



סיכומים באנגלית

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Zion* / ציון, Vol. ס (תש"ס), חוברת ב (סה), pp. XV-XVI

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/70041214>

Accessed: 29/11/2011 07:35

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SUMMARIES

BAKING PRACTICES AND BAKERIES IN MEDIEVAL ASHKENAZ

by Eric Zimmer (pp. 141–162)

Some medieval rabbinic Franco-German sources seem to suggest that it was the practice of many Jewish communal members to bake their baking goods in common ovens with their Christian neighbors. This raised concern among the rabbinic decisors who were divided on its permissibility.

The article suggests that the stringency and leniency of the rabbinic decisions was concomitant with the ‘ban’ or baker’s monopoly which the feudal lords implemented whereby their ovens were to be the sole bakeries for all inhabitants under their hegemony. As the ‘ban’ became more widespread and entrenched the Franco-German sages from the 10th to the 12th centuries gradually adopted a more lenient position of permissibility.

In addition, the article throws light on the nature of the baking ovens prevalent in medieval Europe as well as some baking products prepared by the Jewish community members.

JEWS AND SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR IN LIGHT OF THE THEOLOGICAL DEBATE OVER THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

by Shlomith Yahalom (pp. 163–203)

The final stage in the struggle over the abolition of slavery in the United States of America dates back to the 1830s. Alongside humanistic and democratic justifications for abolition, a fierce theological debate was waged, one in which Jews and Judaism became particularly involved. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, ardent evangelicals sought to change the face of American society by means of a series of social reforms, the most significant being the abolition of slavery. As religious individuals, they sought support for their actions in the Holy Scriptures. In their failure to find total substantiation, they developed a distinction between the value systems of

the Old and New Testament. Claiming that only in the New Testament was slavery defined as a sin, they portrayed the Old Testament as a book of laws with an inferior system of values. American Jews reacted angrily to this contention as it also cast doubt on their political worldview and loyalty to the Union during the war.

Orthodox and Reform figures were called upon to defend the honor of their forefathers' morals, though each did so in a unique manner. The Orthodox admitted that the lofty values in the name of which the Protestant ministers were speaking were not in fact to be found in the Old Testament but neither were they to be found in the New Testament. The ethical ideal that called for the absolute abolition of slavery was actually in their minds a new concept created by contemporary Protestant theologians in order to adapt to the new social ideals of the times. On the other hand, the Reform Jews admitted that the New Testament contained the loftiest moral value-system ever known to humankind, but they vehemently denied the claim that these values were absent from the Old Testament. Maintaining that the New Testament had taken its superior morality from the Old Testament, they denied the former's innovation. Both Orthodox and Reform Jews sought to convince an embattled American public that nothing prevented Jews (and for that matter Christians too) from condemning slavery and working towards its abolition.

This study examines the relationship between the broader theological debate over scriptural values and the question of slavery in the modern world. More importantly, however, it examines why American Jews were implicated in the debate and how they responded to their predicament.

RESEARCH NOTES

R. ELIJA OF FERRARA IN ITALY

by Daniel Carpi (pp. 205–207)

The letter R. Elija of Ferrara sent from Jerusalem to his family in Italy in June 1438 is well known. Less is known about his personality and activity during the years of his sojourn in Italy prior to his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In this note the author suggests to identify the Rabbi with magister Eliah ebreus de Feraria (son of Manuel di Angelo da Rimini), a wealthy Jewish moneylender involved in banking in several North Italian cities – Bologna, Montagnana, Ferrara and possibly Massafiscaglia – from at least 1387 to 1426.