

ENGLISH SUMMARIES

The image of Yitro (Jethro), a secondary character in the biblical story, was enhanced and broadened in post-biblical literature and in both early and late rabbinic literature. Rabbinic homilies dealt with Yitro's motives for joining the Children of Israel, the different names by which he was known, his religious status, assessments of Moses' marrying his daughter, and the reward bestowed on his descendants. The dominant attitude, characteristic of most of the rabbinic homilies, was positive. Yitro was seen in them as the ultimate model of a convert. Following that line of thought, many of the homilies consist of descriptions of the process of integration of Yitro's descendants into the ranks of the sages of the Sanhedrin, who sat in *Lishkat ha-Gazit* (the chamber of the hewn stones) in the second Temple.

However, the dominant tendency of the homilies about Yitro in *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* is different. In the midst of the collection of hagiographic homilies, there are a number of homilies that do not share the tendency towards admiration that characterizes the others. These homilies reduce the reader's enthusiasm about Yitro's character. Some homilies even include hints of criticism of his joining the Children of Israel.

In "Homilies about Yitro in *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* and Their Possible Contribution to Understanding Its Aim", **Brachi Elitzur** examines this exceptional tendency, and proposes an explanation for it. The critical homilies were distributed throughout the various anthologies of homilies from the periods of the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. But they found their way into *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana*, while their hagiographic parallels were not included among the homilies in the work.

Elitzur addresses the unique attitude towards Yitro in *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana*, comparing the homilies in it to homilies with an opposite message found in other collections of homilies, both early and late. She examines whether other biblical figures were treated in the same way, considers the systematic principles that characterize the composition, and attempts to understand through them why the editor of this *midrash* seems to have held a hidden grudge against the figure of Yitro.

In "Supporting Non-Jewish Poor: 'Goyim' (Gentiles), 'Others', and 'Those Who Do Not Belong to the Covenant'", **Yael Wilfand** examines two positions in Land

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of Israel rabbinic literature concerning giving charity to Gentile poor. The *Mishnah*, the *Tosefta* and the *Yerushalmi* favored allowing poor Gentiles to gather the gifts to the poor that were given in the field, giving them other produce in place of the tithe for the poor, and supporting them through communal charitable institutions, based on the principle “for the sake of paths of peace”. By way of contrast, the *Sifra* and *Sifrei Devarim* opposed allowing non-Jewish poor to benefit from the gifts to the poor, the second tithe, or any other charitable support.

Wilfand reveals a difference in vocabulary between these two groups. While the sources that support giving to non-Jews contrasted “the poor of Gentiles” and “the poor of Israel”, the opponents of such support contrasted “Israel” and “others”, or “those who belong to the covenant” and “those who do not belong to the covenant”. Wilfand shows that the contrast between “Israel” and “*Goyim*” (Gentiles) that appears in the Land of Israel sources was relatively neutral and appeared in a variety of contexts — both those that were excluding and that deepened the gap between these categories and those that dealt with them more inclusively, in terms of managing life within a shared living space. On the other hand, the contrast between “those who belong to the covenant” and “those who do not belong to the covenant”, or between “those who belong to the covenant” and “others” described Jews and Gentiles in the context of their relationship with God, and, in general, appears in sources that exclude and/or deepen the gap that separates Jews from non-Jews.

The division of the land of Israel among the tribes of Israel, an important facet of life in biblical times, did not survive the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles and the destruction of the First Temple, *de facto*. Yet centuries later, after the destruction of the Second Temple, the notion of the tribal borders was revived. In “Between Judah and Benjamin — A Study of Leadership Legitimizing Methods of R. Yehuda Hanasi and his Dynasty”, **Alex J. Tal** shows that these mythical biblical geographical borders served as a tool in the competition between sages in the Land of Israel and those in Babylonia at the turn of the second and third centuries.

Two of the tribes of Israel stood out from among the rest: Yehuda (Judah) and Binyamin (Benjamin). The biblical struggles between them were translated in rabbinic tradition into the question of the precise location of the border between their territories, and the consequent division of the Temple.

A tannaitic dispute about the border appears in several sources in talmudic literature. R. Yehuda Hanasi (“Rabbi”) held that the Temple was completely within the territory of Benjamin. This may be related to the tradition of Rabbi’s own words about his lineage (*Breishit Rabba* 33:3, and *Yerushalmi Kilayim* 9:3): “...And if R. Huna, the *Resh Galutha*, were to come up here [to the land of Israel], I would rise before him, for he is from Judah, whereas I am from Benjamin”. The combination of locating God’s *shekhina* (sacred presence) in the territory of Benjamin and

claiming lineage from Benjamin constitutes a significant component in establishing the authority of Rabbi's leadership.

However, while Rabbi was descended from Benjamin on his father's side, he was also descended from Judah, on his mother's side, in a rather complex way. In later generations this complexity disappeared from mention, leaving Judah as the sole origin of the patriarchate's dynasty. This change, Tal argues, was related to the status of Rabbi's descendants in the eyes of contemporary sages.

Thus the tribal territories found new meaning in the leadership struggle of R. Yehuda Hanasi, arguably the most significant leader of the Talmudic era. This had deep and important implications not only in the Galilean social and cultural environment, but also with the hegemony contest between the patriarchate in the land of Israel and the office of the exilarch in Babylon.

It is customary to consider R. Joseph Rosen as part of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century analytic movement in the study of talmudic and halachic texts, most of whose members belonged to the Lithuanian scholarly world. Yet the assimilation of the philosophical terminology of Maimonides' *The Guide for the Perplexed* into the framework of his scholarly halachic investigations is one of the factors that distinguish his method from the Lithuanian methods of his time.

In "Scholarship (*Lamdanut*), *Hassidut*, and *Kabbalah* — On Hassidic and Kabbalistic Influences on the Scholarship of R. Joseph Rosen", **Israel Ori Meitlis** suggests that R. Rosen's sociological and theological belonging to the hassidic world in general, and to Habad *hassidut* in particular, played a role in forming R. Rosen's original method. This hypothesis concerns both the approach of Habad *hassidut* to Maimonides and to *The Guide for the Perplexed*, and clearly hassidic formulations that appear scattered in small doses throughout R. Rosen's scholarly discussions. These force one to seek more subtle hassidic influences in his discussions. An accumulation of a large quantity of sources which probably indicate hassidic influence — that is expressed in conceptualization through the hassidic terminology that was available to R. Rosen in the hassidic climate in which he was active, or, at least, that have a hassidic flavor that arises from the language in which the idea is expressed — confirms this hypothesis, making it a significant factor in R. Rosen's method. Meitlis shows how Habad literature served R. Rosen as a sort of "secondary source" a number of times, and how this was probably expressed in forming the scholarly methods which R. Rosen used in his books frequently. Thus it may be that the indirect hassidic influence on R. Rosen's scholarly halachic discussions was much greater than can be estimated.

Isolated, yet clearer and more explicit influences can sometimes be found in early kabbalistic literature and from hassidic *kabbalah*. Meitlis shows how kabbalistic and hassidic influences on R. Rosen's scholarship were expressed not only in his

scholarly methodology, but also in his practical halachic decision-making. Thus, Meitlis concludes, R. Rosen lent great validity to *kabbalah* and *hassidut* in the framework of halachic discourse. Meitlis argues that although direct hassidic-kabbalistic influence on R. Rosen's halachic decisions is rare in his books, his daring to break down the barrier between halachic discourse and hassidic-kabbalistic discourse is a significant and meaningful testimony to R. Rosen's halachic paradigm.

In "Give My Regards to Yalta: Is *Kol Ishah* (A Woman's Voice) Mentioned in *Kiddushin* 70a–b?", **Aaron Amit** focuses on one attestation of a well-known dictum of the *amora* Samuel: "The voice of a woman is [equivalent to her] nakedness", found in the printed editions of *Kiddushin* 70a–b. The dictum is cited in the context of a humorous exchange between two second generation Babylonian *amoraim*, Rav Nahman and Rav Yehudah. To Rav Nahman's question to Rav Yehudah, whether he would like to send his regards to Yalta, Rav Nahman's wife, Rav Yehudah responded that he cannot, since Samuel has ruled that "the voice of a woman is nakedness". This statement seems out of place in the context of this story, since Rav Nahman would be the one to convey the greeting, and Rav Yehudah would not hear Yalta's voice at all. In any event, the implication of the statement in this passage is that not only is it forbidden to listen to a woman's singing voice while reciting the Shema, but it is also forbidden to hear her speaking voice at any time. Much has been made of the fact that most medieval halachic authorities ignored this implication. Scholarly studies have hitherto failed to recognize the secondary nature of this citation of Samuel. In light of Amit's analysis of the textual history of the *Kiddushin* passage, it is clear that the halachic authorities simply preserved the original reading of the story, which made no reference to Samuel's dictum, which is original in *Berakhot* 24a.

'*Iyyun* was a classical late medieval and early modern Sephardic analytic approach to Talmud study. Three prominent sixteenth century adherents of the '*iyyun* method were R. Joseph Taitazak, R. David ibn Zimra, and R. Joseph Karo.

In "'Name' and 'Substance' in Nazirite Vows: Sixteenth Century '*Iyyun* Halachic Decision-Making", **Hagai Pely** deals with the halakhic use these three rabbis made of the semantic distinction — of Aristotelian origin — between "name" and "substance". This study has two principal aims. First, it is novel in presenting the way this distinction served in halachic decision-making about nazirite vows. The use of this distinction is unusual in halachic decision-making literature. Second, it clarifies the chronology of the halachic use of this distinction. '*Iyyun* scholars — apparently even before the expulsion from Spain — were aided by this semantic distinction in understanding the approach of R. Shlomo b. Aderet (*Rashba*), who saw nazirite status as a type of vow. Later the '*iyyun* scholars changed the way they used this distinction, so that it would match the approach of R. Asher b. Yechiel

— who disagreed with *Rashba* about this — as R. Asher’s status as a decider became firm in Castille. It is worthy of note that the original semantic usage, which was widespread in the *yeshivot* in Castille, found its way into a responsum of R. Moses di Trani. This is how echoes could be heard of the ways in which this rare halachic use was made of an Aristotelian distinction, in the writings of several of the great rabbinic authorities of the sixteenth century. They teach us both about the methodology of *‘iyyun* and halachic decision-making of the Sephardic sages, and about the dynamics of how terms that were adopted from philosophical and logical literature took on forms, and changed forms, in accordance with the reigning halachic method.

In “Studies in the Scholarly and Halachic Thought on Prayer of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik”, **Dov Schwartz** and **Baruch Weintraub** discuss Rabbi Soloveitchik’s scholarly perception as expressed in his work *Shiurim l’Zekher Abba Mari*. Their central argument is that, in contrast with the “Brisk” scholarly tradition, Rabbi Soloveitchik integrated arguments of human consciousness, which rest on religious phenomenology, into his discussions of prayer. Schwartz and Weintraub show that these arguments are not just ornamental, but rather that they affect the conclusions directly. Thus they show that the scholarly presentation is genuinely integrated with Rabbi Soloveitchik’s religious perception.

The dispute between the two Land of Israel *amoraim*, R. Yochanan and Resh Lakish, as to whether the Torah “was given one scroll at a time” or “was given sealed” (*Gittin* 60a) was interpreted in the *Bavli* as dealing with the way in which Moses wrote the Torah. Did he write each section as he received it, or did he accumulate orally all of the sections that were told him, and write down the entire Torah from beginning to end only just before he died? This interpretation, which moves the locus of the dispute from the giving of the Torah to its writing, raises several difficulties.

In “Was the Torah Given ‘One Scroll at a Time’ or ‘Sealed’?”, **Aaron Choueka** argues that this dispute, in its Land of Israel origin, was, indeed, specifically about the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and not about its writing down by Moses. Resh Lakish held that the Torah was already given in its totality to Moses at Mount Sinai, but it was given to him as a “sealed” Torah, that is, closed and hidden. This sealed Torah was then explained to Moses in the Tent of Meeting over the course of forty years. This understanding of Resh Lakish’s statement is supported by other statements of his, and is expressed explicitly in an early Land of Israel *piyyut*. By way of contrast, R. Yochanan held that the Torah was given as an open Torah, not sealed. It also follows from this that the Torah was not given completely at Sinai, but only one scroll at a time, that is, each section as it occurred. Another dispute of these *amoraim* can be explained in light of this one, namely, was the Torah scroll

that Moses wrote at the end of the fortieth year placed at the side of the Ark of the Covenant or inside it (*Yerushalmi Shekalim* 49d).

The positions of Resh Lakish on these two disputes point to a single perception of the Torah as having been given in two copies, one sealed and one open, similar to the paired contracts that it was the practice to write in the ancient Near East. This unique perception concerning the revelation at Mount Sinai has additional implications and significances, inter alia: a) the relationship between Resh Lakish's sealed Torah and the perception of the ancient Torah as it appears in rabbinic literature, and b) the clearly mystical dimension of Resh Lakish's statements about the giving of the Torah, which had a deep influence on the medieval esoteric perception of the Torah.

In "Footnotes", **Daniel Sperber** addresses ten issues:

1 — Vestiges in various cultures of the legal act of *kinyan* via removal of a sandal, and the connection between the act of removing the sandal — as an act of *kinyan* — and the *halitzah* ceremony;

2 — Vestiges of the *halitzah* ceremony among medieval Moslems;

3 — R. Yehuda's view that Pharaoh also drowned in the sea appears in various *midrashim*, and in a Roman-Egyptian magical text fragment from the period of Origen;

4 — The concept of werewolf, a man transformed into a wolf, common in medieval European literature, appears in the commentary of R. Efraim to *B'reishit* 49:27.

5 — The motif of the weeping columns, found in *Moed Katan* 12b, to which Saul Lieberman found support in Eusebius, appears also in the work of the famous traveler, Benjamin of Tudela;

6 — A possible source and reason behind the custom of the brother-in-law and the sister-in-law running to water after the *halitzah* ceremony;

7 — The properties of rubies and sapphires according to R. Bahya, and a comparison to other medieval sources;

8 — In *Sefer Tzioni* to *Shemot* 32:4, on "*egel masekhal*" (a calf poured from molten material) there is a description of a ceremony of the god Apis, attributed to the Egyptian magicians. Sperber proposes an analysis of this selection, and an understanding of some of its components.

9 — It is known that the author of *Seder Olam Rabba* shortened the Persian period in his historiography. A comparison is made to this phenomenon in Roman and Persian historiography, and reasons are proposed for it.

10 — Saul Lieberman noted the phenomenon of shearing some of a sacrifice's hair close to its slaughtering, and making an offering of it, in Hellenistic-Roman worship. A vestige of that is found among medieval Polish customs.

In *Eicha Rabba* there is a homily of the *amora* Zavdi ben Levi, which compares

four kings in situations of war: David, Asa, Yehoshaphat and Hezekiah. The homily describes a gradual process in which the kings rely increasingly on divine assistance, as they reduce their human activity. Hezekiah, the last king in the series, is described as lying in his bed while God destroyed Sennacherib's army, not even saying a prayer of gratitude. This homily has received much attention from commentators and philosophers, who were divided over the question as to whether one is greater who depends on miracles or whether one is greater who makes every effort to act on his own. The assumption underlying this reading of the homily has been that its message concerns the relationship between divine and human action.

In “‘Four Kings — Each of Whom Asked for Something Else’ — Theology and Historiosophy in the Homily of Zavdi ben Levi”, **Gilad Sasson** gives this homily a novel reading. After a detailed study of the relevant verses, he argues first that the common theological reading misses the original intention of the author of the homily. His message was that God assists his followers in whatever situation they may find themselves. Moreover, the homily should be read historiosophically. Zavdi ben Levi was describing the decline of the generations during the period of the Davidic kings. The kings were forced to depend on miracles due to the decline of the security and military situation in their time and not because they chose to do so. In this light, Sasson explains why Hezekiah lay in his bed and did not say a prayer of thanks during the fall of Sennacherib. Thus the homily combined a look at the present, a view toward the future, and an insight into the biblical past. Zavdi ben Levi was trying to convey to his listeners a currently relevant message about God supporting his believers, while proposing a historical commentary on the dynasty of King David.