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סיכומים באנגלית

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Zion* / ציון, Vol. ט (תשנ"ט), חוברת ג' (סד), pp. XX-XXII

Published by: [Historical Society of Israel/](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/70034013>

Accessed: 29/11/2011 07:43

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# SUMMARIES

## THE HISTORY OF THE BENJAMINITE REGION UNDER BABYLONIAN RULE

by Oded Lipschits (pp. 271–310)

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians gave rise to a spiritual and religious crisis. This crisis was augmented by a sharp political crisis, engendered by the loss of independence of the kingdom of Judah and the exile of the royal dynasty that had ruled the people for four centuries. As a result of the deportation of the elite to Babylonia a social and economic crisis also developed. In the eyes of the elite, the exile, together with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the removal of the House of David from power, signified the end of the existence of Judah on its own land.

This depiction of the history of the Benjaminite region following the destruction of Jerusalem, which mainly reflects the feelings of its authors, has influenced historical and archaeological research for many years. Despite its generalization and declarative summary which do not correspond with the detailed account of the fate of Jerusalem, the description was accepted as a faithful reflection of historical reality. Analysis of the biblical testimony and archaeological findings together with an appreciation of the tendencies of Babylonian rule in 'Ḥattu-Land', produces a different historical picture, according to which most of Judah's inhabitants remained there even after the destruction of Jerusalem. The residents concentrated mainly in the Benjaminite region and the Beth-Lehem area, both of which were hardly affected by the destruction and emerged as the center of the Babylonian province with its capital at Mizpah.

In this article I offer a reconstruction of the history of the Benjaminite region. The centrality of this area in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem is reflected in biblical accounts of the time of Gedaliah. The major sites that have been excavated in the Benjaminite region and the comprehensive archaeological survey conducted there form a relatively extensive data base for a period that is practically unknown in historical research.

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE GAONATE IN THE EIGHTH  
CENTURY: AN ELEGY FOR THE HEAD OF THE ACADEMY IN PALESTINE

by Shulamit Elizur (pp. 311–348)

Sparse information exists on the Palestinian *geonim* prior to the middle of the ninth century. The extant material consists essentially of a list in *Seder Olam Zuta* relating all the *geonim* to Mar Zutra (and thereby to the Davidic dynasty). In this article a new document is published, based on a Geniza fragment preserved in the Antonin Collection in St. Petersburg, demonstrating that the information found in this list is unreliable. This fragment indicates that a person of priestly descent (*kohen*) headed the Palestinian academy in Tiberias in the middle of the eighth century. Written in an admixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, the document is a long poetic eulogy of which the greater part is dedicated to the Palestinian Gaon. Although Tiberias is mentioned explicitly under the epithet '(priestly) Division of Ma'azia', the elegist himself was not from Tiberias as he relates that the news of the Gaon's death reached him from afar. Yet, on the basis of a philological analysis of the text, and in particular, of its Aramaic dialect, it is evident that the text was written in Palestine.

The document may be dated to the middle of the eighth century as the elegist mentions an additional calamity that transpired shortly before the death of the Gaon: the great earthquake in the month of Shevat. This took place around the year 749 C.E.. The elegist describes the deceased Gaon not only as 'from among the priests who bless', but also as an expert in Scripture, Talmud and Aggadah, in calendrical calculations (not surprising for a Palestinian Gaon), and in the rules of biblical accentuation. The name of the deceased does not appear in full in the manuscript, but only its first letter, 'P', appears repeatedly as an abbreviation. The article considers the hypothesis that the deceased may be identified as either R. Pinḥas, head of the academy, among the well-known sages of the *Massorah*, or the famous Tiberian *paytan* of the mid-eighth century, R. Pinḥas ben Jacob haKohen.

Following a discussion of the nature of the document and the issues it raises, the entire poetic text is published together with other eulogistic fragments from the same document, some of which may relate to the same deceased Gaon, while others contain eulogies on other people (a woman, young children, and others).

## THE INVOLVEMENT OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE 'LAVON AFFAIR'

by Yechiam Weitz (pp. 349–377)

The 'Lavon Affair' that erupted in 1960 agitated Israeli society for many years. One of its outstanding phenomena was the participation of leading intellectuals with the intention of either protesting against or supporting the behavior of the prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

First, a group of Hebrew University professors joined together to express their concern. They protested against Ben-Gurion's attempt to force his party to remove Lavon from the position of secretary-general of the Histadrut, claiming that such a unilateral action seriously endangered the principles of democratic rule. A number of Israel's most prominent intellectuals – S.Y. Agnon, Martin Buber, Samuel Hugo Bergman, and Jacob Talmon – were among the signatories of the public protest.

The alignment aroused much public interest and disturbed Ben-Gurion himself. His response showed his acute sensitivity to the protest, in particular to Martin Buber's involvement.

In response to the alignment a counter-alignment emerged, initiated by the poet, Nathan Alterman, at a meeting in Tel Aviv on February 1, 1961. This forum argued that under the pretext of defending democracy, Ben-Gurion's critics were engaged in a political struggle directed at removing him from office. The significance of the organization of the intellectuals lies in three major areas. Firstly, it gave expression to a sense of fatigue with the Ben-Gurion era, and to the fact that his regime had changed in their estimation from being democratic in theory to authoritarian in practice. Secondly, the organization changed from being associated exclusively with a specific issue, Ben-Gurion's behavior on this matter, to one concerned with the image of the society and the state. The clearest expression of this was the establishment of the 'Min ha-Yesod' group in the summer of 1962. Thirdly, these alignments seem to serve as a prelude to the 'Eshkol era' that began in 1963 and was characterized by more openness and tolerance than the Ben-Gurion era.