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GEDALYA BEN JOSEPH IBN YACHYA

AND

THE SCHALSCHIELET HA-KABBALAH

BY

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GEDALYA IBN YACHYA: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Gedalya Ben Joseph Ibn Yachya was a scion of the Italian branch of the Yachya family, which was founded by his great grandfather, Joseph Ben David Ibn Yachya. The latter, with his three sons and daughter in law, had fled from Lisbon in 1494 or 1495 to escape the greed and converting zeal of King Joao II.<sup>1</sup> The boat in which the party had fled was driven by strong winds upon the coast of Castile.<sup>2</sup> As Jews they were, of course, persona non grata in that country. They were imprisoned and might have been burned at the stake, if it had not been for the intercession in their behalf of a Portuguese grandee, Don Alvaro de Braganza, who was a friend of Joseph Ibn Yachya as he was of Don Isaac Abrahanel, and who had himself been forced to seek asylum in Spain from the despotism of Joao II.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Alvaro's influence at the Spanish court, Joseph's party was allowed to embark again for Italy, and after five months landed at Pisa. The refugees did not remain here

- 1) The chief (and almost the only) sources for our knowledge of the life of Gedalya and of his immediate ancestors, are the Schalschelet ha-Kabbalah, written by Gedalya and published in several editions; and the Torah Or, written by his father Joseph Ben David Ibn Yachya. Citations from the Schalschelet in this essay are from the Lemberg edition of 1864, and all references to the Torah Or are to the Zolkiev edition of 1802. Carmoly's <sup>מפר נורי הימים לנבי יהיא</sup> (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1850), where it refers to the history of Gedalya and his ancestors in Italy, is also based on these two works.
- 2) A dramatic description of the flight is to be found in the introduction to Torah Or.
- 3) Graetz IX, p. 4.

here very long because the army of Charles the Eighth of France was at that time plundering the country.<sup>4</sup> Joseph and his children were imprisoned and tortured, and were obliged to hand over a very large sum of money to their captors in order to procure their freedom. From Pisa they went to Florence, where Gedalya's father, Joseph Ben David Ibn Yacha, was born.<sup>5</sup> That city, at that time the scene of constant fights between the adherents and opponents of Savonarola, was also no haven of refuge, and the family moved to Ferrara. They seem to have been well received at first by the Duke, but were later imprisoned on the charge of having aided judaizing Marranos,<sup>6</sup> and were again forced to pay seven hundred pieces of gold. The head of the family, Joseph, died a martyr's death there about 1498.<sup>7</sup>

4) Torah Or, Introduction 2a,b; Graetz IX, p. 4.

5) Torah Or, Introduction 2b; Schalschelet 43b.

6) In the Introduction to the Torah Or, 2a, Joseph tells us that his grandfather and his party were accused of aiding Marranos with money and were imprisoned. He mentions nothing about a friendly reception by the Duke. Gedalya, however, states that Joseph and his sons were received favorably by the Duke, and seems to know nothing about an imprisonment or extortion (Schalschelet 43b). Carmoly, in his history of the Yachya family, p.28, note 80, noted this contradiction and decided that the error was Gedalya's. Graetz, however, believes that both accounts may be true and holds that since Joseph's purpose in the Introduction to the Torah Or was to stress the troubles which befell his grandfather, he told only of the imprisonment and extortion; whereas Gedalya's purpose was to give biographical sketches of his ancestors, and he therefore did not hesitate to tell that which enhanced the family tradition; ~~and~~ (vol. IX, p. 4, note 3).

7) Torah Or, Introduction 2a,b ונכל זאת לא חזא הישיש בשפתיו  
וחסיד התפלל אל אלהיו בשברון סתנים. ומה בקדושתו.

quoted by Graetz, IX, p.4, note 3. Compare Schalschelet 43b.

David ben Joseph Ibn Yachya (Gedalya's grandfather) moved to Ravenna after his father's death, and from there to Imola, where he settled with his family. In 1518 he was called to Naples to serve as head of the Talmudic academy<sup>8</sup> and as Dayan of the Kehilla in that city. He remained there until 1540, when the Jews were expelled by the edict of the Emperor Charles the Fifth.<sup>9</sup> He then returned to Imola, where he spent the remaining years of his life. He died in 1543.

Gedalya's father, Joseph, was born in Florence in 1495 and in his youth studied in Padua at the academy of Rabbi Judah Minz.<sup>10</sup> He married a relative, Abigail, the daughter of Solomon Ibn Yachya and later in life served as rabbi in Imola. In addition to a commentary on the Scriptures, he was the author of *Sefer Hachinuch* containing interpretations of many Talmudic legends, *Sefer Hachinuch* a treatise on the Mitzvoth, and *Sefer Hachinuch*, a treatise on the Soul, the Garden of Eden, Gehinom, and the World to Come.<sup>11</sup> He died in

- 8) Schalschelet 46b. Gedalya tells us that it was at the instance of the Jewish community of Naples that his grandfather was called to that city. Graetz (IX, p. 41, note 1) quotes Johann Albert Widmannstadt, a German scholar who was in Naples during David's incumbency, as stating that he heard David delivering lectures on the Talmud in 1532 at the home of Samuel Abrabanel. From this Graetz gathers that it was Abrabanel who brought David to Naples, since the Jewish community in Naples at that time was too small to support him out of its own funds.
- 9) Schalschelet 46b. Graetz IX, p. 306, note 1, lists the chief Jewish and non-Jewish sources for this expulsion.
- 10) Schalschelet 44a. Carmoly points out that Joseph must have studied in Padua at a very early age, for Judah Minz died in 1509 (p. 30, note 97).
- 11) Schalschelet 46b. Torah Or, Introduction, 2b.

1539 and about ten years after his death, in accordance with his will, his children sent his remains to Safed, where they were buried under the supervision of Rabbi Joseph Karo.<sup>12</sup> He left three sons, David, Gedalya and Judah, and four daughters.

Gedalya, the second son, and author of the Schalschelet ha-Kabbalah, was born in Imola about the year 1515.<sup>13</sup>

In his youth he studied under Jacob Israel Finzi of Recanati and at Ferrara under the brothers Abraham and Israel Rovigo.<sup>14</sup>

He seems to have been a very apt pupil, for he wrote a commentary upon Tractate Abot while still very young and unmarried.<sup>15</sup>

In 1549 we find him in Ravenna beginning to work upon the "Schalschelet ha-Kabbalah." He was probably living the life of an itinerant preacher, <sup>and</sup> for in 1552 he began to collect his sermons and put them in book form.<sup>16</sup>

12) Schalschelet, 46b.

13) Gedalya himself does not tell us the year of his birth, but it could not have been much later than 1515, for in writing of the grammarian Abraham de Balmas (Schalschelet, 44a) who died in 1523, he tells us that he was in Padua at the time of his death and saw Abraham's Christian students follow his coffin. Carmoly, p. 34.

14) Schalschelet, 46a.

15) Schalschelet, 46b. Speaking of himself at this period he says:

והשי"ת נתן לי לשון למודים ולהתלהות בבחינת קודם  
שנשאתי אשה באיטליה.

16) Our knowledge of his whereabouts from 1549 to 1583 is based mainly on the list of his works (Schalschelet, 46 b and 47a) where he tells us when and where each book was begun. In speaking of his book of sermons (46b) he says:

השלישי נקרא ספר הדורות ודשתי ברבים בכמה מקומות באיטליה.

It might have been in the course of his early travels in Italy as a preacher that Gedalya made the acquaintance of Obadiah Sforza (died in 1550). The references to Obadiah in the Schalschelet show us that Gedalya spoke with him personally (46b) and also visited his Academy in Bologna, and had access to his letters and books (64a).

The year 1553 must have been a year of sorrow for him. Thanks to the efforts of such converts as Hananel de Foligno, Joseph Moro, and Shelomo Romano, Pope Julius III was persuaded to appoint a commission whose duty it would be to examine Jewish books for anti-Christian sentiments and state-<sup>17</sup>ments. On August 12, 1553 a Papal edict was issued to all princes, bishops and magistrates ordering them to burn all copies of both Talmuds. The months of September, October and November witnessed the public burning of Jewish books in Rome, Bologna, Venice, Ancona, padua, and other cities in the papal states of Romagna. As a result of the orgy of book burning in Padua, Gedalya lost three copies of the Talmud which he had<sup>18</sup> there, as well as two of his father's manuscripts.

In the years between 1555 and 1558 he seems to have lived in Ravenna and Imola, writing the history of his own family and making a living as a dream interpreter. In 1561-2 he was in *Codinaola*, where he began to write a book explaining the difficult expressions and rare words in the Sephardic Mahzor. In 1567-8 he went to Saloniki, where several of his

17) Graetz IX, p. 336; Carmoly, p. 34, 35; Pastor, L, Geschichte der Päpste, VI, pp. 159, 160.

18) Schalschelet, 46b. He may be referring to this burning of books in the introduction to the Schalschelet where he excuses himself for omitting certain items of importance:

כי בראשונה נשרף הנסח אשר היה אצלנו לויאה הסאירה וספרים רבים  
נעדרו ממנו.....



relatives had been living. From Saloniki he returned to Imola.  
He lived there until 1569, following, presumably, the calling of  
a loan broker, for he himself tells us that as a result of the  
Papal edict of expulsion in the above mentioned year, he was  
forced to lose more than ten thousand ducats owed to him by  
debtors in Imola and Ravenna.

Between 1570 and 1575 we meet him in Pesaro, serving  
as rabbi and perhaps engaging also in fortune telling. At some  
time during the latter year he was also at Ferrara. He then  
went to Egypt where he remained from 1576 to, at least, 1583,  
living in Alexandria, Cairo, and Fayum. He was still living in  
1587.

19) Schalschelet, 32b: ועוד שקבלתי סוקני הדור ונפטר בליל ו' ניסן  
כשהייתי שם שנת שכ"ח.

also, 16b, 28b, 77b, where the year is not mentioned.

20) For the expulsion of Jews from the Papal states in 1569, see  
Pastor, opus citatum, VIII 247. Schalschelet, 85a:

ואני לבד נשאר לי באיטליה ורבים יותר סעשרו אש"ס וזו ש  
אנחנו ועל הכל יתבאר שמו ויתבאר.

The editions of Venice, 1587 has ורבים instead of ורבים.  
Gedalya must have engaged in the business of money lending  
some time before this for he tells us (Schalschelet, 85a) that  
Pius IV had abrogated the edict ordering Jewish creditors to  
return to their debtors interest already collected, a law  
which had caused him to flee from the Papal states. See also  
Graetz, IX, p. 367.

21) Schalschelet, 62a. Samuel Lamprontis' פתח יצחק, part III  
(Venice, 1808) p. 26a contains a responsum of Gedalya which he  
wrote while residing in Pesaro. The last words are:

העיר נדליה בן לנאון יוסף זל"ה י' יחיא בבני ישיבת חת"י אשר  
פה פיסארו.

22) The year of publication of the first edition of the Schal-  
schelet. On the title page of this edition, Gedalya's name  
is followed by נר"ו (נשריה רחמנא ופרקיה)

Gedalya had six sons and one daughter.<sup>23</sup> His oldest son, Joseph, to whom he dedicated the "Schalschelet ha-Kabbalah,"<sup>24</sup> was a rabbi in Italy.<sup>25</sup> Nothing is known of his other children. Of all his works, which he lists in the Schalschelet, only three have come down to us, and of these only the Schalschelet in printed form.<sup>26</sup> The complete list of his works follows:

- (1) ספר אבות --a commentary on tractate Abot, begun in Imola (no date given).
- (2) ספר משה or ספר משה --giving the history of Jewish tradition from Moses to the author's time, dedicated to his son, Joseph, and begun in Ravenna in 1549.
- (3) ספר דברים --containing sermons preached by the author in various Italian cities; begun in 1552 and dedicated to his son Moses.
- (4) ספר יצחק --a history of the Yachya family. Gedalya states that he has made use not only of genealogical materials long in the possession of his family,

23) He dedicated a book to each of these and to some of their children. Schalschelet, 46b, 47a.

24) Schalschelet, Introduction, and 46b.

25) R.E.J., X, pp. 183-203. In a collection of responsa of Italian rabbis of the 16th century, gathered and arranged by Joshua Fermi, rabbi in Ancona, we also find the name of Joseph, son of Gedalya Ben Yachya. The same manuscript, under no. 63, states an opinion of Gedalya Ibn Yachya himself, proposing the abolition of a certain Purim custom practised by the Alexandrian community.

26) First edition, Venice, 1587. See Ben-Jacob ספר הדפוסים  
*Letter W* no. 791 for a list of all editions.

but has also used material which he obtained from relatives in Saloniki and Constantinople. Dedicated to his son Judah and begun in 1556.

- (5)            *מגן דוד*            --containing interpretations of all sorts of dreams, begun at Imola in 1557, and dedicated to his son Solomon.
- (6)    A glossary of unusual words found in the Sephardic Mahzor, begun at *Codiniola*, 1562, and dedicated to his son David.
- (7)            *מגן דוד*            --being a treatise on palmistry and phrenology. Pesaro, 1570. Dedicated to his son Enoch.
- (8)            *מגן דוד*            --being a series of exegetical comments and interpretations of Biblical passages. Pesaro, 1575. Dedicated to his grandson Gedalya.
- (9)            *מגן דוד*            --explaining the great importance of Moses and the Torah. Alexandria, 1576. Dedicated to Gedalya, son of his daughter Camilla.
- (10)            *מגן דוד*            --explaining the differences between the version of the Ten Commandments in Exodus and that found in Deuteronomy. Alexandria, 1577. Dedicated to his grandson Moses, son of his daughter Camilla.
- (11)            *מגן דוד*            --concerning the laws relating to the counting of Jews, and about the Evil Eye. *Costeletto* (?) , 1577. Dedicated to his grandson Moses Gedalya, son of Judah.
- (12)            *מגן דוד*            --being a discussion between the

27) Margoliouth's Catalogue of Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum. London, 1899, vol. III, p. 260. The MS. consists of 139 leaves. At the end of p. 106b is a poem revealing the acrostic *מגן דוד*. Part of the dialogue is a discussion of sacrifices; Mordecai Samuel Gherondi in his "Toledot Gedole Israel" (Trieste, 1853) p. 22, no. 10 states that he saw a MS. of this work in Padua.

and the about penitence, and containing also a treatise on the laws of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Begun in Cairo 1578. Dedicated to Moses, son of Joseph.

- (13) דפּר הַתּוֹרָה --an explanation of the prayers, from through the שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר . Begun in Cairo, 1578.
- (14) דפּר נח --concerning Jacob's blessing to his children and a description of his death. Alexandria, 1578. Dedicated to his grandson Noah.
- (15) דפּר הַתּוֹרָה --being a commentary on Psalm 119. Begun at Coste/etta 1579. Dedicated to his grandson David.
- (16) דפּר תּוֹכַחַת מוֹסֵר --a treatise on books about Penitence. Begun in Fayum, 1581.
- (17) דפּר הַלְמוּדִים --containing interpretations of many legends which had hitherto defied explanation. Fayum, 1581. Dedicated to his father and grandfather.
- (18) דפּר דְּרָבִי נֹעַם --how to conduct one's life so as to be assured of eternal happiness. Fayum, 1582.
- (19) דפּר הַפְּרָשׁוֹת --containing sermons on the weekly portions. Begun in Alexandria, 1582.
- (20) מוֹעֵד קָצֵץ --a collection of short holiday sermons. Alexandria, 1581. Dedicated to his grandson David, son of Joseph.
- (21) עַץ חַיִּים --containing answers to all questions and doubts about life in the Hereafter. Begun in 1586 (Place not mentioned).

*I the source for all the above in the index,*

- (22) In Defense of Women. This work is not mentioned in the Schalschelet. It may be that Gedelya considered this too brief an item to be included in his list, or it may have been written after the Schalschelet. It exists in manuscript form in the Bodleian library and was published in the Israelitische Letterbode (X, pp. 139-147) by Neubauer. The author lists the names of famous Jewish women, and by means of citations from the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and Talmud, he shows that women have satisfactorily demonstrated that they possessed the most admirable qualities and virtues.

## CHAPTER II

THE SCHALSCHOLET HA-KABBALAH AND SOME OF ITS SOURCES.

A. An outline of the contents of the Schalschelet. The Schalschelet is divided into three parts:

1. The history of Jewish tradition from Adam up<sup>1</sup> to the author's own time (1a to 50a).
2. An inquiry into the phenomena of the heavenly spheres, the development of the embryo within the womb; birth, magic, angels, the essence of the soul, ancient Hebrew measures and coins (50a to 65a).
3. A record of the Gentile sages and a history of Jewish persecution to the author's own time (1569) (65a to 85a).

## 1.

Creation of Adam and Eve, 1a; Noah and his sons, 1b; Terah and Abraham, 2a; Abraham's life, his sons Ishmael and Isaac, 2b; Isaac and Jacob, Jacob's children, 3a, b; The story of Joseph; Jacob and Laban, 4a; The tribe of Levi and the ancestors of Moses, 4b; Moses in Egypt, his flight, and his marriage to the daughter of Jethro, 5a; An explanation of

1) This is regarded by Gedalya as the most important part of his book. Schalschelet, 47a:

וְהָיָה שְׁלֹחֵי עַד מְחִימוֹ עַל הַדָּבָר...

the sin of Moses and Aaron in striking the rock,5b.

The story of Joshua,6b; Phinehas and his contemporaries; Eli as successor to Phinehas; Samuel as Eli's successor; Legends about David and Saul, 7a; Ahijah of Shilo as Samuel's successor, 7b; A description of the Temple taken from Maimonides,8a; Solomon's throne; The Temple service on the Day of Atonement and Passover, as described in the Schebet Yehudah,8b; Solomon's successor Rehoboam, and the division of the Kingdom,9b; Elijah receives the tradition from Ahijah, 9b; Theories as to the identity of Elijah, 9b; A list of the forty eight prophets of the Bible, enumerated in the Halakot Gedolot,10a; Elisha as successor to Elijah, 10a; Jehodaya, the High Priest, successor to Elisha,10a; The life of Jonah, 10a; Zechariah, Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah serve in turn<sup>a</sup> the standard bearers of Jewish tradition, 10b; Sennacherib drives the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh into Assyria; The first Diaspora,10b; Micah receives the tradition from Isaiah and is followed by Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Baruch,11a.

Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem,; Destruction of Jerusalem forty years later. Nebuchadnezzar takes Egypt,11b; Babylonian history after Nebuchadnezzar,12a; The election of the Exilarch as described in the Schebet Yehudah,12a.

Ezra receives the tradition from Baruch,12b; The Men of the Great Synagogue,12b; The building of the Second Temple,

and the reforms of the Men of the Great Synagogue, 12b; The story of Purim, 13a; Speculation on the fate of the Ten Tribes, and the honor accorded to the Temple by foreign kings, 13a.

Simeon the Just succeeds the Men of the Great Synagogue; Entry of Alexander the Great into Jerusalem; His Jewish contemporaries; Building of a Jewish Temple in Egypt by Onias; Antigonus of Soko succeeds Simeon the Just; Jose Ben Joezer and Jose Ben Johanan, 13b; Ptolemy Philadelphus and the translation of the Seventy, 14a; The Letter of Aristeeas, 14a; Ptolemy's library and its eventual fate, 14b; Judah Ben Tabbaï and Nitai of Arabella, 14b; Joshua Ben Perahya and Simeon Ben Shetah, 15a; Revolt of the Maccabees against Antiochus, 15a; The exploits of John Hyrcanus and his struggle with the Pharisees, 15b; Alexander Jannaeus and his struggle with the Pharisees, 15b; Salome Alexandra and her two sons, 15b; Shemaiah and Abtalion, 15b.

Hillel and Shammai, 16a; Rabbi Johanan Ben Zaccai as successor to Hillel, 16a, b; Gamaliel and his contemporaries, 17a; Conversion of Aquila, 17b; Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Ishmael, 18a; The rebellion of Bar Kokba; Speculation on the Ten Martyrs and what their death symbolized, 19a, b; 20a; Simeon Ben Gamaliel II, 20a; Simeon Ben Yohai and the origin of the Zohar, 20a; Rabbi Meir and his contemporaries, 20b; Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, 21a; Reb and Samuel, 21b, 22a; Huna, 22a; The Saboraim and their work, 23a; The completion of the Babylonian Talmud, 23a; The author advises his son how to study the Talmud, 23a; An enumeration of its orders and tractates, 23a.



The beginnings of the Gaonate, 23b; The advantages of the Academy of Sura over that of Pumbeditha, and the methods of study in both academies, 25a,b; A distinguished member of the Yachya family in the days of Sherira Gaon, 25b; The early history of the Yachya family, 25b, 26a; The coat of arms of the Yachya family, 26a; The end of the Gaonate, 26a.

Beginning of the Age of the Rabbis; Joseph, son of Samuel ha-Nagid, 26a; Isaac Alfasi, 26b; Judah ha-Levi and Abraham Ibn Ezra; How Ibn Ezra became Judah's son in law, 27a; Rabbeinu Gershom; Abraham Ibn Daud, 28a; Stories about Maimonides, 29b, 30a; Maimonides' miracles and accomplishments, 29b, 30a; The attitude of Maimonides to would-be Messiahs, 30a; A history of false Messiahs among the Jews, 30a, 30b; Stories of people who prophesied when the world would come to an end, 31a; The opinions on this question expressed in the Zohar, in Maimonides' works, and by the author himself, 31b; Rashi as a contemporary of Maimonides, 32b; Rashi's father, 33a; Legends about Rashi, 33a; His progeny and their contemporaries, 33b; The debate between Moses and Jacob Tam regarding the law of binding the phylacteries, 35a,b; Moses Ben Nahman, 37b, 38a,b; Solomon Ben Adret, 39b; Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, 40a; A poem written by Gedalya's ancestor, 41a; Rabbi Asher Ben Jehiel and Rabbi Levi Ben Gerson, 41b; Asher's sons, Judah and Jacob, 41b; A list of Italian rabbis, 42b, 43a; Gedalya's family history, continued, 43b; A list of Italian rabbis, 44a; Isaac Abrabanel, 44b; Purim al

Mizraim, 44b; Joseph Karo and Moses Cordovero, 45a; A dirge composed by Rabbi Saul Ben David, 45b, 46a; A list of Italian rabbis, 46a; Gedalya's family history, 46b; A list of Gedalya's works, 46b, 47a; A brief resume of Jewish history, 47a, 48a,b; The authorship of the various books of the Bible, 48b; The books of the Apocrypha, 48b. Favorable sentiments concerning Jews as expressed by Augustine and Aquinas, 49a; The period of time covered by the various books of the Bible, 49a; The order of books in the Bible as given in the Talmud; how they are ordered by the Sephardim and Ashkenazim, 49a; Dates of important Biblical events as stated in the Seder Olam Rabba, 49a,b.

## 2.

The division of the Earth into degrees, 50a; The spheres and their constellations, 50a; The twelve principle constellations, 50b; Calender reforms in Rome, 53b; The opinions of the schools of Aristotle and Galen concerning the nature of human semen, 54b; What the husband and wife contribute to the child's physical constitution, 55a; The determinants of sex, 55a; Why most children resemble their mother, and are feminine, 55a; The development of the embryo, 55b; Why some women bear children with ease, while others do not, 56b; What determines the age at which the child stops growing, 56b; The structure of the body and its functions, 56b, 57a.

The nature of the soul, 58b, 59a; The nature of angels and evil spirits, 59a,b; Where evil spirits dwell, 59b; The nature

of magic, 60a; How Samuel was raised from the dead; the explanations which have been offered, 60b; Quotations from the Zohar concerning the soul and its migrations, 60b; Punishment of the soul for sin, 61b; Rewards of the soul, 61b; Gedalya's own experience in exorcising an evil spirit from the body of a woman, 62a; Similar stories of women being possessed by evil spirits, 62b; A definition of the soul, 62b; The meanings of נפש, חיה and רוח; The נפש resides in the head, the חיה in the heart, and the רוח in the liver, 62b; The influence of the stars upon one's destiny, 62b; How long the נפש remains in the body, 62b; The ways in which the soul travels, 63a.

The coins and measures mentioned in the Bible and Talmud, and their value in relation to the Italian coins and measures of the author's own time, 63a to 65a.

### 3.

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32a. כ' תכונת זכות. לה"ר אברהם זכות

1a, 2a, 3a, 6a,b; 7a,b; 9b, 11a,b; 12a,b; 13a,b; 14b, 15b, 16a,b; 17a,b; 18a,b; 19a,b; 20a,b; 21a,b; 22a,b; 24b, 26a, 27b, 31b, 33a, 34b, 47b, 48b, 49a, 51b, 52a, 55a, 60a, 63a,b; 64a,b; 65a, 66a,b; 70a, 73b, 76a,b; 77b. תלמוד ירושלמי

11a, 12a, 13b, 14b, 15b, 16b, 17a,b; 18b, 20b, 21a, 22a.

74a. ס' התפוח מיוחס לאריסטו

67a. תרגום ירושלמי

36b, 37b. ס' התרומה לה"ר ברוך ב"ר יצחק

34a, 43a, 83a. ס' תרומת הרשן לה"ר ישראל ב"ר פתחיה

C. A source of the Schalschelet, to which Gedalya does not refer by any title, was discovered by David Kaufmann in one of the Halberstam manuscripts (no. 227).<sup>3</sup> This manuscript (pp. 226a-227a) contains a list of famous Jewish teachers and rabbis, copied from another source by the Italian rabbi and collector Abraham Joseph Solomon Graziano (d. 1635). Now<sup>4</sup> Graziano was the great grandson of Azriel Trabot, a fact which we learn from a marginal note in his own copy of the Schalschelet (in Kaufmann's possession). His interest in the literary remains of his ancestors is shown by the fact that manuscript no. 40 of the Cambridge collection (Catalogue of Schiller Szinessy I,97) was purchased by him from the estate of Nathaneel Trabot. Manuscript no. 19 in the same catalogue is a list identical with Graziano's and its author was a Rabbi Azriel Trabot. Kaufmann therefore believes that Graziano copied his list from the original of Trabot. It seems that Gedalya was acquainted with this work of Trabot's and utilized it in the Schalschelet. In introducing the miraculous story about the debate between Moses and Jacob Tam, Gedalya tells us that he found it in a collection in the Academy of Azriel

3) R.E.J., IV, pp. 208-225.

4) Azriel Trabot, Rabbi in Ascoli in the 16th century. See Jewish Encyclopedia XII, pp. 214, 215 for the members of the Trabot family.

5  
Trabot. The same story is found in Graziano's notes in the Halberstam manuscript. Graziano also tells us the story about the Gravestone of Nathanides' mother, which is also found in the Schalschelet.<sup>6</sup>

The theory of Gedalya's indebtedness to Trabot's list is strengthened by the following data:

1. In speaking of Nathan, the author of the "Arukh," the Trabot manuscript reads:

רבינו הנאד והנה רבינו נתן בעל הערוך

Gedalya says:

וראיתי בקונטרס ישן בוסן שזה הרב לקח  
7  
לו לאשה בן של רבינו הנאד נאון.

2. Trabot on Rashi: לרשי לא היו לו בנים פי אם  
בנות. אתה מפרשניו נאון לרבינו נאון והשני לר"ד יהודה  
ב"ד נתן והשלישית לר"ד אפרים.

Gedalya seems to follow the same order:

וקבלתי שלא היו לרשי בנים וזכרים וזלתי ל' בנות  
אשר השיאם סדיו לרבינו נאון הנדולה.....  
לרבינו יהודה ב"ר נתן הנקרא ריב"ן נתן השניה....  
8  
לרבינו אפרים נתן השלישית.

- 5) Schalschelet, 35a: ראיתי בפרט הטאון ר' עזריאל זרנוב ספר  
נדול קטור בו הרבה סודות ועניינים של קבלה  
ובתוכם היה פזוב בו זה המעשה....

Kaufmann's references to the Schalschelet are to the Venice edition. The references here are all to the Lemberg edition (1864).

- 6) Schalschelet, 38b. R.E.J., IV, p. 225, note 94.
- 7) R.E.J., IV, pp. 210 and 216, note 15. Schalschelet, 27b.
- 8) R.E.J., IV, pp. 211 and 218, note 34. Schalschelet, 33b.



3. In speaking of Judah, Rashi's son in law, Trabot states:

שפירש קצת מכתבות לפני רמיו

Gedalya says:

<sup>9</sup> ושפירש קצת מכתבות לפני רמיו

4. Regarding Samuel Ben Meir ( רשב"ם ) Gedalya says:

וראיתי בספור אריאזי ומקובות אחרים שרשב"ם

הגלים לפרש קצת מכתבות שתייה רש"י

מלפרש לכתב פזירתו והם רוב מכתב ברא

<sup>10</sup>

ופנה שני ואחרים +

Gedalya does not remember his source. The מקדש סעז

of Rieti (Goldenthal edition, 100a) contains nothing concerning

the commentaries of Samuel Ben Meir. It is Trabot who says:

רבינו שמואל הוא רשב"ם אשר פירש רוב מכתב ברא

אשר פזירתו של רש"י וקנו פירש ברא פנה שני

<sup>11</sup>

וקצת מכתבות אחרות.

5. In the Schalschelet the names of the following three rabbis are given in the same order as they are found in Trabot's

list: רבינו יצחק בר' יצחק בר' מרדכי רבינו

<sup>12</sup>

יעקב ישראל, רבינו יוסף מאורילינא.

6. Regarding the birthplace of Nahmanides, Trabot says:

(meaning הרמב"ן והוא חרב רבינו משה בר' נחמן מרונה (מקונה)

Gedalya repeats the error:

<sup>13</sup>

הרמב"ן היה סעיר מרונה.....

9) R.E.J., IV, pp. 211 and 219, note 37. Schalschelet, 33b.

10) Schalschelet, 35a.

11) R.E.J., IV, pp. 211 and 219, note 39.

12) Schalschelet, 35b. R.E.J., IV, pp. 211 and 220, note 52.

The next two names following these are the same as those found in Trabot's list, but in reversed order:

ורבינו משה ורבינו יוסף בבור שור

13) R.E.J., IV, pp. 212 and 224, note 94. Schalschelet, 37b.

7. Of Mordecai Ben Hillel Ashkenazi Gedālya says:

וראיתי בקונצרים שהיה נוסר על צעל הכס"ף

He seems to be following Trabot, who says:

בעל המדני.... היה נוסר על רפינו יצחק מקורביל

In conclusion I think it is safe to say that while each clue in itself could not serve as definite proof of Gedālya's dependence upon the list of Trabot's, the presence of all these clues may warrant such a conclusion.

14) R.E.J., IV, pp. 212 and 223, note 81. Schalschelet, 40a.

## CHAPTER THREE

GEDALYA IBN YACHYA'S HISTORICAL METHOD

History is not a purely academic subject for Gedalya: like the Jewish historical writers of the 16th century with the exception of Dei Rossi,<sup>1</sup> and like the non Jewish historians of the Renaissance, he feels that history is a practical science capable of being applied to life; Gedalya's description of the practical purposes of his history, is, as a matter of fact, much more elaborate than that of either Ibn Verga or Joseph ha-Kohen, because the contents of his book are more varied. In the introduction to the Schalschelet, which is directly addressed to his son Joseph, he is very much pleased at the question which his son has put to him: why no one, since the time of Abraham Ibn Daud and Meimonides (in his introduction to his "Mishnah Torah")<sup>2</sup> had written a history of Jewish tradition. His son's question proves to him (Gedalya) that he realizes that a knowledge of Jewish tradition is one of the

- 1) Baron, S.: *La Methode Historique D'Azaria De' Rossi* (Paris, 1929) pp. 4,5.  
For the point of view of Solomon Ibn Verga see his introduction to the *Schebet Yehudah* (Wiener Edition, Hebrew Section, p.1) where he tells us that he has gathered and written about some of the sad episodes in Jewish history so that the Jews should heed them and implore the God of Mercy to pardon them and put an end to their sufferings.  
In his introduction to the *Emek ha-Bakah* (Vienna edition, 1852, p.1) Joseph ha-Kohen says that his book is truly a vale of tears, and that anyone reading it will weep and cry out, "How Long, Oh Lord?" (Quoted by S. Baron "Methode Historique", p. 5, note 2). For the point of view of Abraham Zacuto see his introduction to the *Yuhasin* (ed. Filipowski, p.2).
- 2) Introduction I.

most effective means of maintaining one's faith in God. History should also render more vivid and real the miracles and wonders described in the Bible. Later generations have through their sins and wrong doings rendered themselves unfit for God to reveal himself to them through a miracle at any time. But through narration of such wonders by father to son and by master to pupil, their memory would not disappear from the mind of man.<sup>3</sup> The study of Jewish history should also reveal the divine providence and personal supervision of God.<sup>3</sup>

From these general statements Gedalya goes on to describe in greater detail some of the aims which his son expects him to fulfill in this history.<sup>4</sup>

Such a work should arouse other authors to write on the history of Jewish tradition and through the presentation of different opinions, the truth would gradually "out."

### 3) Introduction I:

ובזה יתאמנו לנו גם כן הנסים והנפלאות הכתובים בתורה וכן פירוש התורה כאלו ראינו בעינינו ובאזנינו שמענו הכל. כי בהמדת האבות שיספרו לבנים וחכמים לתלמידיהם זכרם לא יסוף מזרעם אחרי שבעונותינו שרבו אין כל תדורות ראויים והנזנים להקשות להם נסים גדולים בכל עת ובכל יתאמת אצלנו עיקר ההשגחה פרצות הנסוד והעונש בענין הסנות.....

4) I think that it would be safe to say that Gedalya has formulated these aims himself and that, although he very often addresses his son, and tells him that it was to please him that he has written the Schalschelet, he also has the general reader in mind. At the end of the book (85b), in his final apologetic statement he says (presumably to his son):

.... רוצה אני להשיב לשואלים כדי לשמוע ולא לשואלים לנצח.... ולכן צריך לזה הספר קוראים שיהיו אנשי מדות ואהבה ונחת ולא יהרסו בהסצא עליהם הואנות וקטת היותי דורש להם לנפשם עונג ועדון.

See also 19b: .... ולא ייחס המעיין זה אלי לעונת פנים....

It should tell of the books which have been written previously by distinguished and pious men, and this should arouse the interest of the reader to study them.

It should help in the practice of the Halakah, for an exact knowledge of the order of legal works, would enable one to decide in accordance with the final authorities.

It should help to give greater currency to the stories of miracles which God has wrought daily in the interests of the Jewish people. From these one can easily recognize the divine personal supervision of the Almighty.

It should arouse in the reader a desire to sanctify God's name wherever he maybe, after he has read how many great and pious men suffered torture, exile and death rather than commit sin or blaspheme the name of God.

It should demonstrate the great preference of God for Israel, and show that it was God's great love for the Jews which caused him to bestow the Torah upon them.

It should tell about the non-Jewish sages in the various fields of knowledge who have lived in all periods, and it should show that none of these men, numerous though they were, had ever uttered any derogatory or uncomplimentary remark about the Torah, and the evidence of such esteem should prove to the world that the Torah is flawless in every respect and no one anywhere should dare to doubt its teachings.

As a result of reading the new works brought on by the writing of this history, the reader's social prestige will be enhanced.

Such a history should also show the unlimited patience of God with Israel. The sins of Israel have really made it deserving of destruction, but God has always shown it evidence of His mercy. When one King had driven out the Jews from his land, God caused another King to admit them. And so a study of Jewish history would only help to increase the Jew's devotion to his Creator.

It should relate the history of the distinguished members of the Yachya family since the days of R. Sherira Gaon; for family pedigree is a matter of great importance.

The most important function of all would be to show the way in which Jewish oral tradition has been passed on by the "Master of the prophets," Moses, to Joshua, down to the author's own generation, and eventually to the time of the Messiah, being transmitted by father to son and by master to pupil. Such a demonstration should destroy all false notions and humble those who spoke against the Law. Gedalya here expresses surprise at the statement of Maimonides in the introduction to his "Mishna Torah" that there is no purpose in mentioning the names of the wise and pious men, and points out that Maimonides held the opposite point of view in his commentary to Abot.

- 5) The list of these מלכין is to be found in the Introduction to the Schalschelet, I and II.

The enumeration of all these aims can serve (if for no other purpose) as a reminder that the book is to be a "Tendenz" work with more than one "Tendenz," and we cannot find fault with Gedalya for stressing just these elements which he has enumerated. He does not make any claims to objective standards in the introduction, and in the body of the book itself he sometimes states that his material is presented with a certain purpose. An example or two should be cited here.

While on the subject of massacres and enforced conversions, he tells the reader that he has seen in the Schebet Yehudah a series of severe "gezerot" visited upon the Jews in many places. The author of the Schebet Yehudah has not mentioned the dates of any of these "gezerot," but he, Gedalya, shall place them all in the period which is under discussion at the moment (roughly, the 13th century) because his only purpose in describing these occurrences here is to show that God, in his relations with Israel, has always fulfilled the words of Scripture. After describing the origin of certain customs among different peoples, he tells the reader a story which he read in Samuel Shullam's edition of the Yuhasin concerning the exchange of letters between Joshua and the forty five kings of the East, and Joshua's decisive

6) Schalschelet, 80b: ואני אציגם לפניך בדור הזה כי אין פונתי  
אלא להודיעך כי הש"י קיים בננו בכל זמן פסוק ואף גם זאת וכו'.

victory over these kings. He says that he has chosen to quote this story from the ~~Yuchasin~~<sup>7</sup> in order that the reader should better realize God's supervision and concern for those who have faith in him.

Gedalya's patent efforts to defend the Jewish people and its religion against attacks from the outside also deserve more detailed attention here because his introductory statement still leaves the reader without any substantial knowledge of his apologetic method.

He tells the reader (without mentioning the source) that it should be noted that many Greek philosophers went to Jerusalem to see the Jewish sages whose fame had spread all over the world, and after long discussions and debates the Greek philosophers admitted that the Jews were truly wise.<sup>8</sup>

Gedalya is at pains to show the admiration which the ancient Greeks expressed for Jewish wisdom and piety. He states that he read in Eusebius' "Praeparatio Evangelica" that Pythagoras studied with Jewish philosophers of Jerusalem who had been exiled to Babylonia.<sup>9</sup> We are also told that Gedalya's grandfather saw a quotation from Plato in Nathaniel Ibn Caspi's commentary to the

7) Schalschelet, 69b: ובהחתי להציגם לפניך למען תראה השנהגו יתברך למאמינים ובוטחים בו.

Gedalya also gives his reason for describing the events leading up to the Septuagint translation (Schalschelet, 13b):

ובהחתי להציגו לפניך בקצור הקצורים למען תראה מעלה חזרה כשת.

8) Schalschelet, 71a. The story is prefaced with the words: ראוי לדעת.

9) Schalschelet, 72b.



Cuzari stating that Plato had been with Jeremiah in Egypt and at first he had laughed at the man and his remarks, but in the end he learned to respect him and realized that his words were of divine<sup>10</sup> origin.

One of the most interesting of these items in the Schalschelet is a quotation from a "letter" sent by Aristotle to his pupil Alexander, which Gedalya says he saw in an old book,<sup>11</sup> the title of which he does not mention. In this letter Aristotle thanks God who in his mercy has led him away from the paths of false philosophy and has shown him the true wisdom. A discussion with a wise Jew concerning the Torah has shown him that only the Jewish teachings are based on a solid foundation. If he could collect all of his works and commit them to the flames, he would do so, in order that no one would fall into error through their teachings. These books are not worthy of any attention. Only those who cling to the Torah shall walk in the light. He himself is destined to be punished for all of his previous books, and he did not write all this to Alexander up to this time, because he feared that his pupil might do him harm, but when this letter shall

10) Ibid, 73a.

11) Ibid, 74a,b.

have reached him, he, Aristotle, will be dead.<sup>12</sup>

Gedalya gives us not only the "views" the Greeks had concerning Judaism but also those of noted Christian writers.

While on the subject of R. Huna's contemporaries he mentions<sup>13</sup> Eusebius, who "wrote many books and especially the 'Praeparatio' in which he is abundant in his praise of the Torah of Moses."

While on the subject of the translation of the Septuagint, Gedalya quotes from Augustine's "The City of God"

- 12) L. Ginzburg in the Jewish Encyclopedia (Aristotle in Jewish Legend) vol. II, p. 99 says that the existence of a book containing such a letter by Aristotle is mentioned for the first time about 1370 by Hayyim of Briviesca who declared that he heard from Abraham Ibn Zarza that the latter had received it from the vizir Ibn al-Khatib. Gedalya does not mention Hayyim of Briviesca as the author of the [?] which he consulted, but quotes the author's words; that the author had been in Lisbon and had heard Abraham Ibn Zarza say that Ibn al-Khatib had informed him (Abraham) of the existence of a book by Aristotle in which Aristotle had renounced his earlier writings.
- See Schalschelet, 75 a, b, for the report of the alleged correspondence between Aristobulus of Paneas and Ptolemy Philadelphus, in which Aristobulus tells Ptolemy that in many matters Plato subscribed to the doctrines of the Scriptures and that there was no doubt that Plato studied the Scriptures, as they were available in translation to the Persian kings and to Alexander.
- 13) Schalschelet, 78b. Gedalya refers to the "Praeparatio Evangelica" in which Eusebius tries to show that the Christians are justified in accepting the sacred books of the Jews and in rejecting the teachings and beliefs of the Greeks. Gedalya never refers to the other writings of Eusebius.

that at the time of the translation the Greeks in Egypt hated the Jews intensely, and either intentionally or unintentionally, altered the translation, and this accounts for the variations from the original Hebrew which are found in all the translations made from the Septuagint.<sup>14</sup> In another place he quotes Augustine in defense of the Jews against the charge that Jews maliciously forged certain texts in the Bible and quotes him as saying that next to the Hebrew, the translation of the Seventy is the most reliable text.<sup>15</sup> Equally complimentary statements are introduced from the works of Orosius,<sup>16</sup> Alexander of Imola,<sup>17</sup> and Aquinas.<sup>18</sup>

Even the most superficial reader will notice another matter in the Schalschelet which is stressed out of proportion to its relative importance, and that is Gedalya's family history. We are not surprised by Gedalya's statement that his ancestors had at one time possessed a book--now, alas, lost--which traced the history of the Yabhya family back to the stock of Jesse,<sup>19</sup> for it was common for the writers of the Renaissance to trace their ancestry back to some illustrious personage of antiquity, and Azariah Dei Rossi, for example, traced his ancestry back to the family of

14) Schalschelet, 14b:

15) Schalschelet, 48b, 49a:

16) Schalschelet, 14b.

17) Ibid, 49a.

18) Ibid, 49a.

19) Introduction II, Schalschelet, 25b.

the Edomim, which was supposed to be one of the four prominent Jewish families exiled by Titus from Jerusalem to Rome.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the general statement in the introduction that one of the purposes of the book would be to describe the deeds of the distinguished members of the Yachya family since the time of Sherira, Gedalya also speculates on the meaning and significance of the name Yachya.<sup>21</sup>

Whenever Gedalya comes to the name of one of his family, he allows himself the privilege of more space in his description of the man's life, his achievements and his reward or recognition by the king or ruling prince of the locality in which he lived. A few examples will suffice to show how

Gedalya "favors" his ancestors at the expense of other items

equally as important from an objective point of view.<sup>22</sup> After

running through the Ibn Tibbons and a group of other rabbis in hurried fashion, he comes at last to the fourth generation of his

family, represented by Don Solomon, son of Don Joseph Ibn Yachya,<sup>23</sup>

and describes his career and that of his sons in some detail.

Gedalya also devotes one whole page to the reproduction of a eulogy

20) Dei Rossi: Meor Enayim (Benjacob) Part II, p.212, quoted by S. Baron, "Azariah De Rossi's Attitude to Life" p. 46, note 21. See also Zunz's introduction to the Benjacob edition of the Meor Enayim, p.1.

Solomon Ibn Verga in the "Schebet Yehudah" (Wiener edition, Hebrew, p.89) states that a relative of his was descended from King David and bore the name Don Samuel ha-Nasi (noted by Loeb, R.E.J., vol. XXIV, p.1, note1).

21) Introduction V.

22) For descriptions of the achievements of his ancestors see Schalschelet 25b, 26a, 26b, 37b, 39b, 40b, 43b, 45a, 46b.

23) Schalschelet, 37b. See Carmoly: דברי הימים לדניאל, p.8.

written by Solomon's son, Joseph, on the occasion of the death of his teacher and companion Solomon Ben Adret,<sup>24</sup> and very few of Israel's great men have been accorded the honor of a full page in the Schalschelet!

Having defined his son's (or his own) aims, Gedalva always keeps him (or the reader) in mind while writing. Many remarks addressed directly to a second person, show clearly how eager he is to maintain his contact with his son or with the general reader.<sup>25</sup> I translated some of these:

"Regarding your question, why the Torah did not mention more than one man in a generation, it is fitting that you should know...." (1,a).

"And now I have reached a point where I can reply to your question....." (3,b).

"And now I shall present to you in the proper order and in brief form that which I saw written in various places in the Zohar....."

24) Idem, 40 b, 41 a.

25) In addition to these passages see all of the introduction, and also 8a, 9a, 11b, 16b, 18b, 28a, 34b, 50a. A good example of Gedalya's solicitude for the reader is furnished by his statement that he has copied from the Seder Olam a group of items concerning the time of certain events which were described in the Torah; since not everyone has a copy of the Seder Olam, he thought it would be wise to furnish the reader with this information (Schalschelet, 49a).

"My son, if I proposed to describe to you the building of the Temple, it would require too much time...." (8b).

"And since I am now discussing with you the subject of the end of all things, I have chosen to elaborate upon it, so that you may hear many things from me...." (31b).

"It is fitting, my son, that you should know...." (43a).

"...for it was to comply with your wish that I wrote this book...." (46b).

Sometimes Gedalya identifies himself with the reader and speaks as if both were in search of the same thing. Writing of the Punic wars, he says: "The discussion of these wars would be a very lengthy affair and we have no need of it."<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes he stops to give personal advice to his son. On one occasion he tells him to complete the reading of the " הלכות <sup>27</sup> " at least twice a year, because this book reveals the methods and secrets of the Talmud; and also to study the introduction of Maimonides to his Mishna commentary in order to understand why one order of tractates precedes another.<sup>27</sup>

26) Schalschelet, 76a.

27) Idem, 23a:

וזכור נא בני ללמוד בכל שנה לפחות ב"פ  
ספר הליכות עולם שחבר החכם ר' יהושע הלוי ....  
.... ואם תהפוך בני לדעת ספתי קרימת סדר אחד לחברו  
בין תבין וקדמת הרמב"ם בפ"ה השנייה.

In one place Gedalya tells his "son" (or the reader) that he is going to include some other items in addition to those things which he had "promised" that he would discuss, "matters which will be helpful to you." (65a).

We can easily understand how a man who had been in many cities and several countries and who had lived as a rabbi, itinerant preacher, interpreter of dreams, fortune teller, and loan broker with all the human contacts which such a life had involved, could not help but keep the human element before him when he sat down to write a history. His apologies and anticipations of the possible discovery of errors are also very personal in tone. In the introduction<sup>28</sup> he tells his son that he should not find fault with him if he finds important omissions in the book regarding the history of later generations, for he, Gedalya, has good excuses to offer.

In the first place, his intelligence is limited and his memory very weak. Secondly, the late political upheavals and anti-Jewish "Gezerot" have confused and unnerved him. Finally, many of his books have been burned and he has been forced to content himself with limited materials.

A very interesting apologetic statement is to be found in the second part of the book,<sup>30</sup> where Gedalya is expounding the views of the philosophers relating to the essence of the soul. Before daring to express his own point of view, he tells us that he should not put his head among such lofty mountains, but since pebbles as well as large rocks are used in the construction of

28) See Chapter One pp 4-10  
 29) Introduction IV.  
 30) Schalschelet, 59a.

of courts and castles, to fill the small apertures left by the large rocks, so perhaps he, Gedalya, will be able to find and fill one of these "holes" which his predecessors have left. He then proceeds to tell us what in his opinion constitutes the essence of the soul.

Gedalya's manner of expression is, in general, sober and detached, even where he is exaggerating as to the facts themselves. One does not find violent expressions or statements exhibiting strong personal feeling as are found in the *Sefer ha-Kabbalah* of Ibn Daud and even in the writings of Dei Rossi when Azariah is attacking the karaites, or in the pages of the "*Emek Rabakah*", where they are met with frequently.

- 31) For Azariah Dei Rossi see the *Meor Enayim*, *Ben Jacob* עב. לנסך מצרף לבסוף  
 כי בולל הדבר הוא ספרי הקראים ישרון.  
 p. 22:  
 quoted by S. Baron in "*Méthode Historique*", p. 16, note 1).  
 For Abraham Ibn Daud see his "*Sefer ha-Kabbalah*" (under Hillel)  
 where he sarcastically remarks that decrees of Kirkisani or Anan  
 would not have been accepted with the same unanimity as were  
 those of Simeon ben Gamaliel, Hillel's descendant. Telling of  
 the miracle performed by Simon the Just in persuading Alexander  
 not to destroy the Temple, Ibn Daud adds: "This great miracle  
 was performed for them by Simon the Just, it was not performed  
 for Anan or Kirkisani, the chief heretics (See Elbogen, "Abra-  
 ham Ibn Daud als Geschichtschreiber" Gutmann Festschrift, p. 192).

As to Joseph ha-Kohen, the reader finds such strong expressions  
 of feeling all through the *Emek Rabakah*. I quote at random  
 (from the Vienna edition, 1852):

p. 46: ראה ה' והביטה וריבנה ליבם  
 אל נקמות הופיע נקומדם עדין השפוך על לא תדם עשה.  
 p. 49: כן יאבדו כל אנינין ה'

p. 104:  
 The reader will look in vain for similar expressions in the  
*Schalschelet*. This reserve may be attributed to temperament,  
 rather than to the fear of censorship, because Gedalya refrains  
 even from any elaborate expressions of "pure" grief, unattended  
 by the desire for vengeance upon Israel's tormentors. The  
 third part of the *Schalschelet* contains numerous stories of  
 forced conversions and massacres, but their narration seems  
 to leave him unmoved (see, for example, 80a).



It is true that Gedalya states in the introduction that one of the purposes of his book should be to arouse in the Jewish reader a willingness to give his life for his faith, but he does nothing with his language to arouse this desire, despite his many opportunities.

But although Gedalya does not exploit his historical powers to give expression to feelings of vengefulness, grief, or anger, he does employ standard rhetorical forms and short prayers, which were so common among the Hebrew writers of his age and of other ages as to almost escape special notice. After explaining the symbols on the coat of arms of the Vachya family, he concludes with the short prayer:

שכן יהי רצון מלפני ה' שיהיה נמנה עמם בכל דבר שבקדושה

(26 a) [א]

Speaking of a rabbi in Saloniki who was still living, he concludes:

ה' יאריך ימיו [א] (45 a)

After telling us that he lost ten thousand ducats in debts as a result of the expulsion of Jews from the Papal states in 1569, he closes the incident with:

ועל הכל יהודל שמו יתברך.

and we can hardly blame him for this very modest reaction! One of the standard expressions of a Hebrew author's modesty is also to be

32) One find such stereotyped forms as: ובעזרת ה' המובה עלי (46b).  
(26a) and ב'ר ה' המובה עלי (27b).  
At the end of the Schalschelet (35a) is a short prayer of thanksgiving to God for giving the author strength to carry on his work.

found (Introduction V):

אמר העבד הנרצע ומלחך עפרות רגלי החכמים נרדףיה .....

The literary style of an author can be better ascer-  
tained by reading one or two paragraphs of his own writing than  
by reading anything about it. If I were asked to describe  
Gefelya's Hebrew style I should characterize it as a virile,  
economical, somewhat dry mode of expression adapted and com-  
pletely subordinated to its content and avoiding the temptation  
to become excessively florid or sentimental. The Hebrew is a  
mixture of the Biblical, Mishnaic and Talmudic idioms. These  
are, on the whole, used judiciously, and do not draw the  
reader's attention away from the narrative itself.

Sometimes, however, the author allows the Biblical  
"melitzah" to lead him away from the path of precision, and the  
result is an anachronism. Writing, for example, of the  
hostility of the Spanish grandees to Joseph, son of Samuel

33) Such Talmudic idioms, for example, as: כדדי הוה עובדא  
פיסארן מתא דיתבא על כוף ימא במלכות דזבוס דאורבנינא (62a)  
(76b), and referring his son to certain books (Introduc-  
tion III): ובהם תבין ותשכיל...  
There is also no dearth of Biblical "melizoth" in the  
Schalschelet":

...ואלה נ' גאונים סמכוני באשישות תורתם.

(46a)

...אשר כל אלה הם סולם מוצנא ארצה וראשו פניע השמיכה.

(Introduction III)

...והמלך ושריו יראו פן תבללשנו ארץ.

(39a)

and very many others.



I have pointed out how Gedalwa is always turning to the **reader** and courting his attention by addressing him directly. In order to render the instruction more relatable, he employs a literary method popular with Ibn Verga and Joseph ha-Kohen--that of making the characters ~~speaking~~ <sup>38</sup> for themselves either in ordinary conversation or debate, or through the contents of a letter. He reports a word for word conversation between Jehiel of Paris and the king of France who came to visit Jehiel at his home, and another such conversation between the two at the royal palace, where Jehiel is sitting at the same table with the king and his courtiers.<sup>39</sup>

A prince Gottfried (perhaps referring to Godfrey de Bouillon) sets out for Jerusalem upon a crusade and visits Rashi to converse with him about his military plans and to get his advice. Rashi tells him that he shall be driven out from Jerusalem by the Moslems on the 4th day of his occupancy.<sup>40</sup>

- 38) Ibn Verga's exploitation of the discourse in the " <sup>ענין</sup> " is certainly the most marked of the three. For a detailed discussion of this branch of folk-lore see Loeb, I: "Le Folklore Juif Dans La Chronique Du Schebet Yehuda D'Ibn Verga (R.E.J., vol.24, pp.1-29). These discourses and debates, as between a king and the representatives of the Jews, or between a king friendly to the Jews and Christians, are to be found all through the Schebet (For illustrations see Schebet Yehudah, Wiener edition (Hebrew) nos. 7,10,17, also pp.53-64 and 115-122). According to Loeb, "Folklore Juif", p. 4, all of the ~~conversations~~ <sup>39</sup> in the book, with the exception of no.40 (the disputation of Tortosa) are fictions). For Joseph ha-Kohen's method of putting statements into the mouths of his characters, see, for example, pp. 29,52,94,117 of the Emek ha-Ba~~ka~~ (Vienna edition, 1852).
- 39) Schelschelet, 39a.
- 40) Idem, 33b.

חנה לא יצא לא יישן שומר ישראל.

After they have offered their interpretations, the king then gives his and shows that he, in his own person, has been the guardian of Israel, and has discovered that the true culprits were Christians.

It should be noted, however, that Gedalya does not love the dialogue ~~form~~ to such an extent as to transmit in full the debates or conversations which he finds reported in other sources. Sometimes he merely tells the reader that a discussion or debate took place and that he has seen the written report of it. For example, he tells us that during the reign of King Alphonso of Spain, who ruled about 1240, the Jews were charged with a serious offence. The King, being an upright and humane person, summoned a learned monk, Thomas, to discuss the matter with him in Hebrew.

41) Schalschelet, 81a: Gedalya gives us an abbreviated form of the discussion found in Schebet Yehudah, no. 16 (Wiener ed., p. 39). For other alleged conversations see Schalschelet, 74b, 84b. See 82 a for the alleged contents of a letter sent by Pope Gregory to a King Philip of France, in which the pope, by means of a parable, seeks to prove to the king that the Jews are not to be accused of killing Christ. As his source for this "letter" Gedalya mentions a "יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן יוֹסֵף."

In the end the Jews were saved. Gedalya adds that he has seen the above mentioned discourse but does not quote from it. <sup>42</sup> Even where his own ancestors are supposed to have participated in a discussion, he does not use this as a pretense to quote. <sup>43</sup>

In addition to the discourse, Gedalya tries to please the reader with "personal interest" items; Thus he quotes from the Yuchasin, that R. Jonah Gerundi was a fat man; and that the <sup>44</sup>

- 42) Schalschelet, 81a. נחמיה מלך יהודה . It seems that Gedalya relates this occurrence from the Schebet Yehudah, no.7 (Wiener edition, Hebrew, pp.7-24) and all that he does is to summarize the introductory paragraph (which tells of the blood accusation) gives the king's name as Alphonso, describes his humane qualities, and tells of the summoning of Thomas, who would help the king out of his predicament. Loeb, in his "Le Folklore Juif Dans la Chronique du Schebet Jehuda (R.E.J., vol.24, p.2) has shown that the whole discourse is a figment.
- 43) After telling of the discourse between "King Alphonso" and the learned monk, Thomas, he quotes the Schebet Yehudah as saying that the same King discussed the Jewish faith with Don Joseph Ibn Yachya (such a discussion is described in the Schebet Yehudah (Wiener ed., Hebrew, p.108 ff.) but does not furnish us with even a part of the dialogue. His only reaction to the report of such a discourse is the opinion that this Joseph may have been the son of Don Yachya Ibn Jaish, the founder of the family. Another example may be cited from the story of the Disputation of Tortosa (Schalschelet, 82a). That Gedalya's report was taken from the Schebet Yehudah, no. 40 can be ascertained from Gedalya's own words: נפלאו ימים רבים לפני המפילור ושרים

רבים כנראה בשבט יהודה.

And yet, after telling us that one of the Jewish representatives at Tortosa was Todros Ibn Yachya, he does not tell us any of the arguments.

Of course, it is clear that Gedalya had to be brief in many items (Introduction III) but this does not explain why he reported other conversations at the expense of his own family, to which he otherwise devoted a considerable amount of space in his book.

- 44) Schalschelet, 38b.

author of the "Sefer Mizvot Katan", Isaac of Corbeil, had a large  
45 nose; and from the "Sefer Mizvot Katan" that Moses of Marbonne  
saw and spoke with a woman in Syria who was one hundred and thirty  
years old and still in full possession of her faculties. 46

But more than to both the discourse<sup>47</sup> and the personal interest item, Gedalya seems pledged,--I should say addicted ~~to~~-- to the use of the anecdote or story. In the introduction to the Schalschelet<sup>48</sup> he asks his son not to suspect him, Gedalya, of having gone beyond the limits of his request, if he should find legends and anecdotes which seem out of place, for this is not so. A little thought will soon convince him that even the most insignificant things which the author has noted in the book have some relation to the purposes and aims which he has outlined. One can learn many things from them which should help toward the understanding of the Jewish faith.<sup>49</sup>

- 45) Idem, 40a.

- 46) Idem, 38b.

- 45) Idem, 18a.  
46) Idem, 38b.  
47) Gedalya also shows himself an adept at word play. The Talmud (Baba Mezia, p.84b) relates that R. Judah ha-Masi asked the widow of Eliezer, son of Simeon Ben Yohai, to marry him. She replied: **רַבִּי שְׁמֵעֹן בֶּן יוֹחָי קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׁמַח בְּךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ** Gedalya, in his version (20b) states that **רַבִּי הַקָּדוֹשׁ** wanted to marry Eliezer's widow; then he procures the word play by giving her reply in indirect discourse: **וְהָיָה לָא רַבְתָּא בְּמִסְתָּא דְּהָיָה כְּדִי שֶׁ קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׁמַח בְּךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ** play of words from other

He is also pleased to introduce a play of words from other sources. He quotes an anecdote which he heard from Meir of Padua (40b), that when Yom Tob Ben Abraham, author of the proposed marriage to the widow of Yom Tob, the author of

- 48) Introduction IV.  
49) In the Introduction IV he quotes from the  
of Joseph Albo to the effect that the reader should not be too  
hasty with his objections and criticisms, but should realize  
that the same objections may have occurred to the author  
himself before he committed his thoughts to writing.



Azariah Dei Rossi felt that he had to excuse himself when he wanted to relate a story.<sup>50</sup> If Gedalya had to apologize every time he told a story, the "Schalschelet" would have been twice as large as it is. The reader will encounter them on almost every page of the first and third parts of the book, and in more than one instance Gedalya excuses himself for not being able to relate as many stories as he should wish.<sup>51</sup>

The stories and anecdotes which he relates are of all types and relate not only to Jewish history but to characters in general history as well.<sup>52</sup> Some pages are full of such anecdotes and the reader in going through them, surely feels that the author has left the main thread of his work and is now serving up some delectable refreshment. While discussing the contemporaries of Simeon ben Gamaliel II<sup>53</sup> he tells how R. Meir and R. Nathan sought to embarrass R. Simeon ben Gamaliel in matters of Halakah. The latter, however, discovered their malicious intentions and imposed severe restrictions upon them. While on the subject of Meir, he quotes

- 50) Meor Enayim (Benjacob edition, part II, p. 115 note) (noted by S. Baron, "Methode Historique", p. 19, note 3).  
 51) After relating some stories about Judah Ben Asher which he had read in a book belonging to another, he says (42a):  
 ולא יכולתי להעתיק ענינים רבים ויפים שהיה בקונצרו הזה כי החכם שהראה לי לא רצה.

See also 44a.

- In one place (83b) he tells the reader that he shall relate only one occurrence to illustrate the plight of the Jewish fugitives from Spain, because there are very many such stories. Before he is through, however, he has related two stories.  
 52) Alexander the Great (65b, 73b); The Founding of Carthage (70b); Cyrus (72a); Sibyl (72b); Diogenes (74b); Mithridates (75b); Julius Caesar (76a); Diocletian (76b); and many others.

- 53) Schalschelet, 20b.



the story in Gittin that Meir was a grandson of Nero who became a convert to Judaism. Then he tells us that Nero was supposed to have been a general in the Roman army who was later converted to Judaism and was also known by the name of R. N'horay ( *רבי נהוראי* ). Then we are told some stories concerning the wisdom of Meir's wife, Bruryah, and how she strangled herself after her husband had discovered her in an act of marital unfaithfulness secretly provoked by himself; Meir fled in disgrace to Babylonia. Next comes an item from the Zohar that the wife of Simeon Ben Yohai, <sup>and the mother of his son Eleazar, was the daughter of Phinehas Ben Jair. Finally there comes the "personal interest" story from Baba Mezia, that Eleazar, son of Simeon Ben Yohai</sup> Ishmael, son of R. Jose, and Simon, son of Halaftha and their wives were so stout that when they placed their abdomens opposite each other, the space below was <sup>54</sup> broad enough to afford passage to a team of oxen.

Gedalya is equally prolific in stories of the middle ages. He tells us, for example, that he was told by old men, and particularly by the elders of Saloniki, that when Rashi was travelling from country to country, he passed through Egypt, and was a guest at the house of Maimonides, who

- 54) Gedalya either wishes to indulge his imagination or else his memory has betrayed him here, because the story in Baba Mezia 84a mentions only R. Ishmael and R. Eleazar and states:

*כי הוו מקלעי ר' ישמעאל ברבי יוסי ורבי אלעזר ברבי שמעון  
פדדי הדדי.....*

Gedalya adds the name of Simeon Ben Halaftha and says:

*באופן שפסחיו מקריבים איש ואשתו כרס זה פגד זה.....*

*Rabbinovicz (קריק סלובין, München 1883, Part III p. 339 offers no reading among the variants which might justify Gedalya's construction*

feted him sumptuously when he became aware of the man's greatness, and presented him with some very rare oil

( <sup>55</sup> 10'072 100 ) at a banquet. Merchants from Mantua have also told Gedalya that they saw the gravestone of Rashi in Prague, but could not read the inscription because the <sup>56</sup> lettering had worn off.

In discussing Gedalya's aims, enumerated in the introduction to the Schalschelet, we recall that one of these was to tell of the "miracles which are wrought by God every day for Israel." Many miraculous legends were woven around such historic characters as Rashi, Maimonides, Nathanides, and Jacob Tam, and Gedalya takes full advantage of his opportunity to exploit these stories.

He tells us that he saw in an old <sup>072117</sup> , whose title he does not mention, that Rashi's father, Isaac, possessed a very valuable ruby which was coveted very much by his fellow citizens, who urged him to sell it. He refused, however, to part with it, and threw it into the sea. Later a voice from Heaven was heard in Isaac's academy, telling him that he would be blessed with a son who would

55) For this and the other stories about Rashi see Schalschelet, 32b, 33a, 33b.

56) Ibid, 33a.

serve as a light for all Israel. We are also told from the same source that Rashi, upon reaching his thirty third year, decided to exile himself from his relatives and friends and to spend the following seven years in expiation of the anguish and sorrow which his father had suffered as a result of throwing away the ruby. Another reason for this voluntary exile was that Rashi had then completed his commentary on the Torah and on most of the tractates of the Talmud, and fearing lest others might have preceded him in this work with better commentaries, he hesitated to publish his own, and spent these seven years of exile in searching for such commentaries in the schools of other lands. In this way he travelled through Italy, Greece, Palestine, and Egypt, where he saw Maimonides. After travelling around Persia he returned home (to Troyes) via Germany, and then officially completed his Torah commentaries.

Another story of Rashi which Gedalya relates (merely saying that he saw it written somewhere) is that a prince Gottfried (the crusader Godfrey of Bouillon) who heard of Rashi's wisdom, had summoned him to appear before him. Upon Rashi's refusal to comply with Gottfried's request, the latter paid a visit to Rashi's school, and after <sup>he had</sup> assured ~~ed~~ one of Rashi's pupils that he would do no harm to his master, Rashi appeared in person. Gottfried informed him of his plans to

besiege Jerusalem, and asked Rashi's advice. Rashi predicted that he would take Jerusalem but would be driven out by the Saracens on the fourth day of his occupation, and would return to Troyes with only three horses, including his own. Thereupon Gottfried threatened to feed Rashi's flesh to the dogs, and kill all the Jews of France if he returned from the Holy Land with one horse more than Rashi predicted. The first part of Rashi's prophecy was fulfilled but Gottfried returned four years later with three knights and planned revenge upon Rashi. One knight, however, was accidentally killed, and this deterred Godfrey from his plan. He went, instead to do homage to the great scholar but learned that he had died in the meantime, and he deeply mourned his passing. The same aura of legend surrounds Maimonides.

57

Gedalya relates the written tradition

58

transmitted to him by his contemporaries, that Maimonides remained for twelve years in a cave with his teacher, Joseph Ibn Migash and there he mastered his science. He also tells the story of Maimonides and his rivals at the court of the Sultan in Egypt; how Maimonides and the other courtiers each

57) For the stories concerning Maimonides see Schalschelet, 28a, b; 29a, b; 30a, b; 31a.

58) Schalschelet, 28a.

וקבלתי מהחכם הדור שנמצא פתוב.

drank poisons concocted by the other and how Maimonides survived the ordeal while his rivals succumbed. Concerning the death of Maimonides, Gedalya relates that the body was sent to Palestine; robbers attempted to steal the coffin, but could not lift it on account of its great weight, even though they numbered thirty men.

An equally miraculous story is told about the death of Nachmanides in Palestine.<sup>59</sup> This story is also taken from a יב"ד דמלך. It relates that when Nachmanides was leaving Spain for Palestine, his students asked him for a sign by which they could know that their teacher had died. Nachmanides told them that on the day of his death the gravestone of his mother in Perpignan would be cleft in two and between the two parts of the rock the likeness of a candlestick would be seen. Three years after his departure, one of his students found the gravestone cleft in two and discerned the likeness of a candlestick therein.

One of the most interesting miracles which Gedalya relates is that connected with the death of Amram of Mayence.<sup>60</sup>

Gedalya relates this story while dealing with R. Amram Gaon. He tells us that he found it in an old ספר

59) Schalschelet, 38b. For other lore concerning Nachmanides see, 38a and 38b.  
60) Schalschelet, 24a.

and is not sure whether it refers to Amram Gaon or not but he will tell it any way.<sup>61</sup> This Amram lived in Mayence on the Rhine and had gone to Cologne to establish an academy there. Being old, he told his students that in the event of his death his body should be sent back to Mayence to be buried with his ancestors. His corpse was to be placed in a coffin and put into a small boat on the Rhine, the boat to follow its own course. His students followed his directions and the boat was carried by the current until it reached Mayence. The Christians of Mayence, seeing this miracle, thought that the body was that of a saint, and attempted to remove it and bury it in the Christian cemetery. The boat, however, receded, and came close to where the Jewish citizens were standing. Some Jews climbed into the boat, and in it, beside the body, they found Amram's letter asking them to bury him among his ancestors. The Christians, however, refused to yield the body of Amram to the Jews, and built a church over it, not being able to move it. Many Jewish youths saw Amram in their dreams every night. They eventually succeeded in substituting the body of a hanged criminal for that of Amram, and buried the great

61) Schalschelet, 24a: ולא ידעתי אם הוא זה הגאון שבמחנה  
מחסיא ששלה הסדור או אם הוא גאון אחר. עם כל זה בחרתי  
להציג לפניך הדבר.

teacher in the Jewish cemetery. <sup>62</sup>

The miracles related here do not even begin to tax the rich store found in the Schalschelet, nor do they even exhaust the lore concerning the figures already mentioned.

Similar miraculous stories are told about Solomon Ibn Gabirol, <sup>63</sup>  
<sup>64</sup> Judah ha-Levi, <sup>65</sup> Abraham Ibn Ezra, <sup>66</sup> Jacob Tam, <sup>67</sup> Jehiel of  
<sup>68</sup> Paris, <sup>69</sup> Jehiel, father of Asher, <sup>70</sup> Jehiel of Pisa, <sup>71</sup> Menahem  
 Recanati, R. Judah he-Hasid (36b), and others.

In addition to the miracles performed by great men, the Schalschelet also contains another class of miracles, wonders performed in the interests of the Jewish people either at a time of crises or as a punishment for past offenses committed against the Jews. At the time of Alfasi there is a persecution of the Jews by the "consedenti" and those Jews who do not submit to baptism within a month are killed. The king, however, dies a short time after this. An enemy of the Jews urges the Queen of Spain to demand that the King expel the Jews from the country. Before the edict of expulsion is carried out, however, <sup>73</sup> the villain is found guilty and is hanged. The Jews in

62) According to Kohler (Jewish Encyclopedia, article "Amram of Mayence", vol. I, p. 535) this legend may have been borrowed from the Christian legend of the founding of St. Emmeran's Church in Mayence, and "Emmeran" was changed to Amram.

63) Schalschelet, 26a.

68) Ibid, 41b, 42a.

64) Ibid, 27a, b.

69) Ibid, 43b.

65) Ibid, 27a, b.

70) Ibid, 42b.

66) Ibid, 35a, b.

71) Ibid, 36b.

67) Ibid, 39a.

נראה הקושית נכונה It is not known

72) Schalschelet, 80a.

just what this persecution was, or whether it took place. See, I. Loeb: Joseph Hachohen et Les Chroniqueurs Juifs, R.E.J., vol. 17, p. 93.

73) Schalschelet, 81a. A similar story is found on 82a. Loeb, ibid, pp. 94, 95, believes that both have their source in the Schebet Yehudah, no. 44.

Fezare accused of having buried a convert to Christianity in the Jewish graveyard. The king has already issued a decree expelling the Jews, when Judah Ibn Verga, a cabalist, comes to him and tells him to put a blank sheet of paper in his bosom. After the cabalist has pronounced a secret formula the king draws forth the paper, and finds there a graphic description of the crime together with the names of the Christian culprits who committed it, and the edict of expulsion is revoked. <sup>74</sup> A king, whose name and country are not mentioned, finds that he cannot fall asleep. He arises in the middle of the night and looks out of the window. Seeing some men carrying a corpse, he sends his servants to shadow them. The latter report that the corpse was put into the house of a Jew. When, on the morrow, the Jews are accused of murdering the Christian, the king tells them that he has now discovered the real meaning of the passage in the Psalms:

הנה לא ינחם לא ינחם לא ינחם  
75

and metes out severe punishment to the malefactors. In France, false witnesses appear before the king and state that they have seen Jews commit murder for ritual purposes. The

- 74) Schalschelet, 80b. The story is similar in many respects to that in the Schebet Yehudah, no. 38 and Loeb, opus citatum, p. 94, suggests that the name <sup>שיריק</sup> be changed to <sup>שיריק</sup> (the name of the city given in the Schebet Yehudah, no. 38). See also Loeb, "Le Folk-lore Juif," R.E.J., vol. 24, p. 8, where the story in the Schebet is discussed.
- 75) Schalschelet, 81a. Compare with Schebet Yehudah, no. 16; also Loeb, opus citatum, p. 8.



king, who sentences the Jews to death, is supposed to begin the execution, which consists in placing the Jews in barrels lined inside with nails, and then rolling the barrels. As he begins to roll the first barrel, the king falls down, and this serves him as a sign that the matter has not been properly investigated. Eventually the Jews are absolved and the real culprits are brought to book.<sup>76</sup>

It is interesting to note the traits which Gedalya sometimes attributes to his characters. The king is often grateful to the Jews, and tries to protect them against their enemies. King Robert of Naples has no money with which to finance an important war, and the Jews put their wealth at his disposal. Before his death he instructs his son to show kindness to his Jewish subjects. When the new King offers the Jews a chance to get to the Next World by submitting to baptism, they agree on condition that they be allowed to marry into the nobility. The King urges the nobles to unite with the Jews in marriage.<sup>77</sup>

In the days of the "great and wise Alphonso" who ruled in Spain about the year 5000 (1240 A.D.), the people

76) Schalschelet, 81a. Compare with Schebet Yehudah, no.17; also, Loeb, *idem*.

77) Schalschelet, 80a. Compare Emek ha-Ba~~ch~~a (Letteris edition), p. 51.

bring false accusations against the Jews. The King, however, holds a discourse with the wise and learned monk Thomas and between the two the Jews are saved.<sup>78</sup>

It is in the reign of the above mentioned Alphonso that a priest demands of the Jews that they attend his sermon. The King assures the Jews that no harm will befall them. When the priest, however, in the course of his sermon begins to attack the Jews, the King arises in anger and leaves the church. Only after the priest has deeply apologized does the King decide<sup>79</sup> to remain. The rest of the sermon is a eulogy on the Jewish people.

In one instance of a ritual murder accusation in France, the "King of the Turks" advocates the cause of the Jews before the King of France, and it is only with great reluctance<sup>80</sup> that the latter assents to a death sentence for the accused.

It remains to mention two more folkloristic elements found in the Schalschelet, namely, the belief in devils and

- וְלִבְנוֹת בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם נִצְלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים.
- 78) Schalschelet, 81a.  
 79) Compare with Schebet Yehudah, no. 7.  
 79) Schalschelet, 81a. Schebet Yehudah, no. 13.  
 80) Gedalya has followed the story told in the Schebet Yehudah, no. 17, but he has either introduced certain modifications of his own, or may have had a different text of the Schebet before him. Whereas it is the Turkish ambassador who pleads for the Jews in the Schebet Yehudah:  
 שֶׁר אֶחָד מִשְׂרֵי יִשְׂמָעֵאל אָמַר בָּא עִם הַמְּלִיחָה.  
 it is the Turkish King himself who takes up the Jewish cause in the Schalschelet. F. Baer in "Untersuchungen ueber Quellen und Komposition des Schebet Jehudah", p. 63 believes that the whole story is improbable and points out that it was not till the time of Francis I that a Turkish ambassador was present at the French court.

evil spirits, and the belief in the coming of the Messiah.<sup>81</sup>  
 Gedalya relates an interesting personal experience in Ferrara in 1575. It seems that he was called to the house of a young woman of twenty five who had been possessed by an evil spirit. He found the young woman lying upon the bed without showing any semblance of life. He addressed himself to the spirit which possessed her and begged it to reply to his questions. The spirit soon answered him in Italian and its words could be heard distinctly. Gedalya addressed to it questions concerning the essence and nature of the soul and how it leaves the body. This particular spirit admitted that it knew nothing about these things, saying that it belonged originally to a man who had been a common farmer and a neatherd. Gedalya finally succeeded in driving it out of the woman and she returned to normal health.<sup>82</sup>

Gedalya's interest in Messianic speculation must be regarded by us as a normal interest of the learned as well as the untutored of his time, and we do not necessarily have to accept the theory of Dubnow that his mind had been unsettled by

81) It is not within the province of this essay to treat of Gedalya's ideas concerning astronomy, astrology, natural science, magic, and the nature of the soul. These are taken up in detail in the second part of the Schalschelet (50 a to 65a).

82) Schalschelet, 62a.

the misfortunes which befell the Jews under Paul IV and Pius V. <sup>83</sup>

Gedalya's approach to the problem of the coming of the Messiah is in the form of an extensive obiter dictum. While discussing Maimonides he quotes from the latter's epistle to the sages of Marseilles, wherein Maimonides tells how he warned the people of Yemen against the activities of a false messiah. Finding himself on the subject of messiahs, Gedalva sets out to tell the reader about other false messiahs and to show that "one should not believe the statements of fools." He then relates stories about would-be messiahs from the Schebet Yehudah and from Yossipoon and the stories about David Reubeni and Solomon Molcho. <sup>84</sup> A little later, in discussing various prophecies concerning the date when the world will come to an end, he finally gathers the <sup>85</sup> courage to give us his own view on this important problem. He tells us that in the year 1555, on the seventh day of Passover he could not sleep, and he began to think about the end of all things. After a time, he fell asleep and on awakening in the morning he thought of Balaam's words:

אֲרָאנוּ וְלֹא יָדָעוּ אֲשֶׁרֵנוּ וְלֹא קִרְבָּנוּ.

On computing the numerical significance of the verse in a certain way, he found that it amounted to the number 5358 (1598). Another

83) Dubnow: Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes, vol. VI, p. 158.

84) Schalschelet, 30a, b.

85) Schalschelet, 32 a: וְאֵנִי הַצֶּעִיר אֲמַרְתִּי לְדַעֲיָנוּ אֵלֶיךָ עַל זֶה  
הָעִנִּין מִה שֶׁאֵירַע לִי וְהִנֵּנִי נֹשֵׁב אֵלֶיךָ בִּי כְנִים דְּבָרִי.

verse, in Genesis:

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי וְאַנְיָדָה לָכֶם  
אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים.

yielded the same number.

Gedalya's attempt to comprehend the entire range of Jewish history within the confines of so small a book as the *Schalschelet* has forced him to be very brief. In the introduction to the book, he excuses his briefness on the grounds that the works of Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Daud have offered lengthy treatments of the history of Jewish tradition up to their own times. For Jewish history up to the twelfth century, then, his briefness is self imposed. The lack of Jewish historical works since their time and the burning of those useful books which did exist, have been the reasons for his brevity in the treatment of Jewish characters and events up to his own time. As for the lives and achievements of great non-Jews he tells his son that anyone interested can find an abundance of

material in the many works dealing with the subject. <sup>86</sup>

Of course, Gedalya is not always consistent in this policy of abbreviation and I have already pointed out the large amount of space which he devotes to his family's history and the inordinate amount of attention given to stories about Rashi and Maimonides. Such matters as the sin of Moses and Aaron in the wilderness of Zin, <sup>87</sup> and the significance of the death of the ten Jewish martyrs ( <sup>88</sup> עשרת הדורני סלכות ) are also treated at great length.

The connection between historical items placed next

86) Introduction III.

Undue length is also to be avoided. See, for example, Schalschelet, 82b, where, in speaking of the letter of Hasdai Crescas' ~~letter~~ to the congregations of Avignon, he says:

כי בברתי ואריכות לא העסקתיה כלל רק בקוצר. <sup>always</sup>  
also Schalschelet, 85a, where, he very briefly mentions the execution of brothers Carafa in 1561. Here again he says:

In borrowing from the Schebet Yehudah, Gedalya almost <sup>always</sup> applies the pruning knife. Compare, for example, Schebet Yehudah, no.1 (Wiener edition, p.1) with Schalschelet, 76a; Schebet, no.18 (Wiener ed., pp.41,42) with Schalschelet, 80a; Schebet, no.14 (Wiener ed., pp.37,38) with Schalschelet, 80b; Gedalya also has no scruples about shortening and altering a direct quotation:

Schalschelet, 80b:	Schebet Yehudah, No.35 (Wiener ed., p.65)
: ויאמר למלך עשה עמי צוה נא לעשות	: ...אחר הדברים אשר לו ואיש
: מדורה גדולה ברחוב העיר והפחידני	: היהודי אין לבי להחנצר אבל
: לשרף אותי אם לא אמיר.	: אפשר שבראותי דאש הגדולה אשר
:	: בו ישרפוני אפהד ואשוב מדרכי
:	: לכן אדוני השר צוה ויעשו
:	: ברחוב אש גדולה ולך עמי סמוך
:	: לאש אולי בעת ההיא יתן האל
:	: פלגי את אשר נרצונך.

87) Schalschelet, 5b.

88) Schalschelet, 19a.

to one another does not always trouble Gedalva. Very often one finds a group of events described on one page which bear little or no relation to each other. An example may be cited of page 75a. Here we have first, a story about the great courage displayed by Marcus Regulus in the war against Carthage. Next comes a note on the origin of the sect of Essenes. This leads the author to discuss the other Jewish sects. He then recalls what he has read concerning Christian and Mohammedan sects. This brings him to the time of Jose Ben Joezer and Jose Ben Joathanan. In their period he places Ptolemy Philadelphus, and tells of his literary interests, of the Septuagint translation, and of his great library. The mentioning of the library leads him to descant on its eventual fate. Then he tells us that he has read somewhere (again not mentioning the source) that about the year 3539 the Samaritans obtained permission from the above mentioned Ptolemy to build a temple on Mount Gerizim. Next comes the item that the Ptolemaic dynasty founded by the grandfather of Ptolemy Philadelphus, had thirteen rulers and lasted three hundred years.<sup>89</sup> This leads him to express the probability that

89) It was the father of Ptolemy Philadelphus who founded the Ptolemaic dynasty (Ptolemy I Soter). Ptolemy I began to rule over Egypt as governor in 323 B.C. and the last of the Ptolemies was murdered in 43 B.C. Gedalva's use of the number three hundred here is evidently an attempt at simplification. On p. 74b, Gedalva states that seventeen rulers of Egypt bore the name Ptolemy and that the Ptolemaic dynasty lasted 220 years.

the title "Pharaoh" may have ceased to be used with the accession of the Ptolemies, and to quote from Ibn Ezra's commentary that "Pharaoh" was an Egyptian name. After the rule of the thirteen Ptolemies Egypt fell into the hands of the Romans under "Caesar the Consul." Returning to the era of Ptolemy Philadelphus he tells us that the city of Siena was founded in that period and that a great Jewish philosopher, Aristobulus<sup>90</sup> (Aristobulus of Panceas ?) lived at that time and corresponded with this Egyptian ruler. All this within the space of one page!

A description of this page has shown how Gedalya could very easily run off on a tangent and not even feel the need to justify himself. Many other such examples could be adduced here,<sup>91</sup> and I should like to illustrate this weakness with one more citation. After mentioning Ishmael and his wives, Gedalya recalls a statement somewhere in the Talmud that he who sees Ishmael in a dream will have his prayers answered. Then he quotes from the Zohar that the Israelites and Ishmaelites reckoned the time by the moon. Finally he mentions the Midrash about the six who were called by their names before they were born, and one of these was Ishmael. This Midrash about a number now leads him to recall

90) See note 12 (Aristobulus)

91) Schalschelet, 12b, 13b, 14b, 16b, 17a, 34b, 38b, 75b, 78a, 79a, 80a, 80b and many other places.



other Midrashim dealing with numbers which no longer have any relation to Ishmael. After all this rambling he returns to Tera~~h~~<sup>h</sup> and describes the permanent rift which occurred between him and his son Abraham.<sup>92</sup>

*divine* When we inquire after the material which Gedalya utilized in the writing of his history, we see that he has relied chiefly upon the <sup>traditional</sup> written sources, and such things as monuments, inscriptions, or coins have little to offer him in the way of historic knowledge. The only references made to historic monuments or inscriptions are the ones referring to the Arch of Titus in Rome and to a monument in Saloniki, both of which Gedalya saw in the course of his travels. He describes these monuments briefly while on the subject of the destruction of the Second Temple, and states that the tradition at Saloniki<sup>93</sup> ascribed the monument there to the time of Titus.

He is not very much interested in language as a source of Jewish history and while he has some remarks to make on the origin and importance of Hebrew, he makes only a few (and these naïve) attempts to ascertain historical facts from

92) Schalschelet, 2a.

93) S<sup>c</sup>halschelet, 77b.

the language itself.<sup>94</sup> As to ancient Jewish coins, Gedalya devotes a few pages to ascertain what ratio they bore to each other, and what might have been their value in Italian money,<sup>95</sup> but his interest ends there. He mentions the coins named in the Bible, Talmud and medieval Jewish literature, but he never tells us of the inscriptions appearing on them and their meaning. His whole discussion has a distinctly theoretical flavor.

Gedalya brings little of the critical attitude to an evaluation of the traditional sources of Jewish history. He believes in the Midrashic story that the Torah was already in existence before the world was created and that Adam was thoroughly acquainted with all of its revealed and hidden teachings. Adam transmitted the tradition to Seth, who, in turn, passed it on to Enos, and in this way the teachings of the Torah were passed on by word of mouth until the time of Moses when God openly revealed the Torah to Moses and to all Israel, and from that time it has come down in written form to the present generation. It is impossible to question the most minute item in the entire

- (Not peculiar to him). 94) See Schalschelet, 18a for the interpretation of the name Joshua Ben Karha. He subscribes to the belief that the word 'כסא' refers to the verse: 'כִּי כִסֵּהוּ בְּאֵלֶיךָ ה' which was inscribed upon the Shields of the Hasmoneans (Schalschelet, 15a) and that the Spanish city of Toledo received its name from the fact that the Jews, after much wandering (71270) finally settled there in the days of Nebuchadnezzar (Schalschelet, 73a). See also 6b, where he quotes with approval the Midrash that the Wilderness of Paran was called by that name because the Jews multiplied there (פ' 121' 40) 95) Schalschelet, 63a, b; 64a.

What are the distinctive  
qualities of the Bible?

What is its peculiar  
Contribution?

What is its valuable  
contribution  
for?

No clear answer to above.

Excellent for technical details

For the Bible and as  
far as it goes shows  
scholarly ability - although

a bit scrappy (perhaps  
unavoidably so). J.W. S.B.

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זֶה אָמַר בְּכָה וְזֶה אָמַר בְּכָה אֲסַנֵּם אֵין לְאִסְמִין אֶלָּא דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה.

In another place (69a) after relating the story that Danaus, King of Argos, was the first to dig wells for the purpose of drawing water, he attempts to correct the legend, and says that the author wished to say that Danaus was the first to put stones around the walls of wells, because the Patriarchs had already dug wells to provide water for their cattle.

book, and when there is a contradiction between the words of Scripture and statements of later origin, the words of Scripture must be preferred.<sup>97</sup>

As to the translations of the Bible, Gedalya gives us the story of the translation of the Seventy in all its details as told in the letter of Aristeeas.<sup>98</sup> He also gives us the anecdotes concerning this Greek translation found in Megilla, Leviticus Rabbā and Megillat Taanit. He is in doubt whether the seventy elders translated only the Pentateuch or the entire Scriptures into Greek, since the word "Torah" which is found in the stories of Leviticus Rabbā and Megillat Taanit, can have the narrow meaning of Pentateuch or the broader meaning of Scriptures. He admits that he cannot settle the question, because there is evidence for both interpretations, since the word "Torah" has both connotations in the Talmud. From the statements of Augustine,

96) Schalschelet, 47b: ...ובאופן שמי אפשר להכחישו אפילו במקור  
חירק או י קטנה.

See also Introduction II; ....ובזה תופר אצל כל העולם שהיא  
הסיבה שהפסוק פתי ולא תפול בה ספק משום צד.

97) Schalschelet, 66a. After describing the four tributaries of the first river, which originated in the Garden of Eden, he says:  
ודע כי הפלוסופים בקשו למצא ראשי אלו הנהרות  
זה אומר בכה וזה אומר בכה אמנם אין לואמין אלא דברי תורה.

In another place (69a) after relating the story that Danaus, King of Argos, was the first to dig wells for the purpose of drawing water, he attempts to correct the legend, and says that the author wished to say that Danaus was the first to put stones around the walls of wells, because the Patriarchs had already dug wells to provide water for their cattle.

98) Schalschelet, 14b.

Philo and Yosippon it would seem that the Seventy translated only the Pentateuch.<sup>99</sup>

Gedalya is also in doubt whether the translation of the Seventy was made directly from the Hebrew or from the Aramaic.<sup>100</sup> He also knows of the translations of Jonathan, Onkelos and Aquilas, and expresses traditional opinions concerning them. He attributes the Targum Jonathan to Jonathan Ben Uziel (in accordance with the tradition in Megilla 3a) who, he believes, received the oral tradition in his youth from Haggai, Malachi, and Zachariah, was a companion in his middle age of Hillel, and in his old age saw Onkelos the proselyte.<sup>101</sup> Jonathan, according to Gedalya, was also the author of the Targum Yerushalmi. After telling of two manuscripts, one of which bears the title of Targum Jonathan Ben Uziel, and the other, called the Targum Yerushalmi; and noting that the language of the two is identical, he concludes by stating the possibility that the word Yerushalmi in one means merely that Jonathan wrote it while in Jerusalem.<sup>102</sup> As to Onkelos the proselyte, Gedalya believes the story in Megilla 3a

- 99) Schalschelet, 14b.  
 100) Idem.  
 101) Schalschelet, 17a.  
 102) Schalschelet, 17b. See W. Bacher's article "Targum" (particularly "Palestinian Targum") in the Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. XII, p. 60. Gedalya's reference to the two manuscripts may have been taken from Azariah Dei Rossi's notice in "Meor Enayim" (Benjacob edition, 1863, part I, p. 127) (mentioned here by Bacher). See Camely, opus citatum p. 36 note 122

that Onkelos translated the Torah at the dictation of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua, and does not seem to be surprised by the story found in the first chapter of the tractate Megilla in the Talmud Yerushalmi, which relates the same thing about Aquila, and states that he was praised by the two rabbis<sup>103</sup> in the words of the Psalms 45:3. Gedalya knows that Aquila's translation was from the Hebrew into Greek, and perhaps saw nothing questionable in the theory that both translations may have been made under the supervision of Eliezer and Joshua. He has also read about other translations of the Bible, such as those of Theodotion,<sup>104</sup> Symmachus,<sup>105</sup> Jerome, and Saadia.

Of the Apocrypha, he briefly summarizes the contents of the books of Tobit, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, the two books of Esdras, the three books of Maccabees,<sup>106</sup> and Susanna. He does not mention any of the other books.

When we come to Gedalya's attitude to the Talmudic sources we have much more material to draw upon, because the Talmudim and various Midrashim are utilized extensively in the first and second part of the Schalschelet, and the author in most cases acknowledges his source.

- 103) Schalschelet, 17b. This contradiction is noted by Bacher in the above mentioned article, who holds that the Babylonian teachers mistakenly applied the legend concerning Aquila to Onkelos.
- 104) Schalschelet, 75b. .... ופירוט התורה בלשון ערבי...
- 105) Schalschelet, 25a.
- 106) Schalschelet, 48b.

The Talmud is to him "the illuminating window pane":<sup>107</sup>  
 all of the people of Israel have agreed to its authority and  
 one may not add or subtract anything written therein, except  
 to add that which the Saboraim have written.<sup>108</sup> The true oral  
 tradition comprises only the Mishna and the Gemara.<sup>109</sup> That  
 Gedalya regarded the Talmud as a very trustworthy historical  
 source can be seen from his unqualified acceptance of the  
 statements therein concerning the ancient Hebrew writings.

For the authorship of the books of the Bible he relies  
 upon the statement in the first chapter of Baba Batra:<sup>110</sup> Moses  
 wrote the Torah, the book of Job and the incident of Balaam;  
 Joshua wrote the book bearing his name and the last eight  
 sentences of the Torah; Samuel wrote the books of Samuel,  
 Ruth, and Judges; David and ten elders wrote the Psalms. The  
 elders were Adam, Abraham, Moses, David (!), Solomon (!),  
 Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, the three sons of Korah, and Ezra.<sup>111</sup>

107) Introduction IV: ...הנמרא אשר היא אספקלריאה המאירה.

108) Schalschelet, 23a: ...והסכים עליו כל ישראל ועליו אין  
 להוסיף וממנו אין לגרע וזהו דבנן סבוראי  
 שהוסיפו בו מעט דבר כאשר מקובל לנו מהנאונים הראשונים.

109) ...הקבלה האמתית היא המשנה ושיחא סדרי והיא היא עצמה  
 שיצאה מפי מר"ה שקבלה מהשם יתברך.

110) Schalschelet, 48b. The reference is to Baba Batra, 14b, 15a.

111) Ibid. Gedalya's memory has betrayed him here, because the  
 passage in the Talmud reads: "דור ויי" וקנים" as  
 עשרה שקנים" and not  
 Gedalya summarizes it. The ten elders mentioned by Gedalya  
 differ in some details from the list in Baba Batra. The  
 list of names given in the latter contains the name of  
 Melchizedek and omits the names of David, Solomon, and  
 Ezra. It is in the Tosafot of 15a that Solomon's inclusion  
 among the Psalmists is discussed (This last item is noted  
 in J.E., article, "Bible Canon", vol. III, p. 143 under subheading  
 "Sequence"). Gedalya considers Korah's three sons as one  
 whereas the Talmud regards them here as 3 separate authors.

should be  
 considered more  
 fully & go  
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 into.



Isaiah was the author of the book bearing his name and also of Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. <sup>112</sup> Jeremiah was the author of the book bearing his name, the books of Kings, and Lamentations. The Men of the Great Synagogue wrote the books of Ezekiel and the books of the twelve minor prophets, Daniel and Esther. Ezra wrote the book of Ezra, and compiled the genealogy in Chronicles up to his own time.

In the matter of the authorship of later anonymous works Gedalya also follows the traditions of the Talmud: <sup>113</sup> Eliezer Ben Hyrcanus was the author of the Perakim; <sup>114</sup> Judah Ben Ilai was the author of the Sifra, Rab was the author

111) cont'd. Rabbinoicz (CS, 66, 77, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000)

112) Schalschelet, 48b. Here again Gedalya has erred in his citation. The Talmud (Baba Batra, 15a) states that Hezekiah and his council wrote the books of Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. Gedalya is also not perturbed by his previous statement (Schalschelet, 7b) that Solomon, in his old age wrote the Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. As has already been shown, Gedalya's quotations are often faulty.

Compare also Schalschelet, 49a with Baba Batra, 14b (which it is supposed to follow) for the order of Books in the Canon). Another striking example of a misquotation is to be found on 66a of the Schalschelet where Gedalya quotes from Sanhedrin concerning the history of Hebrew writing:

Schalschelet, 66a

במסכת סנהדרין פכ"ג אמר רב חסדא אמר רב  
עוקבא בחזקה נתנה תורה לישראל בכתב עברי  
ולשון הקודש. כיון שלדו בימי עזרא ביררו  
להם כתב אשורית ולשון הקודש והניחו לכותבי  
כתב עברי ולשון הקודש....

Compare Rabbinoicz, *opusc. cit.* p. 52 סנהדרין

Sanhedrin, 21b.  
אמר רב חסדא ואיתא מר עוקבא  
בתחילה נתנה תורה לישראל בכתב

עברי ולשון הקודש חזרה ונתנה  
להם בימי עזרא בכתב אשורית  
ולשון ארמי ביררו להם ישראל  
כתב אשורית ולשון הקודש והניחו:  
להדיוטות כתב עברית ולשון ארמי:  
אמר רב חסדא פותאי סמי כתב  
עברית אמר רב חסדא כתב ליבנואד:

113) Schalschelet, 17a.

114) Ibid.



more on the subject of the Sifre, <sup>115</sup> Anan was the author of the Seder Elivahu Rabbah and the Seder Elivahu Zutta, <sup>116</sup> Jose Ben Halafte was the author of the Seder Olam, <sup>117</sup> and Hannania Ben Hezekiah was the author of Megillat Taanit. <sup>118</sup>

That Gedalya draws no clear line between the aggadic elements and the historic statements of the Talmud can be seen from his quotation from Baba Batra, 121b, which states that seven people "overlapped" an entire world: Methuselah saw Adam, Shem saw Methuselah, Jacob saw Shem, Amram saw Jacob, Ahijah saw Amram, Elijah saw Ahijah and Elijah is still among the living. "There is no doubt," says Gedalya, "that since each one of these was the head of his particular generation, charged with the responsibility of transmitting the traditions of the Torah, that each man taught the other (meaning his younger contemporary) the whole Torah, which was in the hands of Adam and in the hands of Moses." <sup>119</sup>

115) Schalschelet, 21a. He also considers Rab here as author of the Sifra, and ~~Gedalya~~ does not explain the contradiction between this statement and the one made on 17a.

116) Schalschelet, 22b.

117) He again contradicts himself on 26a, where he places the author of the Seder Olam Rabbah and Zutta in the generation of Joseph, son of Samuel ha-Nagid.

118) Schalschelet, 16a. ~~...הוא היה רב הכולל...~~

119) Schalschelet, 47b. ואין ספק שלהיותם כל אחד ראש לדור...  
וקבלת התורה תלויה עליהם כי לדרו זה לזה כל השורה שהיתה  
ביד אדם וביד מרעה.

Gedalya's quotations from the Midrashim are very numerous in the first part of the Schalschelet, but we are not given any critical principle which should guide and help us to separate the historical from the fictitious.

Gedalya's pious attitude toward the ancient oral sources of Jewish tradition does not, however, render him totally oblivious to the contradictions and dubious statements which he has encountered in the Talmud and Midrashim. One way of overcoming his difficulty in the event of a contradiction is to treat a given number or statement as a copyist's error ( לכאן הנה ) but he leaves us no record of an effort on his part to compare various printed editions or manuscripts to see whether his proposed solution is justified. <sup>120</sup> In other places he is willing to acknowledge the contradiction and let the matter rest undecided. In one instance he tells the reader that all his life he has been eager to learn exactly the names and the number of High Priests who officiated in the First and Second Temples. The Talmud has been of no help to him because its statements concerning this matter are contradicted by the statements of later commentators. <sup>121</sup> He finds a similar difficulty in identifying Elijah the prophet, since

120) Schalschelet, 6b, 7a, 18b.

121) Schalschelet, 16b: ...וזה כי אמרי הנבא והמפרשים אחרונים  
...מותרים זה לזה כמו שפיראם....

the Midrashim and the Talmud contain contradictory statements concerning his origin. He concludes by saying that all Israel has been accustomed to identify Elisha with Phinehas, but that, in truth, the whole matter has been left undecided.<sup>122</sup>

In another place, in discussing the time when the Samaritan Temple was built he confesses his inability to offer any solution.<sup>123</sup>

In rare instances Gedalya attempts to correct the statement in the Talmud by a reference to a non-Jewish source. He tells the story from Sanhedrin 21b that when Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, Gabriel descended and stuck a reed into the sea, and it gathered a bank around it, upon which Rome was built. Our author finds that this does not agree with the *Chronica*, which state that in Solomon's time Rome was already built, and he solves the problem by saying that in the days of Solomon Rome had expanded in size, and a wall was built around it.<sup>124</sup>

The Zohar is another source which is quoted often in the first part of the *Schalschelet*. Gedalya believes that

- 122) *Schalschelet*, 9b. ואין כלל ויכולתי להכריע בענינים ההם...  
 See also 10a for Elisha.  
 123) *Schalschelet*, 13b. See also 47b, where he is puzzled by contradictions between the *Seder Olam Rabba* & *Zutta*.  
 124) *Schalschelet*, 7b. סנהדרין פרק כ... ואני אומר שבפי הקרונים לא נראה זה.  
 See also 11a.

Simon Ben Yohai and his son did not write the Zohar in the form in which it has come down to his own generation. The pupils of Simon and their pupils were the ones who did the writing, about seventy years after the death of Simon himself. He has heard that the whole Zohar is so large a work that if it were all gathered together it would furnish a load heavy enough for a camel to bear. He states that the Zohar has been accepted in Israel and that he has read in the Yuhasin that the Zohar is followed in Jewish law wherever it does not conflict with the teachings of the Talmud, or explains something which has been left unexplained in the Talmud.<sup>125</sup>

The story in the Yuhasin concerning the forging of the Zohar he considers very curious,<sup>126</sup> and after apprising the reader of the theory that Moses de Leon, driven on by the need of money, forged the book, he concludes by saying, "I believe all this is vain talk and the truth of the matter is that Rabbi Simon Ben Yohai and his holy company uttered those words."<sup>127</sup> Of course, their words may not have been written down in definitive form during their lifetime, but later

125) For all these statements concerning the Zohar see Schalschelet, 20a. The theory of the lost and scattered parts of the Zohar justifies him in quoting a statement from it, told to him by another, that Honi the circle-drawer was Phinehas Ben Jair. He, Gedalya, has sought this passage but could not find it (Schalschelet, 21b).  
 126) Schalschelet, 20b. ...וראיתי ביוחסין דבר כסמיה, ובחרתי להעתיקו לפניי.

See Yuhasin (ed. Filipowski, pp. 95a, b; 96a, b).  
 127) Schalschelet, 20b. ...אבל אני מאמין כי הכל הכל נראתו יתיה שרשלי וחבורתו וקרושה אסרו הדברים ההם.

generations gathered the stray books ( *דברי חכמים* ) and composed them in the proper manner. But this should not surprise anyone, because the Mishna and the Gemara were completed in the same way. <sup>128</sup>

It is clear, from Gedalya's statement regarding the Mishna and Gemara as the only "true tradition," that he has drawn a line of demarcation between the Amoraic and later ages. We do not, however, find any statement concerning the importance of the Gaonim, or any evaluation of their work. <sup>129</sup>

An interesting statement regarding the history of Jewish tradition after the completion of the Gemara is found in the introduction to the Schalschelet. Here the author stresses the idea that the bearers of the oral tradition were not just a privileged few, in each generation, but that there were thousands and tens of thousands of scholars and academies in Israel, and in all places and climes in which the Jews had lived. The only genuine oral tradition had been received by Moses on Sinai. All the scholars and academies which existed throughout the ages produced greater and lesser works commenting

128) Schalschelet, 20b.

129) Of works written in the Gaonic period he quotes the "Halachot Gedolot" (10a, 27b), the narrative of Eldad ha-Dani (24b), the opinion of Zemach, Gaon of Sura concerning Eldad's statements (idem), and the Iggeret of Sherira (23a), which he lists in the Introduction as one of his chief sources; Also the Seder Olam Zuta Int III, 11b, *Saddjeh*  
*Commentary on the Book of Daniel, 31b*

upon the written and oral law. Some of these books were burned or lost as a result of expulsions and evil decrees; others remained in those localities in which they were written, and still others were circulated, but the names of their authors have been forgotten. The ancients did not mention the names of all the Jewish sages in the world because that was a lengthy task and would require large books and much time; they therefore confined themselves to mentioning the names of the Jewish leaders in the Diaspora. Gedalya says that he also, following this principle of necessary selection, has mentioned and quoted only those rabbis coming after Maimonides whose works have been of great significance to all subsequent generations. <sup>130</sup> We see, then, that Gedalya does not know of (or, at least, does not make) any distinction in rank between the Gaonim and later rabbis. In leaving the Gaonic age and going over to the medieval rabbis, he finds it necessary only to say that the term "Gaonuth" was succeeded by the term "Rabbanuth" and that the Rabbis now became the bearers of Jewish tradition. <sup>131</sup>

130) Introduction V.  
131) Schalschelet, 26a.

אחר כל זה נבאר שם גאונים ובא תחתיו  
שם רבנות ונשתלשלה אליה סדר הקבלה  
באורה שבקל פה.

Gedalya's attitude toward the Rabbinic literature is of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is, in general, very respectful. We seldom find any commentary on the inability of the Rabbis to solve a problem,<sup>132</sup> and look in vain for any sharp criticism or word of personal disparagement.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps the most vehement expression of opinion is found in Gedalya's protest against the theory of the forging of the Zohar to which I have already referred,<sup>134</sup> but even here we do not find the slightest attack upon the personality of those championing this theory. A good illustration of Gedalya's respect for the great Jewish teachers of previous centuries is found in his statement concerning Gersonides, where he deplores the attacks of certain writers (whom he refrains from naming) upon

132) Schalschelet, 1a. Gedalya feels that the learned men have utterly failed to explain why the Torah mentioned only one person in each of the early generations.

ועל אשר שאלה סמני פעמים רבות למה לא הופירה התורה אלא איש אחד בכל דור ודור ראוי שמועץ פי לא נותן כזה מעט אמן אלא הרבה חכמים בקשו להשיב והעלו חרם בידם פי התורה והפירות.

Among the proposed solutions, he offers those of Maimonides and Nachmanides.

133) To appreciate Gedalya's meekness in the presence of these writings we should compare him with his contemporary, Azariah Dei Rossi, who did not hesitate to criticize medieval or later Jewish writers even though he respected their authority. Disapproving of a statement by Ibn Ezra, Azariah could say:

כמו שהחכם א"ע יצחק לכתב (Meor Enayim, II, 52); concerning a remark of Gersonides: (Meor Enayim, II, 74),

הרבה הזה של דון יצחק ואנחנו לא נהוה לדבריו כמחזקים יותר or, concerning Isaac Abrabanel: (Meor Enayim I, 175).

For these and several other critical remarks of Azariah, see, S. Baron, "La Méthode Historique D'Azeria De' Rossi, p. 35, notes, 2, 3, 4, 5.

134) Schalschelet, 20b. See note 127 of this chapter.



the latter's religious and philosophical views, and concludes by advising these critics not to <sup>reply to</sup> attack the lion when he is dead.<sup>135</sup>

This attitude of respect towards the medieval writers has been carried over by the author into practice. Contradictions between the remarks of two authors are obviated by the theory of "copyist's error" ( **טעות הסופר** or **טעות הדפוס** ) which Gedalya does not take the trouble to prove. Sometimes he presents the opposing statements and adds no comments of his own.<sup>137</sup> On other occasions he confesses to a feeling of indecision,<sup>138</sup> or to a pious belief that the "truth will out."

Gedalya is sometimes outwardly cautious and very humble in expressing his own opinion. He is about to adduce what he considers proofs of the fact that Rashi and Maimonides lived at the same time, but instead of coming out with any dogmatic statement that the two men were contemporaneous, he says, "I am not laying down any positive law that Rashi lived at this time, nor do I decree that this belief be (similar to) a positive commandment of the Torah, but I lean very much toward such a view because of the following proofs..."<sup>139</sup>

135) Schalschelet, 42a. **...ויש מרננים עליו ול האמונה, אמנם אין כושיבים על הארי אחרי מותו.**

136) Schalschelet, 27a, 35a, 36a.

137) Schalschelet, 36b, 37a.

138) Discussing the authorship of the "Ha-Rokeah," Gedalya states that it was written by Eleazar of Worms. He has, however, seen a statement by Maimonides that Eliezer Ben Joel ha-Levi was the author of that book. He leaves the matter open:

**ולא ידעתי על (34b); או (37a): ולא ידעתי להכריע.**

**...והאמת ינשה דרבו (28a): זה ככריע.**

139) Schalschelet, 32b. **...ואני איני נוזר שרשי יהיה בזה דבור ושואם האמונה עתה כמות עשה מן התורה אבל אני נוזם כאר אל זה בכח הראיות האלה.**



At other times he is arbitrary, as, for example when he states (without giving reasons) that he prefers the order of Ibn Daud, who placed Joshua Ben Perazhya after Judah Ben Tabbai, to that of Maimonides and Zacuto, who regarded them as contemporaries. His only "reason" for his choice is that he found no proof for either viewpoint.<sup>140</sup> He solves a chronological difficulty in the Response of Asher by deciding that the Isaac Israeli, mentioned there as Asher's correspondent, was the grandson of Isaac Israeli the physician.<sup>141</sup> In one instance he adopts a hypothesis as a temporary measure, "until a messenger shall come announcing a true solution."<sup>142</sup>

After speaking of the reforms customarily attributed to the Men of the Great Synagogue, he points out that later writers

140) Schalschelet, 15a. ... ואני הלכתי בזה אחרי הראב"ד כי לא כצאתי מכריע.

141) Schalschelet, 26b. ... אמנם ראיתי בספר ש"ת דהראש כלל נ"ה ס"ז שכתבו זה לזה הראש והישראל... אמנם לפי שראש אה"כ זמן הרבה וזה ר"י בדור הזה ראיתי לעשות פשרה ברוב ולכן אמר אני שר' יצחק דהראש היה בן בנו של זה.

The Israeli who is mentioned in the responsum of Asher was probably Isaac Ben Joseph Israeli, who lived in the first half of the 14th century and was a student of Asher in Toledo (see Jewish Encyclopedia, under "Israeli, Isaac Ben Joseph" vol. VI, p. 670). Gedalya considers the date of the elder Israeli's death as 940. He also states that Asher served the German communities as rabbi about the year 1290. And yet he believes Asher's correspondent to have been the grandson of Isaac Israeli the Elder!

142) Ibid, 20a.

have disagreed about the accomplishments of that period in Jewish history, and adds that his intuition leads him to attribute all of these reforms to Moses on Sinai. They were either forgotten or else were not to be written down, and it was under the Men of the Great Synagogue that they were committed to writing.<sup>143</sup>

Gedalya's use of non-Jewish authors is comparatively restricted, but may be regarded by us as an example of tolerance on the part of a pious Jewish writer. As I have already remarked, Gedalya does not hesitate to approve of or give serious consideration to a statement made by a non-Jew even though it conflicts with opinions held by Jewish writers.<sup>144</sup> He tells us in his introduction<sup>145</sup> that for general history he is going to use the קרוניק' of Jacobus Philippus of Bergamo, (referring probably to the "Supplementum Chronicarum of Jacobus Philippus Foresta of Bergamo), but in the book itself the "Chronica" are practically always referred to without giving the author's name, and so, not having the "Supplementum Chronicarum" before me, I may assume that he referred to several

143) Schalschelet, 12b, 13a. הרבה תקונים כמו הלוק הפסוקים. וקרי וכתוב סלא וחסר ופרשיות סתומות ופתיחות ואותיות גדולות וקטנות ופסוקים ונקודות וכן מינוי חדש השנים שיתחיל סהרש תשרי... ולבי אומר לי להכריע שהכל נתן למשה כמיני ושכתבו או שלא נהנו להכתב...

144) See p. . and note

145) Introduction III.

146)

other non-Jewish historians. 146

Of the pagan writers of antiquity he quotes Plato, 147  
 148 149 150 151 152  
 Xenophanes (?), Berosus, Ovid, Suetonius, Plutarch,  
 153  
 and Porphyry (75a). Of the early Christian writers he  
 154 155 156  
 quotes Origen, Orosius, Eusebius, Augustine whom he  
 regards as the greatest of the Christian sages, 158 and  
 Socrates, the Church historian. 159 Of the later Christian  
 writers he quotes from the commentary of Aquinas upon Paul's  
 160  
 Epistle to the Romans.

The Moslem writers quoted in the Schalschelet are  
 161 162  
 Avicenna and Averroes. Gedalya is also ready to syncritize  
 his sources, that is, to quote both Jewish and non-Jewish  
 sources on the same question or problem and ~~allowing~~ them to  
 supplement each other. Thus he combines Origen and the Targum  
 163 164  
 Yerushalmi, Philo, Eusebius and Porphyry. Midrash and  
 165 166  
 Chronica; St. Augustine, Yuhasin and the Talmud.

146) Some of the places where the word קוּלֵּיק is given  
 without naming the author, are 4b, 13b, 25b, 26b, 30a, 67e,  
 70a, 71b, 72 b, 75a, 76a, 76b, 77a, 79a, 83a, 84a.

Among the "Chronica" is one  
 yet been able to identify.

קוּלֵּיק, 11b, which I have not  
 אצלם אצלם אצלם

- 147) Schalschelet, 32a.
- 148) Introduction IV.
- 149) Schalschelet, 1b.
- 150) Introduction IV.
- 151) Schalschelet, 17a.
- 152) Ibid, 85b.

- 153) Ibid, 75a.
- 154) Ibid, 67a.
- 155) Ibid, 14b.
- 156) Ibid, 5a, 68a, 69a, 71b,  
75a.
- 157) Ibid, 14b, 49a, 60b, 76b.

158) In quoting from Augustine's "De Civitate Dei" he says (14b)  
 1 ראיתי ראש הכמים בספר עיר האלקים.  
 ראש הכמים והקוראים שבתם הנקרא ס' אונסין.

See also 48a (bottom):

- 159) Schalschelet, 17a.
- 160) Ibid, 14b, 49a, 70a.
- 161) Ibid, 81b.
- 162) Ibid, 74a.

- 163) Ibid, 67a.
- 164) Ibid, 75a.
- 165) Ibid, 76a.
- 166) Ibid, 76b.

Did Gedalya have any systematic method in examining his sources? Did he have a standard by which he judged statements found by him in written form or heard from the mouths of others? If we regarded only the theoretic statements found in the Schalschelet we could answer these questions in the affirmative. In the introduction <sup>167</sup> Gedalya says that he is reluctant to boast of the fact that he has not written anything important or trivial (especially concerning the history of Jewish tradition) without referring the reader to the written source or to the person who was responsible for the statement, so that he (the reader) might know the truth from its origin. He swears by his life that he has not related anything about a great Jew or Gentile, or told any story without having seen the statement <sup>168</sup> in manuscript form or having heard it from mature persons. He also feels that he ought to justify himself before his son for his readiness to accept the spoken word as a proper historical <sup>169</sup> source for the generations after Manahem Recanati. Addressing himself directly to his son, he tells him that he ought to know that he (Gedalya) has no definite proof that the great men following generations lived in the periods in which he

167) Introduction III.

168) Introduction IV.

...פי הנני נשבע אליך בחיי ראשי שלא  
אכתוב וזכרון שום חכם מישראל או מאומות או שום תורה ומעשה אם  
לא ראיתיו בכתב יד או ברפוס או שקבלתינו על פה מאנשי אמת שהיה  
פרקם נאמן.

169) Italian Rabbi and Cabalist. Lived at the close of the 13th century (Jewish Encyclopedia. Vol. X 340)

has placed them, because Jewish troubles have followed each other in rapid succession and "there is no author who would affix his name to a book." Those few books which have been written have not enjoyed currency in all the lands of the Diaspora; it is necessary, therefore, to have recourse to oral traditions. "You should not be surprised," he adds, "if the history of a master is written after that of his pupil, or if a less worthy individual should follow one of greater importance."<sup>170</sup> We find no other statements of method given in the Schalschelet.

In view of these theoretic principles, it is necessary to see how Gedalya puts them into practice. In one place he notes that he saw various statements about Hebrew measures which he has found scattered in various books without references.<sup>171</sup>

In writing of Solomon Molcho he tells us that he heard from Judah de Blanis "a man who can be believed," that Judah was one of those who guarded Solomon Molcho in Rome.<sup>172</sup> Gedalya's information about the great fire in Saloniki in 1545 has also come to him from old men who had witnessed it.<sup>173</sup>

170) Schalschelet, 43a. ..זולת יש לך לעשות פסוקי ולהאמין אז הקבלה על פה מחכמי הדור. ולכן אל תתמה, אם באורי' יבא איזה חכם כתוב אחרי תלמידו או הפחות קודם לרב. שפצאטי ספורים בקונטרסים בלי סדר מקום.

171) Ibid, 64b.

172) Ibid, 30b. יהודה ר' לואסינו נקרא ר' רבניש שהיה בשכונת ..... Judah de Blanis, physician and Cabbalist, lived in the first half of the 16th century. Greetz, IX, 42. Greetz knows of the connection between de Blanis and Molcho.

173) Schalschelet, 84b.

But this penchant for hearsay leads Gedalya to accept many things which were certainly in the realm of fancy. He tells us, for example, that he doubted some details in the story of the debate between Moses and Jacob Tam concerning the question of binding the phylacteries. He has discussed the matter with many of the wise men of his generation and has received a different version from the pupils of Leon of Monreal and from three elders (each one separately) who had heard the story from their grandfathers. He then goes on to tell their story.<sup>174</sup> The old men of Saloniki are evidently competent to tell him not only of things which happened during their own lifetime, but also about occurrences of previous centuries. So, for example, he learns from them that the "Mishnah Torah" of Maimonides was known in the lands of the Ten Tribes,<sup>175</sup> and that Rashi, during the period of self imposed exile travelled<sup>176</sup> through Egypt and was an honored guest at the home of Maimonides. That Gedalya takes this story seriously can be seen from the fact that he cites it among his proofs that Maimonides was a contemporary of Rashi. Similarly Gedalya gives credence to the<sup>177</sup> hearsay that Rashi also visited Spain.

174) Schalschelet, 35b.

175) Ibid, 28b.

176) Ibid, 32b.

177) Schalschelet, 32b.

...ועוד שקבלתי על פה מוקני וחכמי הדור  
שיש להם בקבלה מוקנים שרשי בגלותו  
היה גם כן בספרד ואם היה קודם הרמבם איך  
אפשר שלרוב חכמיו לא יהיה נזכר...

For other hearsay concerning Rashi which Gedalya accepts, see 33a. For Maimonides see 28a. For Jacob Tam, 28a.

In the historical portions of the Schalschelet, Gedalya has attempted to place his Jewish history in some relation to the characters and events of general history. His knowledge of dates and details in both of these fields seems to have been rather faulty, and he commits numerous errors. Thus, for example, he mentions a Persian conquest of Egypt <sup>between</sup> after the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, <sup>178</sup> and places Philo <sup>and that of Julius Caesar,</sup> one hundred years after the destruction of the First Temple. <sup>179</sup> According to him, Corinth was captured and destroyed by <sup>180</sup> Scipio Africanus (we are not even told whether by the elder Scipio or by his adopted son). He also seems to consider Aemilius Paulus (Macedonicus) not only as the conqueror <sup>181</sup> of Macedonia, but also as the general who destroyed Carthage <sup>182</sup> in the time of Simon the Hasmonean. The Antoninus mentioned in the Talmud as a friend of R. Judah ha-Nasi was the <sup>183</sup> Emperor Antoninus. Gedalya is correct in stating that

178) Schalschelet, 75a. Speaking of Ptolemy's great library, נאחרי הימים שלכי פרס שוללנו ויביאו לפרס ונשרפו קצתם. he says:

179) Ibid, 75b.

180) Schalschelet, 70b. It was L. Mummius, the Roman consul who captured and destroyed Corinth in 146 B.C. Gedalya is also mistaken when he states that Scipio Africanus fought a decisive battle with Hannibal in Italy and drove him from the peninsula (Schalschelet, 74b).

181) Schalschelet, 75b.

182) Ibid, 70b. Gedalya later contradicts himself by placing the conquest and destruction of Carthage under Scipio in the time of Cleopatra (Schalschelet, 76a.)

183) Schalschelet, 21a.



Mithridates was a contemporary of Judah Ben Tabbai, but he  
 errs in placing Judah about the year 3560.<sup>184</sup> Among the Roman  
 contemporaries of these two he lists Ovid, Strabo, and Livy.<sup>185</sup>  
 He believes that Boniface was Pope in the time of Maimonides,<sup>186</sup>  
 and that it was Pope Paul II who decreed that the Jubilee  
 should be celebrated every fifty years instead of every hundred  
 years,<sup>187</sup> has had been decreed by Boniface.

It is interesting to see what Gedalya has to say  
 about the origin and importance of the Hebrew language. He  
 tells us that the Gentile sages tried to discover which language  
 was the first to be spoken by human beings, and in the end they  
 all agreed that Hebrew was the language in which Man expressed  
 his thoughts from the time of Adam to the Era of Separation  
 ( אלפתי אלף ). Thereafter it remained the language

184) Schalschelet, 21a.

185) Idem.

186) Schalschelet, 81b. Boniface VII was Pope from 984 to 985.  
 Boniface VIII was Pope from 1294 to 1303 (Catholic Ency-  
 clopedia, article "Popes" vol. XII, pp. 273-274).

187) Idem. It was Boniface VIII who instituted the Jubilee  
 in 1300 and intended it to be celebrated once in every  
 hundred years. Near the middle of the 14th century peti-  
 tions were sent to Clement VI (then at Avignon) to shorten  
 this period. Clement consented, and a celebration was  
 held in 1350. Paul II (1464-1471) decreed that the  
 Jubilee should be celebrated every twenty five years.  
 (Catholic Encyclopedia, article "Jubilee" vol. VIII, pp. 532  
 to 533.



of Abraham and his descendants.<sup>188</sup> He quotes the story found in Origen and in the Talmud Yerushalmi, that the angels had descended from Heaven to instruct the heads of each nation in the use of a different language, but that God himself had instructed the Jews in Hebrew.<sup>189</sup> Gedalya is not certain about the statement found in the Midrash and in Rashi<sup>190</sup> that Moses had interpreted the Torah in seventy languages, but in any event he feels himself obligated to believe that Latin and Greek were among these tongues. He is also of the opinion that these two great and beautiful languages were forgotten and were later revived, just as Hebrew, which was spoken by Adam<sup>191</sup> and Noeh, was revived and purified in the days of Moses.

188) Schalschelet, 66a. ולבסוף כולו קלמא סודי כי מאדם עד דור  
הפלגה היה תניינא לשון הקדש ונשאר ביד אברהם אבינו וידענו.

189) Schalschelet, 67a.

190) See Rashi on Deuteronomy I, 5.

191) Schalschelet, 70a.

...כאשר נראה בלשון הקודש שהיה  
בפי הקדמונים אדם ונה ואח"כ בימי משה  
רפינו נתיסר מחדש וביהמור צחות לשון.

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