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סיכומים באנגלית

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Zion / ציון*, Vol. 47 (תשס"ד), pp. XXI-XXIV

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/70036514>

Accessed: 28/11/2011 04:12

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## SUMMARIES

### THE IBN AL-AMSHĀṬĪ FAMILY – MAIMONIDES' IN-LAWS

by Mordechai A. Friedman (pp. 271–297)

I. In 1191 Maimonides wrote to his disciple Joseph b. Judah in Aleppo, Syria: 'When Ibn al-Mashshāṭ arrives from India [...], I shall settle the account with him as you mentioned'. 'Ibn al-Mashshāṭ' was probably a member of the 'Ibn al-Amshāṭī' (=one who makes or sells combs) family. A preliminary survey of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century sources on this distinguished Egyptian Jewish family follows.

II. A genealogical list from the Geniza, ca. 1172–1173, traces four generations of the family, Ḥananyā (actually named Ḥananel); his sons, Zadok and Abraham; the latter's sons, Saadya, Ḥayyīm (and his son Peraḥyā) and Ḥananel; and the latter's sons, Manasseh, Ḥayyīm and Samuel 'the munificent'. Abu 'l-Fakhr al-'Aṭṭār Saadya b. Abraham Ibn al-Amshāṭī, was a prominent member of the Fustat Jewish community and a distinguished merchant.

III. A dedicatory inscription on a Torah case in al-Maḥalla, Egypt, September 1182, memorializes Ḥayyīm b. Ḥananel (known as Faḍā'il b. Abū 'wy [read: 'Alī] b. Abraham al-Amshāṭī and Ḥayyīm's brothers Samuel and Manasseh. Samuel is known from the genealogical list and other documents as 'the munificent'. In some, he is called 'the munificent and the noble (or: prosperous)' (*ha-nādīv weha-shōa*'). S.D. Goitein speculated that he might have earned his wealth from the India trade.

IV. Ḥayyīm Joseph David Azulai visited the Palestinian synagogue in Fustat in 1768 and copied ancient Hebrew inscriptions, carved in wood. One, dated 1219/20, reads, in translation: 'He who contributed to their making was Samuel b. Ḥananel b. Abraham the honored elder, known as al-Māshiṭī (possibly an error for: al-Amshāṭī)', etc.

Three panels from a second inscription are preserved in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Cairo Museum, and the Louvre in Paris. A new transcription is offered, which translates: '[o]ur master and lord Solomon, who was cut off after a short life, may the Lord's spirit give him rest and comfort a brother's heart [...] the munificent, the noble, son of our honored, great and holy master and lord Ḥananel the esteemed elder, may he rest in Eden, son of our honored, great and holy master and lord Abraham the elder, known as al-Amshāṭī [...] and may He grant him the merit to witness the rebuilding of His Shrine and Sanctuary speedily and in the near future. Amen'

Mosseri copied the first two words in the second panel as *hmdy'v vshw*, as if reading

‘the munificent Joshua [misspelled]’. This ‘Joshua’ figures repeatedly in the scholarly literature. However, Firkovitch, Adler and perhaps Azulai copied the second word *whšw*’, that is, ‘and the noble’, which reading is preferable. The name of ‘the munificent and the noble’ son of Ḥananel b. Abraham al-Amshāṭī, was evidently Samuel and appeared in a missing section of the inscription.

V. A certain Makārim (or Abu ’l-Makārim) Ibn al-Amshāṭī is frequently mentioned in letters from the 12th and early 13th centuries. It is likely that he be identified with Samuel, since like the Hebrew *ha-nādīv*, Arabic Abu ’l-Makārim also means ‘the munificent’.

Ḥananel b. Samuel ‘the munificent’ is the most prominent member of this family. A judge, a pietist and an accomplished scholar, he wrote commentaries to the code of R. Isaac Alfasi and other learned works, in philosophy and mysticism. One of Ḥananel’s daughters married Abraham Maimuni, another Peraḥyā b. Nissīm of the Ibn Yijū family. There is evidence that Ḥananel was a disciple of Yeḥiel b. Elyakim. We find reference to Ḥananel as ‘our lord, the Nagid’. He must have been recognized as the head of Egyptian Jewry for a short period after the death of his son-in-law Abraham and before his young grandson David Maimonides was firmly established in that office.

VI. It is likely that Samuel ‘the munificent’ was the Ibn al-Amshāṭī whose return from India Maimonides anticipated.

VII. The appendix discusses the ‘testament’ on the copy of *Mishne Torah* proofread from Maimonides’ personal copy. The connection with the Ibn al-Amshāṭī family is rejected. The ‘testament’ was not only penned by Maimonides but also signed by him.

## EUROPEAN JEWISH MADMEN IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

by Ephraim N. Shoham-Steiner (pp. 299–327)

This article addresses the social attitudes of medieval Franco-German Jews towards marginal individuals living amongst them. The group selected for scrutiny is those who found themselves on the margins of Jewish society and described as different on account of behaviour that was labeled by their peers as ‘mad’. The article examines the social attitudes to both the male and female Jewish people who were ‘mad’ in three principle spheres: within the public sphere, in the sacred space of the synagogue, and in the personal domestic sphere – the Jewish home. A variety of sources were used and analyzed from the legal Responsa literature as well as from ethical writings and the literary genre of exempla stories, found in relative abundance in the ‘Book of the Pious’ (*Sefer Hasidim*). A close reading of the sources enabled not only to determine the attitudes towards madmen in the above-mentioned spheres, but, also, to reveal the social mind-set and mentality that

determined the overall social attitude towards such individuals. The findings reveal a marked similarity in the societal response towards madness and the mad among Jews and non-Jews alike. This similarity is not surprising for in many cases we can speak of a fundamental correspondence between the key social characteristics and behavioural codes of groups living in close physical proximity. Although dwelling within their own society, practicing their own religion, and often treated by the surrounding Christian majority as a pariah minority, Jews shared, to a degree, their neighbours' beliefs, human fears, and notions concerning the sick, the deformed, and the mentally disturbed. Jewish communities were probably too small to maintain central communal organizations aimed at the care of madmen, so the Jewish mad were probably kept, like many of their contemporary Christian counterparts, at home. However, as with other social challenges, the delicacy and pressures of the issue of madness compelled Jews, and in particular the Jewish leadership, to carefully weigh their response, guided by *Halakhah* and measured against the standards of the surrounding non-Jewish society. The examples discussed in the article demonstrate the interplay between internal Jewish standards and the standards set by the majority out-group. As for the internal Jewish response to madness it was governed by several elements: the specific manifestations of madness in each individual case, gender differences, popular beliefs, contemporary medical knowledge, and Talmudic tradition. Thus in the public sphere Jews adhered to the Christian distinction between raving and nonviolent madmen. In a case from an Hebrew *exemplum* it is by using this distinction that Jews were able to free a co-religionist who impersonated madness while in captivity to ease his conditions. In the sacred sphere, we find an ethical ruling expressing profound reluctance to allow the insane entry into the synagogue, as opposed to a degree of toleration found in Christian circles, thus revealing some fundamental assumptions concerning the construction of sanctity in the Ashkenazi synagogue. In the domestic realm it is compassion for the plight of the insane and their caregivers alongside a desire to prevent exposure of the insane, especially females, to the dangers of humiliation or abuse while begging for their livelihood in the non-Jewish domain, that guides sages confronted with these issues.

THE LOST TREASURE: LISTS OF THE JEWISH POLL TAX FROM THE 18TH  
CENTURY IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE POLISH MILITARY TREASURY

by Judith Kalik (pp. 329–356)

The present article announces the discovery of a previously unknown archive of paramount importance for the history of Polish Jewry in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and presents the preliminary results of its analysis. A central problem in the research of the history of the Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is the absence of comprehensive records. The great

majority of the Jewish comprehensive financial records were lost, including the minutes from the Council of the Four Lands. Lists of the Jewish poll tax, the main Polish comprehensive source, were regarded as lost as well. Following earlier research into the causes and results of the transfer of the Jewish poll tax to the benefit of the Polish army, especially following the 1717 reform, it was hypothesized that some lists of the Jewish poll tax might have survived in the archives of the Polish military treasury. A search in the archives of the Polish military treasury fully confirmed this hypothesis. Complete and uninterrupted annual lists of the Jewish poll tax from 1717 to 1764 indeed survived in these archives. It is hard to overestimate the historical value of these lists. The map of Jewish autonomy reconstructed by Halpern can be considerably modified on their basis. Likewise, a map of the Jewish settlement in the whole of the Crown lands of Poland can now be fully reconstructed since all towns and villages inhabited by Jews are listed year after year. Two subjects should be singled out as particularly fruitful fields of research in light of this new and unusually rich information: Jewish economic activity, especially rural leaseholds, and a broad picture of the leadership of the Jewish autonomy and the Jewish communal leadership. The article is supplemented with a general table of the assignment of the Jewish poll tax in the Crown lands of Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

#### THE MEIRI ON CHRISTIAN ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS ON THE CONSUMPTION OF PORK

by Hannah Kasher (pp. 357–360)

The following note relates to the explanation offered (among other places, in an article published recently in *Zion*) for the Meiri's statement regarding the Christian view that the prohibition to consume pork is to be interpreted as allegorical. The Meiri asserted that 'whosoever says such a thing - *if he is from our nation* - is considered a heretic: he has no portion in the World-to-come'. The explanation that has been offered in the past is that the view that this person is a heretic and has no portion in the World-to-come is applicable only if he belongs to the Jewish nation, whereas one who is not Jewish is entitled to offer such an allegorical interpretation for the commandments. In this note an alternative explanation for the Meiri's words is proposed: the term 'if' should be understood as 'even if' and not as 'only if'. Such an explanation is supported by his utterances in other contexts. If the Meiri's statement is understood according to this explanation, there is no need to attribute to him an exceptional notion of exegetical pluralism whereby the Bible had a different interpretation for the Jews and for the Gentiles.