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Vol. VII No. 3 (דכ) Spring 1979
Dor le-Dor

Published by the

WORLD JEWISH BIBLE SOCIETY

In cooperation with the

Department of Education and Culture of the World Zionist Organization

and the

World Jewish Congress, Cultural Department

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WORLD JEWISH BIBLE SOCIETY, 18 Abarbanel St., JERUSALEM

AN AFFILIATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN THE DIASPORA OF THE WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION
THE HABIRU AND THE HEBREWS
FROM A SOCIAL CLASS TO AN ETHNIC GROUP

BY STUART A. WEST

The first mention in the Bible of the word לעביר (Hebrew) is in Genesis 14:13, where Abraham is referred to as "Abram, the Hebrew." What is the significance here of the term hebrew? A possible answer is that the description of Abraham as a Hebrew reflects the fact that he immigrated to Canaan from Mesopotamia, beyond the River Euphrates. Thus, in the Book of Joshua we read:

And Joshua said unto all the people: ‘Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwell of old time beyond (לעתה) the River (Euphrates), even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from beyond (לעתה) the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan... 

Joshua 24:2-3

In order to indicate that Abraham came from beyond the River Euphrates, the text uses the Hebrew words לעביר and לעביר (Hebrew) and the word לעביר which has given rise to the explanation that the description of Abraham as לעביר (the Hebrew) indicates that he came from beyond the River Euphrates.

Against this explanation it is possible to point to the genealogy of Abraham:

And unto Shem, the father of all the children of Eber (ש컵), the older brother of Japheth, to him also were children born.

Genesis 10:21

And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begot Peleg.

Genesis 11:16

The following verses of Genesis 11 go on to list the family tree right down to Abraham. So, in this sense לעביר (Hebrew) apparently signifies a descendant of

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Eber. However, the word יִשְׂרָאֵל (Hebrew) in its Biblical usage is restricted to the Patriarchs and their descendants, from whom the Children of Israel emanated. If this is so, we must doubt the origin of the word יִשְׂרָאֵל (Hebrew) as being simply descriptive of the descendants of Eber.

The Bible tells us that Eber had two sons: Peleg and Joktan (Genesis 10:25). Furthermore, we are told:

And Eber lived after he begot Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:17

Abraham was descended from Eber through Peleg (Genesis 11:16-26), but Joktan also had sons — 13 in all (Genesis 10:26-29), whose names apparently correspond to Arabian place names and tribes; but in the Bible none of them are called Hebrews.

Abraham’s first-born son, by Hagar, Sarah’s maidservant, was Ishmael, the ancestor of the Ishmaelites who is not called a Hebrew in the Biblical text. However, Isaac, Abraham’s only son by his wife Sarah, was most certainly a Hebrew, as was his son Jacob — but Esau, Jacob’s twin brother, forbear of the Edomites, is not described as such. Likewise, the descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew — the Amonites and Moabites — are not labelled Hebrews in the Bible.

If the term יִשְׂרָאֵל (Hebrew) is not applied to the descendants of Eber generally, so, too, the Bible does not designate the descendants of Abraham and Isaac generally as Hebrews; the appellation is limited to those descended through Jacob, who were later to become the Israelite nation.

But why were the Israelites originally known as Hebrews?

It could be that in 1877 an Egyptian woman living near Amarna, some 200 miles south of Cairo, stumbled upon the answer.

Amarna had been the capital of Amenhotep IV, who became Pharaoh of Egypt circa 1380 B.C.E. Amarna was the site of his palace and temple, and the mound covering its ancient ruins is known as Tel-el-Amarna. Here, in 1877, a peasant woman accidentally unearthed a large collection of clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform writing. More than 350 tablets in all were discovered, comprising in the main diplomatic letters, written in Akkadian and dating from the 14th century B.C.E. The tablets revealed correspondence between the rulers of city states in Western Asia and the Pharaohs of Egypt. It appears from the tablets
that Egyptian power was declining and that bands of outlaws called Habiru were
overrunning the countryside in areas where city states were located.

The situation prompted pleas, contained in some of the Tel-el-Amarna letters,
for assistance in repelling Habiru attacks. Among the letters are a few from the
governor of Jerusalem urgently entreating Egyptian aid in resisting the Habiru.

In themselves, the Tel-el-Amarna letters show no definite connection between
the Habiru and the Hebrews beyond the similarity of name. However,
archaeological discoveries since have brought to light much more evidence
relating to the subject.

Excavations on the Upper Euphrates at Mari begun in 1933 uncovered the
ruins of a magnificent palace dating back to the third millenium B.C.E. together
with more than 20,000 clay tablets, a number of which mention the Habiru, par-
ticularly as military auxiliaries. The biblical description of Abraham’s rescue of
his nephew Lot certainly could have been an account of the military exploits of a
band of Habiru:

\[
\text{And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram, the Hebrew — now he dwelt by the terebinths of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.}
\]

\[\text{Genesis 14:13-16}\]

Further important archaeological discoveries were made between 1925 and
1931 at Nuzi, about 150 miles north of Baghdad and east of the River Tigris.
Nuzi, which flourished during the 15th to 14th Centuries B.C.E., belonged to the
Hurrians who inhabited Haran, from which Abraham emigrated to the land of
Canaan. Among the 4,000 tablets found at Nuzi, more than 30 refer to the
Habiru, but depict them as persons hiring themselves out as servants in exchange
for food and clothing — a kind of self-enslavement.

From the various archaeological sources it has been possible to establish that
during the greater part of the second millenium B.C.E., the Habiru were an ele-
ment of society in the Fertile Crescent of Western Asia. More often depicted as military auxiliaries, used by local rulers as marauding warriors, some of them nevertheless settled down in towns where they hired themselves out as servants.

Only 30 miles or so from Ur, in Southern Mesopotamia, Abraham's birthplace (see Genesis 11) was Larsa, where records indicate the presence of the Habiru around the year 1900 B.C.E. From Ur, Abraham's father Terah led his family to Haran in the northwest of Mesopotamia. (Genesis 11:31). Although Abraham proceeded from there to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:4-5), he never lost touch with his native land, as we know from the fact that he sent his servant back to find a wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24:4). Likewise, Jacob went to Haran to flee from his brother Esau and to take a wife (Genesis 28:10) — and this was probably during the period the Habiru were in Haran.

The wealth of archaeological discoveries in the Middle East during the last 100 years has prompted many scholars to raise the question as to whether the Hebrews can be identified with the Habiru.

One argument against any such identification is the fact that the Habiru were a social element as distinct from the Hebrews, who are usually identified as an ethnic group. Nevertheless, the way of life both of the Habiru and of the Hebrews had much in common.

From the Patriarchal narratives in the Book of Genesis we learn of the semi-nomadic life style of the Patriarchs. Living in tents, they supported themselves and their families as shepherds, avoiding close contact with city dwellers as much as possible in order to preserve their monotheistic beliefs.

The story of Joseph could well be that of an individual Habiru settling in Egypt and rising from servant to high status. His ascension to power at a time when Egypt was ruled by the Hyksos is perhaps a Biblical example of such an instance. In fact, when Potiphar's wife spoke of Joseph as "the Hebrew servant" (Genesis 31:17) and Pharaoh's butler referred to him as "a Hebrew" (Genesis 41:12), the designation was probably social rather than racial. As if to emphasize this, Joseph even described himself as having been kidnapped from "the land of the Hebrews" (Genesis 40:15), an interesting remark, because the land of Israel, as a nation, was not yet in existence. In other words, "the land of the Hebrews" was the land where people of Joseph's type and social background, lived, to wit, Hebrews: a semi-nomadic people, isolated from the rest of society, strangers in the land. Thus, after the death of Sarah, Abraham said to the sons of Heth:
I am a stranger and a sojourner with you ...

For the Hebrews, Canaan was the land of their sojourn as strangers. Indeed the Divine Promise to Abraham indicated as much:

\[ \text{And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession...} \]

\[ \text{Genesis 17:8} \]

So it appears that insofar as the Patriarchs were strangers in a strange land, without rights, semi-nomads, isolated from the indigenous populations of the cities, they could be said to fit the description of the social element or class known as the Habiru.

As monotheists, the Hebrews isolated themselves from local customs and therefore had to remain separate and apart from the general populace if they were to preserve this aspect of their life; hence their existence as nomads, although some Hebrews chose to hire themselves out as servants, often with their families, in much the same way as did the Habiru. This is apparent from the law as to Hebrew slaves as set out in the Book of Exodus:

\[ \text{If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he come in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he be married then his wife shall go out with him. If his master give him a wife, and she bear him sons and daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant shall plainly say: I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.} \]

\[ \text{Exodus 21:2-6} \]

The passage from Exodus is of particular relevance to the question identifying the Hebrews with the Habiru. Bearing in mind that this law was promulgated after the Children of Israel had left Egypt, one would have expected the text to refer to an Israelite servant rather than speak, as it does, of “a Hebrew servant.”

The question therefore arises as to whether, in the context of this law, the word \text{Hebrew} (Hebrew) is merely referring to those of the Children of Israel who wished to
enslave themselves or is used to include the social class of the Habiru. According to the evidence found at Nuzi, the law regarding Habiru slaves bears a strong resemblance to that written in the Book of Exodus. The Habiru slave served indefinitely, and if he broke his agreement and left his master, he had to make a payment to him of silver or gold, or receive some form of punishment. Alternatively, he could provide a replacement. However, it is with regard to the slave's family that there is this strong resemblance to the Biblical law. As in the Bible, if the Habiru slave married after becoming a slave, he could not take his wife or offspring with him into freedom. Furthermore, the Nuzi tablets reveal a ceremony before the "ilani" (gods) in order to effect permanent bondage.

All the evidence from archaeological discoveries to date seems to point to the conclusion that, sociologically, the Hebrews were in fact Habiru, although not all Habiru were Hebrews. It could well be that the word יְהוּדָי (Hebrew) was originally only a sociological designation, indicating status or class — in which case the words Hebrew and Habiru are synonymous. The fact that in the later Books of the Bible and in its usage in post-biblical times, the word Hebrew has been used as an ethnic designation simply means that the original meaning of the word has been changed. With the eventual disappearance of the Habiru, etymological explanations of the term "Hebrew" such as mentioned at the beginning of this article, were inevitable. In the absence of archaeological evidence until comparatively recent times, the Pentateuch itself was the oldest record extant from which an explanation could be sought. And so the term "Hebrew" ultimately became equivalent to the term "Jew" as in the Book of Jeremiah where the prophet proclaims:

> that every man should let his man-servant, and every man his maid-servant being a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, go free; that none should make bondmen of them, even of a Jew his brother..."

Jeremiah 34:9

Nonetheless this cannot detract from the clear indications which exist that the origins of the Hebrews are as Habiru.

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THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

BY SHIMON BAKON

THE LORD IS BECOME AS AN ENEMY

The siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian forces of Nebuchadnezzar was already in its third year. There was a frightful famine and growing panic as the besieging army, encircling the city with forts, closed in and breached the wall. King Zedekiah, then only thirty two years old, and “all the men of war” fled furiously toward the Arava, leaving the city undefended. Overtaken in the plains of Jericho, Zedekiah was captured and brought before the king of Babylonia. His sons were executed in the sight of their father, his eyes were put out and he was thrown into prison where he eventually died.

On the 10th of Ab, Nebuzraddan, captain of Nebuchadnezzar, burned the Temple, razed the walls, slew the princes, carried away the golden and silver vessels together with all the brass still remaining in the Temple, took 68 prominent leaders from Jerusalem to be executed, and rounded up a total of 4,600 captives in three successive exiles. He ravished maidens and sold an unspecified number of young men and women into slavery. And he left “of the poorest of the land to be vine dressers and husbandmen.”

The above is a matter-of-fact account of what occurred in the year 586 BCE, by Jeremiah¹, a prophet who more than any other had bared the agonies of his soul after witnessing the barbaric excess of infuriated soldiers let loose on an undefended city.

We have to fill in the missing narrative for a glimpse of the enormity of the catastrophe: the House of David, all but shattered with only Jehoiachin and some members of his family held captives of Babylonia since 597, when first he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar; Jerusalem destitute; the glory of the Temple in ashes; the elite of the people, its priests, Levites and leaders led captive on a six-

¹ Jeremiah Ch. 52

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month trek to Babylonia;² the many who must have perished long before reaching their final destination; the deep despair of the captives during years of adjustment in a foreign, if not hostile, environment.

When a similar fate overtook Nineveh, Babylon, Carthage and cities of other empires, it was followed by total collapse of an entire civilization. What was it, then, that caused the creative survival of Judeans in exile, a feat which verges on the miraculous?

WILL THESE BONES LIVE?

If a pagan king had to serve as God’s rod of anger against the Judeans, His choice of Babylonia must be considered providential. Two thousand five hundred years of Diaspora have proven that Jews always fared better in the setting of an Empire than that of a monolithic national state. It stands to reason that an Empire, encompassing within its fold a variety of vanquished people, had to assume the stance of liberalism toward them. Once the captives had recovered from the initial shock of transplantation, the process of adjustment proceeded rather rapidly. From accounts in the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah it appears that the captives had experienced sufficient recovery to be able to support the returnees. And even the returnees, in all probability not the wealthiest among the Exiles, brought with them over 7,000 slaves and 200 male and female singers (Neh. 7:67; Ezra 2:65). As artisans, administrative officials and perhaps absentee landlords, the Judean captives poured into larger cities, such as Nippur, and entered “the active industrial and commercial life.” Salo Baron³ asserts that a Jew named Jacob founded a banking house which granted loans without interest, noting, “This may reflect one of the earliest Jewish contributions to mankind’s material civilization.”

THE TRANSPLANT

More important than the economic progress was the development of a Jewish polity, the sense of community and of a “corporate personality.” The books of Ezra and Nehemiah⁴ relate that returnees arrived in groups homogenous in place

2. Ezra 7:9 informs that it took him four months to traverse from Babylonia to Jerusalem, armed with royal authorization and travelling unencumbered
4. Ezra 2; Nehemiah 7:6-73
of origin and clan. To us it is immaterial why Judeans coming to Babylonia preserved their identity and crowded together either by clans or by landsmannschaften.\(^5\) It is of crucial importance that they did so, preserved their identity, organized themselves in this fashion, had their elders, their priests and their Levites; in short, by instinct or by design they reorganized themselves into a fairly autonomous community.

That the "transplant" proved to be stronger and possessed of more vitality than the "plant" that had remained should not surprise us. As we have seen, those who had remained were of the poorest, left leaderless, while the transplant contained the elite, or what had remained of it. What does surprise is the appearance in Babylonia of a new phenomenon: Not only did the exiles survive the trauma of being torn from their "natural" environment of soil, nation and government, and the spiritual shock of their "Lord is become as an enemy,"\(^6\) but these exiles drew blueprints for Jewish life that were to be valid for millenia. They built spiritual edifices that had profound influences not only on Jews and Judaism, but also on Christianity and Islam.

Beyond that, they were the first "minority" who, confronted with the risks of freedom within a brilliant, wealthy and powerful civilization, had to work out the techniques of reconciling themselves to Exile, living beyond state and territory and without the beloved cultic worship of God as practiced for centuries, while yet remaining unconditionally faithful to Him. And there was still enough vitality left amongst them who would not be reconciled to exilic life to respond to the call of Return.

TRANSFORMATION

What had occurred in the souls of the downtrodden captives to effect such a remarkable transformation?

Scholars differ in their judgments. Salo Baron, for instance, believes that it was the evolving universalism pronounced by the prophets which effected this transformation. Not confined to national boundaries, God can be worshiped in any land and His power is manifest anywhere. Yehezkel Kaufmann maintains

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5. It is uncanny that 2,500 years later, refugees from Czarist pogroms settled in the United States also in landsmannschaften

6. Lamentations 2:5

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that the monotheism of Judeans, once established, would never give way to polytheism. This for him is an iron law of history.

Most likely the clue to the puzzle of the Judean survival is to be sought precisely in the differing perceptions which the Northern and the Southern kingdoms had of the catastrophe that had overtaken Samariah and Jerusalem respectively. The decisive fact was the time-lag of more than 100 years between the two events. This was the period of the flowering of the great prophets. The cumulative effect of their prophecies of impending doom arising from the backsliding of the people had penetrated into the consciousness of the Judeans.

When the tragedy struck, these prophets gained in credibility. The “false” prophets who had spoken of the inviolability of Temple and Jerusalem were forever discredited. They were ready to accept with resignation: “The Lord is righteous for I have rebelled against Him.”

One thing is clear: out of the great suffering the faithful maintained life on foreign soil as a community resting on the foundations of a purified monotheism, cleared of the debris of syncretism. Thus the destruction served as a watershed. After that there was no more idol worship. No post-exilic prophet had to inveigh against this type of backsliding. A clear line had been drawn between true and false prophets.

IS REPENTANCE POSSIBLE

A serious problem troubling the Exiles is expressed in a soul-searing outcry found in Lamentations: “Our fathers have sinned and are no more — and we must bear their guilt!” (5:7). This is the cry of a God-fearing man who feels guiltless in his fullhearted devotion to God, and yet is burdened by guilt carried over from his fathers!

Sensing the danger of this attitude, Jeremiah and Ezekiel responded:

In those days they shall say no more: the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are on edge, but everyone shall die for his iniquity.

Jeremiah 31:28-29

What mean ye that you use the proverbs in the land of Israel saying: the

7. Lamentations 5:7
8. Possibly to the reign of Manasseh
fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge? Behold, all souls are Mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son... The soul that sinneth, it shall die. 

Ezekiel 18:2

Both prophets vigorously assail the flood of defeatism that threatened to envelop the captives. The Judeans had to be freed from the sense of collective guilt, where sins of fathers are visited upon the children. Moreover, it is not God's pleasure that the wicked die, rather “turn yourselves and live.” Repentance thus was not only possible but most desired by God.\(^9\)

It must be said that this call for the possibility of repentance together with the stress on the individual was of supreme significance in the course of re-ordering their lives in Exile.

HOPE OF RESTORATION

The Talmud Makkoth\(^1\) alleges that a group of Rabbis — visiting Jerusalem (after the Destruction of the Second Temple) — came to the Temple Mount. There they saw a fox running from the site of the Holy of Holies. They wept, while Rabbi Akiva laughed. Rabbi Akiva explained that there were two prophecies:

\textit{Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field} (Micah 3:12).

\textit{There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem} (Zechariah 8:4).

And now, as the first prophecy was fulfilled, so for a certainty the second will be fulfilled. Whereupon they replied, “Akiva, you have comforted us.”

This beautiful story is most relevant to our inquiry and reflects an important ingredient necessary for our understanding of the dynamics of Babylonian exiles: the expectations of Restoration! The pronouncement of doom had been fulfilled, and now the words of comfort and of the coming restoration will of necessity come true! The admonition of Jeremiah to build houses and to plant vineyards has to be viewed against the background of his prophecy of a Restoration that would occur in 70 years. His advice to the exiles then is to bide time and not to be too eager for an early return.

\(^9\) Ezekiel 18:32

\(^1\) See more on it in my article: \textit{The Doctrine of Reward}, Dor le-Dor, Vol. V, No. 2

\(^1\) Makkot 23b

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To the question: can these bones live? asked by the captives, Ezekiel responded with a vision, rising to the greatest heights of prophecy:

Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel, behold they say: our bones are dried up and our hope is lost...
Therefore prophesy and say unto them: Thus saith the Lord, behold I will open thy graves... and I will bring you into the land of Israel... and I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live...

Ezekiel 37:11-14

This prophecy of hope in the full regeneration of the people and its final return to its homeland had an incalculable effect upon the despondent remnants. It electrified them, charging them with a conviction of expectation that ever since would never be eradicated. They knew for a certainty that redemption would come.

THE LITTLE SANCTUARY

Out of the tribulations and new perceptions of their relation to God and their emerging relation to their foreign environment, a new dynamic of life was set into motion, the scope of whose reverberations was far beyond what they ever imagined.

While Salo Baron\textsuperscript{12} exaggerated the influence of “universalistic” aspect of prophetic teachings on the transformation that was emerging, there were still aspects of it which gave impetus for the development of a new phenomenon: worshiping God in a foreign land, without sacrifices, in a congregational setting – in the מָקוֹם מַעֲטָה\textsuperscript{13} – thus giving rise to the Synagogue.

We cannot be too certain that synagogues, as we eventually got to know them, were already established at that early stage of the post-exile period.\textsuperscript{14} Whatever form they assumed, they proved to be a powerful institution for the exiles. It is around them that their inner life crystallized. Convocations were called, frequent fast-days proclaimed. Jews began to meet there to pray together and to discuss

\textsuperscript{12} Salo Baron, see chapter: Religious Universalism and Particularism, in volume quoted before
\textsuperscript{13} Ezekiel 11:18 – “Yet have I been to them as a Little Sanctuary”
\textsuperscript{14} Y. Kaufmann thinks that they had already been established then. See: הולחרת האוסנות VIII הנשאולות

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matters of mutual concern. This institution also served to counterbalance the forces of assimilation that most certainly made known inroads, viz: change of Hebrew names into Aramaic; designation of Babylonian months.

Sight must not be lost of the fact that in the minds of exiles the synagogue or congregational prayer did not replace the Temple and sacrifices. Far from it. With the enforced distance, the significance of the Temple and Jerusalem grew, indeed was idealized. Subsequent history of the Return, the wide support that the rebuilt Temple received from Jews in all the dispersions, proves this point. And even Isaiah, in one of his most universalistic chapters, projects sacrifices in God's House of Prayer:

\[
\text{Also the aliens... even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My House of Prayer. Their burnt-offering and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon Mine altar, For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.}
\]

Isaiah 56:6-7

TORAT MOSHE

One of the paradoxes, yet an easily explainable phenomenon, was the ascendancy of Torat Moshe. Prophetic exhortations and consolations had had their hour, likely to be heard in time of crisis. They were designed to reawaken in the listeners a proper perspective of man's relation to God and to man. At a time when the ceremonial impulses in man were overstressed, they shifted emphasis on inwardness and on ethics. But as life returned to normal, people needed legislation to give direction and meaning to their national-religious polity. If they were not to surrender their religious identity in the sea of an idolatrous majority, they needed divine laws to regulate the individual and corporate life.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to assess which of the Laws of Moses were upheld. But with loss of the executive power of a national government to enforce these laws, whatever was kept was kept as a matter of conscience. The process of individualization, through the exhortation of Ezekiel and Jeremiah,\textsuperscript{15} where the burden of responsibility weighed heavily upon the individual, helped in the acceptance of law by voluntary consent.

\textsuperscript{15} See also Ezekiel 11:19: “and I will put a new spirit within you... that they walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them.”
In the end it seems certain that both Torat Moshe and prophecy proved indispensable for the Restoration. Both were considered words of the Living God — אלוהי דברי אלוקים היום. They were the pendulum of the same clock, merely swinging back and forth as the hour demanded it.

AND THOU SHALT TEACH THEM

At this juncture the following questions seem legitimate: Whence did scholars and prophets of the stature of Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah get their schooling? How and by what stages did the transition take place from the Biblical injunction of “Thou shalt teach them diligently to your son” to the large academies in Babylonia and Israel?

Pre-exilic literature is rather rich in narration having a bearing on variegated approaches to education. A most remarkable incident is told in the life of Gideon the Judge who, returning from pursuing the two kings of Midian, caught an Israelite youth in Succoth and had him write down the names of 77 elders of the city. Prophets served as teachers. We learn that “Elisha came to Gilgal and the sons of prophets were sitting before him.” Similarly we read, “and it came to pass... as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell upon me.” Baron contends that “it seems that even before the destruction of the Temple there were in Palestine, and particularly in Jerusalem, regular schools of wisdom.” An interesting method of teaching is related in Chronicles: Jehoshaphat sent Levites and priests “and they taught in Judah having the Book of the Law of the Lord with them.”

However the passage most relevant for our investigation is in the Book of Jeremiah:

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which He had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch saying...

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16. Judges 8:14
17. II Kings 7:38
18. Ezekiel 8:1
20. II Chronicles 17:9
21. Similar: Jeremiah 26:2-6
therefore go thou and read in the roll... the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord’s house upon a fast day.

Jeremiah 36:4-6

We see an evolution from teaching by fathers of sons, disciples sitting before prophets, to bringing God’s message directly to the site of the Holy Temple at a fast-day before a captive audience.

Would it be too daring to suggest that even before Ezra the Sofer, who firmly established the institution of readings from the Torah, the intermediate step was introduced of using the Synagogue for some study on fast-days and other days of convocations? Most certainly we have the beginnings out of which the great Academies grew.

At any rate the process of democratization of education was set into motion, with the function of teacher imperceptibly moving from priest-Levite to Sofer-Rabbi, and with popularization of instruction.

THE TWO MODES OF REDEMPTION

When Cyrus, in the year 538, made his proclamation, as recorded in the Book of Ezra, allowing Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple, they responded, posing for us a few historical puzzles. If Cyrus made his proclamation to all the displaced peoples of his Empire, we have scant record that they, except for the Jews, responded. If he made the declaration to Jews only, what prompted him to do so? And finally, what motivated some Jews, well established in their new environment, to break away from Babylonia and return to a desolate and hostile Judea? It is true that many considered exile as a penalty, a burden of previous sins, which now had been expiated. Expectations of early redemption lay heavily in the air. They were hopeful that national redemption would be ushered in by God’s special anointed, of the seed of David. Highest hopes were staked on Zerubbabel. The time was ripe for the Return. And when it coincided with Cyrus’ proclamation, it moved many to action. Yet the mystery remains.

No less a mystery surrounds the other mode of Jewish existence, flowing from a transformation of the “Covenant” that took place in the exile. As a result of the

22. See article on Ezra the Scribe by Prof. H. Gevaryahu, Dor le-Dor, Vol. VI, No. 2
23. It is in Ben Sira that we first encounter the term (51:23)
tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the loss of national independence, the question of whether the "Covenant" was still valid must have exercised the minds of the Judeans. Prophets asserted that the covenant was conditional, and with the separation of large sections of Israel, "due to their sin," it was in force with a "faithful remnant" only.

But what was the use of a covenant when one of the parties to it, namely the faithful ones, receive nothing in return from the other! From this troubling question, there evolved three interrelated views: God as transcendent inscrutable Lord, the suffering servant, the End of Days.

We cannot begin to fathom His will and His guidance of the World. He has selected Israel to be His suffering servant. One notices a switch from the "Rod of Anger" to a "Suffering Servant" who, guiltless, has been singled out to be "Israel" doing battle for the Lord. His suffering is temporary only. For God is using him as an instrument for fulfilling His final design for this world. Thus hand in hand with the suffering servant there is also the End of Days in which he, having fulfilled his function, will be fully justified. We have before us the second mode of Redemption, the eschatological aspect of Messianism.

A NEW CONCEPT OF HISTORY

In one fell swoop Judeans in the Babylonian Exile had developed a comprehension of History as no people before or after. It had a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning was the Covenant, the proud knowledge of common descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with whom God had entered a special relation. The middle, the ever-now, constituted the status of Jews in history as the patient servant, the "true" Israel, doing God's bidding. And there was also a glorious End of Days when Israel will be fully exonerated and in which the final design of God will be fully manifest to all peoples of the earth.

The time in which history unrolls is sanctified. It was this magnificent comprehension of History which perhaps was most instrumental in the perseverance of the Jewish people throughout the vicissitudes of life in Babylonian exile and throughout the millenia of the Jewish Dispersion.

24. The Book of Job falls into this category
Thus we see that the Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the loss of national independence served as an acid test for prophetic teachings. A major transformation had taken place. Exiles, freed forever from the sin of idolatry, were able to face the challenge of an idolatrous majority. Being thrown into a pluralistic society, an aggregate of many peoples and religions, and unhampered by interference because of a tolerant government, they opted for a “corporate personality.” Having recently experienced supreme national and personal tragedy, they looked expectantly to redemption in the near future. Having been tested by the Lord to the utmost, they viewed their catastrophe as the just reward for their own sin. Envisioning the destroyed Temple as a national calamity, they found that God could also be approached in alternate ways.

They organized themselves into a unique national-religious entity, resolved to remain steadfast in the faith of God, independent of material well-being. They developed a new sense of superiority of their monotheism, a new perspective of their “election” which demanded quiet suffering as the price of being “Israel,” the suffering servant who does battle for the Lord. Being vouchsafed that God had chosen one people, had selected one city and one special spot to rest His glory, they nevertheless believed this House to be a House of Prayers for all peoples. Forseeing the national Restoration with an ideal descendant of David reinstated by God, they also dreamed of an End of Days, beyond history, with an anointed of the Lord ushering in a new order of life for all peoples.

In short, we encounter a new dynamism of Jewish life, encompassing the inseparable merger of nation and religion, the dialectics of seemingly dichotomous beliefs, which to this day have remained the despair of historians and theologians who never could fully grasp the uniqueness of Jewish existence.
BELSHAZZAR'S FOLLY

BY SOL LIPTZIN

Pride goeth before a fall — is the basic moral of the Belshazzar-theme in the Book of Daniel, Chapter V, and is reiterated with variations and elaborations in the literary versions based on the biblical narrative.

In English literature, one of the earliest Anglo-Saxon manuscripts contains a poetic rendering of the Book of Daniel which some scholars ascribed to Caedmon, the shepherd-poet of the seventh century. However, the evidence for Caedmon's authorship is not adequate and the rendering is fairly literal.

CHAUCER

Chaucer (1340-1400) treats the Belshazzar-theme in The Monk's Tale. The Monk, who participates in the pilgrimage to Canterbury, is called upon to entertain his fellow-travelers with a tale. Instead of a single long story, he prefers, in accordance with his religious calling, to narrate several short episodes that illustrate a moral. He chooses the moral that all those who attain to great prosperity and become overweeningly proud are ultimately cast down from their high estate into calamity. He begins with Lucifer, the brightest of all angels, who sinned and was hurled down to hell. He continues with Adam, who was not satisfied with everything granted to him for enjoyment in Paradise but he must needs partake also of the forbidden tree, a deed which drove him from the Garden of Eden to toil and misery outside its boundaries. The Monk then narrates the tragedies of the proud heroes Samson and Hercules, who put too much trust in their mightiness, only to learn too late their human limitations. Then follow the tales of the Babylonian kings Nebukadnezzar and Belshazzar. The former conquered Jerusalem and took to his capital Babylon the vessels of God's Temple, as well as the fairest children of Israel, including wise Daniel. Yet, this mighty and haughty king of kings was cast from power after his victories and forced to roam as an animal among the beasts of the forest until he recognized the greater power of God and swore to sin no more.

Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, took no warning from what had befallen his predecessor Nebukadnezzar. He too became all-too-proud of his high estate and was unheedful of the fact that fortune comes and goes as God wills. He
made a feast at which he put on a great display of the vessels from the Jerusalem Temple. While he, his wife, his lords, and his concubines were drinking out of these vessels in honor of false gods, an armless hand appeared and wrote on the wall symbols that made all of the banqueteers quake. Daniel expounded these symbols as foretelling the king’s doom for rebelling against the one true God. That same night Belshazzar was slain and Darius ascended the throne.

The moral repeatedly stressed by Chaucer is that no dominion is secure. Glory, wealth, power are but transitory, and friends acquired in periods of affluence turn to enemies when ill fortune strikes. Had Belshazzar but paid heed to the warning God sent to Nebukadnezzar, he might have avoided premature, sudden death.

CALDERON

A similar moral pervades the Morality Play, La Cena del Rey Balthasar by the Spanish dramatist Calderon (1600-1680), written about three centuries after Chaucer. The Baroque dramatist was a deeply religious churchman, unsurpassed in his generation as a writer of Autos Sacramentales, of which his play about Belshazzar is generally acknowledged to be his best.

Calderon believed both in the omnipotence of God and in the free will of man. Hence he depicted his principal character Balthasar as a king who was free to choose between good and evil, and who deserved to pay the penalty of death for making the wrong choice. However, every human being should be offered an opportunity to repent. Only if he still persisted in his evil course was his punishment to be carried out. Calderon’s morality play was, therefore, structured in such a way that Balthasar, though guilty of arrogance and impiety, was twice reprieved from death by the intervention of Daniel. Only after he twice relapsed into overweening pride and defiance of the true God was he finally handed over to Death, the young, dark knight with sword, dagger and skeleton-braided cloak, who was ever ready to carry out God’s bidding.

In Calderon’s dramatic allegory, Daniel, who stands for God’s wisdom, is contrasted with the king’s companion Pensamiento, who stands for Human Thought, in reality Human Folly. Balthasar, married to Vanity, decides to take Idolatry as his second wife. Only Daniel dares to question the king’s decision. Daniel feels that the king’s marriage to Idolatry is an act of infidelity to the Supreme Creator of the universe. Nevertheless, he asks Death not to slay Balthasar but only to
threaten him, to convince him that every mortal is but dust, and to make him give up Idolatry. Balthasar does indeed hesitate for a moment when he receives Death's message, but he soon yields once more to the allurements of both wives. Death then succeeds in putting the king to sleep. However, on drawing his dagger to slay the sleeper, Daniel again interferes. On awakening, the still un­ chastened and unrepentant king prepares for the impious feast. At this feast he drinks to the health of Moloch from the consecrated vessels of Jerusalem's Temple. It is then that the fiery inscription appears on the palace wall and neither Vanity nor Idolatry can prevent Death from executing the well deserved doom which Daniel no longer cares to arrest. On witnessing Balthasar's end, Idolatry resolves to abandon the many gods for the one true God.

**HANDEL'S ORATORIO**

If Calderon's morality play may be regarded as the best literary treatment of the Belshazzar-theme in the seventeenth century, then Georg Friedrich Handel's dramatic oratorio *Belshazzar*, which he completed in 1744 and which experienced its first performance during the following year, is undoubtedly the finest artistic treatment of the eighteenth century. It is true that its popularity was exceeded by his *Messiah, Samson, and Judas Maccabeus*. However, the text by Charles Jennens is of a quality comparable to the other libretti. The libretto and music of *Belshazzar* stress the death-throes of the Babylonian Empire as symbolic of a civilization in the final stages of decay and as a warning to all aspiring empires that their dominance would be but temporary and that their decline was bound to follow sooner or later.

The opening monologue or aria by Nitocris, the mother of Belshazzar, sounds the moral of the drama, the mutability of human empires. At a time when British imperialism was in the ascendancy and British might was reaching out to all continents, Babylon's fate was presented as a warning to British audiences that all empires were doomed. Imperial rule was vain and fluctuating. Empires begin as small and weak powers in need of the protection of mightier neighbor-states. They are nursed along until they attain to wealth and formidable strength. Arrived at full maturity, they become rapacious. They rob, ravage, and oppress their terrified neighbors. They grow fat with conquest. Pride, luxury, corruption, perfidy begin to eat away at their vitals. When such an aging imperial power becomes flabby, advantage is taken of its infirmities by some other, newly arisen
power, which brings about its downfall. The victorious, young state then runs the same shadowy round of fancied greatness and meets the same tragic end as its predecessor.

This opening aria sets the keynote to the unfolding drama. Aging Babylon is nearing the end of the imperial cycle. Persia is the young, aspiring power. Belshazzar, nevertheless, retains his haughty, imperious demeanor. Despite the raging conflict with Cyrus, he proclaims a festival, during which promiscuity is to reign. Paying no attention to the unhappiness of the Jewish captives, he vows to drink from the sacred vessels of their destroyed temple. At the royal banquet, surrounded by his wives, concubines and lords, he does indeed drink out of these Jerusalem vessels and sings the praises of the Babylonian gods. It is then that a hand appears and writes mysterious symbols upon the wall. Trembling overtakes Belshazzar, his knees knock against each other, and the bowl of wine drops from his grasp. Daniel alone can interpret the handwriting, which foretells the doom of Belshazzar and his empire.

The dramatic oratorio ends with Belshazzar slain and with the triumphant Cyrus promising to release the Jews from captivity and to rebuild their sanctuary in Jerusalem.

GOETHE

A generation after the Jennens-Handel oratorio, young Goethe planned a Belshazzar drama, as well as a second biblical drama on Jezebel, but he never wrote either. There does, however, survive an outline of the former play in Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung (Book II, Chapter 4; Book III, Chapter 9).

Goethe’s Belshazzar was conceived as a young, good-natured, frivolous king. At his court, a plot was forged to overthrow him. Its leaders were Princess Kandace, whose father had been dethroned by Nebukadnezzar, and the courtier Eron, who resented the waning of his earlier influence with the royal establishment. Darius, King of the Medes, offers to help the conspirators. Disguised as his own envoy, he appears at Belshazzar’s court. His true identity unknown even to his co-conspirators, he joins in their deliberations. These plan the murder of Belshazzar during the feast being arranged for his birthday. They would then elevate the princess to the throne of Babylon and marry her off to the king of the
Medes. The disguised Medean envoy promises to bring the proposal to Darius but makes no firm commitments.

As the action develops, the princess falls in love with the envoy and would prefer him as her consort. The disguised Darius, however, has fallen in love with Nitocris, the wife of Belshazzar, but fears that she would never agree to become the mate of her husband's murderer. He, therefore, persuades the conspirators to delay the execution of their plans. Eron becomes suspicious of the envoy. Can it be that Darius intends to by-pass the princess and to seize the throne for himself?

When Eron learns about the handwriting on the wall and Daniel's interpretation, he feels that immediate success is assured for the overthrow of Belshazzar. But the envoy of Darius still counsels delay.

The final act shows the intoxicated Belshazzar terrified by the mysterious words that seem to foretell his doom. As he leaves the banquet hall, he is killed by the conspirators. The princess claims the throne for herself, when suddenly Darius, no longer in disguise, appears at the head of his troops who had forced their way into the city. He is accepted by all as the new ruler of Babylon. He rewards the princess magnanimously but does not marry her. As the final curtain descends, he is comforting Belshazzar's widow with words that leave the impression that a union between them is likely soon.

Though Goethe never got beyond a single monologue before abandoning the Belshazzar-theme, the English dramatist Hannah More, who was born in 1745, four years before Goethe and who died in 1833, a year after him, did complete and publish in 1782 a Belshazzar as one of her so-called Sacred Dramas. This play did not rise above mediocrity.

BYRON

Nor are the two poems on this theme which Lord Byron (1788-1824) composed a generation later of a superior quality. Indeed, only one of them, The Vision of Belshazzar, did he deem sufficiently significant to include in his Hebrew Melodies, 1815. The other, To Belshazzar, was written in the same year but was not published until 1831, seven years after his death. Its three stanzas are addressed to the arrogant king whose soul expired ere youth decayed. He is admonished to turn from banqueting and from sensuality. He is not a mighty despot but rather a weakling who was weighed in the balance and found worthless, unfit to govern, live or die.
The Vision of Belshazzar consists of six stanzas that retell the biblical episode of the festival in greater detail: the king and his satraps drinking the godless wine from the sacred vessels, the handwriting on the wall which the Chaldean seers could not read but which the captive Hebrew youth deciphered and whose prophetic message proved to be true on the following morning when Belshazzar's grave was made and his kingdom taken over by the Medes and the Persians.

Byron's poem probably stimulated the far more magnificent ballad of Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). Although the German poet claimed in 1849 that he composed his Belsatzar before his sixteenth year, hence before Byron's Hebrew Melodies appeared, his memory must have been at fault. The original impulse to compose a poem on this theme may have come so early. He recalled intoning in his boyhood the Hebrew hymn intoned by Jews annually at the Passover Seder, "Va'i bekhatzi halayla" — "And it was at midnight." This opening line of the Hebrew hymn is echoed both rhythmically and in meaning in Heine's opening verse "Die Mitternacht zog näher schon." By 1820, Byron's poem was available to German readers in translation and probably stimulated Heine to attempt a new poetic version of the biblical scene. The German poet may also have read it in the original English, since he was an avid reader of Byron and was soon to be dubbed the German Byron because of the Byronic or Weltschmerz tone in his early lyrics.

The entire action of Heine's ballad takes place during a single night, the night of the banquet. Heine omits all mention of Daniel and of the Persian army at the gates of Babylon. While midnight-silence envelops the entire city, the imperial palace is astir with loud carousing. The king, under the influence of wine, blasphemes the Lord, God of the conquered Jews, and calls for the vessels robbed from their shrine in Jerusalem. As the ruler of a mighty empire, he feels himself superior to the vanquished captives and their deity. However, hardly has he voiced his scorn of such a God, when horror overcomes him and the loud laughter of his courtiers yields to corpse-like silence, a foreboding of doom for the blasphemer. In the midst of this absolute silence, a hand becomes visible inscribing letters of fire on a white wall. Horror is intensified, as no one knows the meaning of the flaming signs. But that very night spelled the end of the haughty ruler, who was slain by his own underlings.
Heine’s poem was set to music by Robert Schumann. It was sung and recited to German and international audiences ever since its publication and is thus far better known than all the Belshazzar versions that preceded or followed it.

EDWIN ARNOLD

Subsequent Belshazzar versions in the nineteenth century include Belshazzar’s Feast by the poetess Felicia Hemans; Impious Feast, a poem by Robert Landor, the brother of the more famous Walter Savage Landor; Belshazzar, a drama by Henry Hart Milman; Belshazzar’s Feast and Belshazzar, two poems by Byron Waller Procter, who wrote under the pseudonym of Barry Cornwall; and The Feast of Belshazzar, a narrative poem by Edwin Arnold.

Of these poetic versions, Edwin Arnold’s long tale of 1853 is the most elaborate and the most moving. It depicts King Belshazzar in his arrogance decreeing a high festival. Though the foe is at the gate of Babylon and a battle is to be fought on the morrow, the king wants to feast with royal extravagance. He gives orders that the bowls and goblets carried off from Judah’s temple when Jerusalem was conquered be filled with wine for Jerusalem’s conquerors. But the handwriting on the wall casts a pall of fear over the revellers. Daniel the Hebrew, who reads visions, is summoned to decipher the mysterious symbols. Fearlessly he faces the mighty monarch and his satraps. He reminds them of Nebukadnez­zar’s arrogance, which was humbled when God drove him out into the desert, to roam among the wild asses, far from kingly majesty and from the brotherhood of fellow-men. Had Belshazzar bowed to the Lord’s will as did his repentant predecessor, then he might have continued to retain his sceptre. However, he had mocked the majesty of heaven, hence the message whose spectral letters proclaim his coming end. Before the night was over, Belshazzar lay crownless and sceptreless, a robe of purple round a form of clay.

MENE MENE

The symbolic words written on the wall of Babylon’s palace while its lords feasted were often referred to as ominous warnings to more recent rulers and arrogant dictators. On the eve of the Revolution of 1848, the words Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin formed the title of lyrics by Emanuel Geibel in 1846 and by Hermann Semmig in 1847. Later, the warning spelled out by the handwriting on the wall recurred as a leitmotif in William Walton’s splendid oratorio of 1931, 125
Belshazzar’s Feast, which was based on a text by Osbert Sitwell, and throughout the novel of resistance to Nazi arrogance, Sansibar, by Alfred Andersch in 1956.

In the poem by Geibel, the leader of the Munich Group of poets, high society carouses, candles sparkle, music resounds, and scantily dressed maidens serve foaming wine. Outside the palace walls, thousands of hungry faces gather in the darkness of night. Led by an Amazon with a red flag, they surround the banquet-hall. Still the carousers dance on, though hollow-eyed death is all about them, ready to overwhelm them.

In the novel by Andersch, one of Germany’s most popular contemporary writers, the hero, Pastor Helander, waits throughout the arrogant Nazi years for a handwriting to appear on the church-wall with the message that the realm of evil would soon come to an end. Since the victory of the Nazis in 1933, his community, his church, and his house had become empty, echoless space. God seemed so remote, far too remote to write in invisible ink even a few letters on the church wall with the slightest message of hope which could comfort him in his isolation. The Nazis continued to stride from victory to victory and seemed to be invincible. Finally, the long awaited message of God did come to him in his last hour after he completed his courageous deed of defiance of the Nazi establishment and as the bullets of the Gestapo riddled him. His dying thought was that now the message for which he waited throughout the long years of silent and heroic resistance must appear. God must bring retribution upon the Nazis. “He turned and glanced at the wall and, as he read the writing, he hardly felt the fire that entered into him. His only thought was ‘I am alive,’ as the small, hot fires burned in him. These fires hit him everywhere.”

Down the many centuries, the fiery symbols of the Book of Daniel—Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, have been hurled by literary spokesmen at tyrants and tyrannical systems, and have brought hope and comfort to oppressed groups and national entities, including Jewish communities under the heels of brutal conquerors from Belshazzar to Hitler. These symbolic words remain an eternal affirmation of divine justice that humbles the proud and uplifts the lowly.

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RESTORATION OF A HOLY NATION (445 B.C.E.)

BY BEZALEL PORTEN

THE IDEA OF RESTORATION

The period when Achaemenidian Persia ruled the land of Israel (539-332 BCE) is known as the "Restoration of Zion." The expression derives from Psalm 126:1, probably of preexilic origin, seeking divine assistance following some calamity, perhaps agricultural in nature. The cycle of sin-punishment-restoration was basic to Israelite faith and is found in every genre of its literature (cf. Deut.30:1-10; Is.1:21-27; Ps. 79). The destruction of the Temple and the exile of the nation constituted a calamity of epic proportions but one which did not find the people bereft of response. The People of Israel lamented their fate, acknowledged their sin and prayed to God for restoration. "Renew our days as of old" (Lam. 5:21) was their burning desire.

Israel restored was to be as Israel established — "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex.19:6). When redeemed from Egypt, the people worshiped the Lord at an altar on Mount Sinai and erected a sanctuary in their midst to insure the guiding care of the Divine Presence. Restored from Babylonia, the same people rebuilt the Temple altar in time to celebrate Sukkot and despite difficulty and delay, eventually reconstructed the Temple so that the Divine Presence once more resided in Zion (Zech.2:13).

The task was accomplished through the joint efforts of two descendants of the traditional leadership — Zerubbabel of the House of David and Jeshua of the House of Aaron. The messianic hopes pinned upon Zerubbabel (Hag.2:21-23) were not fulfilled, and he disappeared from the scene without a successor. Before departing, however, he and Jeshua made a basic decision affecting the composition of the "holy nation." They ruled that the offspring of foreigners settled in the northern part of the Land of Israel by the Assyrian monarch Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE) were not to share in the reconstruction of the Jerusalem Temple despite the protestations of these settlers that their ancestors and they had been

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worshipping the God of Israel continuously. Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the leaders of Israel decreed that they were aliens and not members of the newly restored "exilic" community (Ez.4:1-3).

**Ezra and Nehemiah**

The major personalities responsible for the Restoration were Ezra, who traced his lineage back to Aaron but whose precise relationship to the contemporary High Priest is unknown (Ez. 7:1-5; 1 Chron. 5:29-41), and Nehemiah, whose ancestry is unknown but who was accused by his foreign adversaries of aspiring to kingship (Neh. 1:1; 6:6-7). Both were products of the Diaspora, both secured royal support for their missions and both functioned in official capacities. Nehemiah took leave as royal cupbearer to become governor of Judah (Neh. 1:11; 5:14), while Ezra was known as "Scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven" (Ez. 7:12; 21; cf. verses 6, 11). In personality and style, however, the two were very different, almost opposites. Nehemiah was a bold figure, seized the initiative and pursued his goals aggressively. Skilled in statecraft, he rallied his supporters, scorned his opponents and triumphed over all obstacles. Ezra proceeded cautiously, took his lead from others and absorbed himself in the details of each task. Reared in the study of Torah, Ezra was sensitive to its nuances and implications. He trained a devoted cadre of followers in its interpretation, proceeding through persuasion and teaching. Despite their differences, both prefaced their major actions with prayer and both attributed their achievements to divine guidance (Ez. 7:6, 27f.; 8:22; 9:5ff.; Neh. 1:4-2:5, 18; 4:8; 6:16). They shared the same views about the exclusivity of the reestablished "exilic" community, and both apparently wrote up their experiences in personal memoirs that were incorporated into the major source for the period — the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Since the end of the nineteenth century students of the books of Ezra and Nehemia have cast suspicion on the chronological sequence of events represented therein. Ezra is said to have arrived in Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign (Ez. 7:7f.) and Nehemiah in the twentieth (Neh. 1:1; 2:1; 5:14). The two men are associated on the occasion of the reading of the Torah on the first of Tishre (Neh. 8:9) and in the procession at the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:36, 38).

As three kings bore the name Artaxerxes, we are fortunate in having the
Aramaic papyri from Elephantine, one of whose letters provides a synchronism (Cowley 30:18) that enables us to assign Nehemiah to Artaxerxes I (445 BCE). This should date Ezra’s arrival to 458 BCE. Various reasons of major or minor significance, however, have been set forth to disassociate Ezra from Nehemiah and to date his arrival in the twenty-seventh (438 BCE) or thirty-seventh year (428 BCE) of Artaxerxes I or even later, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II (398 BCE). Since none of the arguments for rejecting the traditional sequence of events appears decisive, it would be the better part of prudence to retain it.

Nevertheless, whichever chronology for the period one accepts, the general picture remains the same. The holy city of Jerusalem was refortified and repopulated, and its major institution, the Temple of the Lord God of Heaven was emplaced on a firm economic basis. The people contracted among themselves to observe the Torah, singling out for emphasis prohibition of intermarriage and the obligations to observe the Sabbath and the sabbatical year and to support the Temple. This establishment of a holy nation upon the two pillars of Temple and Torah was certainly a milestone in Jewish history, which, if we may accept the traditional chronology, is to be dated to 445-444 BCE.

**INTERMARRIAGE**

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the concept of a “holy nation” is associated with the prohibition of intermarriage, for a people occupying the land of the Canaanites should not be led astray by their abominations (Deut.7). Similarly, reasoned Ezra, a holy nation restored to its land must reject all intermarriages, for the “nations of the lands” were “nations of abominations.” If the people were to eat of the good of the land, as promised by Deuteronomy (cf. 7:13; 11:14-17), they must not seek the good of the Moabites and Ammonites, let alone intermarry with them (cf. 23:4-7). Even the Egyptian and Edomite, permitted by Deuteronomic law (23:8-9) to enter the congregation of Israel in the third generation were included by Ezra in the blanket prohibition (Ezra 9). This policy was but a logical extension of that initiated by Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

Intermarriage was a sin akin to that of Achan, who violated the ban against mis-appropriating the war spoils designated for the Tabernacle. This was the only transgression recorded of the generation of the Conquest, but its gravity was such as to threaten national destruction. The mood of Joshua and the leaders was punitive and mournful. The guilty had to be discovered, made to confess
and extirpated to avert divine wrath (Joshua 7). Intermarriage was considered by Ezra, and apparently also by Nehemiah (13:23-30), as the major calamity of the age of Restoration. When first confronted with the problem, Ezra too went into mourning and then accepted the recommendation of Shechaniah, son of Jehiel, to extract confessions from the guilty and expel their foreign wives — upon penalty of exclusion from the "exilic" community. Although the steps taken by Ezra are recounted in detail, the account is oddly non-committal about whether Ezra actually did succeed in expelling the foreign women (Ezra 9-10).*

REFORTIFICATION OF JERUSALEM

A second uncertainty beclouds our understanding of the achievements of Ezra. If he indeed arrived in 458 BCE, then it was during his tenure that an attempt by the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem miscarried. Envious of the status Jerusalem would achieve should it once again be refortified, Rehum the Chancellor and Shimshai the scribe, top officials in neighboring Samaria, persuaded Artaxerxes that a rebuilt Jerusalem would naturally rebel and they elicited from him a permit to stop the work (Ez. 4:8-23). Ezra's name is absent from the account of this incident, hence it is uncertain whether he played any role in the affair.

The overzealous ban on construction left Jerusalem in a constantly precarious situation. It was nothing less than "shameful" for the wall of the "holy city" to be in ruins and its gates burned down (Neh. 1:3; 11:1). Nehemiah succeeded in persuading the king to reverse himself by requesting that he be allowed to rebuild the city of his ancestral sepulchers (Neh. 2:5). Ezra had been ashamed to request a military escort, despite the large sums he was transporting, for he assured the king that the Lord would protect him (Ez. 8:22-27). Nehemiah however, viewed

* Although the nation restored consisted only of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, it viewed itself as representing all of Israel. The recurrence of the number 12 was the symbolic counterpart to the exclusion of all aliens from among Israel's neighbours. The leaders of the first group of repatriates, together with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, numbered 12 (Neh.7:7, correcting Ezra2:2). At the dedication of the Temple in 515 BCE, 12 sin offerings were sacrificed "according to the number of the tribes of Israel" (Ezra 6:17). In Ezra's caravan there were 12 lay families; the Temple contributions were entrusted to 12 priests and 12 Levites; not only 12 sin-offerings but 12 bullocks "for all Israel" (Ezra 8:35) were offered upon arrival. Although the text is unclear it would appear that the list of intermarrieds purported to relate that the number of lay families and localities affected was likewise 12.
the granting of royal letters of passage and military accompaniment as concrete expressions of divine favor (Neh. 2:7-9, 18).

If Ezra was guided by Joshua's punishment of Achan, Nehemiah took the account of Joshua's conquest and distribution of the land as his model. In the Book of Joshua we read seven times of how the Canaanites "heard" of the exploits of the Israelites, first under Moses and then under Joshua.* Each exploit invited a response, whether of resignation or hostility, until Joshua subdued the land. He then proceeded to divide it among the tribes by lot (Joshua 13:21).

Nehemiah's opponents were Sanballat, governor of Samaria; Tobiah, the Ammonite Servant (a royal official?); and Geshem or Gashmu the Arabian, whose son Cainu bore the title "king." Each act of Nehemiah is "heard" by them: his arrival (Neh. 2:10); his decision to build (2:19); the actual construction of the wall (3:33); the progress in construction (4:1); the discovery of their plot to block construction (4:9); erection of the wall (6:1); foiling of the plot to eliminate Nehemiah (6:16).

As in Joshua each act invited a response of the enemies, graduated in intensity, to prevent the walls from being restored. All attempts failed, and after successfully carrying through his task, Nehemiah placed his relative Hanani, Officer of the Fortress, in charge of the city, set up watch at the gates and civil guards along the walls, and examined the old census list as the basis for the casting of lots in order to repopulate the newly enlarged holy city (Neh. 7:1-72; 11:1-2). Ezra joined him in the ceremony to dedicate the wall. After priests, Levites, the people, the wall and gates were all purified, two musical processions circled the wall, one led by Ezra, the other joined by Nehemiah. The processions converged at the Temple where sacrifices were offered and men, women and children united in a joyous celebration that recalled the Temple's foundation ceremony almost 100 years earlier (Neh. 12:27-43; Ez. 3:10-13).

* The crossing of the Reed Sea and the conquest of the Transjordan (Joshua 2:10-11);
2. the crossing of the Jordan (5:1);
3. the conquest of Jericho (6:27);
4. the conquest of Ai (8:24);
5. the erection of an altar on Mount Ebal (9:1-3);
6. the conclusion of the pact with the Gibeonites (10:1);
7. the conquest of the center and the south (11:1).
SUPPORT OF THE TEMPLE

Once the holy city was refortified, steps had to be taken to insure its economic viability and preserve its sanctity. Its population had to be increased and its major institution, the Temple, assured of continuous support. Ezra's decree from King Artaxerxes extended exemption from the three royal taxes to all priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and other Temple servants, and authorized Ezra to draw upon the royal stores up to 100 talents of silver, 100 "kor" of wheat, 100 "baths" each of wine and oil, and unlimited amounts of salt (Ezra 7:20-24).

In a solemn assembly, marked by fasting, the donning of sackcloth and a lengthy confession led by the Levites, the people concluded a covenant in which they undertook to abstain from mixed marriages, observe the Sabbath and the sabbatical year and support the Temple (Neh. 9:10). Nehemiah's name headed the list of signatories, while all others signed by families.

There were some 21 priestly families headed by Seraiah, probably Ezra's family (Neh. 10:1-9; Ezra 7:1); 17 Levitical families and 44 lay families. The lay signatories represented the traditional families whose representatives returned either with Ezra or earlier with Zerubbabel. The more than 20 signatories whose names did not appear in either of the earlier two lists must have been represented among those repatriates originally listed according to town rather than family (Neh. 10:10-28; Ez. 2; Neh. 7; Ez. 8:1-13).

As in the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 24:3, 7) the entire people undertook to obey all the laws of the Lord promulgated by Moses (Neh. 10:29-30). The newly instituted provisions, however, were not recorded as apodictic commands but as commitments voluntarily undertaken. The provisions of the pact in support of the Temple detail six kinds of payments, some familiar from the Torah, others interpretive of Torah laws and still others wholly innovative (Neh. 10:29-40):

1. Annual tax of one-third of a shekel for Temple maintenance and support of the sacrificial cult: the twice-daily regular sacrifices; the weekly showbread; the Sabbath, monthly and festal sacrifices; special communal holy offerings and sin-offerings.

2. Annual wood-offering to keep the altar fires burning constantly (cf. Lev. 6:5-6), allocated by lot among priests, Levites and people.

3. Offerings of firstlings to be brought to the Temple; annual first fruits of the ground and of the trees (cf. Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 26:1-11); firstlings of sheep,
goats and cattle (cf. Num. 18:17-18): redemption money from the first born of humans and unclean beasts (Num. 18:15-16). The monetary and animal offerings are specifically earmarked for the priests.

(4) Produce contributions for the priests to be brought to the Temple chambers: the first of the dough (cf. Num. 15:17-21); grain, fruit, wine, and oil (cf. Num. 18:11-12; Deut. 18:4).

(5) A tithe of ground produce collected by and for Levites, accompanied by priests, in every town (cf. Num. 18:21-24).

(6) A tenth of the Levitical tithe, as contribution to the priests, to be brought to the Temple chambers (cf. Num. 18:25-32).

New officials were appointed in charge of the Temple stores, now organized to receive the various priestly and Levitical gifts (Neh. 12:44).

SUPPORT FROM TAXATION AND VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Support for the Temple and its personnel thus derived not only from occasional royal gifts and limited subventions, or from voluntary contributions of Jews and others abroad (Ez. 1:4-6; 7:15-22) but from an annual system of taxation in money and kind binding upon all the inhabitants of the land of Judah. Priestly payments that Torah law does not specifically require to be made at the sanctuary, such as redemption of the first-born (Ex. 13:1 ff.; 22:28; 34:20; Num. 18:15-16), were now to be collected in Jerusalem. Such Temple personnel as musicians and gatekeepers, whose status and rank had not placed them in the inner circle during pre-exilic times, were now exempt from imperial taxation and counted among the ranks of the Levites. In fact, it is believed that in earlier times the tithe itself was not an annual obligatory offering but a voluntary donation.

Despite these measures to funnel all priestly gifts to Jerusalem and upgrade the position of musicians, gatekeepers and Levites (cf. Neh. 12:27-29), priests and Levites continued to reside outside the city, which suddenly became under-populated within newly fortified boundaries. Not only did a call go out for volunteers, but lots were cast to bring a tenth of the nation — that is, a tithe — to reside in the holy city (Neh. 11:1-2).

The people were thus summoned not only to give of their sum and substance to the Temple but to contribute of their population to the city. A list of settlers enumerates the leading families of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, priests, Levites, gatekeepers and musicians who took up residence in Jerusalem (Neh.
11:3-24). But we are also informed that when Nehemiah left Jerusalem to return to Susa, people began to withhold the tithe, forcing the Levites and musicians, newly established in Jerusalem, to flee to the fields. Upon his return Nehemiah took stringent measures to reorganize administrative personnel in the Temple (Neh. 13:10-13).

PRESERVATION OF THE SABBATH

An even more serious violation that developed during Nehemiah's absence was widespread desecration of the Sabbath. On that day the farmers treaded grapes and loaded grain, wine and figs on donkeys and drove them to Jerusalem. Tyrian merchants trading in fish and other wares conducted business in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Upon his return, Nehemiah took the nobles to task for tolerating such a situation. His rebuke was reminiscent of the words of Jeremiah, who threatened Jerusalem with divine destruction if burdens were carried there on the Sabbath, promising at the same time that the city would forever serve as the cultic center for the land under a Davidic king if it sanctified the Sabbath (Jer. 17:19-27).

The implication was clear: the city could not remain holy if the Sabbath was desecrated therein. Nehemiah therefore clamped shut the city gates for the Sabbath, ordered the foreign merchants out on that day and appointed a special guard of his own men, supported by Levites, to preserve the day's sanctity (Neh. 13:14-22).

OBSERVANCE OF THE TORAH

When Nehemiah wrote his "Memoirs," he congratulated himself for having ruled with a light hand, in contrast with former governors. Moreover, he restrained the nobles and local officials from impoverishing the people through foreclosure of mortgages and enslavement for debt. The guiding principle in his actions, and one which he urged upon the people, was reverence for God. This meant consideration for one's fellow-man, and is mirrored in the seven-fold occurrence of the term "brother" in Nehemiah's story (15:2-12), which link observance of the sabbatical year and support of the poor with release of the "brother" sold into debt slavery after six years of service. Proper observance of these laws would redound to the people's blessing on their land (Deut. 15:4, 6, 10, 18). Nehemiah surely reasoned that renewal of the blessing on the people restored to
their land could only be assured if the people adhered to the laws of social justice.

These laws of brotherhood epitomized the provisions of the Torah. The point that Nehemiah made for the individual, Ezra made for the group. Ezra sought to involve the entire people — men, women and children — in the reading, interpretation and application of the Torah. Appearing on the first of Tishre before a national assembly gathered in the square by the Water Gate, he mounted a wooden platform, flanked by 13 officials and attended by 13 Levites. As Ezra unfurled a Torah scroll, the assembly arose. He pronounced a blessing, and the people responded “Amen” with raised hands, bowed and prostrated themselves. The ensuing reading was accompanied by Levitical interpretation.

The people’s impulse to tears was repressed by Ezra and Nehemiah who admonished them to celebrate this holy day in gladness. The next day the elders gathered before Ezra for a study session and issued instructions for the construction of booths in Jerusalem in celebration of the approaching festival of Sukkot.

Under Zerubbabel, emphasis in the observance of this festival by the repatriates had been placed upon the sacrifices, 70 in all, thereby recalling the end of 70 years of exile as foretold by Jeremiah (25:8-14; 29:10-14; Ez. 1:1; 3:4). The celebration under Ezra was linked to Joshua, conqueror of the land, who had also convened a national assembly, blessed the people and read from a “copy of the Torah of Moses” which he had inscribed on stone (Josh. 8:30-35). The emphasis on booths no doubt recalled the various passages from the prophetic writings and psalms construing the booth as symbolic of God’s guidance and the restoration of the House of David (Amos 9:11; Is. 4:5-6; Ps. 76:2-3; Ex. 12:37; Lev. 23:43; Zech. 14:16-19).

THE THREE PILLARS

The age of Restoration did not succeed in re-establishing the Davidic Dynasty but its legacy to the future of Judaism was emphatic, as witnessed by the fact that the Ethics of the Fathers (Pirke Avot) commences with the statement of one of the last members of the Great Assembly, Simeon the Just: “The world stands on three things: the Torah, the (Temple) service and acts of kindness.”
THE WESTERN WALL

BY BEN ZION LURIA

Part VII

This is the seventh in a series of articles commemorating the tenth anniversary of the unification of the city of Jerusalem. The present account continues the history of the Western Wall.

THE MUFTI OF JERUSALEM

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini, who headed the Arab nationalist movement, fought with every means at his disposal against the Jewish Yishuv in the country. And since he enjoyed the support, albeit covert, of the majority of the British officials in the country, he did everything in his power to restrict Jewish rights at the Western Wall.

Possibly there were people of moderation among the Moslem community in the country who did not believe in the Mufti’s instigation that the prayers of the Jews at the Western Wall and the erection of a canvas partition there on the Day of Atonement constituted a danger to their holy places, but no one had the courage to express an opinion different from that of the Mufti, for fear of the Arab bands who were subservient to the Mufti’s call and forcefully silenced all people who refused to toe the line laid down by him.

DISTURBANCES AT THE KOTEL

Completely oblivious of the law and disdainful of the religious sensibilities of other people, and with the encouragement of the British Mandatory authorities, the Mufti continued his machinations. Under license of the government, he built a wall near the Western Wall, close to the Moroccan Gate. In this wall he opened an entrance and built stairs leading to the courtyard between the square of the Moroccan Quarter and the courtyard facing the area of the Western Wall. Likewise, the government issued a permit to convert the building within this courtyard into a Moslem seminary. The muezzin (the Moslem caller to prayer) used

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to climb to the roof of this building adjoining the Western Wall area and call the faithful to prayer — something that had never before taken place. Thus, he began disturbing the Jews at prayer at the Western Wall, with no one to stop him. This was a blatant breach of the status quo established in regard to the Western Wall, with the malicious approval of the Mandatory Government.

The area adjoining the Western Wall had hitherto served as a passageway for only a few families who used to enter through the gate fixed at the north of the area to their dwellings bordering on the Wailing Wall area. By opening the new entrance and building the stairs, a direct link was created between the Western Wall area and the Moroccan Gate street leading to the Mosque of Omar. In this way the small and modest area where Jews had for generations communed in prayer became an open short-cut for all passers-by.

The attempt to erect a new Moslem building for religious study and prayer close to the Western Wall infringed on the religious susceptibilities of the Jews in that it blatantly changed the appearance of the Western Wall and was likely to serve as a permanent focus for attack and a source for intrigue and strife between one people and another.

RIOTS OF 1929

It was in such a charged atmosphere that tension mounted, until the explosion was sparked off on Friday, August 16, 1929. This occurred after an inciting speech delivered by the Mufti to an Arab crowd whom he had convened especially from surrounding villages. The Arabs, for the most part armed, broke into the Western Wall area, some from surrounding lanes and some through the New Gate, drove away the worshippers, beat up the beadle, lit a bonfire in this holy place and burned prayer books and psalters and petition notes that had lain for centuries in the crevices between the stones of the Wall, broke up a table and an oil lamp, all with the clear purpose of committing an act of sacrilege, wounding the susceptibilities of the Jewish people, and driving away the worshippers at this place, so that they might never return there again.

The preparations for these excesses had been known to the Mandatory Government, but it took no steps to prevent them. The demands voiced by the Jewish national institutions to find the organizers of this attack and its perpetrators and bring them to justice went unheeded. The Mandatory officials closed their eyes to this sacrilege and turned a deaf ear to the Jewish protest.
Interesting evidence about the feelings of the Jews of Eretz Israel at that time is to be found in the memoirs of M.M. Ussishkin, one of the foremost Zionist leaders in the Jewish world and Head of the Keren Kayemet Leyisrael at the time. Ussishkin tells of his chance meeting with Rabbi Chaim Sonnenfeld at the Western Wall. This is what he writes:

"It was on the eve of Rosh Hashana of the year 5690 (1929), about six weeks after the anti-Jewish riots of August 1929. The Jewish part of Jerusalem was still steeped in gloom and mourning; the impressions of the disturbances had not yet waned. The Jews went about the streets in an air of depression and at every corner we saw the 'adequate protection' that had come, as one knows, too late. By the Western Wall, which served, officially, as the cause of the disturbances, were stationed large numbers of policemen who kept an eye on all people coming and going. Under such conditions visits to the Wall and prayers there had ceased almost entirely.

"I had returned to Jerusalem from abroad two days before the eve of Rosh Hashana. It is not my custom to visit the Wall on that day, but this time I decided to call at the last remnant of our ancient glory before the Mincha service. I stole out of the house for fear that the members of my family would not let me go. With a feeling of sadness and dejection I entered the Old City. All the way to the Wall, I met hardly a single Jew. British and Arab police thronged the narrow lanes.

"And then all of a sudden I found myself face to face with the Wall. The sight of the surroundings of this relic of our ancient past always makes a gloomy impression upon me. This time, however, I was more deeply provoked by what I saw. I was facing the same Wall, the memento of our great and glorious past, the only relic of our Temple, but only two Jews stood before it: the beadle and myself. The whole of the area facing the Wall was filled with British policemen. Overlooking the area, near the entrance gate to the Temple Mount and the Mosque of Omar, were Arabs looking on the Jewish destruction. In my grief, I stood in silence and thought of the days gone by. Two thousand years ago the whole of that vast courtyard was humming with Jews from all parts of the country. Over the entrance gate was an inscription in Latin and Greek, warning strangers not to dare approach the Temple precincts. Even the Romans, the rulers of the world of those days, were permitted to approach only as far as the gate and no further."
Today the rulers of the world were refusing us, the Children of Israel, permission to go up to the place which is so holy to us. Now we are accounted as strangers!

"I can't recall how long I stood communing with these melancholy thoughts; the sun had set and darkness pervaded the whole of the area before the Wall. Lamps began sparkling all around, but none were permitted to be lit here. Of a sudden I heard footsteps approaching. From the dark lane an old Jew of imposing stature and mien, attired in his traditional festive garb, came into the square followed by two companions. With head bent he approached the Wall and began kissing its stones with ardour engendered by holiness. I recognized him. He was Rabbi Chaim Sonnenfeld. I stood glued to my place, not daring to approach him, because I did not want to disturb that reverential and awe-inspiring scene.

"A deep sigh broke from the depth of his heart. He lifted his head, gave the stones a parting kiss and was about to go his way when he noticed me.

"'How happy I am,' he said, 'that I have found a near and dear brother here to share our sorrow and pain. I was never in the habit of visiting the Wall on the eve of Rosh Hashana because the distance is too much for me (he was then over 80 years of age), but today, after the recent events, I deemed it a duty to come up to behold the remnant of our past glory.' Suddenly he lifted his head; his eyes sparkled with enthusiasm and hope, and he said: 'Fall not in spirit; this too will pass; "Es vet zay nisht helfen." We will achieve our ends. No, we shall not approach this holy place of ours through narrow lanes and with bent head, but proudly, our heads held high. Continue your work faithfully. Who knows, perhaps very soon we shall be privileged to behold the true redemption. Reach home safely and in peace. 'Es vet zay nisht helfen' (nothing will avail them).

"Having said this, he took his leave and went his way. The words of that wonderful old man, at that moment, and in that place, left an indelible impression upon me. I shall never forget the scene as long as I live. More composed and heartened than I was when coming to the Wall, I returned home."

The extent to which the Western Wall succeeds in uniting all the Jews of Eretz Israel may be gathered from the fact that Rabbi Chaim Sonnenfeld was the spiritual leader of the religious zealots in Jerusalem, and stood at the head of the opponents to Zionism and to the Yishuv leadership. At the Western Wall, however, a spirit of understanding and comradeship pervaded these two leaders, one common hope filled their hearts: the hope for the complete redemption of the Jewish people in Eretz Israel.
TORAH DIALOGUES
BY HAROLD D. HALPERN

Part II

This new series of questions and responses on the weekly Sidra is designed to encourage closer study of the text and to promote discussion. The dialogues are especially appropriate for the Shabbat table between parents and children or in the synagogue between rabbi and congregation.

The responses given are necessarily brief and should be regarded merely as starting points for fuller discussion.

We recommend that these dialogues be kept for future reference. Following issues will continue with questions and answers on all books of the Pentateuch.

QUESTIONS

HAYYE SARAH

1. Which mitzvah is emphasized at the beginning of this sidra (Ch. 23)?
2. Why does the Torah devote so much space to Abraham’s transaction with Ephron the Hittite? What modern significance does this episode have?
4. What three significant details does the Torah relate about the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah?

TOLEDOT

1. Which incidents in the Torah indicate Isaac’s passive personality?
2. How could Isaac choose to bless Esau and not Jacob? Why did he favor Esau in the first place (25:28)?
3. Abraham admonished Eliezer about Isaac marrying only a suitable woman from among his own people. Where in this chapter do we find a reiteration of the patriarchs’ objection to intermarriage?
4. What justification can you find for Rebekah’s ordering Jacob to impersonate his elder brother?
5. What subtle but meaningful changes are there in Rebekah’s report to Jacob of his father’s words to Esau in 27:1-4?

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RESPONSES

HAYYE SARAH

1. Providing a burial place for the dead.

2. Perhaps to emphasize that the site was acquired by cash payment and with all legal formalities followed. This is especially significant today when there is controversy at that very sepulchre in Hebron.

3. Here are some of the interesting differences in Eliezer’s version.
   v. 35 — He expands the description of Abraham’s wealth (cf. v. 1)
   v. 37 — He doesn’t mention God (cf. v. 3)
   vv. 38 & 40 — Eliezer makes Abraham’s family the requirement for marriage not just his homeland (cf. v. 4)
   vv. 39-40 — The suggestion that Isaac might be brought to Aram is studiously omitted (cf. vv. 5 and 8)
   v. 47 — Omits details in vv. 22-23 and reverses the order of inquiry and bestowal of gifts!

4. Rebekah’s consent is asked before she is sent with Eliezer (24:58). She takes over Sarah’s tent and provides consolation for her death. Love is mentioned after marriage. (v. 67). Incidentally, the blessing bestowed upon Rebekah in v. 60 is still used today when the bride is bedecked with her veil.

TOLEDOT

1. Isaac is very rarely quoted in the text. A wife is chosen for him and he readily submits to the Akedah (chapter 22). In the incident with the wells (26:15-22) Isaac is forced from one place to another without apparent resistance on his part.

2. Chapter 27 begins by informing us that “Isaac’s eyes were dimmed,” perhaps to explain his strange preference. He was also influenced by the rule of primogeniture — the priorities of the firstborn son. Some see his favoritism as part of an innocent outlook which fits his overall personality (see Question # 1). Other commentators take the intriguing position that because Isaac knew Esau’s evil ways he showered affection and blessing upon him, in order to change his ways!

3. Esau married Hittite women and “they were a bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah” (26:34 f.) Isaac re-emphasizes his attitude in 28:1 (cf. 28:8).

4. She thought that Jacob was worthier and Esau had married Hittites. Also, the prophecy of 25:23 guided her actions.

5. Isaac’s words Rebekah’s report
   v. 3 ... go out to the field and hunt... v. 7 ... bring me game...
   v. 4 ... food such as I love... Omitted
   v. 4 ... that my soul may bless you... v. 7 ... bless you before the Lord.
QUESTIONS

VaYETZE

1. Why does the Torah present the mundane conversation between Jacob and the shepherds (29:4 ff.)?
2. Our sages point out that a sinner is often punished “midah kineged midah” — measure for measure. What incident in this sidra seems to fulfill that aphorism?
3. What previous occurrence might Laban be alluding to when he says: “In our place this is not done: to put the younger before the elder (29:26)?
4. Why does Leah first say “Now my husband will accompany me” only after the birth of Levi (29:34)?

VaYISHLACH

1. Rashi cites the following rabbinic comment on the opening verses: “Jacob prepared himself for three things: doron (gifts), tefillah (prayer) and milhamah (battle).” Which three passages are the basis for this comment?
2. What is the meaning of Jacob’s struggle with the stranger at Yabbok?
3. Identify some events in Jacob’s life that indicate his spiritual growth and maturity.
RESPONSES

VaYETZE

1. Perhaps as a lesson in courteous conversation and polite inquiry. The depiction of a pastoral scene is a beautiful example of the literary quality of Torah.
2. Jacob is deceived by marrying Leah masquerading as Rachel just as he had deceived his father by pretending to be Esau.
3. Jacob pre-empting the blessing intended for Esau, his elder brother.
4. Rashi cites the Midrash which notes that through prophecy Leah knew that she now had borne at least her share of the 12 sons that would be born to Jacob by 4 wives. Another possibility is that she is referring to the fact that a mother can carry or hold the hands of two children but that a third makes it necessary for her husband to accompany (Heb. lavoh) her.

VaYISHLACH

2. Many theories are put forth. Rashbam says that the stranger was simply God’s emissary to stop Jacob from fleeing. The Midrash speaks of him as a kind of angel (sar) of Esau. Some see the incident as a psychological inner struggle and others as an allegory of Israel’s eternal fight for survival against its enemies.
3. We first meet Jacob as the brother who exacts the bechorah (rights of first-born) from Esau and then as the deceiver of his father. The beginning of his spiritual growth is revealed in the famous vision of the ladder but his preoccupation is still often with striped and speckled sheep (see his dream, 31:10-12). The way he confronts Esau in Chapter 32 is in sharp contrast with his earlier brotherly dealings. So are his later visions (32:10, 35:9 ff.).

ISRAEL

“וַיֶּלֶכֶת אֵלֶּה אֶת־עֵפֶן יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֵר יְהוָה אֶת־עֵפֶן וַיֹּאמֵר אִיתָם שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־עֵפֶן שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם אֲלֵהוּ שֵׁם אֲלֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־עֵפֶן שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁם W

And he (the angel) said unto him: “What is thy name?” And he said: “Jacob.” And he said: “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel, for thou hast striven with God and with men and hast prevailed” (32:28–29).

It is interesting to note that henceforth the descendants of Jacob would be called Israelites or Children of Israel (not Jacobites nor Hebrews). During the two millenia exile the Jewish people called their land of promise ארץ ישראל, the Land of Israel, though they did not posses it. When the Jewish state was established in 1948, again the most natural and acceptable name was taken: Israel.
BIBLE NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

WORLD WIZO BIBLE DAY

While the State of Israel was preparing to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary the thinking and imagination of some of our brothers and sisters around the world naturally turned to the grandeur that was Solomon's. All the various WIZO chapters around the world devoted this fourteenth annual WIZO Bible Day last year to study the greatness of Solomon.

In London, Rabbi Cyril Harris tried to unravel King Solomon's character and to discover "what made him tick." He spoke of his wisdom, his power and of his great organizing ability; the Temple he built, the trade he expanded, peace and security he established. He also spoke of his downfall and collapse.

In France a number of cities devoted their studies to elucidate and dwell on the greatness of King Solomon.

In Aix-en-Provence Rabbi El Beze dwelt on his wisdom in the Books of The Song of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. In Strassbourg Rabbi Warschawski spoke about his peace treaties. In Luxembourg Rabbi Buiz presented the legendary king as seen in the Oral tradition. In Valencia Rabbi Habib focused attention on Solomon the builder of the Temple. In Lausanne, Switzerland, Rabbi Dr. Valnai stressed the peaceful aspect of King Solomon's name and reign, since the WIZO Bible Study day coincided with the historic visit of Sadat in Jerusalem and the tenth anniversary of the unification of the city.

WETHERSFIELD, CONN, BIBLE STUDY GROUP

We have made a change in our meetings this summer which is working very well. We used to meet twice a month in the evenings in each other's homes. However, during the winter weather we had several cancelled meetings.

Now we meet in the daytime at our Synagogue. We bring a sandwich and have a cup of tea together. Then we have our Bible Study. We meet every week now. We have gained some members and find it most interesting.

Helena Kavalier

THE FLATBUSH BIBLE SOCIETY

One of the oldest and largest local groups affiliated with the World Jewish Bible Society is the Flatbush Bible Society, located in one of the major Jewish neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York. It was founded in Fall 1963 by Dr. Shlomo Shulsinger, long active in the movement for Hebrew in the United
States and for Hebrew camping in particular. That summer he had been a guest at a meeting of the Hug Tanakh founded by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion held in the President's home in Jerusalem, and had been very much impressed by its spirit, organization, and method, which he tried to emulate.

The Flatbush group consists of about twenty-five members who take turns meeting at each other's homes on alternate Friday nights during the winter months. After a period of socialization from 8:30 to 9 p.m. there is a one-hour lecture in Hebrew, followed by a question and discussion period, refreshments and singing.

The lecturers are usually local teachers, sometimes members of the group, and occasionally visitors from Israel (such as Dr. Haim Gevaryahu). The regular lecturers have included Rabbi Amnon Haramati, Dr. Nisan Ararat, Dr. Avigdor Bittmann, and Meir Lubetski. Most years the group has studied a specific book of the Tanakh, but in some years the lectures have been on various topics. In fifteen years the group has covered almost the entire Nevi'im and Ketuvim.

The Executive Committee of the Flatbush Bible Society this past year consisted of Mr. Mordecai Mandelbaum, president; Mr. Shlomo Telushkin, treasurer; Dr. Shlomo Shulsinger; Mr. Bernard Teitelbaum; and Professor Morris Silverman.

Prof. Morris Silverman

CHICAGO ILL, STUDY GROUPS

I lead at present two Bible groups in Chicago. Both were among the groups established by Mr. Harry Ruskin in the 60's.

After reading over the Pentateuch a few times, we decided to continue with the other books of the Bible. Each group meets every other week. We finished the Book of Job in July. We shall start reading The Song of Songs in August.

One group, which I shall call the Downtown-West Rogers Park chapter, meets in private homes. Currently there are ten members, and all are subscribers to Dor le-Dor. After the regular Bible session, we read a chapter of the Pentateuch. At present we are reading Genesis.

The Near North Side chapter meets bi-weekly at the home of Jack and Rose Nathanson. Dinner is served from 6-7, and from 7:00 to 8:30 we study the Bible. The average attendance is twenty.

Members of both groups are free to express their interpretations and opinions on whatever we read in the Bible. In addition, we discuss current events after Bible study is concluded for the evening.

The members claim that they learn a lot from our sessions. I believe that I am learning more than all of them.

Israel Chodosh
THE BET HATENAKH AND LATIN AMERICAN JEWRY

Chaim Finkelstein, formerly Head of the Department of Education and Culture in the Diaspora of the World Zionist Organization and at present Chairman of the World Executive of the Bet Hatenakh, and Professor Haim Gevaryahu, Chairman of the World Jewish Bible Society, have returned from an extensive tour of Latin America on behalf of rallying support for the Bet Hatenakh, the World Jewish Bible Center in Jerusalem.

Their preliminary reports were most encouraging. Addressing many meetings of communal leaders, formal and informal rallies for adults and youth alike, they succeeded in bringing the message of the significance of the Bet Hatenakh as the symbol of the centrality of the Bible in the life of the Jewish people, and as a living fountain-head from which the knowledge of Bible would spread and invest new meaning to the challenge of Jewish survival in the Diaspora, to the leadership and to the rank and file. Considerable enthusiasm was engendered by the prospect of housing the World Jewish Bible Center in Jerusalem, thus reaffirming Israel’s capital as the spiritual center of World Jewry.

As a result of their efforts some very significant results were achieved. First and foremost, a movement was initiated for the strengthening of existing Bible study groups and the establishment of a net-work of new Bible circles. Heading this movement were heads of the organized Jewish communities in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, Mexico and Chile, representatives of national and local organizations as well as individuals in important positions in the general life of Latin America. This leadership took it upon itself to raise financial support among its communities for the Bet Hatenakh.

It augurs well for the future that this entire venture has strong support from the Prime Minister, Menahem Begin and from the Chairman on the World Zionist Organization, Arieh L. Dultzin.

DAF YOMI

The renowned Rabbi Meir Shapira originated the Daf Yomi in 1923, by which Jews all over the world could study the same page of the Talmud on the same day. The custom spread rapidly, and is now in its eighth cycle which began on June 24 1975. There are 2711 pages in the Talmud, and it takes a little over seven years to complete a cycle. Since Jewish tradition accepts the Oral Law as an integral part of the Torah, which comprises both the Written and the Oral Law, we are including in this issue of Dor-le-Dor the pages of the Daf Yomi which will be studied from March 29.

Please turn to page 147 for the readings of the Daf Yomi.
### TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

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We add here the daily Talmud page endorsed by the Jewish Community.

א"ת: יומאים בדיקת ב' במשכת קדרשים
כ"ד: יומאים מהתולים מסכת בא קמא
TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

May 1979

Su 27 Isaiah 10
M 28 Isaiah 11
T 29 Isaiah 12
W 30 Isaiah 13
Th 31 Isaiah 14

June 1979

Su 26 Isaiah 32
M 27 Isaiah 33
T 28 Isaiah 34
W 29 1 Samuel 11:14–12:22
Th 30 (צחקו) קרא

Israel observes only one day of each major holiday (except Rosh Hashana). Since there is no second day of Shavuot in Israel, the regular Torah sequence is read. Therefore all the Sidrot from June 2nd to July 7th will be read a week earlier in Israel. On July 7, only the second of the two Sidrot indicated will be read, since the first will have been read the previous week.

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Restoration of a Holy Nation

The Western Wall — Part VII

Torah Dialogues — Part II

Bible News Around the World

Triennial Bible Reading Calendar