

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES DEALING WITH THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE  
Jews IN BABYLONIA

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THE ACADEMIES OF SURA AND PUMBEDITA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED BY JOSEPH HARRIS PAYMER AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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## II

### CONTENTS

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#### PART ONE

#### CHAPTER ONE

#### TRANSLATIONS

---

- I . THE ORDER OF THE ACADEMIES
- 1 . The Origin Of The Academies Of Sura And Pumbedita. Page 1
  - 2 . The Exilarch Ukba And David Ben Zakkai . Page 5
  - 3 . Rab Saadia Gaon And His Conflict With The Resh Galuta. Page 11
  - 4 . The Inauguration Of The Resh Galuta. Page 19
  - 5 . The Laws Of The Exilarch And The Judges. Page 27
  - 6 . The Order Of The Sessions. Page 34
- 

#### CHAPTER TWO

---

- II . NATIRA AND HIS SONS
- 1 . Natira. Page 39
  - 2 . Sahal---The Son Of Natira. Page 45
  - 3 . Isaac---His Brother. Page 48

### III

#### CONTENTS

---

#### PART TWO

##### CHAPTER ONE

---

- 1 . The Academy Of Sura. Page 51
- 2 . The Supremacy Of Sura. Page 55
- 3 . Saadia Gaon. Page 60

##### CHAPTER TWO

---

- 1 . The Academy Of Pumbedita. Page 67

##### CHAPTER THREE

---

- 1 . The Exilarchate--Its Origin And Functions. Page 77
- 2 . The Egyptian Exilarchate. Page 88

##### CHAPTER FOUR

---

- 1 . The Origin Of The Gaonate. Page 91
- 2 . The Title Gaon. Page 95

##### CHAPTER FIVE

---

- 1 . The Palestinian Geonim. Page 98

##### CHAPTER SIX

---

#### Criticism On The Text And Scholarship

- 1 . Language. Page 109
- 2 . Text. Page 116

##### CHAPTER SEVEN

---

- 1 . The Economic Situation. Page 121

CONTENTS

---

CHAPTER EIGHT

---

1 . A Criticism On Natira And His Sons . Page 128

---

NOTES ON TEXT Page 135

GENERAL NOTES Page 140

BIBLIOGRAPHY Page 150



TRANSLATION OF THE HEBREW TEXT

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אברהם כהנא

HISTORICAL LITERATURE OF ISRAEL

ספרות ההסטוריא הישראלית

BY ABRAHAM KAHANAH

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PART ONE

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CHAPTER ONE

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THE ORDER OF THE ACADEMIES

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I. THE ORIGIN OF THE ACADEMIES OF SURA AND  
PUMBEDITA AND THEIR RESPECTIVE VALUES

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# I The Order of the Academies

The origin of the Academies of Sura and Pumbedita and their respective values.

In these respects the School of Sura surpassed that of the School of Pumbedita.

In the early days of Rab, who was among the last of the Tanaim, and the first of the Amoraim, there was as yet no school in existence in Babylon, and those leaders who were there would not call the heads by any other name than <sup>1.</sup> ר' ש' סדרא "The Head of the Order", as we find quoted: מאן ר' ש' סדרא בבבל "Who is the head of the order in Babylon?" he was told אבא אריכא "Abba Areka" - and he is Rab. And after Rab passed away they founded a School in Babylon after the manner of the Land of Israel which was the School of Sura. And Rab held office there for forty years, and he was the first of all those that headed a school in Babylon. And Rab Chasdai held office after him; and his period of office extended ten years. At the end of the days of Rab Chasdai, Rabba bar Nachmani founded a school in Pumbedita, and from that day on there was a school in Pumbedita which was the school of the Diaspora. Rabba bar Nachmani held office for twenty-two years, and after him Rab Joseph held office for two and a half years; and after him Abayi held office for fourteen years; and after him Raba held office in Pumbedita and Sura with the help of Heaven and with the blessing that Rab Joseph, blessed him with,

as we derive from what he said to him: "May it be the will of God that you will be the first over the whole city." And he held office for fourteen years. And after him Rab Papa held office for nineteen years; and after him Rab Ashi held office for sixty years. And after him Tobyomi's son who is known by the name of Mar bar Rab Ashi held office, in whose days the Talmud was completed. And with the passing of Rabbana Jose, the two schools were without a leader (Gaon) until the Sabureans agreed to follow the custom of the scholars of the Talmud, that there should be two schools as they had in the days of Rab Huna. Even though the Sabureans neither added to nor deducted anything from the Talmud, nevertheless, they were the heads of the schools, and likewise the leaders (Geonim) who sat and preached, and it was from their source of learning that the Law emanated for all Israel. And this was the practise in their schools until this day.

And these are the degrees in which the School of Sura was superior to that of Pumbedita:

A. With the consent of the head of the Academy, a leader was not selected from Pumbedita but from Sura. Moreover, when the heads of both schools met with the Exilarch in an ancient city of Bagdad<sup>3</sup> which meeting was customary on the Sabbath, the head of the School of Sura and his disciples read the Scroll of the Law for the Exilarch because of his greatness and the head of the School of Pumbedita and his disciples read and translated it; moreover, when the Exilarch sat on

his assigned seat, the head of the School of Pumbedita was on his left. Moreover, when they sat at a prescribed meal with one of the Exilarchs, the head of the Sura School would break bread first and pronounce the blessing after meals. And when entering and leaving, the head of the Sura School preceeded the head of the Pumbedita School. And even though the head of the Pumbedita School was a man of eighty years, and the head of the Sura School was younger than he, the preference would always be given to the head of the Sura School. Moreover, when they sent letters to one another, the head of the Pumbedita School wrote: "Let this document be read before the Gaon and the Rabbis of Sura<sup>5</sup>." And the head of the Sura School would write "Let this document be read before the Rabbis of Pumbedita" and he did not address him as "Gaon". Moreover, when the Exilarch read the Scroll of the Law, the head of the Sura School translated after him, and the head of the Pumbedita School sat silent. Moreover, when the Exilarch died the tax districts<sup>6</sup> of the Exilarch became subject to the head of the School of Sura and the head of the School of Pumbedita had no share in them. In the beginning the Sura School used to take two parts, and the Pumbedita School one part until Kohen Zedek held office in Pumbedita, and the students of the school increased and the usual allotment of one third did not suffice for them. And a quarrel occurred among them, concerning this matter, and the heads of that generation assembled together and arranged a compromise between them and decided that they should divide whatever they received in equal parts. And that is the custom to this day.

2. THE EXILARCH UKBA AND DAVID BEN ZAKKAI

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## 2. Exilarch Ukba and David ben Zakkai

And this is what Rabbi Nathan Hakohen, son of Yitzchok the Babylonian, said, of what in part he saw in Babylon and in part was told regarding Ukba, the head of the Galut. Ukba was of the seed of David, who came from Africa and ruled over Babylon for many years, the number of which he did not learn.<sup>8</sup> And the head of the School in his day was Rav Kohen Zedek, son of Rav Joseph in Pumbedita<sup>9</sup> || which is Alambar || for four years until a quarrel arose between them regarding rites in Koroson.<sup>10</sup> From the very beginning Koroson used to ask permission from Pumbedita || and from there the judge would go out || and whatever benefit they got would reach Pumbedita. And Rav Ukba sought || to send out his own judge to rule there and || to return the benefits to him. And Rav Kohen Moro Zedeck prevented him.<sup>11</sup> And he had as aids Yosef ben Pinchas, and his son-in-law, Natirah || father of Sahal and Yitzchok<sup>12</sup> || and together with a few of the pillars of the generation until Ukba left Babylon and was exiled to a place called Karmissin,<sup>13</sup> which is five days journey in Eastern Babylon, || on the Koroson road. || And at that time Amram ben Shelomo was the head of the Sura School, and Ukba sat in Karmissin several months until the king went || out of || Babylon<sup>14</sup> to tour Karmissin, for there there were water and gardens and groves. And all the saffron of Babylon came from there, and outside of it<sup>15</sup> about a half mile there was a place called Shafron and there was a beautiful building, and when the king would go there, he would stroll

about. And there was one tall house, about two stories, and there were two figures in it, one of the king<sup>16</sup> || Kisron<sup>16</sup> || and one of his concubine<sup>17</sup> || Siran<sup>17</sup> || and beneath it<sup>18</sup> there was the form of a hollow horse and water came down from the mountain and entered it and flowed from its mouth. And the king would visit this place daily and stroll about. And Ukba would arrange to be there when the king was there, and would stand before him and praise him with sweet words and pleasant songs; he did this every day for a whole year. And the king's scribe wrote down his songs and his words each day, and noticed that what he said one day he would not repeat another day, and this continued for a whole year. At the end of a year the king's scribe told his master that Ukba never repeated anything from the beginning of the year to the end. The king requested the scribe to give him proof of what he said, and the scribe brought him his note book in which the songs and words of Ukba were written and nothing was there repeated twice or three times. The king then commanded Ukba to appear before him and when he presented himself the king said to him, "Whatever you ask I shall grant you," and he asked that he be returned to his post. The king wrote a letter in which Ukba's request was granted. Since his return however, he made it difficult for Natira and Joseph ben Pinchas and their followers. And they spoke to the king concerning him until the king again ordered him out of his kingdom, and thus exiled

him a second time. And a letter was written regarding him to the people throughout the land that he should not be permitted to enter any part of the kingdom of Babylon forever. Should he, however, enter any part, his entire property would be confiscated and no country of the eastern lands would hold him. So Ukba left for the West.<sup>19</sup> And the administration remained without a leader for about four or five years until it became very difficult for Israel. And they spoke about David ben Zakkai who was the uncle of Ukba, the past Nasi, that he should be appointed Exilarch but Kohen Zedek who was the head of the School of Pumbedita objected. He did not want David ben Zakkai to rule since he was a relative of Ukba, the previous Resh Galuta. However, the head of the School of Sura appointed him on his own responsibility and wrote to all the people of his School, to the students and to the teachers,<sup>20</sup> and ordered them to bless him and to write to him and invite him of their own accord to be the Resh Galuta over them, and they did as he commanded. And they all went to meet him until they reached a place called Katzer in Southern Babylon,<sup>21</sup> the distance between it and Sura was seven miles and that was the place of David ben Zakkai. That was his birthplace; and they blessed him and appointed him head over them. In spite of all this, Kohen Zedek, head of the School in Pumbedita, refused to accept the matter for three years. And there was a man of bright eyes who was known as Nissi,<sup>22</sup> the head of the Naharon Kalla,<sup>23</sup> and he entered the matter peacefully and thought that perhaps



he could arrange to have him (David ben Zakkai) appointed over the School of Pumbedita, so that Kohen Zedek, the head of the School, would be satisfied with him. One night he went and opened all the locks of Babylon with the Name <sup>24</sup> and that night he opened fourteen locks until he reached him and stood before him and found him studying at midnight. When Kohen Zezek saw him he hurried toward him and asked him what his business with him was, and he said to him: "Upon my soul, my lord, I did not reach you until I opened fourteen locks," and he said to him: "What is your wish?" and he said: "My desire is that you bless the Resh Galuta and appoint him over yourself". And he answered that he would do as he was bidden. Nissi left and went to the Resh Galuta and told him and made an appointment for the day on which he (Kohen Zedek) should come and he returned to the teacher, Kohen Zekek, and notified him of the appointed time. Kohen Zedek then ordered all his students and all the people of his School and all who were with him to gather together and go out to meet the Resh Galuta. And they went out to meet him at a place called Zarzar, a half day's journey from Babylon. When they approached the Resh Galuta they found that he, too, came with a large retinue, and with him were all his students and all his followers. And there was already prepared for him a Court in a well-known village in the ancient land. When they reached the gates of <sup>25</sup> the State of Babylon, they were reciting pleasant poetry and singing

pretty songs until they reached the Court that they had prepared for him. And he entered and settled in Babylon, he and all the men and women and his whole household.

And after five years the head of the Sura School passed away, and after him ruled he who was the son of Kiyumi. And he was the head of his generation, in his time, and managed the School of Sura for twenty years, and he died, and Kohen Zedek, the head of the School of Pumbedita, was yet living.

3. RAB SAADIA GAON AND HIS CONFLICT WITH

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THE RESH GALUTA

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### 3. Rab Saadia Gaon and His Conflict with the Resh Galuta

And when the head of the School of Sura died, the School of Sura remained desolate; and the Resh Galuta took counsel as to who should assume the rule. And he went to Nissi of Naharuni to ask him to accept the post of Rosh Y'shibah. And he answered him: "It is not conceivable that Rosh Y'Shibah should be called the light of the world and yet be dark to the world." And <sup>26</sup> he said: "Well, what do you see in that?" And he said to him: "What you wish, shall be done." And he thought of our teacher, Saadia of Fayum, and of Zemach ben Shahin, for he was the son of a scholar. The Resh Galuta told him what was in his mind but he (the Resh Galuta) could not make up his mind between our teacher Saadia and Zemach ben Shahin. Nissi replied that he should appoint Zemach ben Shahin, and not Rab Saadia despite the fact that the latter was a great man and profoundly wise who did not fear any man at any time; and because of his great wisdom and the breadth of his mouth, and the length of his tongue and his fear of sin, he was not partial to any man in the world. The Resh Galuta said to him: "But I have already decided and approved of our teacher Saadia of Fayum". Nissi replied: "Do as you wish for I will be among the first who will listen to his words and sit before him, and I shall be the head of those who will approve of him". And he was appointed at that time in the presence of Kohen Zedek and the students of the School of Pumbedita to be the head of the School of Sura. Shortly after,

however, a quarrel arose between the Resh Galuta and Rab Saadia, and the kingdom of Babylon was split into two factions. And all the rich of Babylon and the students of the Schools and the important men of the place were with Saadia to aid him with the power of their wealth and their personal influence with the king and his lords and advisers. But there was in Babylon a very important man named Caleb ben Sar<sup>27</sup>jadu who was a help to the Resh Galuta. This man was very wealthy and he gave of his wealth, sixty thousand zuz in order to have Rab Saadia removed from his post. He was, however, unsuccessful, for there were with Rab Saadia the sons of Natifa<sup>28</sup> and all the wealthy people of Babylon. And this Caleb grew jealous of Rab Saadia, for Caleb was a wise man and outspoken; and all questions that he was asked he would reply to with one or two reasons. Saadia, however, would add, thereto, ten-fold, and it was because of this that he was jealous. The root of the quarrel between Saadia and the Resh Galuta was in reference to court matters. And the men who were under the jurisdiction of the Resh Galuta inherited large sums of money which they sought to divide. A quarrel arose among them, until they decided to donate a tithe of the total inheritance to the Resh Galuta that he might remove the complaints and issue a favorable decision. And the Resh Galuta received as his share 700 gold pieces from the tithe which they gave him. And he had writs prepared for them which he signed, and then ordered them to be taken to the heads of the schools for execution. When the writs

feached Saadia he found some clauses in them of which he did not approve. Nevertheless, he politely said to the messengers: "Go to Kohen Zedek, the head of the Pumbedita School, and after he has executed it I shall do likewise". He said this because he sought to conceal the ugly angle he saw in them and which he did not wish to reveal. They did as he ordered them and went to Kohen Zedek, the Head of the School of Pumbedita, who signed them. After Kohen Zedek signed them they returned to Saadia to have him sign and execute them. Saadia said to them: "Why do you seek my signature. Here you have the signatures of both the Resh Galuta and the head of the School of Pumbedita. You do not need my signature". They said to him: "Why don't you sign?" He said to them: "I do not know". And he avoided disclosing the matter until they bound him by oath several times that he should tell them what he saw in the papers. And he could not pass over the oath and keep the matter from them. He told them what he saw in the papers and for what reason they were void. They returned to the Resh Galuta and notified him. The Resh Galuta sent his son, Judah, and said to him: "Go and tell him in my name that he should execute the papers". The son of the Resh Galuta, Judah, went and told Rab Saadia in his father's name that he should sign the papers. And he said to him: "Return to your father and tell him it is written in the Torah, 'Ye shall not be partial in judgement'". And he returned to him a second time with the instructions to tell him to sign the papers and not to be a fool.

The youth returned and said politely to Saadia, not what his father told him, but, beseechingly, he asked him to please sign the papers so that no quarrel should ensue between him and his father. And he refused; and he (the Exilarch) sent him many times and the son refused to tell Saadia what his father had said to him, rather he coaxed him to sign the writs in order to avoid a quarrel between him and his father on that matter. Since his father, however, troubled him many times to go to and fro he got angry and raised his hand to Rab Saadia and said: "If you do not sign these papers as my father asks you to, I shall strike you". The words were no sooner uttered from the mouth of the youth when Rab Saadia's men dragged him and removed him outside the gate and locked it in his face. When he returned to his father, who saw his eyes tearing, he was asked what happened and he told the whole story. When his father heard it he excommunicated Rab Saadia, and appointed Rab Joseph bar Jacob as head of the School of Sura to take his place. And when Rab Saadia heard this, he in turn excommunicated the Resh Galuta and sent Hassan, brother of David ben Zakkai, who was Josiah, to be the Resh Galuta in the place of David ben Zakkai, his brother. And he ruled three years and died. And the controversy between them continued for seven years until a case arose between two men who quarrelled greatly about a matter of law. One chose Rab Saadia and the other chose the Resh Galuta. The Resh Galuta sent for the man who chose Rab Saadia and he was assaulted and hurt. The man who had been assaulted went with his torn clothes and cried out to

the people of the community and related what had happened. And the matter was very painful to them for it had been their custom that the heads of the Schools had no authority over anyone who was under the jurisdiction of the Resh Galuta and likewise the Resh Galuta had no authority over anyone who was under their jurisdiction, and neither could reverse a decision of the other which was not under his own jurisdiction. And should a stranger come to the country and is under neither jurisdiction, he may go to whichever judge he pleases. Now since the man who had been assaulted was not under the jurisdiction of the Resh Galuta, the people were aroused by what had happened, and they all gathered unto Bishr, son of Aaron who was the father-in-law of Sarjadu, who was a great man in Babylon and one of the pillars of the community. And they told him how far the controversy had reached in Israel, and the seriousness of the situation. They said to him: "Arise, for the matter is in your hands and we are with you; perhaps we can remove this controversy which depends upon no other than your son-in-law, Caleb ben Sarjadu". And he went and gathered the leaders of the day to his home. And the Resh Galuta was with them, and he told him in their presence: "What is this deed that you have done? How long are you going to continue this controversy, and why don't you restrain yourself from punishment? Fear the Lord and remove yourself from the controversy, for you know how great the power of controversy is. Now seek a way to improve your relations with Rab Saadis and make peace with him, and put away your



"grudge against him". The Resh Galuta answered in terms of peace and said that he would do as had been suggested. And he arose and went and got Rab Saadia to come to his house with his retinue of men and he told him all those things that he told the Resh Galuta, and he, too, answered in terms of peace. And the Resh Galuta was in one house, he and his retinue, and Rab Saadia with his retinue in the house opposite, and the two were in the court of the man who had arbitrated the peace. And the people of the heads of the community were divided into two companies one of which supported the Resh Galuta; the other supported Rab Saadia. And each company left its place of assembly and marched until they met, and they kissed and embraced. And this happened on the Fast of Esther. and when peace had been declared, the man who negotiated the peace placed everyone present under oath that they would spend the night with him and read the Meggillah at his home. But neither the Resh Galuta nor Rab Saadia was willing. But the Resh Galuta said: "Either Rab Saadia will dine with me or with you". And they drew lots and The Resh Galuta won, and Rab Saadia went with him. And thus he did: He served him with a Purim dinner and entertained him for two days, and on the third day he left happily and with a good heart. And when the peace had been consummated between them, Rab Joseph ben Jacob, whom the Resh Galuta had appointed as head of the School in the place of Rab Saadia during all the years that the controversy had existed between them, now that the controversy was ended, sat at home. Never-

theless, the authority that he had when he was Rosh Y'shivah was not denied him, except that they would go to his home.

When the Resh Galuta passed away they appointed his son in his place, but he did not last more than seven months after his father, for he too died. And he had a small son about twelve years old, and Rab Saadia befriended him and sent him to school until Rab Saadia passed away. And there was no one found in those days who was worthy of being Resh Galuta, excepting one man who was one of the Bene-Haimon who was in Nisibis. He had, however, scarcely been appointed to the post when he became embroiled in a controversy with a Goy in the market place, and it was testified against him at the trial that he cursed the Goy; and he died. And after the death of Rab Saadia, Rab Joseph ben Jacob ruled the School in Sura. And after the death of Kohen Zedek, who was the head of the School of Pumbedita, Zemach bar Haffnie ruled after him for thirteen months and he passed away and after him ruled Caleb ben Joseph who was called Caleb ben Sarjadu.

4. THE INAUGURATION OF THE FRESH GALUTA

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#### 4. The Inauguration of the Resh Galuta

And this what Rab Nathan Ha-Kohen has to say regarding the inauguration of the Resh Galuta, and the allegiance the people pledged to him at the time of the inauguration. This is the manner in which it was done:

If the people agreed to his appointment, the heads of the two schools gathered with their respective students, and all the leaders of the community, and the elders in the house of one of the important men of the generation, as for instance, Natira and the like. And he in whose house they met felt very highly honored and he derived great pleasure from it. And the respect for him grew when the great and the elders met in his home. And they all gathered in the synagogue on Thursday and they blessed him, and they placed their hands on him, and they blew the Shofar that all the people both great and small might hear. When they heard this sound, everyone in the community sent him a gift according to his ability. The leaders of the community and the rich sent him handsome clothing and beautiful ornaments and silver and gold ware, each man according to his wealth. The host then prepared a meal for Thursday and Friday and served all kinds of food, drink and delicacies such as sweets.

Now when he (the Resh Galuta) went to the synagogue on the Sabbath, many of the important people of the community gathered to

accompany him to the synagogue. In the synagogue there had already been prepared a wooden tower, seven cubics long and three cubics wide, and they spread over it a fine covering of silk, blue, purple and scarlet, until the whole thing was covered, and none of it (the wood) was visible, and underneath it, youths who<sup>29</sup> had been chosen from the leaders of the congregation gathered. They were youths who had fine pleasant voices and who were thoroughly conversant with all matters that related to the service, and the Resh Galuta himself was covered, together with the leaders of the Schools, and the youths stood under the tower and not one of them was seated.

The Cantor of the congregation began with *ברוך שאתר* and the youths answered after him all the words from *ברוך שאתר* *ברוך הוא* and when he said: *מקמור שיר ליום השבת* they answered: *טוב להודות לה'* And all the people read special Psalms<sup>30</sup> until they finished them. The Cantor opened with

*נשמת כל חי* and the youths answered after him :

*תברך את השני* he said one part and they answered after him until they reached the *קדש* section which was pronounced by the congregation in a low voice and the youths in a high voice.

Then the youths were quiet and the Cantor alone finished the prayers until he reached *גאל ישראל* and all the people stood in prayer. The Cantor then passed on to the "Almemar" and continued

until he reached the קדושה and all the youths answered till וְהַקְדַּשׁ הָאֵל in a loud voice, and he completed the prayer and the congregation sat down. And when the congregation was seated the Resh Galuta left the place where he was concealed, and when the people saw him they rose to their feet until he sat on the tower that had been made for him. And after him the head of the School of Sura came out and sat on the tower after he had bowed. And after him came the head of the School of Pumbedita and he too bowed, and sat on his left. Throughout all these proceedings the people stood until the three had adjusted themselves in their places. The Resh Galuta sat in the middle, the head of the School of Sura sat at his right and the head of the School of Pumbedita sat at his left. Between them and the Resh Galuta there was a vacant space. And upon his (the Resh Galuta) place there was spread above the tower over his head, a fine cloth, tied down with costly purple cord. And the Cantor of the congregation covered his head with a sheet, faced the tower and blessed him with blessings that had been previously arranged. These blessings he announced in a low voice so that no one heard him except those who sat around the tower and the youths who were underneath it. Now, when the Cantor blessed him (the Resh Galuta) the youths answered after him loudly וְאָמֵן And all the people were silent until he finished his blessings. The

Resh Galuta began his part of the service with a lecture on the Portion of the Week or else he permitted the head of the School of Sura to deliver the lecture, and the head of the School of Sura gave the honor to the head of the School of Pumbedita, and in this way they honored one another until finally the head of the School of Sura began. And the interpreter stood near him and translated his words to the people. And when he delivered the lecture he delivered it with fear, and he closed his eyes and wrapped himself in his praying shawl ( **טלית** ) until he covered his forehead. And there was no one among the people at the time he delivered his address who dared to open his mouth to make any sound or say anything. And if he became conscious of anyone speaking he would open his eyes, and a fear fell upon the people. And when he had finished, he opened with a problem and said: "It is necessary for you to learn" and one of the old men, a wise and tried person answered on the matter and then sat down. Then the Cantor stood and said **קדיש** And when he reached **בחיי נשיאנו** he said **בחייכון וביועכון** "by the life of our leader, the Resh Galuta, and by the life of all the House of Israel". And when he had finished saying the **קדיש** he blessed the Resh Galuta and after which he blessed the heads of the Schools. And when he finished the blessings he said "Such and such a state

and its dependencies, so and so will kindly rise." And he mentioned the names of all the states that sent (gifts) to the school and he blessed them. And then he blessed the people therein who were engaged in philanthropic work until he reached the schools. After this, the Cantor removed the Scroll of the Law and called a Cohen, and after him a Levi. And the Cantor of the congregation took the Scroll of the Law to the Resh Galuta while all the people stood. And the Resh Galuta received the Scroll of the Law and stood and read therefrom, and the heads of the schools stood with him. And the head of the School of Sura translated and returned the Scroll of the Law to the Cantor who then returned it to the "Almemar". And when he reached the "Almemar", he sat down, whereupon everyone else sat down in his place. And after that the heads of the "Kallot" read, and after them the students of the heads of the Schools, but the heads of the Schools themselves did not read from the Scroll of the Law that day, for they had been preceded by someone else. And when the *7'U99* had been read some great, rich man translated it which was considered a great honor. And when he finished, he (the Cantor) continued to bless the Resh Galuta with the Scroll of the Law, and all the representatives of the congregation who were familiar with the service stood around the altar and said: "*7DX*". And afterwards he blessed the heads of both Schools and then returned the Scroll of the Law to its place. Then the



Gantor read the "Additional Service" after which they left. And when the Resh Galuta left all the people followed before him and after him and they accompanied him with words of song and of praise until he reached his home. However, the heads of the Schools did not follow him to his home. The students, however, did, and he did not permit even one of them to leave his home until seven days had passed. And during the whole of that time he did not leave his house. And the people gathered and prayed with him always whether it was week day, Sabbath or holiday.

And when it was necessary for him to go out and execute official business, he rode in a stately carriage similar to that of the king's ministers, attired in splendid clothing. And about fifteen people followed him and his servants ran after him. And when he passed any Israelites, they ran toward him and grasped his hand and greeted him. And so did every Israelite who passed him and by the time he reached his destination, there were at times fifty or sixty people gathered around him. And the same routine was followed on his trip home. And he never left without his entire retinue following him; and in this respect he was like one of the king's ministers.

And when he wished to see the king or to ask him for anything he requested the king's lords and servants, who often visited him, to make the necessary arrangements. And it was obligatory for the gate-man to let him in. And when he came in, all the king's servants ran

to greet him. And he had already prepared gold coins to give to those servants who came to welcome him. And he put his hand into his pocket and gave each one whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, occasioned. And they honored him and lead him until he stood in the presence of the king before whom he bowed. And the king signaled to one of the servants, who stood on one foot and kneeled on the other, to take the visitor by the hand and to lead him to a seat to which the king assigned him. Then he spoke to the king and the king inquired about his health and his affairs and the purpose of his visit. Whereupon he asked permission to speak, and the king granted it. And the visitor began with praises and blessings which he had previously prepared and he related to the king the customs of his fathers and their forefathers and with sweet words he impressed the king until the king granted his request, and wrote out for him all that he wished. He then left the king and departed in joy and peace.

. THE PREROGATIVES OF THE EXILARCH AND THE JUDGES

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### 8. The Prerogatives of the Exilarch and the Judges.

And these were the fixed sums which the Resh Galuta--  
Exilarch--took annually from a place called Naharuan and all  
its suburbs which was a half day's journey eastward toward Baby-  
lon. And the Resh Galuta sent out to them a judge with his au-  
thority and the authority of the heads of the Schools. And the  
judge was provided with a writ stating that his authority had  
been derived from them. And he obtained from that place an in-  
come of about sixty or seventy gold pieces. And when the judge  
arrived there, he selected two of the elders of the community to  
consult with him regarding the decisions he had to make. And if  
such a judge who had been appointed was righteous in his ways and  
thorough in his deliberations, the elders of the community wrote  
and recommended him and praised him to the Resh Galuta . But if,  
God forbid, there was anything bad in him, or should he have show-  
ed any evil qualities, they wrote to the Resh Galuta and to the  
heads of the Schools and said: "So and So is corrupt in his deeds  
and in his ways" and he was removed and replaced by another.

And this was the fixed sum which the judge took from the people  
of the place; from each one who was twenty years old or above: two  
zuz annually, a zuz at Passover and a zuz at Tabernacles. And from  
a marriage certificate or a divorce or from notes of indebtedness or  
notes of gifts or notes of sale, the owners were to give four zuzim

and a third by the weight of Ishmael (Arabic standard of money). And the scribe had no income assigned to him except that which the judge granted him, and the rest was for the judge. And so it was customary to do: to give the judge all the money whether he was there or whether he had gone elsewhere. And the judge had two men who supervised his entire domain so that no one could do any of the things mentioned above without his permission. Should anyone however be found who had written a note secretly he was dismissed from his post and was fined a fee for the note and in addition was whipped. But if he was a poor man who was not able to pay the specified sum, the scribe took from him, with the permission of the judge, as much as he was able to pay. And the judge received from all the butchers a zuz weekly. And also there accrued to the Resh Galuta through the courtesy of the State of Persia an annuity of twenty gold pieces by the same regulations. And there was another place called Haluan which was five days journey from Babylon. And he received from there a hundred and fifty gold pieces annually. He had also another place called Katzr which was his birthplace, and from there he derived the sum of thirty gold pieces annually. And he had a place in Babylon where his home was and which was under his authority, and here every Jew was taxed two zuzim, one at Passover and one at Tabernacles. But he took nothing from the poor for the rich assumed the responsibility for them. And the butch-

ers gave him a quarter of a gold piece each year. The result was that he received from all sources the sum of seven hundred gold pieces annually. And if he wished he could write to distant places to honor him and to accept his jurisdiction, and they did as he requested. Should the son of the Resh Galuta travel anywhere he was honored and given gifts and no one refused him anything, but gave according to his ability. If there were some, however, who refused to pay him honor and to give him gifts, his father despatched a warrant and excommunicated them. And Rab Nathan said he saw the son of David ben Zakkai leaving for the State of Persia which was under David ben Zakkai's jurisdiction, and he (the son) was not honored or respected by the people so he sent word to his father and his father issued a warrant and excommunicated them, and notified the viceroy who in turn notified the king. And the king wrote to the king of Persia to help him (the Resh Galuta). And when the king of Persia heard of the matter through the letter which had reached him from the king of Babylon he ordered a large amount of money to be taken from the Jewish people of Persia and her provinces which were under the jurisdiction of the Resh Galuta. And when the son returned to Babylon there was not one of the heads of the Schools who contested the matter.

Upon the death of the Resh Galuta all his rights were turned

over to the head of the School of Sura. The scribe of the Resh Galuta received his salary from the Resh Galuta. And the Resh Galuta had no share in the pledges and the gifts which the communities of Israel sent to the Schools for they sent only in return for the questions, and the Resh Galuta had no part in those questions. Likewise it was customary that when one of the heads of the School was appointed, the same procedure took place as when the Resh Galuta was inaugurated except that the Scroll of the Law was not brought down to him, but he went up to it like any other man. Moreover, the heads of the Schools had the same authority to send out judges in all places, under their jurisdiction, and had the same arrangements with the judges as the Resh Galuta had when he sent out judges to his districts.

And these are the jurisdictions that each had: The head of the School of Sura, a place called Vasatt and its suburbs from which he derived the sum of one hundred and fifty gold pieces annually. And from Batzrah and its suburbs the sum of three hundred gold pieces annually. And a place which was called Kallah and another place called Gamuss which was two day's journey from Ophir. And likewise Ophir itself was under the jurisdiction of Sura. Summarized, Sura derived from its districts the sum of fifteen hundred gold pieces annually besides



pledges and gifts. And Babylon had jurisdiction North, South, East and West, and the heads of the schools acted there as the Resh Galuta acted in the places he had in Babylon, as we have written above. And the butchers in the jurisdiction of Sura gave to the head of the School of Sura a quarter of a zuz weekly. And if the school under the Resh Galuta was at times in financial straits, letters were despatched to all the communities of Israel notifying them of the poverty and the financial difficulties of the School, and each community despatched gifts according to its ability. And such was also the custom of the head of the School of Pumbedita and all his jurisdictions.

If questions were sent to one of the heads of the Schools in his name the head of the other School had no share in the pledges and gifts that came with such questions, but if questions were sent to a particular school, the head of that school accepted the pledges and gifts that came with them. But when questions were sent designating no definite school, the two Schools divided the gifts equally. They shared all that they received in gifts and pledges throughout the year. They placed all the money in the hands of a trustworthy person for the purpose of bringing students from wherever they lived. They all gathered from different places in the month of Kalla, which was Ellul in the summer, and Adar in the winter. And each of the students studied those five months



the Masechta which the head of the School assigned him when he left. In Adar he told the students that such and such a Masechta would be discussed in Ellul and in Ellul he told them that such and such a Masechta would be discussed in Adar. And they all came and sat down before the heads of the Schools in Adar and Ellul and the heads of the Schools stood over them while they studied and examined them.

## **6. THE ORDER OF THE SESSIONS**

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# 6. THE ORDER OF THE SESSION:

And this was the Order of the Sessions: The head of the School sat and had ten men before him. They faced the head of the School; and of the ten who sat before him, seven of them were the heads of the Kallot and three were called ד'רנן companions. And why were the seven called the heads of the Kallot? Because each of them was appointed over ten of the Sanhedrin, who were called ד'רנן chiefs, and this was their custom: If one of the heads of the Kallot passed away and left a son to take his place, he took the place of his father and sat thereon even though he was a youth in years. And so it was among the companions. If one of them died and left a son to take his place, he sat there, and no one encroached on the right of his comrade. But if he did not take the place of his father and he was eligible to sit in one of the seven rows, he sat there. But if he was not worthy to sit with them, he sat with the sons of the Rabbi and with the rest of the students, who numbered four hundred men. And the seventy Sanhedrin which comprised the first seven rows: in the first row sat those whom we have mentioned above and after them ten more until seven rows were filled. And they all faced the head of the School, and all the students sat behind them, and no one recognized his place (there were no reserved seats). But in the seven rows each one recognized his place and no one usurped the seat of

his comrade. And if one of those in the seven rows was greater in wisdom than another, he was not placed in the seat of another, for he had not inherited it from his father; but they gave him more than his due on account of his wisdom. And when the head of the School wished to test them on their studies, they all met him on the fourth Sabbath of the month of Adar. He sat and the first row recited before him and the other rows listened and kept quiet. And when they reached a part which they had to explain, they discussed it among themselves and the Rosh Y'shivah listened to them and understood their words. And after that he read and they kept quiet and they knew that he had already understood their differences. And when he finished his reading he discussed and analysed the self-same Mesechta which they had studied during the winter months, each in his own home. He then explained in the course of his discourse whatever the students differed on and from time to time he asked them for a definition of the Laws. And they respected one another, and they all respected the head of the School and asked him for interpretations, and none of them ventured to talk in his presence until he had given them permission. And each one spoke according to his wisdom, and he (the Resh Galuta) expanded in his discourse the solution of each Law until all was clear to them. And when everything was very clear one member of the

first row stood and preached to the entire group so that everyone, both big and small, heard it. And whoever saw him standing, knew that he was standing for no other purpose than to explain the Baraitha, which supported the thesis previously discussed. The rest of the students then applied themselves to the details thereof; they conducted a research, and explained it fully. And so they did all the days of the month. And on the fourth Sabbath the entire Sanhedrin and all the Students read, and the head of the School examined each one of them, and tested them, and inquired of them until it was clear to him who was wiser than his comrade. And if he saw anyone who had not prepared his work well, he was very severe with him and would decrease the share of his credit, and would reprimand him and scold him. He then pointed out to him the places that he had neglected to study and in which he was indolent, and warned him by his soul and threatened that if it was repeated again and he did not put his heart into his studies, he would not receive any reward. The students, therefore sharpened themselves and applied themselves very well to their studies so as not to be found wanting in any matter of the Law. And the scholars in the rows could not leave his presence until he notified them of the Mesechta that each must busy himself with at home. The remainder of the students he did not need to

notify but each one studied whichever Mesechta he desired.

And this was their custom in answering questions: on each day of the month of Adar he produced for them all the questions that had reached him and gave them permission to answer them. And they honored him and said: "No, we will not answer in your presence." But he prevailed upon them; then each one spoke according to his knowledge and according to his wisdom. And the others asked and analysed and scrutinized each matter and examined them all carefully. And the head of the School listened to their words, understood all that they had said to one another, and he stood and examined what they had said until the truth was clear. Then he ordered a scribe to take down the answers in writing. And so was their custom daily until all the questions were answered that had come in during the year from the congregations of Israel. And at the end of the month they read all the questions and answered in the presence of the entire company, and the Resh Galuta signed them. The answers were then sent to the inquirers and he (the Resh Galuta) then divided the fees among the scholars.

PART ONE

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CHAPTER TWO

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NATIRA AND HIS SONS

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1. NATIRA

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## II Natira and His Sons

### 1. Natira

(30 A)

The Caliph, Al-Motadhid issued a terrible decree against the Jews. This decree came about through the advice of his counsellor, Ibn Abo Albagel, and he issued a statement of this decree to the heads of the provinces in order to bring the matter about. . . . and he wrote letters to all his favorite officers, and he came to the Sultan with the letters to have them signed. And he found that the Sultan was very busy and he left the letters with him to be signed in order that he might take them in the morning. Now it happened that night when Al-Motadhid was sleeping soundly on his couch that he saw a man in his dream who struck him on his thighs and attacked him with great anger, and after that the man said to him, "Now be careful." After that he repeated a second time: "Be careful not to touch the Jews, lest I punish you and amputate your hands and your feet." And he was very much afraid and trembled for his soul. And it seemed to him that all this was happening while he was awake and that there was around the place where he was sleeping . . . . They were awake guarding, and divided the night into periods. . . . and forty men of them were awake during every (watch) of the night. And he commanded that the men of that particular watch--forty in number--should enter. All of them (entered) and he fell asleep. And so the man came a second time and said to him:



that compels you to shed the blood of innocent people who have no way  
 of seeing me and no possibility of knowing my word, for I am Elijah.  
 And I have already told you once, so, therefore, take care not to  
 touch the Jews in any of the ways prescribed by you lest I do to you  
 and do. . . . "---and he awoke again fearing greatly. And he sent  
 for Natira at that hour. Now Natira had no doubt that he was lost,  
 and that there would be nothing he could do even with Ibn Abo-Al  
 bagel. And so he got himself ready and put on shrouds and entered  
 before the Sultan and stretched forth his hands in his direction,  
 but he did not recognize him because of his strange garments, for he  
 had never seen anyone like him. So he asked for a reason whereupon  
 he informed him that he had gotten himself ready in shrouds and had  
 taken leave of his home and had disposed of his life. But the Caliph  
 reassured him against fear and informed him that he had sent for him  
 in reference to a matter that troubled him greatly. Then he said to  
 him: "Who is Elijah?" Whereupon he answered: "May God give strength  
 (31)  
 to the ruler of the believers! He is Alkazar" So he said to him:  
 "Does Elijah really worry for the Jews?" He answered him: "Yes, my  
 Lord! This is a tradition that we have from the Books of the Pro-  
 phets, peace be upon them. For the Jews are a very weak nation; God  
 will not let them surrender in any event, for so He promised them,  
 (32)  
 through Moses His prophet, peace be upon him, and also this" He  
 read to him the entire verse. He said to him: "Translate it for me."

And he translated it. And then he related to him all that had happened, whereupon he (the Caliph) took out the letters and commanded him to arrest Ibn Albo Albagel, and to take possession of him and his property and of everything that the Sultan had granted him. And Natira with all the servants of the Sultan went out and arrested him during the night and imposed upon him a severe penalty until he brought forth all that he had in the open and in hiding, and he removed all of this to his dwelling, he and all his documents and set him aside by himself. Then he (Natira) placed a guard over him, and in the morning he came to the Sultan and handed him all the documents and informed him concerning everything he had found in reference to money, jewelry, clothing, precious stones, utensils, maids and servants. Then he (the Sultan) said to him: "Here I give to you all the things you have mentioned, let your soul be at rest." And Natira asked the Sultan to agree to accept the maids and the servants, but he refused this. However, the Sultan said to him: "Do with them as you please, and let not a single soul of them, nor anything that had belonged to him, come unto my place." So Natira took all these possessions, females and males, and much of his wealth, and all that he had in hiding and in the open, and took them to the Vizier and all the other men of the Sultan, and what remained he took for himself.

After that Al-Motadhid commanded him to do away with the tax im-

posed upon Israel, but he (Natira) said unto him: "O master! The ~~they~~ can guard their lives only through the tax, and if you do away with the tax they will be considered privileged people and their future will not be safe. For perchance at some future time they will be pressed, the exemption will be removed and back payment will be demanded and not having the money they will become paupers. Therefore, it is better that they pay the tax according to the good judgment of the ruler of the faithful--May God prolong his days--through his consideration, his kindness and his mercy." Then he said to him: "Collect it from them according to the custom of the prophet, peace be unto him, in accordance with the manner of things as they were in his day." And so he did.

Now Israel lived securely and sheltered for nine and a half years, during the remaining days of Al-Motadhid, and knew of no suffering or distress. And they would dress in garments of the style of the family of Allebas (33), namely black garments, and the gentiles lived with them in peace and they did not impose upon them any hardship in any way until many of the sect of Alzophia (34) imposed themselves upon them, for they considered themselves superior and oppressed them in the vicinity of the Lamp. And this was in the vicinity of the Lamp and the Lamp was in the vicinity of the Sultan, right opposite his palace, near (35) the Tigris river. And the Sultan commanded that they be brought in boats to his palace in pairs, and commanded them to remain there

until they were hidden away. And when night came he commanded that they be brought out in pairs covered with sacks and gave an order to beat them with a cane until their bones were broken to pieces and then he sent them back to the boats and drowned them in the Tigris. After this incident, no one dared for a long time to cause trouble to a Jew.

(36)

After his death, his son, Al Moktadir ascended the throne, and Natira was with him in his lofty position for eight years, up to his death, May God have mercy upon his soul. And after him came his sons Sahal and Isaac, and he had no other children besides these, neither male nor female.

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## 2. SAHAL--- THE SON OF NATIRA

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2. Sahal, the Son of Natira.

Sahal succeeded his father. And his residence was in the street  
(37)  
of Jamil in the section called Alrabiah . He used to ride on horse-

back every day to the palace of the Sultan. He received no salary.

(38)  
He used to spend every year five hundred shekels and would distribute it among the Viziers of the Sultan, and nothing was left of it.

Ismael received many benefits from him: He would help both small and great among them. And it never happened that if one were in difficulty and it came to his notice that he did not help him in his trouble, not only with his money, but informally with charity, publicly and privately, with a purse of coins and with garments.

And every Saturday men used to pray with him and he used to call anyone who would come to him and a servant used to stand before him. Now, if he wanted any person to remain and dine with him, he would lift his eyes toward him and look in his direction, whereupon the servant would understand his wish and have that person remain. When the service was over the people would leave through a second door, and not through the one by which they had come. And he would keep with him anyone he wished in one of the rooms. Then the entering of the poor would begin, approximately from two hundred to four hundred, never any less; and they would sit ten at a table. And it was his custom to arrange with the three establishments that prepared bread from Thursday till Friday afternoon. All those who came received

bread and meat privately, and of what there was: and if there remained any food he would provide the poor with it on the Sabbath, for every man bread and two slices of meat, and they ate to their heart's content. And he himself would stand near them (39) until they had finished the meal and would give them to drink and distribute fruit and other such things. He himself would eat several bites, say Grace with them and dismiss them. After that he would sit down with his friends to eat. And when they had cleared the table he would order them to bring drinks and he would drink with his friends to the end of the meal. And they would pass the night (there) and when morning came they would pray, and then go off to attend to their own affairs.

He also dealt kindly with gentiles through charity and gifts, and he would buy five hundred garments, more or less, and distribute them among gentiles, and would also send money to the city Kofeh to be distributed to the family of Eli (40), and the family of Asham (41). In this matter he followed the custom of his father who preceeded him. And in Persia he had the stretch of market place that brought him approximately two thousand drams by measure every week.

His memory was very strong with the knowledge of the Bible, Mishna and Talmud, and he also knew whatever was required of the knowledge of the Law and Halacha. He was a pupil of Saadia, and

he possessed many of the latter's qualities. He was about forty years old and exceedingly skilled in Arabic writing and wrote compositions. And he had a son whose name was also Natira, who was eight years old at this time.



3. ISAAC--- HIS BROTHER

3. Isaac, his Brother.

He was the brother of Sahal, and he was twenty seven years old,  
a partner of his brother Sahal in . . . . .

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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES DEALING WITH

Babylonia

THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE JEWS IN

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1. THE ACADEMY OF SURA

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The town of Sura, which was originally called Mata Mechassia, but which was changed to Sura on account of its being situated on the broad lake of Sura, was one of three prominent Jewish centers located near the Euphrates (the other towns were Nahardea and Pumbedita). It was inhabited by a mixed population of Jews and heathens who were noted both for their poverty and for their honesty.

The town of Sura became an important center of Jewish learning through the efforts of the famous teacher and sage, Abba Areka, who was the founder of the Academy of Sura. He was born in 175 C.E. and died in 247. Even as a child he manifested an unusual aptitude for the study of the Torah, and later was sent to Palestine to study, where he attended the famous Academy of Judah I in Tiberias. On his return he was greeted by two of his friends who overwhelmed him with questions. The principal of the school, Shilah, was so impressed with his knowledge of the Law and his ability to grasp the meaning of things that he bowed to his superior wisdom. When the president of the school died the post was offered to Abba Areka, but his modesty prompted him to refuse it in favor of one of his friends, Samuel. He did, however, accept the post of inspector of markets, which carried with it the control of weights and measures.

As inspector of markets, Abba Areka was obliged to travel to the various districts of Jewish Babylonia. It was during one of these journeys that he discovered, to his great surprise and pain, the unbounded ignorance of the Jewish people. In one place nothing was known about the traditional prohibition against eating meat and milk together. It was this ignorance, that existed throughout the district of Sura, that gave him the idea of founding a school there. His efforts, as we know, were crowned with great

success. It became the most famous school in Babylon, its importance spreading throughout the world. It is to Abba Areka that we owe in great measure the preservation of Judaism, for with few intermissions the Academy of Sura flourished and became the seat of Jewish science and learning for about eight centuries.

The Academy which bore the name of <sup>(1)</sup> *אמורא* was opened by <sup>(2)</sup> Abba Areka about the year 219. More than twelve thousand students gathered there from all parts of Babylonia to sit at the feet of the great sage. The throng of auditors was so tremendous that the lecture room had to be enlarged to hold those who sought his wisdom. Their reverence for him was so great that they called him "Rab" meaning "Master", and his school was known as "Be-Rab" abbreviated from Beth (house). Rab was a wealthy man and supported many poor students. His consideration for his poor auditors was so great that he introduced an excellent system whereby those who desired to study the Torah could do so without neglecting their business. He introduced the "Kalla Sessions". <sup>(3)</sup> In the autumn and the spring (Ellul and Adar) all the students and auditors would assemble, and lectures were delivered every day from early morning. In addition to these two months Rab devoted a week before the chief festivals to public lectures to which all who were interested were welcome to attend. The throng that took advantage of these lectures, which were called "Rigle", was so enormous that it was often impossible for them to find lodgings, and many were obliged to sleep in the open fields or on the shore of lake Sura. This system found great favor with the people and was the means of educating the ignorant masses. It was also the means of developing the study of the Torah among the more

advanced students who grasped every opportunity to increase their knowledge of the Talmud. These educational revivals influenced the civil life of the people. Court was suspended during these periods, and the Resh Galuta himself attended to receive the homage of his people.

As for the method which Rab employed, this is what Graetz says: "Nothing is known of any peculiar method employed by Rab. His mode of teaching consisted of analyzing the Mishna, which he had brought with him in its latest state of perfection, of explaining the text and the sense of every Halacha, and of comparing them with the Boraitas. Of these decisions and deductions, which are known by the name of Memra, there exists a great number from Rab's hand, and they, together with those which proceeded from Samuel and Jochanan, the contemporary principals of the schools, form a considerable part of the Talmud. For the most part he was more inclined than his fellow Amoraim to render the Law severer, and to forbid such legal acts as verged on the illegal, at least in the opinion of the Multitude of Babylonian Jews, who were incapable of nice discrimination. Most of Rab's decrees received the force of law, with the exception of those, however, which affected municipal law, for his authority was more respected in questions of ritual than of civil law" (4).

The Academy of Sura soon surpassed the academies of Palestine, whose distinguished scholars gradually recognized its authority. Abba Areka refined the morals and aroused the intellectual activity in Babylonia. For twenty-eight years (219-247) Rab devoted himself to the Sidra at Sura. When he passed away all his disciples accompanied his body to its final resting place. Babylonia mourned a whole year for him and brides discarded the practice of wearing flowers and myrtles at weddings during that period.

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## THE SUPREMACY OF SURA

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### The Supremacy of Sura

The title *גאון* (Gaon) was used for many years exclusively by the head of the Sura Academy (see below). Its reputation had been made secure by two great Amoraim, Rab in the third century, and Rab Ashi in the early part of the fifth century. The more prominent scholars usually taught at Sura in the Gaonic period, and most of the Gaonic responsa that have been preserved originated at Sura. Even the liturgic order of prayers and rules were formulated by the Geonim of Sura (5).

When the School of Pumbedita was in need of a new head, it had to consult with the Gaon of Sura to fill that post. Furthermore, the new Gaon or leader could not be a scholar from Pumbedita but had to come from the School of Sura. The title Gaon (exalted) was not officially used by the head of the Academy of Pumbedita until a much later period (see below). If the heads of the two Academies met anywhere, the Gaon of Sura was always given precedence. This was particularly noticed when the Geonim paid their respects to the Exilarch on his Reception Sabbath (6). When the Geonim corresponded with each other the head of Pumbedita addressed the Gaon of Sura: "To the Gaon and scholars of Sura", while the Gaon of Sura addressed his letters with the salutation: "To the scholars of Pumbedita", leaving out the title Gaon. In case the office of Rosh Galuta had no incumbent temporarily, the Gaon of Sura performed the duties of Exilarch and its revenues fell to his share. The Academy of Sura received two-thirds of the gifts and donations contributed for the maintenance of Babylonian Academies, while the Academy of Pumbedita received only one-third. This financial arrangement was changed however in 926 under the Gaonate of Eban Zedek, when he demanded an equal share of the receipts on account of the increase in the number of disciples in the Academy of Pumbedita (7).



On the basis of the above facts Ginsberg says:-

"Graetz properly makes the assertion that originally the title Gaon was the prerogative of the head of the Academy at Sura, the Gaonate not being a diumvirate but an institution with a single chief, and its origin must be explained with these facts in mind. In opposition to this sane  
(8)

view Halevy puts up a theory, which sets forth that in the Geonic time Pumbedita held the leading place, and the above mentioned privileges of Sura applied to the time of the Amoraim, probably of Rab Ashi, with but few exceptions not being in force in the Geonic time. But how, in the name of common sense, can it be said that the claim upon the larger share in the donations to the Academies appertains to the Talmudic times? We  
(9)

know from Talmudic data that the revenues of the Academies consisted of voluntary contributions deposited in boxes, which were put up for this purpose in the house of the head of the Academy. We should be accusing Rab Ashi of highway robbery pure and simple, if we supposed that he ordered the removal of two-thirds of the contents of the box at Pumbedita to the coffers of Sura. It is hardly necessary to defend the great leaders of the Jews against such charges. Halevy in particular has no ground under his feet when he relegates the privileges of Sura to Talmudic times (p. 263), because he gives the preference to Rabbi Samuel's version, which bases the distribution of moneys between the two Acad-  
(10)

emies upon the parish divisions for judicial purposes, and such divisions it is well known, did not exist in the Talmudic time, as

(11)  
the appointment of communal officers was in the hands of the Exilarch".

Sinsberg further contends that even if the title Gaon is not taken literally but as an equivalent for **לראש מתיבתא** it is not a term used in the Talmudic period in addressing a scholar. **רב** and **רבנן** were the titles applied to scholars in that time.

Hallevy, however, advances his reasons from the letter of Sherira, which states that two scholars of Pumbedita, Rabbi Samuel and Rabbi Jehudai, occupied the Gaonate of Sura. Sherira, as we know, belonged to Pumbedita and therefore was very proud of the fact that such honor fell to the lot of two members of his Academy, and took special pains to record it. But he had no particular interest in recording that scholars of Sura were appointed to the Pumbedita Academy. It is a fact that the greatest scholars of Pumbedita were invited to the Gaonate of Sura. Such an invitation, however, was looked upon as a mark of distinction and is sufficient proof that the Academy of Sura excelled the Academy of Pumbedita. (12)

The Academy of Sura experienced many vicissitudes. It was closed for a short period under Hormisdas IV, and reopened under Chosru II. For two years it was without a Gaon (837-839). The reason for this is not quite certain, though some are inclined to believe that the rise of Karaism had something to do with it. In the ninth century the Academy of Sura declined. Questions still kept coming in addressed to the Sura Academy on account of its fine tradition, but the Academy of Pumbedita was looked upon, even in Babylon, as being the greater authority and having the more influence. In the tenth century (921) after the great controversy between David ben Zakkai and Kohen-Zedek, which threatened to disrupt the Jewish communities of Sura and Pumbedita, David recognized Kohen-Zedek as the legitimate Gaon of Pumbedita, while he (David ben Zakkai) functioned as Exilarch. (13)

Kohen-Zedek, Gaon of Pumbedita, did not succeed in extinguishing the

Billarchate, and he lived to see the Academy of Sura, which had been humbled by him, rise again from its low position. Renewed splendor was shed upon it by a stranger from a foreign land, so that for several years it cast the school of Pumbedita into the shade.

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### SAADIA GAON

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The foreigner who shed fresh luster on the Academy of Sura by his character and fame was Saadia. He was born in Fayum, Northern Egypt, in 902 and was the son of Joseph. His earthly existence was but of short duration, yet significant and wonderful are the works he accomplished during that period. Never before him had a Gaon been selected for the famous Academy of Sura who had not been born in Babylon. It was undoubtedly because of his broad culture, his keen intellect and his vigorous stand against Karaism that he attracted notice so widespread that Babylon heard of him. It was principally as defender of rabbinical Judaism that he was called to the leadership of the school (15). His innate genius manifested itself early in life and attracted the attention not only of his co-religionists, but also of the Mohamedans.

In the month of Iyar, in the year 928 (4688) he came, at the age of thirty-six, to Sura, was appointed Gaon, and commenced at once to spread knowledge in all directions. His presence so increased the number of pupils that the Academy at Sura soon became famous throughout the world. He appointed worthy young men to academic offices, and was faithful to the duties of his position. He realized that the former greatness of the Sura Academy consisted now in nothing but high sounding titles that meant nothing. The Exilarch was without intrinsic excellence and was at constant variance with the schools. The Exilarchate was no longer recognized at court and as a result its existence was threatened with extinction. Money needed by the Exilarch to purchase his power from the courtiers or from the ruler himself was extracted from the people. This situation brought with it corruption and oppression, and when on one occasion the Exilarch, David ben Zakkai, sent

his men to one of the Jewish communities to collect money, and the people of that community refused to accede to his demands, he denounced them to the vizier, who accused them to the Caliph. A heavy fine was imposed upon the people and although the Gaon of Pumbedita was greatly perturbed at this outrage of the Exilarch, he was afraid to raise his voice. Saadia, who had been recently elected to his post had not been long enough in office to protest. Inwardly he condemned and disapproved of the tactics of the Exilarch, but in order to avoid a breach with the Exilarch he refrained from interfering. But Saadia's righteous indignation soon manifested itself, as Nissi, a blind scholar and sage, forewarned David, who came to him seeking advice. The break came when David decided an inheritance suit unjustly. His decision was influenced by the prospect of financial gain; he had been offered by one party ten percent of the amount of money involved. To make the decision legal it was necessary for the Geonim of both Sura and Pumbedita to affix their signatures to the document. The Gaon of Pumbedita, Igmar-Eddek, readily signed the document, which was brought to him by the son of David. Saadia, however, after reading it and seeing the injustice of the decision, refused to sign his name. David's son then raised his hand and threatened Saadia with bodily harm for persisting in his refusal. Saadia's men became alarmed and threw David's son out of the house. When David heard of the treatment Saadia had accorded his son, he lost patience and imposed the  $\square 77$  on Saadia. Saadia, however, was not one to be easily frightened. The position of Gaon of Sura had practically equal power with the Exilarch. He therefore imposed the  $\square 77$  on David and in his stead appointed Josiah Hassan, the brother of David, to that office, just as David had appointed Joseph ben Jacob ben Satis, a rather mediocre person,



to the Gaonate of Sura. Two factions immediately arose as a result of this controversy. A large amount of money was spent by one of David's supporters, Ibn-Sarjadu, a wealthy and learned man who was jealous of Saadia's capabilities, to bring about the deposition of Saadia. This was not a very easy thing to do, as Saadia, too, had wealthy and influential supporters, and the Caliph, Al-Muktadir, was a very fair minded man. Ibn-Sarjadu's opportunity came when a rebellion broke out and Caliph Al-Muktadir was killed. Kahir, the new ruler, was so poor that he did not even have enough money for the ceremonies of his installation. He was therefore ready, for a price, to listen to the poisoned words of Ibn-Sarjadu against Saadia. David's party then poured money into the treasury of the new Caliph, who prohibited Saadia from holding office. Saadia did not seem to be very much perturbed with this change of fortune. He went into retirement for several years, but did not spend his time grieving, although the constant quarreling impaired his health. He spent his time actively engaged in literary labors, and wrote some of his best works during that period. Among these works were commentaries on "Sefer Bereshit" (Book of Creation) and "Emunot V'Deot" (Faith and Science).

The controversy lasted for several years, and finally came to a climax when an important law suit had to be decided upon. One man selected Saadia, the deposed Gaon, to act as judge for him. This could now be arranged as the cruel and avaricious Kahir, who had decreed the banishment of Saadia, was now replaced by the just Caliph Abradhi. Saadia, during the period of his banishment, had increased in prestige, while David had lost many of his supporters, who saw the righteousness of Saadia's stand, and sided with him against David. When David heard that a party to the suit had requested Saadia to act as judge for him, he became so filled with rage that he had personal

violence done to the man who had appealed to Saadia.

This unwarranted attack upon an innocent man aroused the whole Jewish community and eventually brought about a reconciliation through the good offices of a wealthy and important member of the community, Bashr, the father-in-law of Ibn Sarjadu, to whom the people appealed. Saadia was reinstated amid great rejoicings of all the population, and David, the Exilarch, and Saadia, the Gaon of Sura, became great friends.

David invited Saadia to a Purim Feast, as the reconciliation occurred on this festival, and entertained him for several days. Ibn Sarjadu looked askance at this reconciliation and left for Pumbedita where later on account of his wealth and influence he became head of the Academy of Pumbedita.

This controversy between the Exilarch and Saadia played havoc with the dignity and influence of the Academy of Sura, particularly during the years of Saadia's retirement, as the man who was appointed in his place was far inferior to Saadia. After the reconciliation, however, the Academy of Sura came into its own again, and questions from home and abroad instead of going to Pumbedita, were sent once more to Sura.

Although Saadia did not enjoy the best of health, he labored indefatigably. Finally, however, he succumbed to the disease from which he had suffered (942). His death was like the last rays of the setting sun for the Academy of Sura. Joseph ben Saadia, who had acted as Gaon during Saadia's involuntary retirement, was now reinstated, but he was not able to uphold the dignity and superiority of the famous Academy of Sura. He very soon abandoned the school and emigrated to Bassora (about 948).



The Academy at Sura, however, did revive somewhat under the Gaonate of Samuel ben Chofni, who instead of being opposed by the Gaon of Pumbedita, Rab Hai, was assisted by him, as he was the father-in-law of Samuel, and his equal in learning and character. Samuel wrote several systematic works on the ritual and a commentary on the Pentateuch in which he set forth the Unity of God. Although his exegetical works made no distinct progress, they show the important fact that the Geonim followed the scientific lines laid down by Saadia. Like Saadia, Samuel attacked Karaism. He died in 1034, thus ending the line of Geonim of the Sura Academy.

A Gaon of Sura who deserves to be mentioned is Mar Amram ben Sheshna who headed the Academy from 853 to 856. He arranged the first complete order of prayers at the request of the Spanish community. Mar Amram collected everything the Talmud and the custom of the schools had ratified concerning prayer and divine service. His prayer book is known as "Siddur Rab Amram", and about sixty years ago it was republished with many new additions.

The Academy that Rab had founded early in the third century (219 C.E.) was now closed (1034), after it had given light and learning to the members of the house of Israel scattered throughout the world for over seven hundred years. An attempt was made to restore it when four learned rabbis were sent abroad to collect funds to maintain it. Various accounts of this incident have been written, and many fanciful stories and legends have been woven around these men. Some claim that the ship on which they traveled was attacked by pirates and the men, sold as slaves, were sent to different parts of the world. These men, who eventually were freed by their co-religionists, who paid a large ransom for them, became leaders in Talmudical schools. These schools in time became famous, thus making the people independent of

the schools of Babylon.

We are told that the important books of the library of Sura were later transferred to Spain, as Babylonia no longer was the source of Jewish inspiration. It had to yield to a foreign country, just as Palestine some centuries earlier had had to yield to Babylonia.

CHAPTER TWO

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1. THE ACADEMY OF PUMBEDITA

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## THE ACADEMY OF PUMBEDITA

The town of Pumbedita, as we already know, was one of the towns on the Euphrates and had a large population. Its one advantage over Sura was that it lay nearer to the capital, Bagdad, than its sister city of superior fame. It was distinguished for its magnificent buildings and the shrewdness of its population. A popular proverb reads: "It is better to live in the dunghills of Mata-Mechassia (Sura) than in the palaces of Pumbedita."

The light of the Law that had burned so brilliantly in Judea for fifteen successive generations and which had produced great giants in every field of intellectual endeavor, now began to burn very, very low. Its rays, however, were not extinguished. Rab and Samuel of Babylonia caught its warmth and with it illumined their native land. For half a century they labored to restore the light of the Torah on foreign soil. With their constant care and indefatigable efforts it took such deep root that it burned brighter on foreign soil--Babylonia--than in its native Judea. The people became imbued with a great desire to acquire a knowledge of the Law. It was accounted as the highest honor to be a Baal Torah, while ignorance of the Law was counted a disgrace. Pumbedita, although second to the school at Sura, became a center of Jewish learning and inspiration, and at times outshone its sister college. The founder of this school, that left its mark on the pages of Jewish history, was Judah ben Ezekiel. He was born in 220 and died in 299 C.E. He was one of the famous disciples of the Sura Academy under the great master and teacher, Rab (Abba Areka). His desire for knowledge was so great that he could spare only one day a month for sacred devotions. He possessed

a wonderful memory and it is owing to his remarkable skill in retaining knowledge that we possess many of Rab's and Samuel's sayings. His profundity of knowledge was so vast, his intellect so keen, and his character so estimable that he enjoyed undisputed authority, both in and outside of Babylon. Judah introduced a new and original method of studying the Halacha into the Pumbedita Academy. This Academy soon rivaled in importance Rab's school at Sura by the side of which it continued for eight centuries.

The Gaon of Pumbedita had to pay deference to the Gaon of Sura, whose school was likewise superior to that of Pumbedita. It was not allowed to appoint a Gaon from among its own scholars but had to content itself to receive one of the scholars from the Sura Academy. For many years its head did not enjoy the privilege of the title Gaon. About 827, however, owing to constant quarrels between the two schools, a compromise was reached wherein the title Gaon was extended to the head of the Pumbedita school but the head of the Sura school took precedence at all public functions. The Gaon of Sura had the privilege of delivering the address at the general assemblies. He sat at the right side of the Exilarch while the Gaon of Pumbedita sat on his left. On entering or leaving any public place the head of the Sura school always led the way and in the presence of the Exilarch walked immediately after him. Even though the head of the Sura school was a young man and the head of the Pumbedita school an old man, this order was preserved<sup>(1)</sup>.

The Academy of Pumbedita, like its sister Academy of Sura, went through many experiences. During the lifetime of Judah the number of students increased tremendously. At times there were as many as twelve thousand disciples attending the school of Pumbedita. Rabba, we are

told, did not confine his lectures to the practical part of jurisprudence alone, as Judah had done. He treated all the subjects contained in the Mishna. He sought to reconcile the various contradictions existing in the Mishna, the Baraithas and the additions made by the Amoraic authorities, and generally to introduce clearness.

The principals of the Sura Academy were usually men of great wealth. Sometimes they assumed the entire financial obligation of running the Academy, and in addition supported hundreds of poor scholars. The leaders of the Pumbeditan Academy, on the other hand, were usually men of limited means. It was necessary very often to maintain an academical fund to which the communities and sometimes even the Exilarch contributed, in order to support needy disciples.

In the spring and in the autumn (Adar and Ellul) Pumbedita also conducted Kala sessions <sup>(2)</sup>. So eager were the people to attend these sessions under the leadership of Raba bar Joseph bar Chama of Machuza, (299-352), that they often neglected their business pursuits. Raba was obliged to warn the people and his warning had a two-fold purpose: Firstly, for their own welfare, saying: "I pray you, do not come to my school in the spring and in the autumn months, lest you should neglect the time of the harvest and of the preparation of the wine and oil, and so be troubled throughout the year by the cares of life." Secondly he warned them out of fear of the government who lost money in taxes when the people neglected to attend to their fields and vineyards, and also very often neglected to pay their poll-tax. It is said that the death of Rabba was due indirectly to such a circumstance. The king was informed that owing to people gathering for the Kala session twelve thousand of his dis-



ciples failed to pay their poll-tax. A royal bailiff was sent to arrest him. He was, however, warned in time to escape. He ran to the woods and on hearing the rustling of trees, which he mistook for the marching of soldiers, he took fright and died. His body was later found by two of his most distinguished disciples, Abayi and Raba. These two great scholars produced what is known as the dialectic form of the Talmud. Abayi, who succeeded Joseph, had opened a school of his own in Machuza on the Tigris and numerous students were attracted there. It was through Abayi and Raba that the Pumbeditan method was brought to its greatest perfection. These scholars were never at a loss for an answer to the most difficult questions, which Rabba and Joseph were at a loss to find solutions to. In this sense the Talmud was the creation of the Pumbeditan and Machuzan schools. This system of Talmudical dialectics did not develop after Raba's death. People cultivated it, but did not develop it as in the lifetime of Rab. He died after fourteen years in office and then the Academy of Pumbedita began to wane, as none of his successors were able to measure up to his mental stature.

Pumbedita, like Sura, felt the cruel reign of Hormisdas IV. Under the reign of Bahram Tshubin, whom the Jews supported when he wrested the throne from Prince Chosru, both the Academy of Pumbedita and Sura were opened again. Chosru I, however, with the help of the Byzantine emperor, Mauritius, succeeded in bringing Bahram's rule to a sudden end. The Jews paid dearly for loyalty to Bahram, as many of them were massacred. When, however, Chosru II ascended the throne, he did not hold the Jews responsible for their participation in the revolt. He ruled with justice and kindness throughout his long reign (590-628). The two Academies, Sura and Pumbedita, were opened again and enjoyed uninterrupted

prosperity.

The Academy of Pumbedita had its flashes of greatness even though it was second in importance to Sura. When during the reign of Al-Mamun, about the middle of the ninth century, the Exilarch was no longer officially recognized as an official of the State, the importance of the Pumbeditan Academy increased. It was near the capital, Bagdad, whose influential Jewish men were in close touch with the Academy. Pumbedita rose from its subordinate position and was now on a par with its sister Academy of Sura. Its president assumed the title of Gaon and made himself independent of the Exilarch. Instead of the Gaon of Pumbedita and his faculty going once a year to the Exilarch to pay him homage, now, if the Exilarch wished to hold a public assembly, he and his retinue had to repair to Pumbedita.

A Gaon worthy of mention at this period is Mar-Zemach I ben Paltoi (872-890). He headed a list of literary Gaonim. He arranged an alphabetical index of difficult words in the Talmud, under the title of "Aruch". This dictionary forms the first contribution of the constantly growing department of Talmudical lexicography.

Another man worthy of mention, a contemporary of Mar-Zemach I ben Paltoi, was Nachshon ben Zadok. He made himself famous through the discovery of the key to the Jewish calendar. He found that the order of the years and festivals repeats itself after a cycle of two hundred and forty-seven years, and that the forms of the years can be arranged in fourteen tables. The key bears his name; it is known as the cycle of Rabbi Nachshon.

The Academy of Pumbedita not only rose to be the equal of the Sura school, but before long outstripped her. Instead of important questions



from home and abroad being addressed to the Gaon of Sura, they were addressed to the Gaon of Pumbedita, who was looked upon as the chief authority in Babylonia. When Hai ben David became the Gaon of Pumbedita (890-897) the influence of that Academy increased still more. The influence he exerted upon the Academy of Pumbedita was greatly due to his popularity at the capital of Bagdad, where he had held the position of rabbi and judge, and was a great favorite of the people. The Jewish community of Bagdad had sponsored his appointment to Pumbedita because they were anxious to see the school of Pumbedita become the leading college of learning in Babylon. Toward this end they bent all their efforts. They were not only anxious to have it eclipse the Sura Academy, but even wanted to put an end to the Exilarchate. It was about this time that Mar Kohen-Zedek II ben Joseph (917-936), the head of the Pumbedita college demanded a greater share of the revenue than the Academy of Sura received. He claimed that it had many more students and therefore deserved greater consideration. Many quarrels arose on this account and as a result a compromise was arranged, whereby the money should be divided equally instead of the usual two-thirds to Sura and one-third to Pumbedita (3). Kohen Zedek did every thing in his power to eliminate the office of the Exilarch and succeeded for a time. The people, however, were too warmly attached to the house of David, about which traditions and memories clustered. Much against the will of Kohen-Zedek, a relative of the banished Exilarch, Ukba, was installed as Resh Galuta. Nor was that all. The School of Sura again came to the fore when Saadia, a stranger from a foreign land, was selected as Gaon of Sura, much to the chagrin of Kohen-Zedek. Saadia, brought light and glory to the school of Sura, and Pumbedita was again put into the shade.

After the death of Saadia, however, the Academy of Sura once more declined. A rich merchant of Bagdad, Ibn Sarjadu, who had been a bitter opponent of Saadia and who had helped to persecute him, was chosen to the post at Pumbedita. He had not been through a regular academic training but was chosen because of his riches, as well as for his knowledge and energy. He occupied the position of Gaon for eighteen years (943-960). He wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch, as well as works of a philosophical nature. Like Hohen-Zedek, he tried to exalt the School of Pumbedita at the expense of the Sura Academy, but after his death, the School was torn with internal struggles. In the meantime the four men who had been sent out from Sura to raise funds, had opened schools in Egypt, Africa, Spain and France, and thereby separated these communities from the Babylonian schools. In Spain, particularly, schools for the study of the Torah began to flourish and the Jews of France, Germany and Italy gladly yielded them the precedence which had formerly been enjoyed by the Babylonian Academies. Cordova, Lucena, and Granada soon took the place of Sura and Pumbedita.

As the schools in Spain increased in fame, the schools in Babylon decreased in importance. Before their complete annihilation, however, two celebrated men, father and son, occupied the office of Gaon in the Academy of Pumbedita. The first of these was Sherira, Gaon in 968. He was born in 920 and died in the year 1000 C.E. He boasted that he could trace his descent, both on his mother's and father's side, to the line of the Exilarchs before Bostanai. Sherira is especially distinguished because of his "Letter", which is the main authority for the history of the Talmudical, post Talmudical, and Gaonic periods of Jewish history. He composed an important Talmudical work called "Megillat Setarim" (on the meaning of Haggadot). His

"Iggeret" (epistle) gives a valuable list of Geonim. Despite his fame and brilliance he was not able to prevent the decay of Pumbedita. The schools of Babylonia had outlived their usefulness. Such an inferior grade of scholars did Babylonia produce at this period that Sherira was obliged to promote his son, who was only sixteen years old to the high office of judge. Both father and son met with reverses. Due to some unknown charge, Caliph Al-hadir ordered their arrest, (997) and the confiscation of their property. Through some influential persons they were liberated and restored to their former station. Soon afterward Sherira abdicated in favor of his son, Hai, (998) and died a few years later. Another account states that Caliph Ach-mad ordered his imprisonment and finally his death. He was beheaded in the year 1000. Both accounts agree, however, that he died in the year 1000 C.E.

Hai, the son of Sherira, Gaon (969-1038) was raised to the post of Gaon at the age of thirty and thus succeeded his father. He was held in such high esteem and was so popular with the people that as a mark of honor to him, instead of the usual prophetic lesson on the Sabbath, when the Law was read, in which Moses prays for a worthy successor, the story of David, anointing his successor was substituted, and in conclusion the words: "And Hai sat upon the throne of Sherira, his father, and his kingdom was firmly established," was inserted. Hai was an exceedingly cultivated person. He was acquainted with Arabic and endeavored to promote a national comprehension both of the Bible and of the Talmud. He wrote an exposition of the Pentateuch in Arabic verse, called: "Musar Haskal." Hai was universally acknowledged as an authority and through his influence the School of Pumbedita somewhat recovered its prestige.

The Exilarchate was now practically extinct. The death of the grandson

of David ben Zakkai had left the position vacant and no attempt had been made to fill the post. Hai, therefore, was at the head of the Babylonian Jewish community, and so able a man was he that questions on important matters were sent to him, not only from Babylon and Palestine, but even from Europe. When in 1038, Hai passed away, he was mourned throughout the Jewish world and was eulogized by the greatest poet of all time, Ibn Gebriel.

His successor was immediately selected: Rabbi Chiskia, who acted both as Gaon and Exilarch; but as I have already remarked, the Babylonian schools had outlived their usefulness and these sudden spurts of light were but the last flickers of a dying candle. The period of the Geonim, however, did not last long, for no sooner had Rabbi Chiskia assumed office than the ruling Caliph, Kadir, ordered his execution for some unknown reason. The sun had now definitely set on the Gaonate of Babylon. Sura and Pumbedita that had shed so much light and learning over the Jewish world for over eight centuries, were now in darkness.

The sun that had set in one part of the world, however, was now beginning to rise in another. The Academies in Spain became celebrated and influential and were destined to play an important role in the life of the Jew.

### CHAPTER THREE

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#### THE EXILARCHATE---ITS ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONS

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## THE EXILARCHATE

### ITS ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONS

The origin of the Exilarchate is vague and uncertain. The period of its existence was about eight centuries. Because the Exilarchs were believed to be descended from the House of David, their leadership was recognized by the people and they were honored as *D'N'WJ*, princes. The Exilarchs claimed their origin and ancestry to be as far back as Zerrubabel (597 B.C.E.), the grandson of the Jewish King Jehoiachin. This legend is based on II Kings, 24-25, where it is stated that in the thirty-seventh year of the Jewish captivity in Babylon, Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon set King Jehoiachin free and showed him kindness. The office of Rosh Galuta was not visible, however, until the second century C.E., when Ashiya held office. From then until the eleventh century, when the office was no longer in existence, we can trace it without a break.

The Exilarchate was on a par with the Palestinian Patriarchate, whose incumbent was the president of the Sanhedrin, and who assumed the title of Nasi, Prince of Judea. The Sanhedrin was the ruling authority over all Jewish affairs, political, spiritual, social and judicial. The Patriarch, however, had to guide himself by the opinions of the majority of its "Seventy members", over whom he presided. When the Patriarch was arbitrary, obstinate and excessively severe in his actions and decisions, he could be removed by that body as was Gamaliel II. In the course of time this important body began to decline and Babylonia occupied the stage of universal interest; this position was recognized even by such men as Ami and Assi, the leaders of Judea.



The Resh Galuta--Prince of the Exile--was the ruling political and civil power over all Israel in the Diaspora. The Geonim were the spiritual rulers of the people and yet we find at times the Exilarch assuming the prerogative of appointing the Gaon to office. The Geonim, Mar R. Samuel and R. Yehudai of Sura, and R. Natroï Kahana of Pumbedita were appointed by the Exilarch Solomon ben Hisdai (eighth century). The Exilarch David ben Judah appointed R. Isaac ben Hannaniah, Gaon of Pumbedita in 833. But when Kohen-Zedek was appointed Gaon of Pumbedita by the Exilarch, David ben Zakkai, the Academy rebelled and the members themselves elected Rab Mebasser. The schism arising as a consequence was adjusted amicably, by having both Geonim officiate together until the death of Mebasser (826), leaving Kohen-Zedek sole Gaon of Pumbedita (1).

The Resh Galuta, who was the governor of Jewish Babylonia, obtained his authority by order of the king of Babylon and was responsible to him alone. He was the highest judge of the Jewish people in both criminal and civil cases. His duties included administering justice (he sometimes delegated this duty to a subordinate); supervising collection of taxes from the Jewish communities. He held court with all the pomp and splendor of an oriental Potentate. His table was laden with the finest of foods and the choicest of wines. His hospitality was extended to a large number of poor scholars who wore a badge as a sign of their dependence upon him. The more orthodox, suspecting that such a large quantity of food could not be prepared according to the strict letter of the Jewish law, kept away as often as convenient. The throngs that visited the Resh Galuta were largest during the Festival season.

The Prince of the Exile attended state functions, as for instance on

the Persian New Year, escorted by his retinue of servants, who like him, were dressed in most gorgeous and colorful clothes. On such occasions he brought with him a gift of money. His station demanded that he wear a girdle of gold and silver threads. In earlier days his seal was engraved with the Lion of Judah; later, however, the design was changed to a fly  
(2)  
or a wasp.

Over and above his duties as judge and tax collector, the Exilarch through subordinates whom he selected, had charge of public safety, weights and measures and inspection of canals.

It was not essential that the Resh Galuta be a great scholar. In fact at times he was not. Some, however, were very ambitious and wanted to assume, in addition to their worldly and political powers, the spiritual authority over the people. When the Exilarchs were great scholars they acted as presidents of the Judicial tribunal. This often brought about controversies as the Geonim felt that the Exilarchs were usurping their power and position. Some of the Exilarchs were tyrannical and unscrupulous and many were the complaints made by the people against them. The Exilarchs expected the Geonim to carry out their wishes, but their wishes were not  
(3)  
always just and righteous. If the Gaon refused, the Exilarch would excommunicate him and appoint another in his place. This, of course, was not the general rule. The rank and file of them were conscious of their position. Many of the Exilarchs of Talmudical times endeared themselves by their great learning, noble conduct, and just administration.

The Exilarch did not always depend upon the income he derived from gifts and taxation of the people. Neither did he depend upon the regular annual income from stated districts. They were usually men of wealth and



with their own incomes supported a large retinue of poor scholars, attendants and slaves. Graetz says: "Wealthy by reason of the income accruing from their extensive lands, they also possessed many slaves and a numerous suite of attendants; even free men placed themselves under their patronage, wearing, as sign of their fealty, the arms of their masters on their garments. The Princes of the Captivity were more sensitive with regard to these distinctive marks, refusing to pardon even the scholars whom they themselves supported. if they laid aside or even only covered over these badges." Again Graetz says: "It is not until later times that mention is made of regular yearly revenues drawn by them, (the Exilarchs) from certain regions and cities <sup>(4)</sup>".

Many distinctive honors were bestowed upon the Exilarchs. One of these in particular was during the Reading of the Torah. The usual custom is for the one honored to go up to the Torah at the time of reading; when the Exilarch was honored with such a "Mitzva" the Torah was brought down to him instead of his going to the Torah. It was probably because of the many honors and the deference shown to the Exilarchs that some of them became overbearing, not only to the people but also toward the Geonim at times. As a result the Geonim sometimes tried to weaken his power and even to suppress this office entirely <sup>(5)</sup>. The people, however, loathed to see the one remaining symbol of their former glory disappear, and often suppressed their own personal feelings in order to perpetuate this Davidic dynasty, which was symbolized by the Exilarch.

The office of Resh Galuta had its hazards as well as its privileges. The family of one of the early Exilarchs, Mar Chanina, endured many hardships during the Kobad persecutions. Being the leader of the Jewish

community, particularly in political and civil affairs, the Exilarch was naturally the first to be brought to account when an unfavorable government change took place. When therefore, King Yobad, a man not altogether without good qualities, was induced by one of his religious reformers, Mazdak, to make Magianism the ruling faith of the country, the Jews revolted. The family of Mar Chanina was obliged to flee to Judea and take with them Mar Zutra's posthumous heir, who also bore the name of Mar Zutra. Mar Chanina, himself, however, was taken prisoner and executed. As a result of these conditions, the office of Exilarch was left vacant for a year or two. The Schools of Sura and Pumbedita were closed. Conditions for the Jews changed, however, when Bahram, whom the Jews supported in his effort to usurp the Persian throne, was victorious. The Jews of Persia and Babylon welcomed Bahram as their savior. As a reward for their loyalty to him, he granted them many privileges. The schools were again opened and the Jews prospered under his rule. Between this event and the Arab conquest of Persia (589-640), three Resh Galutas are mentioned by name: Kafnai, Chaninai, and Bostanai. It was Chaliph Omar, who in 638 raised Bostanai to the dignity of Prince of the Exile. He was the son of Chaninai, a direct descendant of the Davidian house. Bostanai was a man whom both history and legend have selected as an object of glorification. He succeeded in again investing the office of Exilarch with substantial power. The following legend is told about his birth: It is related that a king had decreed the total extermination of the Exilarchal family. Chaninai, the last of the victims, was executed shortly before the birth of that son. For this atrocious deed the king was admonished in a most singular manner. He dreamed that he was cutting down trees in

his orchard (Bostan) one after the other, until there was but one left, a tender sapling. Suddenly an old and dignified man approached him. Snatching the knife from the hand of the king, the old man threw it against his forehead. Blood streamed from the wound upon the king's face and beard. The venerable old man upbraided the king for destroying the trees and admonished him to save the last young tender shoot. The king, apologetic because of his wanton destruction, promised to save the young sapling and to cherish it so that it might grow up to be a sturdy and fruitful tree. When the king awoke from his dream he sought to have it interpreted. For this purpose, the father of Chaninah's widow, was called. He told the king that the dream referred to his ruthless destruction of the family of the Exilarchs; the sapling referred to the last of the line, the unborn child of the last victim. The king, satisfied with the interpretation of his dream, and full of remorse, ordered Chanina's widow to be given the best of care, and when the babe was born, named him Bostanai, which referred to his garden. <sup>(4A)</sup> This of course is legend. It is true, however, that when Bostanai reached manhood he justified the hopes of his family and friends. Omar not only raised him to the dignity of Prince of the Exile, but gave him Dara, a daughter of the Persian king, Chosroes, for wife.

Bostanai was the first Exilarch to be the vassal of the Mohamedans. He obtained many concessions, one of which was to wear a signet ring. This honor gave him the privilege of stamping his documents and decrees with an official character.

Despite the hereditary character of the office of Resh Galuta, new nominees had to be approved by the heads of both colleges. The installation of a new Exilarch was an affair of pomp and splendor. The installa-

tion was held in the synagogue on a Thursday when the Law was read. Amidst the blare of trumpets, the Geonim, after putting their hands upon the head of the new incumbent declared: "Long live our lord and Prince of the Exile <sup>(6)</sup>."

Anan was the last Exilarch to be inducted into office because of his hereditary descent. After him the office became elective, and the presidents of the Academies directed the election. Gradually the presidents of the Academies assumed more and more power over the Exilarchs. They even succeeded in ousting one of the Exilarchs <sup>(7)</sup>. When the Geonim succeeded in controlling the office of Exilarch and he became dependent upon them, the Exilarch usually tried to free himself from this state of dependence. When a strong character was appointed he clashed with the Geonim. This condition naturally exerted an evil influence on the Babylonian Jewish commonwealth.

Despite the many handicaps of the office of Resh Galuta, to the Jews of distant lands it appeared surrounded with a halo of power and greatness, and on account of confused rumors, seemed again to be empowered with the sceptre of David. The hearts of Jews in distant lands turned toward these potentates on the Euphrates; gifts flowed in freely to enable the House of David to make a worthy and dignified appearance.

Not only did the Geonim work to weaken the power of the Exilarchate, but they often worked against each other. Rab Kohen Zedek II ben Joseph, Gaon of Pumbedita (917-936) worked to strengthen himself at the expense not only of the Exilarchate, but also of the sister Academy of Sura. Sura, as we know, was the superior school and therefore received two-thirds of the income from all questions, while Pumbedita had to content itself with the remaining third. Kohen Zedek during his administration demanded and eventually received an equal share of money and gifts with the Academy of

Sura. He then turned his attention to the Exilarchate which was occupied by Ukba. Kohen Zedek was not opposed to Ukba personally, but he was to the office itself. He finally was successful not only in removing Ukba, but also in having him banished from Bagdad, the capital, where the Exilarch lived. The people, however, were warmly attached to the House of David and after the Exilarchate was vacant for some time they clamored to have it filled. They selected David ben Zakkai, a relative of the banished Ukba to fill the post. For a time Kohen Zedek refused to acknowledge the new Exilarch. A reconciliation was eventually effected through the good offices of Nissi Naharvani, a blind man, who was much beloved and respected for his piety. Nissi, himself had at one time been offered the post of Gaon (5) of Sura, but he refused on account of his blindness .

David ben Zakkai died in 940, and through the influence of his one time opponent, Saadia, David's son, Judah, was elected to the office. His incumbency was but for a short period, however, for after holding office for seven months he passed away, leaving a son who was twelve years old, too young to succeed him. Saadia, however, befriended him and had him educated as befits a future leader of the House of David. He was eventually raised to the position of Prince of the Captivity; but the resuscitation of the dying embers of the once great Davidian dynasty greatly incensed the Moslems. They determined to assassinate him on one of his public appearances. The Caliph, who was informed of their intention, tried to avert the murder, but in vain. After his death no attempt was made to appoint another to this office. The Jews did not want to arouse again the animosity of the Moslems. Thus died the last of the Exilarchs of Babylon.

The Exilarchate, however, did not cease entirely with the assassination (9) of the grandchild of David ben Zakkai. Abraham Ibn Ezra speaks of the



"Davidic House" at Bagdad (before 1140) calling its members the "Heads of the Exile". A long time before this David ben Daniel endeavored to renew in Egypt the glory of the Exilarchate<sup>(10)</sup>. Upon his arrival in Egypt in 1061 at the age of twenty he was proclaimed Exilarch by the eminent Jewish scholars there, who were anxious to obtain for Egypt the leadership, power and influence formerly enjoyed by Babylonia. In 1094, however, he was deposed by Mohamet Almuktafi<sup>(11)</sup>, who appointed in his place a wealthy and influential Jew, Solomon (Chasdai?) in whom he had taken a great interest. Solomon was greatly respected by his own people too. The Caliph endowed the office with dignity and power. Once more the Prince of Captivity rode in splendor on horseback and wore costly garments. He was followed by a retinue of slaves and guards and was permitted to stamp his documents with an official seal. His public appearances were heralded with: "Make way for our lord, the son of David". The Exilarch appointed and confirmed rabbis, judges and readers in all parts of the Caliphate. His power extended from Persia to Kharsan and the Caucasus and as far as Yemen, India, and Tibet. He appointed these officials through commissions and received in return numerous gifts. The Exilarchate thus obtained a new lease on life and practically returned to its former greatness and influence. The former Babylonian schools had disappeared but in their place there arose an important Talmudical College in Bagdad, whose leader assumed the title of Gaon. The leader, Ali Halevi, attracted a number of students, and the Exilarch himself was a learned Talmudist.

In the thirteenth century an energetic man, Yishai ben Chiskiya, was appointed Resh Galuta by the temporal authorities. He was the head of the Eastern congregations, but his Exilarchate extended to those communities of

Palestine which were under the rule of the Mohamedans and of the Egyptian Sultan, Kilavun. As late as the fourteenth century several families claimed their relationship with Josiah, the brother of David ben Zakkal.

2. THE EGYPTIAN EXILARCHATE



## THE EGYPTIAN EXILARCHATE

The fact that we know very little about the Egyptian Exilarchate does not disprove its existence. David ben Daniel was the son of the Jerusalem Gaon, Daniel ben Azarja. It was a situation in which the Magid Meborach and the Egyptian Gaon, Josia ben Azarja Ha-Kohen, favored him. Both helped him to become Exilarch; this event must have taken place about 1081.

David was also supported in his office by the government<sup>(12)</sup>. At first his power extended to only Egyptian communities at Postat, Alexandria, but later also to Palestine and the Phoenecian coast at Ashkalon, Caesarea, Haifa, Beirut, Byblus and finally Tyrus (1089), where the Palestinian Geonim lived. He had also his own court called *רֵאשִׁית הַגָּלִיל*, then also: *נְשִׂיא*<sup>(13)</sup>, then also: *נְשִׂיא אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל*, then also: *כָּל גִּלּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל*. His cruelty, however, was so great, even towards his own benefactors, that it led to his downfall.

Magid Meborach, who is responsible for his rise to the Exilarchate, caused his downfall in 1094.

Whether the Egyptian Exilarchate came to the fore, or whether David had any successors is not known. We do find, however, a certain Exilarch, Jehudah ben Josia, who with his two Dayyanim: Isaac Sason and Samuel Ha-<sup>(14)</sup> Levy ben Saadya, were very highly thought of by Maimonides.

Sambari states: *הַבְּנֵי בְּנוֹ הַשָּׂאֵל זֶהוּ כְּתוּרָה וְכֹהֵל וְאֵין לְצוּר הַיְמָנָה וְכֹתֵב יְאוּדָא הַנְּשִׂיא נְשִׂיא גְלִיּוֹת כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּן יֵאֱשִׁיָּהּ וְזֶה הָרֹב הָיָה נָגִיד בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם*  
 והוא מִצְרַע דִּיד וְהָיָה מִתּוֹשֵׁב דְּמִשְׁק.

Here Nagid can only mean Exilarch, although Maimonides himself was Nagid, but with reference to an Exilarch the genealogy from David must be emphasized.

Hardly one hundred years later than Fostat, the Exilarchate was re-established in its old seat--Bagdad.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### 1. THE ORIGIN OF THE GAONATE

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE GAONATE

To establish the chain, of which the Geonim formed a link, we must go back to the completion of the Talmud, and observe the changes which this important event wrought in the external condition of the Jews. In doing this, we note the decline of the schools, as well as that of the dignity formerly attached to the academical chiefs. The reason for this lay in the fact that the publication of the oral law had largely reduced the necessity of oral instruction. The rabbis, however, bent their energies more than ever to strengthen the authority of the Talmud. The Saboraim—Expounders or Ponderers—made redactional improvements and introduced a few additions into the body of the Talmud. The Geonim—Title of the heads of the Babylonian Academies—who succeeded the Saboraim, and whose period lasted barely one hundred years, began to superintend and direct the Jewish academies in the domain of Islam, especially at Sura. They were very active in the field of literature, and many excellent works, now extant, are the product of the Gaonic period, which extended to the eleventh century.

The spiritual factor, as we know, has always been a very great force in the history of Judaism, and has been the dominating element in the lives of the Hebrew people scattered throughout the world. It was natural, therefore, that in addition to the Resh Galuta, who represented the political and the civil side of Judaism, there should be a spiritual representative of the Jewish people, and this person was the Gaon in the days of the Exilarch. At different times this office was fulfilled by different people: by the prophets, the Men of the Great Synod, the Patriarchs ד'א'ש'ל, the Tannaim, Amoraim,

Saboriam, and now the Geonim. Although it is true that their activities differed in scope, their inspiration and their message were always the same throughout the ages. The one object toward which they bent all their energies was to perpetuate the Law of Moses, and to make it a guiding factor in the lives of the people. The Geonim about whom we are now concerned, were the links between the generations of the Talmud and the Middle Ages.

As with the Resh Galuta, the beginnings of the Gaonate are but imperfectly known. Graetz tells us that it probably originated with the head of the school of Sura <sup>(1)</sup>. About the middle of the seventh century, the Persian State seethed with revolt. In the year 655, the ruling head was struck down by the hand of an assassin. Islam was split into two factions, one, the insurrectionists, proclaimed Ali as Caliph, while the other supported Moawiyah, a relative of the murdered Caliph. The Jews supported Ali, who was very weakly aided by his own people. It is said that nearly one hundred thousand Jews under the leadership of Mar Isaac, the head of the college, greeted Ali when the latter captured the town of Shabur or Anbar (656). To show his appreciation to the Jewish people for their display of loyalty, he granted them certain privileges. The head of the Sura Academy was granted special privileges and it was at this time, says Graetz, that he assumed the title of Gaon (Exalted). Mar-Isaac, was recognized by the Caliph, and ushered in a new period in the history of the Jewish people--the Period of the Geonim. Malter, corroborates this historical origin of the title Gaon, and says that in the year 658 Ali, son-in-law of Mohomet, granted religious autonomy to the Academy of Sura and freed it from the jurisdiction of the Resh Galuta who, prior to this time, meddled in its affairs <sup>(2)</sup>.

The name of the head of the school prior to the above mentioned incident in 658, was Resh Metibta . Sherira, who is a generally accepted authority on Jewish history of the Gaonic period, makes very little distinction between those who headed the Academy in Sura before the time of Mar-Isaac and those who came after him. He calls them all by the title Gaon and even the heads of the Pumbedita College, who did not assume the title Gaon until much later; he even applies the title Gaon to some of the Amorians who happened to be president of the Academy, as for instance, to R. Hisda (died 309) and to R. Ashi (died 427).

Ginsberg doubts very much whether Rabbi Isaac was at the head of the Sura Academy at the time of the controversy that flared up into a revolution. What he probably did obtain, from the new ruler, says Ginsberg, was the permission to call into being, by the side of the Resh Galuta, a religious authority with definite powers .

2. THE TITLE GAON

## THE TITLE GAON

It is believed that the title גאון (Gaon) is an abbreviation of the Biblical expression, גאון יעקב "the Pride of Jacob". This is the official title for the representatives of the two Babylonian Academies, Sura and Pumbedita, during the Persian-Arabic period. This title refers to the heads of these two schools during this period only (4).

According to a report by Nathan the Babylonian, this title applied only to the head of the Sura School, but in time there was no difference in title between the two schools. It is a noteworthy fact that only their followers, and not they themselves, called them by this name. They, however, called themselves usually ריש מיתבתא or ריש ה'שיבה'. When the term גאון is used then the whole phrase ריש מיתבתא גאון (5) is meant. This phrase originates from the eighth century. We also find the phrase

ראש 'שיבה' של גלגלה. Poznanski is inclined to believe that the latter title was used by the Pumbedita school and the title גאון by Sura; thus Nathan's statement may be correct. Actually, however, it is found that the heads of Pumbedita used ריש מיתבתא גאון, for example, by Semach ben Paltoy. We likewise find ראש 'שיבה' של גלגלה used by Sina, example, Samuel ben Hofni (6).

It is not known, as I have remarked above, when the title of Gaon was first used. The periods flow one into another imperceptibly. That is, the Amoraim into the Tannaites; thus we call one half of the Tannaites חצי תנאים (that is, we call them half Tannaites). It is said that the title Gaon ceased officially in Babylon with the death of



Hal in 1038, we are, however, not certain of this. We do know, though, that  
 one hundred years before the Babylonian Gaonate disappeared there arose a  
 rival in Palestine called *לשון קדש*. Its popularity, in  
 fact, reached and influenced the Rhine region. The most important of these  
 Geniza fragments was Megillat Ebyatar which shed new light on the whole situ-  
 ation. This document was cleverly interpreted by Bacher whose conclusions were  
 further elaborated upon by Bornstein, Greenstone, Marmonstein, Marx, and  
 Poznanski.

The work done by the above men indicates clearly the growth and increase  
 of knowledge concerning the Palestinian Gaonate that has been accomplished grad-  
 ually through the documents of the Geniza. Much, however, remains to be accounted  
 for through new discoveries and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

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THE PALESTINIAN GEONIM

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Poznanski in his book summarizes all the facts and tries to establish definitely the order of succession of the Palesyinian Geonim. The assumption of office was of the greatest importance, he says, since we wish to establish whether they were the heads of the schools (the two schools) or whether anybody else shared their title. The example was followed by other lands and at different times, among which are Bagdad in the thirteenth century where Geonim arose. Thus the study of the organic growth is of the greatest importance.

No doubt its beginning is connected with the conflict over the Calendar which broke out in 921 between Palestine and Babylon, the details of which are well known. In this year there appeared over the Palestinian School Ben Meier, whose geneology may be traced back to Gamliel and Jehudah Hanassi, i.e. from Hillel and the Davidic line. He tried to establish the supremacy of the Holy Land by the decision of the first of the months and the holidays. He created lively agitation and won many followers even in Babylon. But the Exilarch and Gaon were not equal to the task of fighting against Meier. Finally they had to call upon the twenty-nine year old Saadia, who had left his birth place, Egypt, and traveled and lived in Babylon, Assyria, Syria and Palestine. Saadia emerged as the victor.

The fact that Meier failed to make Palestine supreme didn't prevent him from making it independent from the Babylonian Gaonate by creating its own Gaonate.

Ben Meier uses the title ראש החכמה and ראש הישיבה

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\* S. Poznanski " Babylonische Geonim im nachgeonäischen Zeitalter. Berlin 1914, Pp. 80-97



in office. His follower was his son Josia, who is likewise mentioned in the memo. Here he is called **ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב**. We also find his name on the heading of a letter addressed to **רפח** (Raphia) designated as **ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב**. In a note of 1031 he is mentioned as **רבינו יאשיהו** <sup>(4)</sup>.

Josia was the last of this family. His successor was Joseph Ha-Kohen, to whom Gaon Sherirah addressed a letter on the thirteenth of Ab 1300 (July 18, 889) which begins as follows: **בבקשה ניין ראש ביישיבה שנינו**  
**לעד שייצוה להקרא האגרת כי כן נעשה לאבותינו שם פעמים רבות**  
Here Joseph is titled not **ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב** but **ראש ישיבה** which from Sherirah's point of view can be well explained psychologically. He bore the official title of his predecessors (as we shall see later). Thus from the beginning of the letter we learn that Joseph had been the head of the Academy.

It was a Palestinian custom to read important foreign letters, especially from Babylon, in public by the head of the School, on the mountain of Olives. It was read on **חושענא רבא** by the command of the Gaon in other Palestinian cities.

How it came about that the Gaonate was transferred from the Hillel family to that of Aaron is not known. From now on the Hillel family was to remain satisfied with **אב בית דין** and so we find in a record that Aaron, the son of Josia, was honored and titled as **אב בית דין של כל ישראל**. He occupied this office, no doubt, during Joseph's incumbency, against whom a **קלל** had been pronounced. Joseph Ibn Abitur addressed a letter to Samuel Ha-Kohen begging him to do away with the **קלל** which had been pronounced against him. Samuel was said to have been willing to acquiesce and to

come to the aid of Abitur, but Hanoch ben Moshe with whom Abitur had had the controversy and for which Abitur had been placed in  $\square 77$  protested vehemently.

(5)

Through Ibn Daud we know that Ibn Abitur went to Hai in Pumbedita, but the latter didn't allow the question of  $\square 77$  to come up before him, and so Joseph emigrated to Damascus and died there. Thus we see that the Palestinian academy was asked for help after perhaps Hai's refusal. At any rate, this gives us a definite chronology for the conflict between Hanoch and Joseph. This date was established by Philoxene Luzzatto .

(6)

How long Samuel Ha-Kohen was in office is unknown. His  $\square 78$  at the beginning was Aaron ben Josia. He became Gaon later on. The earliest we hear of his Gaonate is 1027, the latest is 1046. He was the longest in office as well as the most outstanding and active among all his colleagues. With reference to his (Samuel) genealogy, we have no reports.

In his Academy, Joseph Ha-Kohen was  $\square 79$  who had been the father of a new branch of Geonim (Aaronites). Perhaps the  $\square 80$  was created first by Shalomo in the Talmudic time, alongside with  $\square 81$  and

$\square 82$ , the  $\square 83$  also existed. So here, too, Shalomo wanted to make the  $\square 84$  to correspond to the  $\square 85$  along with the  $\square 86$  and

$\square 87$ . We find that there was a list of seniority from three to seven. In a document of 1045 next to the Gaon we find  $\square 88$

$\square 89$ . The sixth is also referred to in the above mentioned letter .

(5)

Shalomo was in contact with foreign lands, especially with Egypt



(Postat). Even as an **גב** he carried on a lively correspondence with two outstanding leaders of Postat: Ephraim ben Shemarjah, and Abraham ben Sohlun. We still have some of this correspondence. The contents of this mail deals with the conflict that broke out in the Postat community, and which Shalomo attempted to settle. He stood on the side of Ephraim. On the day of **קושענא גבא** according to the old custom, he ascended the Mount of Olives, and in the presence of the pilgrims he enunciated a **דרה** on all persecutors of his friend. It happened that a fight also broke out among the pilgrims which was denounced by the government. This denunciation included an order against placing anybody in **דרה**.

These pilgrims were the main source of income for Jerusalem, particularly for the academy. Consequently a decrease in the number of pilgrims meant decreased help, and foreign help had then to be sought. Here (Egypt) Ephraim belonged to the Palestinian congregation **גבא דא"י** which, of course, sympathized with the Palestinian Academy. In Postat, as well as elsewhere in Egypt, there existed a Babylonian congregation **גבא דבבל** which had connections with the Babylonian School (i.e. Pumbedita) <sup>(9)</sup>.

In the above mentioned passage from Ibn Daud, Egypt is also mentioned among those countries that helped the Babylonian school. (The number of responsa addressed to Hai is greater, by far, than those addressed to Palestine).

We have almost no information at all as to the relations between Hai and Shalomo. In a letter addressed to Postat there is a reference to the Gaonate of Shalomo, but no full sense can be made out of it, nor

are we certain about its authorship. It reports that Shalomo's Gaonate falls in a period when the Gaonic epoch had ceased.

As to his scholarship, we know nothing. The content of his correspondence is almost exclusively personal and of a social nature, as against that of Hai (of same period). Brüll identifies him (Shalomo) with Shalomo ben Jehudah, the Babylonian who lived about half a century before the Gaon (Shalomo). Nevertheless the Gaon might have written some Piyyutim which Zunz terms as anonymous. The language of his letters, we are told, is similar to that of the piyyutim, but we are not sure that he did write the Piyyutim.

Shalomo ben Jehuda may have died immediately after 1046, and the Gaonate was transferred to the family of his *י'ד נ'ב נח* Joseph. The latter's successor is Shalomo Ha-Kohen, his son, whom we know from genealogies and other records.

He had three sons, the oldest of whom is Joseph Ha-Kohen, who had been his *י'ד נ'ב נח* and finally his successor in office.

In time Joseph had for *י'ד נ'ב נח* one of the first of the Hillel family of Geonim, namely Josia ben Aaron, who must have been very advanced in age. Joseph was not long in the Gaonate. From Babylon came one from the family of Exilarchs, Daniel ben Azarja, who caused much trouble to Elia and Joseph, brothers. He threw them into prison, removed Joseph from office, and as a result of shame and suffering died after Chanuka of 1365 (December 1053).

He left behind him very weak traces as Gaon. In one memo we find him only as *י'ד נ'ב נח*, and in another it is completely omitted. But



that he had been a Gaon for at least a short time is shown by a notice of a hand written Midrash. Then again his name is mentioned with his brother Elija in the Megillat Ebjatar mentioned as *שני גאונים*.

A son of Joseph, Shalomo, went to Fostat, and in the year 1077 wrote a poem about the defeat of the Turks at Cairo where he designates himself as *שלמה הוא הכהן והסוף בין גאונים*.

In the year 1092 he signed a document of the court of Exilarch David ben Daniel (ben Azarja), and here he names himself as:

*שלמה הכהן בירו שלים יוסף אב הישיבה תצ"ל*.

Daniel ben Azarja stepped into office at the beginning of 1054, but actually we find in a document left us by a female slave dated Jerusalem the twenty-fifth of Tishre 1369 (September 26, 1057), as:

*דניאל הנשיא ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב*.

(10)

Likewise, in other Geniza fragments we find him as: *ראש ישיבת*

*גאון יעקב*. The family of the Aaronite Geonim has reconciled itself with him, and Elijah (brother of Joseph) became his *אב בית דין*.

Six years later, after Joseph's death (1059-60) Daniel fell seriously ill, and finally died. Only after his death, Ellul 1373 (1062) Eila Ha-Kohen, became the Gaon. Thus the Gaonate was returned to the family of Aaron.

Elijah had three sons: 1. Saddok, who seems to have died young, perhaps before 1062, 2. Ebjatar, who was his *אב בית דין*, 3. Shalomo, who was the *שלישי*.

Elijah and Ebjatar answered questions together about liturgy, questions sent to them from Meshullam ben Mose from Mainz. Thus the relation between the Palestinian Academy and the Rhine existed for about

one hundred years.

Elia moved the seat from Jerusalem to Tyrus because of its conquest by the army of Melikshah in 1071. Elia died 1084 but two years before his death he convened an impressive meeting at Tyrus and there designated Ebyatar as his successor and Shalomo as his *ג'תנ"ל* and Saddoch ben Josia as the *שליש*. In the year of his death he went to Haifa where he established (renewed) the New Year and reaffirmed the appointments he had made two years before. He enunciated a severe *דבר* against any contenders. He died Kislev 1395 (December 1084). He was buried in Galilee.

Ebyatar Ha-Kohen thus succeeded his father. There was also a *ד'ר* (fourth) in the person of Ebytar's son, Elia. But Ebytar was destined to remain in office peacefully. A son of Daniel ben Azarja, David, was established as Exilarch in Egypt. He was able to bring under his influence the communities of Palestine and of the Phoenecian coast. He relentlessly persecuted the Gaon until he was forced out of Tyrus. He seems not to have been so much against the Academy as against its representatives and its *דא*.

The deliverance first came in 1094 when David was thrown out of office by the Egyptian Magid Meborach ben Saadyah. Great credit for this deliverance is due to the *שליש* Saddok ben Josia (Megillat Ebyatar is the only source for these facts).

Ebyatar returned to Tyre but his brother Shalomo meanwhile seems to have gone to Egypt where he assumed the title of: *ג'תנ"ל* and in his place Saddok became *ג'תנ"ל* at a very advanced age in Tyrus.

As a result of the conquest of Tyrus by the Crusaders, Ebyatar moved the seat of his school to Tarabulus, Tripolis in Syria. We know this from

a preserved letter sent out from here. We don't know when Ebyatar died, but we do know that he was the last of the Palestinian Geonim. His above mentioned son, Elia, we meet in the year 1111-1112 in Postat to which already Shalomo, the son of Joseph, and Shalomo the brother of his father, as well as the successors of Saddok ben Josia had emigrated, and where official Geonim existed.

Bacher assumes that the suspended activities of the Palestinian school (due to the Crusades) were continued in Damascus. He concludes this from Benjamin of Tuledo, who had been there in 1170 and who describes the school of this city as **ראש ישיבת של ארץ ישראל**. This assumption can be further supported by the fact that the head there (Ezra) had at his side his brother Sar Shalom as **אב בית דין** just like Ebyatar and Shalomo. Immediately under them a certain Joseph served as **החמישי ביישיבה**, perhaps must be emended as **עלישי**.

They did not carry the title of **גאון** but for this title we find (11) through Horizi a certain Saddok mentioned as **ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב**. We don't know whether he carried this title as the official perpetuator and successor (or even as an indirect follower) of the Palestinian Geonim.

The following is a list of the Palestinian Geonim, etc:-

GEONIM - <b>גאונים</b>	FATHERS - <b>אב בית דין</b>
I. The Succession of Patriarchs	
1. Abraham (b. Meier ?) 943	
2. Aaron b. Abraham	
3. Josia b. Aaron b. Abraham	
II. Of Aaron Family	
4. Joseph 969	Aaron b. Josia b. Aaron
5. Samuel b. Joseph	*Shalomo b. Jehudah b. Berechya
III. Of Unknown Origin	
6. Shalomo b. Jehudah	Joseph ha-Kohen
IV. 7. Shalomo b. Joseph Ha-Kohen	*Joseph Shalomo Ha-Kohen
8. Joseph b. Salomo b. Joseph Ha-Kohen (1053).	Josia b. Aaron b. Josia

GEONIM-

ד"ר יצחק

FATHERS-

י'ט ז'ל ז'ח

## V. Succession of Exilarchs

9. Daniel b. Azaria  
(1054-1062)

\*Elia b. Shalomo Ha-Kohen

## VI. Others From Aaron Family

10. Eli b. Shalomo b. Joseph  
Ha-Kohen (1062-1085)  
11. Ebyatar b. Elia b. Shalomo  
Ha-Kohen (1085-1109)

\*Ebyatar b. Elia Ha-Kohen

\*Shalomo b. Elia Ha-Kohen

Saddok b. Josia (after 1094)  
Abraham Ha-Kohen

\* The star indicates that he was advanced later on to the Gaonate.  
The last one, Shalomo b. Elia Ha-Kohen, became Gaon not in Palestine,  
but in Egypt.

CHAPTER SIX

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CRITICISM ON TEXT AND SCHOLARSHIP

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LANGUAGE

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## CRITICISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

## LANGUAGE

In the year 566 C.E. (4326) Rab Shmuel, son of Moses Shulam of Mashtadin, published a historical book called *סדר השולחן* "Yuhasin". It was customary in those days for a publisher to add some historical facts to such a publication and this the publisher did. One of his additions was a complete composition by the name of: "The Generations of the World, briefly, from Adam until David ben Zakai who conducted a quarrel with Rabbi Saadia, of blessed memory; and the degrees in which the School of Sura surpassed the School of Pumbedita." This addition Rab Shmuel Shulam removed from a manuscript of the year 509 C.E. (4269). In that manuscript this composition was called by the name of *סדר השולחן* "The Order of the Schools." Scholars agree that this brief name is more appropriate according to its content, than the new name that was given to it by Rab Shmuel Shulam.

The composition *סדר השולחן* comprises chiefly the Memoirs of Rab Nathan bar Yitzchok, the Babylonian - that is Bagdad - who was a contemporary of Saadia Gaon. It refers to the Schools of Babylon and the men who in his day were the leaders of those Schools. In these Memoirs were included some things that Rab Nathan learned as an eye witness and some by hearsay. The Memoirs by Rab Nathan are the most important source of information regarding the life in those Schools. They aim at an accurate sketch of the life, manners and events concerning them. Even when he tells of the controversy between Rab Saadia and the Resh Galuta, he writes without partiality to either side. He tells all that he knows and does not suppress even legend:- "Rab Nissi who is ex-

perienced in miracles opens the locks of Babylon by the use of the

לִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ " - so heard Rab Nathan and so he passes it on to us without even adding any explanation himself. It is said that Rab Nathan prepared these Memoris not in Bagdad, but elsewhere. Perhaps the Memoirs were edited in Kairuan (in Africa) where Ukba, the Resh Galuta, had drifted also after he had been driven from Bagdad, and where the people paid him special honors. The people of Kairuan found much interest in the matters of the Schools of Babylon which had for them a relation to the life of Ukba.

Until recently the Memoirs of Rab Nathan were known to us only in the Hebrew version. In 1905 (5665) however, Israel Friedlaender removed from the fragments of the Cairo Geniza an Arab fragment including some of Rab Nathan's words regarding the expulsion of Ukba from Babylon. In the Arabic version there are some details that are not in the Hebrew version. It is evident therefrom that originally the Memoirs were written in Arabic and that only afterwards was the Hebrew translation made thereof. Apparently, Arabic was Rab Nathan's mother tongue, but the Hebrew translation was so pure and free that it is almost impossible to suspect at all that it is not the source itself. The translator did not subject himself to the form of the Arabic body, but presented the contents with freedom and at times relates it as one who has heard something from his comrade and which he repeats, as for instance: "And Rab Nathan said that he saw the son of David ben Zakai leaving for the State of Persia, etc." Moreover, there were omitted or dropped from the translation some points and proper names. In consequence of this, the translator found it necessary to add many explanations which he did, without



changing the contents.

In the story of the controversy between the Resh Galuta, Ukba, with Kohen-Zedek ben Joseph, the Gaon of the School of Pumbedita, Rab Nathan mentions the name of an important personage of that generation by the name of Natira who was a supporter of Rab Kohen-Zedek. And likewise, in the story of the controversy between Rab Saadia Gaon and David ben Zakkai, the Resh Galuta, he relates that the sons of Natira were on the side of Rab Saadia.

In the year 1903 (5663), Harkavey published a fragment of an Arabic tale out of the remains of the Cairo Genazah regarding Natira and his sons. The author of the tale was a Jew from Bagdad and he wrote during the Gaonate of Saadia (between 928-931 C.E.). With very clear presentation, he describes the forms of Natira and his sons (the elder Sahal was a student of Rab Saadia) and their manner of life and the behavior of the important men of that generation.

Friedlaender believes that the author of this tale, too, is Rab Nathan, the Babylonian, who wrote in Arabic a complete book on the general history of Bagdad entitled: " *אכסר בבל* " and out of this book was taken the tale regarding *נאטיר ונבני* and also

*דוד ונבני*.

According to the above account there seems to be two versions extant, one in Arabic and the other in Hebrew. The Arabic version is fuller and more in detail, while the Hebrew version is more brief and the translation more free, which leads some scholars to the conclusion that the Arabic account is the original while the Hebrew is probably a translation. And this view was accepted until recently.

(1)

Friedlaender who examined the fragment which is now in the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, and which belongs to the Genizah Collection of Taylor-Schechter, is one of the authorities who believes that the original was Arabic, and he gives his reasons. In the first place, he says, that Rabbi Nathan, being a native of Bagdad would naturally use the Arabic language for his narratives. Secondly, the Arabic is written in a very fluent and pure style. Thirdly, some essential additional words and phrases are to be found in the Arabic, which would be quite impossible in a translation. And finally, although the Hebrew report is fluent and free, yet it betrays the influence of the Arabic in several places. Friedlaender gives many instances of proof on the definite attitude he has taken on his Arabic theory.

(2)

Louis Ginzberg disagrees with Friedlaender and tries to prove that not the Arabic but the Hebrew report was the original. And he too, gives very forceful arguments for his deductions. He, too, says that the language in which the original was written is a matter of very great importance, and while he appreciates "the learned and instructive introduction to Friedlaender's narrative", nevertheless, he ventures to believe that "the proofs adduced by him are not conclusive".

(3)

I have selected one of many of Doctor Ginzberg's "proofs" which I herewith present:

"The expression עמד על is not an Arabism; it is found in the Talmudim and the older Midrashim with considerable frequency. I shall adduce only a few of the passages. בין השמשות כהרף עין ולא יכלו

לעמוד עליו חכמים. Twilight lasts but an instant, so that the scholars could not determine its duration." (4) שביקש לעמוד על

מען של ישראל 'He wanted to determine the num-

ber of Israelites,' which corresponds exactly to the expression used by

(5)

Nathan . The Talmudic equivalent for errando discitur is אין אדם עומד על דבריו

Man cannot fathom the words of the Torah until he

(6)

has made mistakes.' Regarding the motion of the celestial spheres,

Rabbi Simon ben Yohai says:-

הדבר קשה מאד ואי אפשר לברית

לעמוד עליו 'It is so difficult a problem that man cannot

fathom it.'

"These quotations will probably suffice to show that

(8)  
עמד על

is an Arabism neither with Nathan nor with Rabbi Saadia, who employs

(9)

it twice.

" עמד על ראשו in the sense used here is no better Arabic

(10)

than Hebrew. עמד עליו is classical Hebrew and the connection

with לאש can be authenticated as little in Arabic as in Hebrew.

Nevertheless, the expression is well chosen. It is a vivid descrip-

tion of Kohen-Zedek sitting absorbed in study, his head bent over his

book, and suddenly raising it to see Nissi standing before him, as it

were, 'over his head.' Moreover, the expression עמד על ראשו

(11)

is found in an original Hebrew letter from the last Exilarch, Hezekiah,

though it must be admitted that the meaning there is not clear."

We gather from the above excerpt that Ginzberg is not convinced of Friedlaender's Arabic theory, on the contrary, he says, that if a comparison is made between the Arabic fragment and the Hebrew version in Yohasin, we will find some features tending to establish the priority of Hebrew. Ginzberg, however, believes that the question is still open.

It is possible, as Friedlaender suggests, that neither of the re-

ports in question is the original, but that the Arabic fragment found in the Cairo Genizah is a part of a longer work that Rabbi Nathan wrote in Arabic. And the account מלל'ה'ה' 770 and the story of 7'77' 77'77 are taken from this larger work. This of course, would still make the original Arabic with which theory Ginzberg does not agree.

Ginzberg says that Rabbi Nathan was probably not an author who recorded his reminiscences in writing but was rather an oral reporter on Babylonian conditions. If we accept this assumption, says Ginzberg, it would reconcile the difference between the Hebrew and the Arabic versions of his narratives. The two versions then would be separate of each other. For in the audience of Vairwan that listened to Rabbi Nathan there were some who used Hebrew and others who used Arabic. Thus the narrative reached us through the medium of two languages. Ginzberg is of the opinion, however, that the language in which Rabbi Nathan wrote is still open, but perhaps, some future excavator or research scholar will reveal the answer to this question.

CRITICISM ON TEXT

## CRITICISM ON TEXT

Abraham Epstein, in an article in "Harkavey Festschrift" (12)  
 believes that the first paragraph of our text in סדר ה'שבו (13)  
 was printed with the story of Nathan Hababli in a book יוהסין (Yuhasin)  
 by Rab Shmuel Shulam. He says that one part of this first paragraph  
 is found also in the complete יוהסין (י'הסין השלם) Yuhasin Ha-  
 shalom, which proves that a part of this first paragraph of the story  
 of Nathan Hababli was added by Shmuel Shulam.

In יוהסין השלם (14) we have the following statement: "In the in-  
 troduction to the Talmud by Samuel Hanagid we find the qualities by  
 which they considered the School of Sura superior to the School of  
 Pumbedita. At first they did not appoint a head of the Academy from  
 Pumbedita up to this day." More than this we do not find in Yuhasin  
 Hashalom. Furthermore, the story of Nathan Hababli is not found there.  
 However, in the Yuhasin, with the additions of Shmuel Shulam there ap-  
 pears first of all the letter of Sherira Gaon and immediately after it  
 there appears a selection, which is not found in Yuhasin Hashalom, in  
 the following phraseology: "The generations of the world briefly from  
 Adam to David ben Zakrai, who made a controversy with Saadia Gaon etc."  
 followed by the whole of the first paragraph of our text concluding  
 with the words: עד היום הזה (15) until this day. All of this is not  
 found in Yuhasin Hashalom. Immediately thereafter, however, following  
 the first paragraph of our text (16) up to the end of the selection, (17)  
 this selection is found in Yuhasin Hashalom. The story of Nathan Ha-  
 babli is not found in Yuhasin Hashalom.

Epstein says that the manuscript from which Shmuel Shulam took the selections: the letter of Sherira, the מעלות and the story of Nathan Hababli, is now found in his possession. In this manuscript, the letter of Sherira Gaon, is found from pages 159b to 181a, and immediately after that on page 181b, comes the selection with which we are now dealing.

The two first paragraphs of our text, the first beginning with אלה and the second with ואלה המעלות do not come from one source, for if one author had written them, says Epstein, he would have begun the second paragraph with: וזעוד נהעלתה ישיבת סורה, and not with the words ואלו המעלות. Therefore, Epstein comes to the conclusion that the second paragraph of the מעלות referring to the School of Sura, came from the introduction of the Talmud by Samuel Hanagid, for in the name of Samuel Hanagid does Abraham Zucut, the author of Yuhasin Hashalom, quote these מעלות. Now since the story of Nathan Hababli comes immediately after the second paragraph of our text (18) and is attached to the former by the words: ואשר אמר therefore it is possible that this story of Nathan Hababli also comes from the introduction of Shmuel Hanagid.

In any event there is a great difference between the section dealing with the מעלות of Sura, and the story of Nathan Hababli. The section dealing with the מעלות of the School of Sura was undoubtedly written in Sura or was based on a source coming from Sura. However, the story of Nathan Hababli was not written in Babylonia, as our text suggests, but in some other land by Rabbi Nathan who came to that land and told what he had seen and heard in Sura.



The author of the *מגילות* of Sura praises the School of Sura and stresses its superiority over the School of Pumbedita, just as Rabbi Sherira Gaon praises and emphasizes the superiority of the School of Pumbedita. This section (meaning the *מגילות* Sura) contains many errors, as for instance: We are told that Rab Joseph was at the head of the School of Sura after Mar bar Rab Ashi, whereas in reality Rab Joseph was in Pumbedita and was at the head of the School after Rab Simai, the son of Rabba. Surely this mistake was not made by the author but by some other person who copied the manuscript at a later period and who did not know the order of the generations, for we have seen above that Rab Samuel Hanagid also wrote that Rab Joseph was in Sura, and Rab Abraham Ibn Daud writes likewise. In general there are many errors that have crept into the works of the authors who used the sources concerning the School of Sura, probably for the reason that these sources were not properly arranged.

The story of Nathan Hababli contains important facts concerning the management of the Schools, the studies of the pupils and the controversy of Saadia Gaon with the Exilarch and his other opponents. It is true, says Epstein, that there are in the text of the story many errors, and that the names of many Geonim have been confused, and that there are many mistakes in chronology. It is possible that he who wrote from the information given by Rab Nathan did not understand what was told to him, but on the other hand, it is also possible that those who gave the information to Rab Nathan in Babylonia misinformed him. Another possibility is that Rab Nathan did not convey correctly what he had heard and seen in Babylonia. We cannot, of course, give credence to the story of Nathan in in-

stances where he disagrees with the Letter of Sherira Gaon. In any event, the story of Nathan is important and significant in regard to the Schools in Babylonia and the controversy of Saadia, for many of the incidents told in it are based on historic occurrences. Then again Rab Nathan relates them in an unbiased manner, and some of the things he relates, he knew by being an eye witness to them:

וְאִשֶּׁר אֶתְרִ'נָתָן (19)  
 וְאֶת רִ'נָתָן יִרְאָה אֶת בְּנוֹ שֶׁל דָּוִד (20)  
 הִכְהֵן בְּרִצְחָן הַבְּבִלִי וְהוּ'  
 בֶּן זַכַּאי וְהוּ' . We have therefore, conclusive

proof that Rabbi Nathan was in Babylonia during the life of Saadia, because David ben Zakkai died during the lifetime of Saadia Gaon. Rabbi Nathan tells that Caleb (Aaron) ben Joseph became head in Pumbedita after Zemach Kafnai and tells no more of any other Gaon. Now Caleb ben Joseph was head, according to Sherira Gaon, between 943 and 960, therefore since Nathan does not mention Sherira Gaon, who succeeded Caleb ben Joseph, it is evident that Nathan left Babylon before 960.

The conclusion, says Epstein, is that the story of Rabbi Nathan, who claims to have been an eye witness to what he saw and heard, must be given credence, and we must try to amend the text wherever errors have crept in.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

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## THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

We have read that the most important thriving Jewish towns in Babylonia were those situated near the Euphrates: Pumbedita, Sura (also called Mata-Mechassia) and Nahardea. But Jews did not confine themselves to large cities in those days anymore than they do today. They lived then, as they do now, in the villages and in the hamlets. They comprised part of the farming population as they did of the merchantile class. The Jews who worked on the farms, however, were not usually the owners of the lands they tilled. These lands, as a rule, belonged to wealthy land owners. The Jews leased them and paid exhorbitant rates. Although the tax-gatherers were ruthless and insistant in their demands, many Jews loved to work on the land and preferred it to commerce. But they were not entirely cut off from the city, as each week the farmer would take his produce to the market where merchandize of every description was sold. Each kind of merchant had a particular area in the market for his wares where inspectors watched and regulated the weights and measures and settled any disputes that arose.

There were other Jews, however, who, whether through circumstances or preference, lived in the large cities. The city brought with it opportunities that could not be found in the country. Jews labored as ship-builders and woodcutters; they were to be found among the bakers and brewers, the dyers and weavers, tailors, tanners, fishermen, sailors, even blacksmiths and porters. No labor was too menial for the Jew provided he was given the opportunity to exercise his freedom. But Jews, were not content to be farmers and small merchants, such as street vendors and retail traffickers; they were to be found among the princes of commerce. They ex-

ported wool, flax, grain and wine, and they imported precious stones, silks, and iron. The man of big business suffered less at the hand of the government than today, and although those who traveled by water did not enjoy the ease and luxury that the traveler enjoys today, yet he was looked upon with great envy as he always had with him a retinue of slaves and menials.

The Jewish communal life of Babylon was patterned on the whole, after that of Palestine. There was a central bureau which collected money for administrative purposes, the same bureau also collecting money for charitable needs. On account of the Sabbath, Friday was the regular day for disbursing money to the needy. Food, however, was given to those who came for it every day. Soup kitchens were opened and no one was refused whether he was a resident or a stranger; whether Jew or non-Jew. Every opportunity was seized by the "Baale Batim" to raise money for worthy causes. In the synagogues special offerings were made and funds were raised. Purim was usually the time to collect money for poor brides. All this money that was collected was entrusted to a special commission whom the people trusted implicitly. At the head of this commission was the "Gabbai" and so high was he rated in honesty and purity that even a priest might marry his daughter without searching his pedigree.

The synagogue provided the people with general education. Teachers, however, could open schools for private tuition since tuition was paid for by the parents. Wealthy people engaged private teachers for their children; poor children, whose parents usually depended upon the communal chest for support, were taken care of by the community. If a teacher could not make enough to provide himself and his family with the daily necessities--as the teacher was not allowed to overcharge for teaching the Law, the deficiency was made up

from the public fund. A teacher was obliged to be a married man since children were often accompanied to school by their mothers.

Higher education was provided by the academies of which Sura and Pumbedita were the outstanding ones. The heads of these institutions had their regular sources of income, not only for themselves, but to support many of the needy students, as well as the college itself. The Jewish communities in Babylon were divided into districts and each Gaon had his particular district upon which he could impose a tax. In addition to this income the Academies received a large revenue from questions that were sent to them to be answered, and which came not only from different parts of Babylon, but from all parts of the world. Questions were always accompanied with gifts. If the questions were sent to a particular school the other school would not share in the gifts; if, however, questions were sent designating no particular school, then the Academy of Sura would receive two-thirds of the amount and the Academy of Pumbedita would receive the other third. This system, however, was later changed when Kohen-Jedek, Gaon of Pumbedita demanded and received equal share with the Academy of Sura, as the number of students at his Academy greatly increased. The money that was received for answering questions was divided by the president among the members of the college and the students of the Talmud (1).

In addition to these sources there was another source of income for the Gaon. He had the right to appoint a judge to decide cases in the various districts of his jurisdiction. And from each district the judge took from the people, from each one who was twenty years old and upward, two zuz annually; one zuz at Passover and another zuz at Tabernacles. From every butcher he would receive one zuz weekly. For these services that the judge performed he



received no definite salary, the Gaon sending him only as much as he wished to. He bore the title of "Dayan", and was a notary of the community. He had the authority to confirm marriage contracts, letters of divorce, bills of exchange, and deeds of gifts. For these various functions he received, firstly, a certain contribution from every independent member of the community; secondly, fees for drawing up deeds; and thirdly, a weekly salary from the vendors of meat.

Judges were not allowed to decide cases themselves. They selected two important "Baale Batim" from the community who sat in judgement with him. These men received no remuneration for their services.

Ginsberg tells us that Nathan Hababli states that the Gaon received a fixed salary for his personal use, and Rab Amram also tells us in his "Introduction to his 'Seder'" that one half, or according to another reading, one fourth of all donations sent to the Academy fell to the share of the Gaon. (2) Rabbi Nehemiah, in a letter addressed to the communities begs them to send money for himself and the Academy. (3) Thus we have three witnesses, independent of each other, testifying to the relatively large revenues of the Geonim. The same Nathan tells us that Babylonia and its adjacent countries were divided into parishes, a part of them divided under the jurisdiction of the Exilarch, (read below) a second part of them under the jurisdiction of the Gaon of Tura and a third part under the jurisdiction of the Gaon of Pumbedita. Each of these heads had the right (as I have mentioned above) of appointing judges and other communal officers, and in acknowledgement of their sovereign rights a fixed annual revenue was exacted and delivered into the coffers of each. (4 & 5)

As the head of the Jewish community in Babylon was the Rosh Galuta (Exil-



arch) (See the chapter on the Exilarch).

The Persian court depended upon him to collect the taxes that were levied upon the Jewish community. The Exilarch maintained an almost regal establishment. Like the Geonim, he derived his income from stated districts. In addition to the regular taxes for the maintenance of the head of the Jewish community, he could impose a special tax if he found it necessary. He had the right of sending out judges which brought in an annual revenue, and like the districts of the Geonim each person from twenty years old and upward had to subscribe two zuz annually: a zuz at Passover and a zuz at Tabernacles. But he took nothing from the poor as the rich assumed their obligation. The butchers also gave him a quarter of a gold piece annually. From all sources he received in one place alone, called Palum, seven hundred gold pieces in hard times. How much aid then would he get in days of prosperity? And if he desired he could send to distant places to honor him and to accept his jurisdiction and they could not refuse to honor him with gifts. On one occasion, David ben Zakkai sent his son to Persia and the Jewish community refused to honor him with the usual gifts. David ben Zakkai sent a warrant of excommunication to the community, and notified the King of Persia to whom David ben Zakkai was responsible for the collecting of taxes. The king imposed a heavy fine on the Jewish people at the request of the Exilarch.

Some of the Exilarchs were avaricious and not only imposed heavy taxes upon the people to maintain their establishments, but also tried to increase their income by questionable means. The great controversy between the Exilarch, David ben Zakkai and Rab Saadia, Gaon of Sura, (6) shows us to what lengths some of the Exilarchs went to increase their incomes. Rab Saadia refused to

sign a writ that the Resh Galuta sent for his approval because the Resh Galuta was to receive ten percent of the amount involved if he gave a favorable decision to one party in the suit. This condition did not generally prevail, however, as most of the Exilarchs were men of very high moral character.

CHAPTER EIGHT

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A CRITICISM ON NATIRA AND HIS SONS

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## A CRITICISM ON NATIRA AND HIS SONS

I In Megillat Nathan Hababli, the names of Natira's family are mentioned only twice,

1. In the story regarding the controversy between the Resh Galuta, Ukba, and Rab Kohen-Zedek, the Gaon of Pumbedita, Rab Nathan says the following: "Rab Kohen-Zedek had as his supporters Joseph ben Pinchas and his son-in-law Natira and several other important men of his generation with the result that they succeeded in expelling Ukba from Babylon. . . And since he (Ukba) returned, the matter was disagreeable to Natira, to Joseph ben Pinchas, and to the other members of the group, with the result that they attempted to influence the king against him, until the king finally commanded that Ukba leave the kingdom, and expelled him a second time . " (1)

2. In the matter of the controversy between Saadia Gaon and David ben Zakkai, Nathan Hababli tells us as follows: "And a short period of time elapsed. . . and he did not prevail because Rab Saadia Gaon had the support of the sons of Natira and all the rich men of Babylonia". (2)

From the above we see that the family Natira is mentioned only twice as far as we know. Abraham E. Harkavy says, however, that in one of the responsa of Saadia Gaon there is mentioned the name of a certain man called  $\text{נַטִּירָא}$   $\text{בֶּן־יִצְחָק}$  which Harkavy first thought was perhaps the name of one of Natira's sons and that  $\text{נַטִּירָא}$  was probably the Arabic form of the Aramaic Natira. (3)  
Now, however, Harkavy believes that this speculation is without foundation since we know that Natira only had two children: Sahal and Isaac, and nothing is mentioned of a son by the name of  $\text{נַטִּירָא}$ .

Up to this time we did not know who Natira and his sons were or even

what were the names of Natira's sons. Neither did we know why they were so important in Bagdad, the capital of the Caliphate, that they could influence matters in favor of the two Geonim, Rab Kohen-Zedek of Pumbedita, and Rab Saadia Gaon of Sura, in their controversies with the two Resh Galutas. Harkavy says, therefore, that he was very happy when he received some folios from the Geniza of Egypt among which were two parchment leaves containing a part of the story in the Arabic concerning Natira and his sons. It seems that the narrator was a contemporary of the latter (Natira) and wrote during the Gaonate of Saadia Gaon (928-931). It is unfortunate, however, continues Harkavy, that the beginning of the story is missing since this omission, he (4) says, renders many of the detail unintelligible.

II. Now follows the Arabic document.

III. A resume of this document in Hebrew.

IV. Harkavy says that he did not have enough time to look into the histories written by the Arabs in order to verify whether anything is mentioned in them regarding the story of Natira and the Caliph Al-Motahdid. He succeeded, however, in obtaining the following information:-

A. In a book of his contemporary Al-Masudi entitled *מרוך אלזהב* (5) which was printed in a French translation we find a story concerning a nightmare which Al-Motahdid had. Following is the account:-

"In that year 283 of the Hagira (896 C.E.) there appeared before Al-Motahdid in his palace a man in various forms. Once he appeared before him in the form of a priest with a long white beard dressed in priestly garments; then again he appeared to him in the form of a young man with black hair, dressed in other garments, and still again in the form of an

aged business man. At another time he appeared in the form of a man with an outstretched sword in his hand with which he smote one of the servants of the Caliph and killed him. Despite the fact that all the doors were locked and guarded by watchmen, nevertheless these visions were experienced by the Caliph at the various places where he happened to be, namely, in the house, in the court, and even in the garret of the new palace he had built. Now the people discussed this matter very much, yet the accounts varied in accordance with the particular character of the narrator. Some said that the rebelling angel spoke to the Caliph and annoyed him. According to the opinion of others, however, it was one of the evil spirits who had seen the wicked ways of the Caliph and wanted to set him aright; still others said that the whole plot was planned and executed by one of the servants of the Caliph who was in love with one of the maidens of his harem, and by means of witchcraft he succeeded in changing his appearance from time to time without being detected."

(6)

In another passage of the same author he narates that even before this Caliph had ascended the throne, while he was yet in prison, having been imprisoned by his father, he saw in a vision a certain old man sitting on the banks of the river Tigris. When this man stretched forth his hand, all the waters of the river flowed into his hand and the river turned into dry land; when he stretched forth his hand again, the waters flowed back into the river. Now this old man was Ali, the son of Abbi Talab (the son-in-law of Mohamed) who implored him not to levy taxes upon his descendants, and he kept that promise when he ascended the throne.

This proves that the Caliph was a person who saw visions which he considered as very important, and was actually guided by them in his daily conduct. It is therefore, not a surprising thing that in the case of the Jews he did some kindly act and did away with an unfavorable decree after having seen some nightmare or vision, for certainly it is not conceivable that an Arabic author would relate a story simply because it contained certain elements favorable to the Jews.

B. Concerning the matter of showing leniency in the levying of taxes, (7) we find further evidence in the history of Gustav Veill, and concerning the new year of the Persians (Neroz) which was postponed by the Caliph for eleven days during which period he exempted the payment of taxes. We can (8) also add the testimony of the author, Machamad ben Garir Al-Tabari where we find the statement of the Caliph's proclamation in this matter stating that he did this (freeing from taxes) because he had pity on his servants and wanted to improve their condition. We should therefore not be surprised that he assumed a similar attitude toward the Jews in regard to their taxes.

C. Now we can understand why Natira sent clothes and presents to the descendants of Ali since the Caliph was very favorably disposed toward them at the request of the son-in-law of Mohamed.

D. Among the names of the people mentioned in the account of the Caliphate of Al-Motahdid, Harkavy found a certain officer by the name of Al-Belgil and his son Ibn Al-Belgil, who were among the rebels. However, Harkavy does not know whether they are to be identified with the Al-Belgil in the story of Natira.



E. The summary of all the foregoing:-

1. That Natira became prominent in the early days of the reign of the Caliph Al-Motahdid and was famous in the days of Caliph Al-Moktadir.

2. When Natira became prominent, the Jews enjoyed a great salvation through him, and an unfavorable decree was rescinded.

3. All the days of his life Natira was the shield and the protector of his brethren. He knew how to influence the Caliph in their behalf. He gave of his wealth to the high officials within the state in order to influence them for the welfare of the Jews.

4. As proof of his diplomacy in the matter concerning the levying of taxes, he refused to have the law abrogated lest at some future time the Jews would suffer in consequence thereof at the hands of the officials. It is, therefore, no surprise that Nathan Hababli in speaking of the election of the Resh Galuta<sup>(9)</sup>, says as follows: "The two heads of the Academies and the members of their Academies and all the heads of the communities and the elders assemble in the house of a prominent man of Babylonia, one of the great men of the generation, such as Natira." It was through Natira also that his father-in-law, Joseph ben Pinchas, became prominent, and so they were able to help the Gaon, Rab Kohen-Zedek in his controversy with Ukba.

5. When Natira passed away his sons inherited his prominent position and they followed in the footsteps of their father. The elder, Sahal, was also learned in the Torah, in Arabic and was one of the pupils of Saadia Gaon. This Sahal and his brother Isaac, sided with Saadia in his controversy with David ben Zakkai. His younger brother (Isaac) took part in all

the famous acts of his brother and participated in his good deeds, for both are generally called the sons of Natira. They were of equal importance in the Jewish community and in the court of the Caliph. We do not know how it came about that at a later period, David ben Zakkai, the opponent of Saadia Gaon, managed to become master of the situation so as to be able to oust the learned and respected teacher of Sura, Saadia Gaon. Perhaps it was because the sons of Natira suddenly lost influence at the court of the Caliph, and so could not plead Saadia's case.

6. From this document we derive the information concerning the life of the wealthy Jews in Babylon in the early days of the tenth century. On the one hand they used their wealth to help all needy people of their own faith and even those outside the faith; and on the other hand through their wealth and influence they served as a shield and a protection to the Jews in the courts of the Caliphs.

7. The account of the celebration of the Sabbath, and inviting strangers to feast at their tables is beautifully described by an eye witness (10). The account indicates to what extent the Jews observed the "Mitzvot" of *הכנסת אורחים* and *גמילות חסדים*. The typical exemplifiers of such noble conduct were Natira and his sons.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

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SECTIONS ONE AND TWO

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## NOTES ON THE TEXT

## ORDER OF THE ACADEMIES

## SECTION I.

1. חולין קל"ז ב'.
2. יומא נ"ג ב'.
- 3.. Apparently there was written in the Arabic original which refers to a city, therefore it was translated into Hebrew as land.
4. בבל Bagdad.
5. יקרא כתב זה לפני This phrase is translated from the Arabic into Hebrew.
6. Sources of tax income over which he has authority.
7. Which says that Rabbi Nathan learned a little as an eye witness and a little from heresay.
8. Rabbi Nathan was not in a position to learn how many years Ukba ruled in Babylon.
9. || This sign means that all that is between the two symbols is from the Arabic version.
10. The right of judges to teach and to judge in Khorassan.
11. Kohen Zedek as opposed to Ukba.
12. The brothers Sahal and Isaac, of whom Sahal was Isaac's senior by thirteen years, were important and well known for their knowledge and their righteousness. Sahal was a student of Saadia Gaon (Refer to Farkavy in the Berliner Memorial Volume, pp 34-43) and from this reference of Natira and his sons, it appears that Natira was no longer alive.

13. קרמשיין or קרמנשה
14. טאדא = Bagdad.
15. Outside of קרמיסין
16. He was the Persian king Khorsau II Parvêz and in Arabic it is Abarivêz. (source: Jewish Quarterly Review Vol. XVII P. 757)
17. Shirin or Tirin was famous for her beauty.
18. Referring to the king, that is to say, that in his statue the king was shown astride a horse.
19. The West means North Africa. Ukba settled in Mairun ( in the province of Tunis) where they received him graciously "And they prepared for him a seat of honor in the synagogue beside the ark, and after they called to the חזן ולוי a תורה they would bring the Law down to him."  
(חפניה ה' עבד סי' נ"ח)
20. The Tanaim would lecture before the students in the Beth Hamidrash the laws of the Tanaim and the masters of the Baraitha. (Exeget. Termin. II, 241 תנאכיר).
21. "hich means in Arabic, a tower; and many places exist which were called by that name.
22. Opposite language.
23. From a city נהרוואן, a half day's journey eastward of Bagdad (refer to page 67).
24. The Holy Name.
25. State means city.
26. Nissi Nahruani, the head of the Kalah was blind.
27. His name in Arabic was כלף, and Rab Nathan used his

Hebrew name כלל. According to Sheinscheinder (Arab. Lit. 34) it should be סגלאל.

- 28. Sahal and Isaac, (Pp. 70-72, text).
- 29. Under the Tower.
- 30. Psalms 145-150.

## NOTES ON SECTION II

## NATIRA AND HIS SONS

- 30.A. Al-Motadhid, who reigned from 892-902 C.E.
31. So the Arabs call Elijah the Prophet.
32. Lev. XXVI, 44.
33. The family of the Caliphs.
34. A sect of Arabic mystics.
35. In Arabic it is called *אקדגלה* and is known as the River Tigris.
36. Al-Muktadir. 908-932.C.E. Before him his brother, Al-Moktafi, ruled 902-908 C.E.
37. A quarter (section). So that section is called in Bagdad.
38. In Arabic it is called *מתקאל*.
39. Fans a leaf to make a breeze.
40. The son-in-law of *מחמד*.
41. The family of *מחמד*.



NOTES ON HISTOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

## NOTES ON THE ACADEMY OF SURA

## PART TWO

## CHAPTER ONE

## 1. Text P. 59

Whenever the word "Text" is used it does not refer to the English translation, first part, but to the original Hebrew text:-

Vol. I. *אברהם כהנא ספרות ההספריא הישראלית והארשה תרפ"ב*

## 2. Graetz, Vol. II P. 514.

## 3. Text, pp. 69-70.

## 4. Graetz, Vol. II. pp 515-16.

## 5. Jewish Ency. Vol. V. P. 570.

## 6. Text, P. 65.

7. For complete information regarding the honors of the Gaon of Sura over those of Pumbedita, see text P. 59.

## 8. Halevy, Dorot ha-Rishonim, III, P. 151 et seq.

## 9. Gittin, 60 b.

## 10. Compare above, p. 35. n.1.

## 11. Ginzberg. Geonica, Vol. I. pp. 37-38.

12. Halevy, says Ginzberg, might have added Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni, for he was the grandson of the Pumbeditan Gaon, Kohen-Zedek, and assuredly belonged to the Academy of Pumbedita.

13. For a complete account of this controversy in reference to the supremacy of Pumbedita over Sura, read Ginzberg's Geonica, Vol I. pp. 37-45.

14. For a complete account of this controversy, read text, p 62.

15. For the complete story of his call to the Gaonate of Sura read text, p. 62.
16. See text p. 63.
17. For complete story of this controversy read text pp. 62-63.

#### NOTES ON THE ACADEMY OF PILBEDITA

##### CHAPTER TWO

1. See text, pp. 59-60, second paragraph.
2. See text, pp. 69-70.
3. See text, p. 60.

NOTES ON THE EXILARCHATE  
ITS ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONS

CHAPTER THREE

1. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vo. V, P. 569.
2. Read the legend of the wasp in Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. III, Page 331, Article Bostanai. Read also the legend of the fly in Jew. Ency. Vol. XII, p. 706, Article Mar Zutra II.
3. Read the story of the Exilarch, David ben Zakkai and Saadia Gaon, Text, p. 63.
4. Graetz, Vol II, p. 510.
5. See text, pp. 60-63. Read also the legend in Jew. Ency, Vol III, p. 330, article Bostanai.
6. For complete details of installation ceremony read text P. 66. English account in Jewish Ency. Vol V, p. 292. Article Exilarch.
7. For complete story read text, pp. 60-63.
8. See text, p. 62.
9. Commentary to Zech. XII, 7.
10. Read Egyptian Exilarchate
11. Meggilat Ebyatar; also J.Q.R. Vol XV, p. 80. et seq.

NOTES ON THE EGYPTIAN EXILARCHATE

12. This follows from Saadyana XL. P. 1<sup>v</sup>.
13. Compare R.E.J. LXVI. P. 70. Note 3.
14. Sambari, edited by Neibauer, pp. 116 & 153.

## NOTES ON THE ORIGIN OF THE GAONATE

## CHAPTER FOUR

1. Graetz, Vol. III. P. 90.
  2. Malter, Saadia Gaon, His Life and Works, P. 99.
  3. Ginsberg, Geonica, Vol I, P. 53.
  4. S. Poznanski. Babylonische Zeitalter, Berlin, 1914. P. 80.
  5. Ed. Jellinek *מלך המלכות* . III 72. Also Ed. Wertheimer, P. 77.
  6. Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. XVIII, P. 403.
  7. Saadyana, No. XXXVIII. (Megillat Ebyatar). Schecter, Geniza fragments, Cambridge, 1903.
  8. Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. XV, pp. 79-96.
  9. Bornstein, *מלך המלכות* . Pp. 111-112, pp. 166-167.
  10. Greenstone, A.J.S.L. VII, pp. 155-159. and J.Q.R. I pp. 45-53.
  11. Marlorstein, Z f H.B XVI, P. 91. Z.D.M.G., LXVII, pp. 635-644.
- J.Q.R. IV, pp. 623-625.
12. Marx, J.Q.R. I, pp 62-78.
  13. Poznanski. R.E.J. XLVIII. pp. 145-175. LI, pp. 52-58. LVII, pp 266-267. LXVI, pp. 60-75. A.J.S.L. XXII, pp. 247-248. M.G.W.J. LII. pp. 110-111. Z.F.H.B. XVI, p 126. Z.D.M.G. LXVIII. pp. 116-128.

## NOTES ON THE PALESTINIAN GEONIM

## CHAPTER FIVE

1. J.Q. R., Vol. I. P. 48, and R.E.J., Vol. LXVI. P. 65
  2. In the author's edited memoranda we find him mentioned with the title of : ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב
  3. If the answer of the king of Khazars be authentic then toward its close the words 'שיבה שברושלים' is in contrast to the also mentioned name of 'שיבה שברב' Here Aaron's school is meant. It would be the first proof of its seat having been in Jerusalem. But the most recent findings by S. Schechter, (J.Q.R., Vol. III P. 181 ff) places a question mark on the authenticity of this letter.
  4. R.E.J., LXVI, Pp. 64-67.
  5. Ed. Neubauer, p. 69.
  6. Cf. Graetz Geschichte Vol. 5. Pp. 375 and 538.
- Philoxene Luzzatto. Son of Shadal. Born 1829, died 1854. Notice sur Abou-Jousouf Haïsdai ibn Schprout (Arch. Israelites XIII, Paris 1852. P. 57.
7. J.Q.R. Vol. XIX, P. 728.
  8. For further details about the order of seniority, refer to R.E.J., Vol. LXVI. P. 73.
  9. R.E.J., Vol. XLVIII. P. 157 ff. Alongside of these two congregations, a third one, that of the Karaites, existed.
  10. S. Schechter. Saadyana. P. 81. Note 2.
  11. Ed. Kaminka. P. 354.

## NOTES ON CRITICISM ON TEXT AND SCHOLARSHIP

## CHAPTER SIX

1. J.Q.R. Vol. XVII. pp. 747-767.
2. Geonica, Vol. I, pp. 22-29.
3. Ibid, pp. 25-26.
4. Yer. Berakot, I. 2b, 35 and parallel passages; Babli, ibid, 2b, end.
5. Yer. Ta'anivot, II, 56d, 44.
6. Gittin, 43 a.
7. Genesis R, VI 8, and parallel passages.
8. In the responsa of the Geonim this is not a rare expression; compare, for instance,  $\text{א"ר}^{143}$  (which is falsely ascribed to Rabbi Joseph ben Abitur, while it actually is from the hand of a Gaon of Sura, as appears from the reference to "my teacher Zadok"; the superscription in M.S. Luzzatto,  $\text{משה און}$  has probably preserved the truth for us), and G.S., p. 284; also Rashi, Pesahim, 46 a (Ginzberg, Geonica, Vol. I P. 25, note 1.
9. Harkavy, Saadia, 152, 20 and 170, 20.
10. Judges III, 19, 2 kings XXII, 19.
11. R.E.J., LV, 50.
12. St. Petersburg 1908, pp. 164-174.
13. Abraham K'hanah  $\text{ההסטוריא הישראליית}$  P. 59, Vol. I.
14. P. 55 A.
15. Abraham K'hanah  $\text{ההסטוריא הישראליית}$  P. 59, Vol. I.
16. P. 59, text.
17. P. 60, text.



- 18. P. 59. text.
- 19. Text, p. 60, par. 2.
- 20. Text, p. 68, par. 1.

## NOTES ON THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

## CHAPTER SEVEN

1. For a detailed account of the districts and the amounts collected from each district see text, page 67.
2. Compare Marx Untersuchungen zum Seder des Gaon Rab Amram I. p 11.
3. J.Q.R., Vol XIX, p. 106.
4. Ginsberg, Geonica, Vol. I. p. 13.
5. Concerning landed estates, and the revenues of the Academies, see J.Q.R. Vol. XIV. p. 369. and Vol. XVIII. P. 402.
6. See text, p. 62.

## NOTES ON NATIRA AND HIS SONS

## A CRITICISM

## CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Yuhasin, Amsterdam, ed 5477, P. 906. See also Seder Hachachomim of Neibauer, second part, pp. 78-9.
2. Yuhasin, p. 91, and Neibauer, p. 80.
3. Pp. 276 and 389. זכרון לראשנים מחברת ד
4. אברהם אליהו הרכבי, נשירא ובניו ספר ברכת אברהם לכבוד ברלינר, 43-34 זצ
5. Les Prairies d'or. Vol 8. Paris 1874. pp. 181-2.
6. Ibid, pp. 205-6.
7. Gesh der Chaliten, p 513 and 2.
8. Tabari, Annales, III, IV. 2143.
9. Yuhasin. P. 92 a.
10. Natira and His sons, text, p. 72.

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2. ספר יוחסין דפוס קראקא ש"מ (דף קי"ב - קכ"ה).

The above two books are the same but different editions published in different places. Druckeri Hermon A.V. Frankfurt <sup>השלם</sup> ס' יוחסין.

תרפ"ה pp. 204-207.

A <sup>שלם</sup> ספר יוחסין was prepared by Abraham Zakkut, also known as Zakoti, born in Salamanka, Spain, and dwelt in Tunis, Africa. The book includes all the generations from Moshe Rabbeinu through the author's time.

The first edition, as we see above, was published in Constantino, 5326. The second edition (see above) appeared in Crakow, 5340. A third edition was published in Amsterdam. The first edition cut the author's material to shreds; the second edition also eliminated many things, and the third did more damage (we are told) than the two others. Now it appears for the first time, truly and faithfully copied from the author's manuscript, found in Oxford. This is the fourth Edition. London 1857.

In 1925, A.H. Friemann reprinted the fourth edition, photographically, adding thereto an introduction of fifty pages covering the following material:-

- 1) Life of Zakkot.
- 2) The works of Zakkot.
- 3) A General Review of Sefer Yuhasin.
- 4) The Sources of Yuhasin.
- 5) The Various Editions of Yuhasin.
- 6) Editions of Yuhasin.

- 7) Erata and Comments
- 8) A Key to the Names of the People Mentioned.
- 8 a) A Key to the Names of the Cities Mentioned.
- 8 b) A Key to the Books Mentioned.

#### ADDITION

The completion of the Sixth Essay of Sefer Yuhasin.

The chief sources are taken from Keiserling and Graetz for the biographic material.

88-77 4. סדר החכמים וקורות הימים מאת נא'בו איר ת"ב, צד

5. J. Friedlander. The Arabic original of the report of Rab Nathan Gababli (J.Q.R., XVII, 747-761).

6. I. Ginzberg, Geonica, New York, 1909 I. 22-66.

7. אברהם איפשטיין, מקורות לתולדות הגאונים וישיבות בבל.

(ספר היוגל לכבוד הרכבי, צד 172-169)

8. אברהם אליהו הרכבי, נמירא ובניו וס' ברכת אברהם

לכבוד ברלינר, ברלין תרס"ג, צד 43-34

Also:- Netira and Seine Sohne.

Eine angesehene Jüdische Familie in Bagdad am Anfang des X Jahrhunderts von A. Harkavy, in Festschrift zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag A. Berliner's Herausgegeben von Dr. A. Freimann and Dr. M. Hildesheimer. Pp. 34-43.

9. M. Steinschneider, Geschichtsliteratur, par. 16.

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