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SUMMARIES

ROYAL INSCRIPTION VERSUS PROPHETIC STORY: MESHA'S REBELLION IN HISTORICAL WRITING

By Nadav Na'aman (pp. 5–40)

Royal inscriptions commemorating important deeds in the lives of monarchs were written during the life of the kings and their authors must either have been eyewitnesses to the events described or have lived through the events they recounted. In spite of their literary and stylized form, their self-righteousness and extreme bias, they are important sources for reconstructing the history of many ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. Unlike royal inscriptions, the Book of Kings was composed no earlier than the late seventh century BCE, long after many of the events it describes. For writing the history of the early stages of the separate monarchies of Israel and Judah, the author was entirely dependent on the sources available to him. Among these sources are prophetic stories, which the author of Kings integrated in his composition and wrote some of his own texts on their basis. Because of their literary genre and relatively late date of composition, these stories may have included various details that were far removed from historical reality.

The article discusses in detail a royal inscription (the inscription of Mesha, king of Moab) and a prophetic story (2 Kings 3) that both refer to the same event: Mesha's rebellion and his struggle with Israel in the second half of the ninth century BCE. Each of the two sources is first examined in its own right, in an effort to clarify its internal structure, its contents, its messages and the way it conveyed the historical episode. This is followed by a comparison of the two sources in an effort to expose the gaps, identities and inconsistencies between them. The last part of the article is devoted to a detailed reconstruction of the relations of Moab and Israel from the late second millennium until the late ninth century BCE.

The article demonstrates the priority of Mesha's inscription, which must serve as a key source for the history of southern Transjordan in the ninth century BCE. It also indicates the many problems involved in the use of prophetic stories as sources for the history of Israel. The narrative of 2 Kings 3 was written in the Kingdom of Judah in the late monarchial period and its author did not really understand the historical situation in the time of the Omrides. His description reflects his misunderstanding of the ninth century's reality and also includes some anachronisms reflecting the late time in which he wrote the story. Only in the light of Mesha's inscription can we sift some

historical germs from the prophetic story and integrate them within the historical reconstruction of the ninth century BCE.

ROMAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS JEWS AND JUDAISM

by Benjamin Isaac (pp. 41–72)

This paper attempts to describe Roman attitudes towards Jews against the perspective of the Roman views of other subject peoples and foreigners, while keeping in mind that those often are derivative of opinions in the Hellenistic world. The subject matter is arranged by topic rather than in chronological order or by author. The ideas and stereotypes about Jews are grouped as follows: 1) The social sphere. 2) Religion. These two headings themselves are again subdivided by topic.

The main objection in the social sphere is that the Jews are an anti-social people who purposely cut themselves off from the rest of the world. This is considered the ultimate in barbarism, unforgiveable in the case of the Jews, because they are not a remote mountain people, but live among civilized peoples. The Jews live apart, are loyal to each other and hate all others, it is claimed. Connected with these objections is the idea that Jewish morals and way of life are the reverse of those of normal people. A particularly aggravating factor was the obvious popularity of Judaism among some Romans. It is quite possible that the actual number of such people was not large, but even so the sympathizers were viewed as a dangerous phenomenon. Proselytes were considered traitors, because in converting to Judaism they not only accepted a religion regarded with aversion and customs considered ridiculous or worse; they in fact abandoned their ancestral religion, customs and laws. In this sense, conversion to Judaism was seen as a change, not merely of cult practice, but of ethnic identity and all that entailed in the sphere of loyalties and obligations. In Roman eyes the Jews also formed a pressure group, loyal to each other and hostile to others. The combination of the real or presumed attraction of proselytes and the sense that the Jews formed a pressure group resulted in the familiar anxiety that the victors were subdued by the vanquished. A different phenomenon which belongs to life in urban Rome is the presence of numbers of impoverished Jews who, apparently, were found in the neighbourhoods of synagogues. There are accusations of such people acting as fraudulent soothsayers and exorcists.

In the religious sphere there are related animosities. Some authors speak of secrecy, which raises associations with mystery cults, forbidden in Rome. Monotheism itself was considered unacceptable by most writers. In spite of a small number of thinkers who had some respect for the consistency and logic of the concept, the Jewish god was viewed, like the Jewish people, as being exclusive. This in itself made the religion

incompatible with Roman religion. The dietary laws meant that Jews did not share meals with others, which was part of their image as unsociable. The Sabbath was regarded with little sympathy. Circumcision emphasized and marked the otherness of Jewish men and meant a decisive and clearcut step for converts to take. We also encounter notions concerning uninhibited lust or sexually extravagant behaviour among the Jews.

Yet, in spite of all this hostility, Judaism was permitted in Judaea, in Rome, and in the provinces. It was permitted because the Jews had the status of a recognized people and a people had a right to its religion, whatever it was. In Rome religion was an inseparable part of the state. Under the Empire the imperial cult became part of this complex. Rome, however, accepted that the Jews had a peculiar fanaticism which made it impossible to demand of them what was demanded of everybody else: but they were tolerated as an exception.

Finally, these attitudes are assessed in the light of Roman views of other peoples. In Greek and Roman eyes, eastern peoples tend to be seen as clever and cunning, degenerate and effeminate, born slaves – qualities which are often attributed to two major factors: the environment and the monarchy. This is not true of the Jews. While they are described as frivolous, liars, treacherous, libidinous and, generally, morally depraved, they are not usually regarded as a typical eastern people and no reason for their negative qualities is given in terms of environment or constitution.

Many of the elements of later antisemitism are clearly present in ancient Rome, while important others are not. Some of those are encountered among Roman hostile stereotypes, but not in connection with Jews in particular, for they are associated with other eastern peoples. It is also clear that widespread hostility did not normally affect the formal status of the Jews in the Empire, although there was an obvious hostile response to any real or assumed increase in the number of proselytes.

THE FUNERAL DISORDERS: THE JEWS OF TUNIS IN TRANSITION TO COLONIAL RULE

by Yaron Tsur (pp. 73–102)

In March 1887, six years after the French occupation of Tunisia, Jewish resistance to new regulations concerning funerals in the capital Tunis culminated in minor clashes with the security forces. This article discusses the economic, political and cultural factors that led to the funeral disorders and links them to the dawn of the new colonial regime.

In contrast to the traditional image of an harmonious transition from Moslem to French colonial rule, there is evidence that many Tunisian Jews were ruined by the accelerated European economic activity in the local markets. Our main source of information is a Hebrew *Maskil*, Shalom Flak (שלום פלאח), who used to send reports to Hebrew journals

in Eastern Europe. Flak represented a small circle of moderate native *Maskilim* and he seemed to have developed a skeptical and ironic attitude towards the new French rulers and their 'civilizing mission' that, in contrast to their promises, brought poverty and moral distress to both Moslems and Jews. Another source is the letters of the director of the Alliance Israelite Universelle's school in Tunis, David Cazès, a radical *Maskil* devoted to the French cultural mission and French political interests. The AIU director's correspondence confirms Flak's descriptions but it contradicts the latter's belief that the French presence is dangerous to the natives' culture and interests. Cazès felt that the local problems were natural outcomes of this period of transition and that the Jews' discontent would disappear once French rule was consolidated.

The new regulations – decreeing the creation of a municipal concession for funerals and ordering the Jewish and the Christian inhabitants to employ only the new service – reflected the French efforts to impose European norms in Tunis. Handling of the dead and burial was an extremely delicate subject which also aroused trouble in Europe, mainly on religious grounds. In Tunis, as a result of the colonial situation, it meshed with political and economic factors, as the new concession hurt the interests of the *Chevra Kadisha*, the strongest of the Jewish communal institutions and one of the few remaining sources of money of the impoverished Jewish community. The regulations governing funerals were also justly interpreted as a step towards denying the community its main source of income, namely the autonomous administration of ritual slaughter (שחיטה כשרה). It therefore forced the leadership of the local Tunisian (Twansa) community and of the local Italian Jewish community (Grana) to express strong opposition. The general Jewish public, already in distress, was easily mobilized by its leaders' call to resist the new regulations. The moderate *Maskilim*, too, probably took an active part in the Jewish upheaval. Incidentally, in 1885, when the colonial administration started to modernize the burial services it encountered so much Moslem resistance that in 1887 it exempted the Moslems. But the Jewish reaction in 1887 was no less impressive.

The French authorities were deeply surprised by the funeral disorders. There were different interpretations of the events and the one which was adopted by the foreign minister in Paris emphasized the role of local Italian Jews in organizing the resistance, thus attributing to it an anti-French and Italian nationalist character. It therefore had a negative impact on the administration's attitude towards the Jews and delayed for about forty years the plan to establish in Tunis a Jewish modern *consistoire* in line with the French model.