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SUMMARY

ISRAEL, THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE FROM THE
DAYS OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS TO THE "EDICT OF TOLERATION"
OF 313 C.E.

by I. BAER

This article is intended to deal with the relationships among the three above-mentioned historical forces during a period which, up to now, has not been sufficiently studied. The author wishes to aid in the understanding of this period by means of a comparison of the teachings of the sages of Israel with the thought of contemporary Christian teachers.

Beginning with a brief survey of the period up to the generation following the Bar-Kochba Rebellion (132—135 C.E.) and followed by a review of the writings of Justin Martyr, the author then proceeds to a consideration of Tertullian's writings. By comparison of the apologetical writings of Tertullian with parallel sayings of the sages of Israel, the author marks the similarities and the differences between Israel and the Christian Church in their relationships with Rome. Both these religious groups recognized their struggle with Rome as inherent in their historical, providential mission. A danger to the religious, political existence of the Empire was likely to arise from these two quarters. The political, national problems peculiar to Israel determined only another direction to religious political matters which were common to both Judaism and Christianity. On the other hand, Roman policy made no basic distinction between Christianity and Judaism. Roman policy did not differentiate — as it is customarily maintained by modern historians — between *religio licita* and *factio illicita*, but rather, towards these two sects, vacillated between a system of persecution and of compromise, as the situation demanded. The author continues by discussing Tertullian's "De Idolatria" and concludes that the advice and warnings given by this Christian teacher to his coreligionists were mainly based on laws and teachings of contemporary sages of Israel and their predecessors. A similar foundation is also found in Tertullian's "De Spectaculis" and in the rest of the Christian works dealing with this subject. In the same way, those books written by Tertullian, Cyprian, and others to encourage the martyrs were based on a conception of martyrdom which the Christians received from the Jews. In order to prove this thesis, the author brings a number of salient points from Origen's *εἰς μαρτύριον προτροπικὸς* and indicates the teachings of the sages of Israel which are found throughout this book. The uncovering of Hebrew sources in all the Christian writings does not show only the continuous influence that flowed from the Jewish to the Christian camp. Rather, the primary purpose of research such as this is to prove that the people of Israel was still, in the third century of the common era, in the same condition of a persecuted community as the Christian Church.

The second section of this study concentrates firstly on the writings of Origen. The homiletics and exegeses of the great Christian theologian on the "Song of Songs" are based on the *Midrash*, that is to say, on the teachings of the *Amoraim* of Palestine with whom Origen came in contact. This study is intended primarily to point out the historical reality in which the Jewish people found itself in the third century. The historical, martyrological, eschatological outlook which the Christians acquired from the Jews served, first and foremost, to describe the religious, political condition of the Jewish people in that era. Israel was described by Christian and Jew alike as in the forefront of the struggle against paganism. In comparison to Judaism, the Gentile Church resembled a Negro maidservant, conceived and born black and filthy from her paganism, where-

as Israel corresponded to a royal prince who had been slightly tanned by the sun in the distant past when he had sinned in worshipping the Golden Calf but who, with ease, could cleanse himself and return to his pristine whiteness and purity. Controversies such as these between Israel and the Christian Church prove that the Jewish nation still stood at the front in the battle against Rome and her pagan worship; and that the young Christianity had to prove her worth as a fellow combatant possessing the necessary equal, ethical claims. In this connection, the author remarks (cf. note 83) on the parable of Suzanna and the Elders which was interpreted by Hippolytus in reference to the Christian Church as follows: "The Two Nations" — the Jews and pagans — array themselves against the Church in order to entice her into the practice of idolatry with them and, if she should refuse, to bring her for punishment to the Roman officials. The author points out the deception in this libel and demonstrates that the writings on the martyrdoms of Polycarpus and of Pionius are dependent on Hippolytus' words, were written during a later period, and have no value for the history of the Jews.

At this point, the author turns his consideration to Origen's book against Celsus. Origen claims in this book that the Christians alone were being persecuted by the Empire while the Jews enjoyed religious freedom. This claim is contradicted by several remarks in this and other books by Origen. Study of this great apologetic work also aids in the inception of new view-points for a review and clarification of the religious, political relations among Judaism, Christianity, and the polytheistic Roman state. The discussions in Origen's "Contra Celsum" (Bk. V, ch. 25 sq.) are interpreted by means of a comparison with the Hebrew traditions of Philon and the *Midrashim*. Famous statements of the *Amora* Rabbi Yohanan (d. Tiberias, 279 C.E.), his contemporary, Rabbi Yosi bar Hanina, and Rabbi Elazar ben P'dat (who was still living during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine) are explained, in their historical setting and their exact political and religious meaning with the aid of Origen's book. Porphyry's relationship to Judaism is also mentioned. This chapter is concluded by a comparison of the similarities and differences in the religious, political positions of Judaism, Christianity, and Graeco-Roman polytheism.

The third section of the study deals with the actual status of the Jews during the period of intense persecutions from the time of Emperor Decius until the end of Diocletian's reign. The Latin and Greek sources do not allow for the assumption that the Jews were exempted from the edicts of Emperors Decius and Valerian which bound every citizen of the Empire to participate, by a symbolic act, in sacrifices to the gods according to the accepted rites of Rome. In a number of the statements of the *Amora* Rabbi Yohanan, there are described contemporary problems of religious compulsion, martyrdom, iconoclasm, and of conduct towards those who had sinned through idolatry and wanted to repent. The spiritual teachers of Israel had similar tasks as the leaders of the Christian Church during these persecutions.

In regard to the Diocletian period, it is learned from a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud (the authenticity of this passage can not be doubted) that from the beginning of his reign in 286 C.E. while he was residing in Tiberias, the Emperor decreed that all the nations of the Empire, the Jews excepted, make "Libations", i. e. to sacrifice to the gods. This independent evidence verifies and strengthens the similar Christian martyrological tradition as against the testimony of Lactantius and Eusebius who fix the intense persecutions as beginning only towards the end of Diocletian's life, in 303 C.E. — testimony which is accepted by the majority of modern historians as alone being authentic. The exemption of the Jews from the obligation of "Libation" must also be thought of as only temporary because in the Talmudic tradition itself, religious compulsion and persecutions in the time of Diocletian are mentioned. On the other hand, remnants of the edicts on sacrifices (to the gods) which were decreed by Diocletian, Galerius, and Maximinus

Daia — fragments which were preserved by Eusebius — again do not justify the assertion that they were not valid for the Jews in Caesarea or some other places in or outside of Palestine. Eusebius' sermons — which were written during the period of persecution itself and which were preserved in the collection "Eclogae Propheticae" — were dedicated to controversy against Judaism. It can be inferred from them that the Jews were under a regime of religious oppression and compulsion no less than the Christians. During and at the close of the period of persecutions, Eusebius wrote his two great apologetic works against Hellenism and Judaism: "Praeparatio Evangelica" and "Demonstratio Evangelica". These two books, which summarize this drawn-out controversy among the three great religious, political systems, give evidence that Judaism played an important part in the struggle during the period of intense persecution. Eusebius tried to prove that Judaism had been decisively defeated in this struggle. To support his arguments, he pointed to the destruction of the Land of Israel which was completed in his day by the Roman legions under commanders such as Maximinus Daia. Indications of the renewed destruction of the Holy Places, as viewed by the Jews, are found in the liturgy composed by the sages of Israel of that same generation.

In the final portion of this study, the author discusses the edicts of toleration which were issued by the Roman emperors towards the close of the period in question. The edict of Galerius, 311 C.E., was apparently based on the words of Porphyry. Either the drafters of the document drew it up in a slipshod manner or the copyists distorted it, so that today it is hardly comprehensible. It is perhaps also possible that portions mentioning the Jews were deleted. The basis of the Edict of Toleration of 313 C.E. was composed, it seems, in the Emperor Constantine's own chancellery. This document of tolerance specifically included Christianity and the other religions which did not belong to the official forms of worship of the Roman Empire. This law at first, undoubtedly was valid for Judaism no less than for Christianity. It is possible that the Jews were specifically referred to in the original of Constantine's edict and that, in the meantime, Christian historians and copyists had expunged mention of the Jews. There are certain diplomatic bases common to the edict of toleration of Mediolanum and the letter of Julian in favor of the Jews. The roots thereof go back to the period of religious persecution in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The modern historian is duty-bound to recognize the historical role played by the People of Israel in the struggle for monotheism and religious freedom from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes to the fall of the Roman Empire and all through the long period of the Middle Ages.

ALIYA-INSCRIPTIONS ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT FROM THE EARLY TIMES OF THE ARAB CONQUEST

by B. DINUR

This article deals, not with new, but with well known inscriptions which, according to the author, have been explained unsatisfactorily or not at all. One of these inscriptions is engraved on the monolithic pillar in the gate under the mosque of El-Aksa. It was published by de Saulcy ninety years ago in his book "Voyage en Terre Sainte" (2nd ed., II, pp. 325—327). The other was found on the south section of the wall surrounding the Temple Mount inside the Golden Gate. Some fifty years ago it was published by Macalister and correctly read by Büchler (P.E.F. Quart. St. 1908). The first inscription has four lines: אברהם בר שושינא חזק. The second has only one: יונה ושבתי'ה אשתו מן' (ד)קליא חזקן בחיי(ם).

Up to now, the main deficiency in the explanation of these inscriptions is that their real meaning is not elucidated — i. e. What do they want to say or tell? — The

elucidation of this meaning is a prior condition to the dating of these inscriptions. — The author bases his explanation on the use of the word *חזק*. In the Talmud (Berachot, 32b) it is stated: *ארבעה דברים צריכים חזוק, תורה ומעשים טובים, תפלה ודרך ארץ*. ("Four things need strengthening; Torah, good deeds, prayer, and conduct").

The need for the strengthening of these four things is indicated by passages in the Bible. The need for strengthening *דרך ארץ* is explained by the passage in Samuel II, chapter 10, verse 12: *חזק ונחזק בעד עמנו וגו'* (Be of good courage and let us play the man for our people...) (The continuation is: *ובער ערי אלהינו* and for the cities of our God). And likewise it is customary to read *חזק* at the conclusion of the reading of a book of the Pentateuch and at the close of religious poems. Every deed within the scope of Tora and prayer is followed by the exclamation *חזק*. Here, the point in question is: *דרך ארץ*, a certain act or deed for "the cities of our God", which necessitates the exclamation *חזק*. This "deed" is, in substance, immigration to Palestine. And *חזק*, used in conjunction with the letter "bet" (in) means: to cling to a thing. And *חיים* is a symbolic word referring to the Land of Israel and to Jerusalem. The author brings proof of this from the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, the Midrashim, and particularly from the "Fathers According to Rabbi Natan" (end chap. 34); the Land of Israel is called *חיים* and also Jerusalem (according to variant readings), is among the ten things called by the name *חיים*.

The author explains that the name *חיים* symbolizes Palestine because it was believed that the resurrection of the dead was bound-up with the Land of Israel. (Ergo the custom of transferring the dead for burial in Palestine during that period). These two inscriptions call for the gathering of strength and immigrating to Palestine, "to cleave to her, for she is life". In conjunction with the development of these opinions on resurrection and immigration, the author dates these inscriptions as during the short period between the Arab conquest of Palestine and the erection of the mosque of El-Aksa. During the same period, according to the testimony of Sebeos, the Armenian historian, and of Jews of that generation, a synagogue and house of study was built on the Temple Mount. There was also an awakening towards immigration and these inscriptions urge it on. Immigration to Palestine was connected, to a certain extent, with the renewal of services *עבד* and pilgrimages to the Temple Mount. The author has found evidence of such in the liturgy of the period where there is explicit mention of the Jews celebrating the holiday of Tabernacles on the Temple Mount.

A DISPUTE OVER THE ELECTION OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL AT FRANKFURT AM-MAIN, AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN POLAND AND BOHEMIA

by I. HALPERN

The dispute described broke out in 1615, a short while after the Jews, expelled from Frankfurt as a result of Fettmilch's revolt, had returned to the city. It ended in 1628. Essentially the dispute was a bitter struggle against the Jewish Community Council, whose members held their posts for life and even elected new members to fill any vacancies. The opposition demanded a more popularly-based régime, after the manner of Prague: they wanted the *Kebilla* Council to be elected by the whole community, for a limited period only, and they wanted to forbid the election of close relatives. The opposition also demanded the restoration of the full administrative and judicial autonomy previously enjoyed by the Jews, which had been curtailed by the City Council on account of the dispute.

In addition to the City Council, which took a very active part in the proceedings, the dispute involved the Emperor and his representatives on one hand, and Rabbis and

Jewish institutions inside and outside Germany on the other hand, especially the Synod of the Four Lands in Poland. The Polish Synod which then occupied the greatest authority in the Jewish world, supported the opposition on grounds of principle. It threatened to ban the heads of the Frankfurt community, claiming that their tenure of office was unlawful. This threat was, in fact, subsequently carried out. The Polish Synod also threatened to use sanctions against German Jews entering or residing in Poland.

The dispute ended in a compromise, which provided for the immediate restoration of administrative and judicial autonomy, and a gradual democratization to take place over a period of some years.

Lastly, the author considers the possible connection between the struggle of Frankfurt Jewry against their existing oligarchy, and the revolt against the City Council which preceded it — the very revolt which had led, among other things, to the expulsion of the Jews from the city.

The question is also raised of the evolution of the Frankfurt Community and of other Communities in Germany, towards a more oligarchic structure, as compared with such Jewish Communities as those of Poland and Bohemia.

Several hitherto unpublished Hebrew documents are appended to the article, as well as the text of the intervention of the Synod of the Four Lands and the Prague Community in the dispute under discussion.

AUTHENTIC AND IMAGINATIVE ELEMENTS IN JOSEPH PERL'S "M'GALEH T'MIRIN"

by CH. SZMERUK

By means of marginal notes explaining certain codes (*gimatriya*), found in a copy of Joseph Perl's "M'galeh T'mirin" (Vienna, 1819), the author has succeeded clarifying one of the sub-plots in this book.

Comparison of a Hassidic source and a petition presented by Perl to the Austrian government gave proof of the historicity of an event described in "M'galeh T'mirin". The personality involved was a Hassidic publisher of Zaslav by the name of Ya'acov Meir. He had travelled in 1818 to Galicia to distribute indexed Hassidic books and was, as a result, taken into custody there by the Austrian authorities. Joseph Perl served the Austrians in this case as official translator of various papers in Hebrew which had been found on the prisoner's person. The historical figure of Ya'acov Meir and his activities in Galicia were included by Perl in the general plot of his epistolary novel. At the same time, the author used the character of Meir to express his own views and give his own description of Judeo-Galician life in his day.

The clarification of this not unique element in Perl's novel throws light on the creation and development of this work and allows for its use as a reliable historical source. Perl's confession that the actual letters of the Hassidic book-seller were, at one time, in his possession, also clarifies one of the sources of the stylistic influences evident in this book. From a literary point of view, this character in "M'galeh T'mirin" is only a prototype of the picaresque figure in modern Jewish literature which was later developed by Mendele Mocher S'farim.

JANUVRIS — JANUS.

by D. FLUSSER

A statement by Rabbi Johanan in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Avoda Zara 39c*) relates the story of a Roman general, Januvris (i. e. Januarius) by name, who sacrificed his

life that his forces might be victorious. The origin of the name "Calendae Januariae" is from his name, and of the number of months from the number of his sons — 12. That this theme is not original is born out by ancient Greek traditions. Among the Romans, such an act by ruler or commander became a religious ritual known as "devotio".

In "De Divisionibus Temporum" attributed to Beda is found (P.h., vol. 90, p. 650f.) a similar narrative. In this case, the hero is the exile Janus, King of Epirus, who was in Rome during a siege. He aided the Romans, by self-sacrifice, to defeat their enemies on condition that he be deified. Hence the origin of the god Janus and the month January.

Without a doubt, these two versions, one by Rabbi Johanan and the other by Beda, are two forms of the same legend on the origin of the god Janus. It is also possible that the legend was created to explain the prominence given Janus in the service of the "devotio".

The description, in this and other legends, of the process of deification of humans, was vilified and ridiculed by Jews and Christians and used by them in their polemics against idolatry.

DR. J. SHATZKY ז"ל

An Obituary
by I. HALPERN

IN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ISRAEL

From July 8 to 10, 1956, a meeting was held to deal with problems of history. It was organized by the Historical Society of Israel in conjunction with the Israel Society for General History and the department of secondary education in the Ministry of Education and Culture, under the patronage of the Hillel Foundation.

Addresses were given by Messrs. Prof. B. Dinur, Dr. D. Flusser, Dr. Z. Yavetz, Prof. I. Baer, Dr. J. Talmon, Dr. A. Shalit, Dr. S. Ettinger, Dr. C. Bloch, and Prof. S. D. Goitein. The meeting was opened by Prof. A. Tcherikover and welcoming remarks were delivered by Prof. G. Scholem, head of the Institute of Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University. The addresses were followed by open discussions.

The Society plans to hold similar meetings annually.

The Annual General Assembly:

Was held at the close of the above-mentioned meeting on July 10, 1956 in the Hillel House.

The assembly was opened by the retiring chairman, Prof. B. Dinur. Minister of Posts, Dr. J. Burg, presided. Prof. I. Halpern, retiring vice-chairman, gave a report on the activities of the Society.

Open discussion followed this report. Participating were Messrs. M. Gordon, B. Jaffé, Dr. J. Ophir, Dr. M. Hendel, and the late B. Schochetman.

The meeting called for and approved a revised set of rules for the Society on the grounds that the old set was out-of-date.

A new Society-Council was elected, comprising:

Messrs. G. Agron, Z. Aranne, Dr. M. Avidor, S. Avigur, Dr. S. Ettlinger, Prof. N. Feinberg, M. Gordon, Dr. G. Herlitz, Dr. R. Mahler, Prof. B. Mazar, Dr. J. Meisl, M. Namir, M. Narkis, A. Rutenberg, G. Schoken, Z. Shazar, Prof. E. A. Simon, Prof. A. Tcheikover, Dr. K. Wormann.

A new Society-Committee was also elected comprising:

Prof. I. Baer, Dr. A. Bein, Prof. B. Dinur, Dr. S. Ettinger, Prof. I. Halpern, Dr. J. Katz, Prof. J. Praver, Prof. G. Scholem, and Prof. E. E. Urbach.

At the first meeting of the new Committee, 3.10.56, Prof. B. Dinur and Prof. I. Halpern were elected chairman and vice-chairman respectively.

At the same meeting, a committee on public affairs was created, composed of Prof. J. Prawer, Dr. S. Ettinger, and Dr. H. H. Ben-Sasson. On 14.11.56, Prof. Prawer was elected its chairman.

Cooperation Among Scholars

Prof. I. Halpern (acting Yad-Vashem delegate in France) and Mr. Ch. Szmeruk participated in the unveiling of the Memorial to the Unknown Jew which took place in Paris at the end of October, 1956.

Representatives of Jewish scholarly institutions and many historians, from many parts of the Diaspora, were present. The representatives from Israel met with those from other countries for the purpose of creating conditions for joint-action among scholars of Jewish history.

Advanced Studies for Teachers

The department of secondary education in the Ministry of Education organized, in conjunction with the Society's committee on public affairs, a course for history teachers. This course took place on 29.11.56, in Tel Aviv and was attended by teachers from all parts of the country.

Monthly lectures are being given in Tel Aviv and Haifa to high-school history teachers on subjects related to the Jewish and general history curricula.

IN THE JEWISH HISTORICAL GENERAL ARCHIVES

International Congress of Archives

The third International Congress of Archives was held in Florence from September 25 to 29, 1956. The delegation representing the Israel archives was headed by Dr. A. Bein, Keeper of Records for the State of Israel and included Messrs. D. J. Cohen and Ch. Szmeruk, archivists of the Jewish Historical General Archives.

Special importance is seen in the direct contacts made by members of the Israel delegation with representatives from other countries. The Jewish Historical General Archives hopes that these contacts will lead to the survey and photographing of the important material on Jewish history scattered throughout the general archives of the world.

The members of the delegation were invited by the *Unione delle Comunita' Israelitiche Italiane* to give advice on the setting-up of a central archive for Italian Jewry. Dr. Bein presented his opinion on this subject to the *Unione*, based on the survey made during the last several years of the archives of the Italian communities. The heads of the *Unione* were aided by the delegation in the preparation of a detailed plan and budget for the central archive.

Archival Survey of the Italian Communities

During the months of September and October, 1956, the survey of the community archives in Italy was completed by the delegation from the General Archives in conjunction with Yad-Vashem and the *Unione*.

Members of the delegation worked in Alessandria, Casale-Monferrato, Ferrara, Genoa, Leghorn, Padua, Trieste, Vercelli, Este, Venice, and other cities. In these places, archives were set in order and lists were made of the material there.

Likewise, microfilms of the most important material in these archives were ordered.

Messrs. Ch. Szmeruk, Dr. S. Simonson, D. Carpi, and Miss. N. Hillel participated in this project. Thanks must be extended to Mr. Renzo Levi, vice-chairman of the *Unione*, and to Rabbi Toaf, chief rabbi of Rome, for their assistance as well as to Mr. Sasson, Israel ambassador to Rome, Mr. Eshed, and to the rest of the embassy staff who considerably lightened the work of the delegation.