he was an advocate of Deism and religious laxity. In his later writings Margolioth proposed several explanations for the atheism and libertinism of his times, even claiming to be a follower of the Vilna Gaon in his denial of any rational attitude in religious matters.

Margolioth began in the 1770s–1780s as an early, impassioned Maskil but completed his intellectual odyssey with a frightened orthodox response and by deeply withdrawing into the warm shelter of faith and tradition. Fearing the effects of reason on faith in an age of progressing secularization, Margolioth reacted in an orthodox manner. Though in some characteristics – openness to rationalist thinking and non-rabbinic thought and rejection of magic – he belonged to the early Haskalah, his thinking did not eventually lead to a clear enunciation of the Haskalah but rather to the endorcement of a retreat behind the lines as a community of believers.