

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK SCHOOL

FINAL THESIS APPROVAL FORM

AUTHOR: Lawrence Richard Sernovitz

TITLE: A Translation, Analysis, and Contextualization
of Nathan Ha-Bavli's Seder HaYeshivot

Elad Hosten 31 Jan 2007
SIGNATURE OF ADVISOR(S) Date

Dina Lust 1/31/07
SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR Date

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE YOUR THESIS WILL BE
CONSIDERED ACCEPTED.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION ON THIS FORM.

07. 9. 95

A TRANSLATION, ANALYSIS, AND
CONTEXTUALIZATION OF NATHAN HA-BAVLI'S
SEDER HAYESHIVOT

LAWRENCE RICHARD SERNOVITZ

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinical Program
New York, New York

FEBRUARY 6, 2007/18 SHEVAT 5767
Advisor: Dr. Martin A. Cohen

Thesis Summary

**A Translation, Analysis, and Contextualization
of Nathan Ha-Bavli's *Seder HaYeshivot***

For many centuries, and perhaps from shortly after the time of its composition in the second half of the tenth century, the *Seder HaYeshivot* of Nathan Ha-Bavli, part of a larger work no longer extant, has provided the classical description of the structure and proceedings of the great academies of Sura and Pumpeditha in Abbasid Babylonia, including the power brokers of these academies, their relationship to one another and to the exilarch, and the ritual of installment of an exilarch. However, the likelihood is that the picture drawn by Nathan, and frequently accepted by historians as accurate for the entire history of the academies, reflects solely the situation in the early decades of the tenth century CE and sheds only faint light on its pre-history.

In this thesis, I have provided an annotated translation of Nathan's text, and an analysis that discusses the broader world of which Nathan's account forms part. This analysis will include, briefly of course, an account of the development of the Babylonian Jewish Institutions, especially the Gaonate and Exilarchate, the rise and decline of the Abbasid world and its Jewish component, the struggle between rabbinic and "sectarian" Judaisms, notably Karaism, and the impact of all this on the troubles of Jewish institutional life in tenth century Baghdad and its seminal impact on Nathan's account.

There are two main divisions to the thesis. The first section comprises of eight chapters which provide an analysis and contextualization for Nathan ha-Bavli's *Seder HaYeshivot*. The second section is a complete annotated translation of *Seder HaYeshivot*, a document

which has never before fully been translated into English. Following these two main divisions are two appendices. The first one provides the actual Hebrew/Aramaic text of *Seder HaYeshivot*. The second appendix consists of several maps which show the geography of the vast Abbasid Empire during the tenth century and where the Jewish communities were situated within this world. Also included is a map of the Umayyad Empire.

Table of Contents:

Acknowledgments		2
Part One - Analysis and Contextualization		
Chapter One	Who was Nathan ha-Bavli?	3
Chapter Two	The World of Nathan ha-Bavli The Muslim world of the Tenth Century Its Antecedents	4
Chapter Three	Jews in the Muslim World of the Tenth Century Population Economics Organization of the Academies The Talmud	10
Chapter Four	Antecedents of the Jewish Communities in the Abbasid World The Umayyad World The Amoraic Era Redaction of the Talmud	18
Chapter Five	Problems of the Jewish World during the Abbasid Decline The Decline of the Academies Saadia Gaon The Saadia-David ben Zakkai Controversy The Decline of Sura and the Ascent of Pumpeditha The Jewish World of Baghdad at the end of the Tenth Century	24
Chapter Six	The Agenda of Nathan ha-Bavli The Sociopolitical Reflections of his Text His Agenda The Idealization of the Academy	34
Chapter Seven	The Post-History of Nathan ha-Bavli What happened to the Academies? The Apogee of Karaism The Success of the Babylonian Talmud	42
Chapter Eight	Conclusion-What can we learn?	47
Part Two - Annotated Translation		49
Bibliography		82
Appendix A- Text of Nathan Ha-Bavli's <i>Seder HaYeshivot</i>		86
Appendix B - Maps of the Islamic World in the Tenth Century		103

This thesis is dedicated to:

- My loving wife Becky. You not only have provided me with continuous encouragement and inspiration during the intensity of the last eight months, but you are also my best friend and my soul mate. Thank you for being you.
- My parents, Harvey and Diane Sernovitz. You both have helped to shape me into the person I am today and have given me great amounts of support and encouragement during the last five years of rabbinical school. I owe the two of you a debt of gratitude.
- Last, but certainly not least, my advisor and mentor Rabbi Martin A. Cohen. You have been a guiding light for me throughout this process and allowed it to truly be one where I could learn and grow. Besides help with the thesis itself, you have taught me a great deal about practical rabbinics, much of which will be with me for many years to come. Thank you.

Lawrence Richard Sernovitz
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
New York, New York
February, 2007

PART ONE-Analysis and Contextualization

Chapter One-Who was Nathan ha-Bavli?

There is not much known about Nathan ben Isaac haKohen haBavli, also known as Nathan the Babylonian. He seemed to have lived during the 10th century and arguably is the most important chronicler of this time period, giving us much insight into the life of the Jews during the Abbasid Empire. Little is known, however, about his background. Most likely he resided in Baghdad and was associated with the elite of society, including the academy heads and the exilarch. There is a strong possibility that he was a student at the academy of Sura and this can be supported by a careful analysis of his writing. His *Seder haYeshivot* seemed to be part of a larger no longer extant work about the Jews of Baghdad, entitled *Akhbar Baghdad*.¹ The document appears to be written soon after 942 and the appointment of Caleb ibn Sarjado as gaon of Pumpeditha.

¹ Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Nathan ben Isaac Ha-Kohen Ha-Bavli*

Chapter Two-The World of Nathan ha-Bavli

The Muslim World of the Tenth Century

Politics and Economics

From the year 750 until 1258, the Islamic world was controlled titularly by the Abbasid Empire. The assassination of the Ummayyad Caliph Marwan II in 750 brought an end to the Ummayyad dynasty and heralded in the Abbasid Empire, which brought major change both politically and economically. Baghdad was chosen to be the capital city of the empire, a significant move from Damascus under the Ummayyads. Baghdad was transformed into a cosmopolitan city, one which was dedicated to scholarship, the arts, literature, and trade. While it had become the seat of secular and religious power in Islam, it was not as pious as this characterization would imply.

As a cosmopolitan city, its population was quite diverse, both demographically and religiously. There was a gap, not unlike today, between the wealthy and the poor. There were scholars, merchants, and soldiers. There were also Iranians, Turks, Shi'ites, Sunnis, and traditionalists, Christians, and Jews.

Politically, the Abbasids made major changes and established the position of the *wazir*, or *vizier*, who administered the affairs of the state. They also created new governmental departments, called *diwans*, which created a status change for the caliphs. Within this structure, the Islamic policy of *dhimmi*, the way to ensure Muslim superiority in status, was employed to keep non-Muslims out of high status positions. While this was ideologically the policy of the state, realistically it was not completely feasible. In order to create an efficient and productive government, the Abbasids needed to employ non-

Muslims as well as Muslims. An example of this was the position of *diwan al-jahbadha*, the official state Financial Administrator, which was held by two very influential Jews, Joseph ben Phineas and Aaron ben Amram. These two Jews, as documented by Nathan ha-Bavli, would not only play major roles in the administration of the state, but also would be power players in the world of Rabbinic Judaism.

The economic, as well as political climate of the Abbasid empire was fierce, with individuals clamoring and competing against one another to build their up their own financial stability. A significant factor contributing to this climate was the fear of losing their accumulated wealth or having it taken by others, especially the government.

Problems

While the Abbasid Empire brought much change and prosperity into the Muslim world, it had significant problems which would eventually lead to its demise. The Abbasids controlled a vast empire which right from the very beginning was difficult to control and unify. Having such a large empire made governance and communication within regions extremely difficult. Resistance groups aspiring for independence sprouted up in many different regions of the empire. As early as 847, under the reign of al-Mutawakkil, there were signs of the rising power of the *amirs*, hired army commanders conscripted from Turkish tribes. Al-Muqtadir ruled from 908-932 and leased provinces to civilian and military governors who covered their expenses for military and other needs from taxes which they farmed from the caliph. All of this contributed to financial losses in income and revenue.

The Abbasid Empire's internal strife and political conflict is directly tied to the Jewish community of Baghdad and its stability. As soon as major conflict arose among the Abbasids, and dissident groups began to posture for political and economic power, the Jewish community also experienced political and economic issues. The downfall of the Abbasids sparked the demise of the three major Jewish institutions of Baghdad: the Exilarchate; the Academy of Sura; and the Academy of Pumpeditha.

Its Antecedents

The Abbasid Empire

Beginning in 750 with the assassination of Caliph Marwan II, the Abbasids seized control of the Muslim world from the Ummayyads. Significantly, they transfer the capital of the empire from Damascus to Baghdad, which is where the Abbasid power and support systems were located. Baghdad would become over 25 square miles and have a population between 300,000 and 500,000². The creation of a new Abbasid government was supposed to shelter itself from the conditions that destroyed the Umayyad government. It would build effective governing institutions, mobilize adequate support from Arab Muslims, converts, and from non-Muslim communities that paid taxes. Most importantly, it would have to, "secure the loyalty and obedience of its subjects for a rebel regime and justify itself in Muslim terms." Therefore, they transformed from a Bedouin style tribal system to a one run by *caliphs* through newly appointed department heads called *diwans*. Instead of democratically consulting with heads of tribes under the Umayyad dynasty, the caliphs had ultimate control and used the department heads to help maintain their control. With this change came the rise of Persians and members of

² Lapidus, pg. 56

Turkish tribes serving in important offices within the caliphate. This time period also allowed Jews to have a greater role, particularly within the financial administration of the state. This was a significant change in policy from the Umayyad government.

The Abbasid Empire was vast and spanned a wide geographic region, which led to issues of governance and communication. It extended from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to India, from Kabul to Seville, and from Northern Armenia to Southern Arabia.

The Umayyad Empire

From 660-750, the Muslim world was controlled by the Umayyads. Under Muawiya, the first Umayyad Caliph and founder of the dynasty, leadership of the Muslim world was for the first time not in the hands of one of Mohammed's associates, which had been the policy during the Rashidun period (632-661)³, particularly within the agenda of Umar, the second caliph during this period. Those who accepted the succession of Muawiya were called Sunnis⁴ and those opposed were called Shi'a⁵. Muawiya and his followers were much more interested in secular political development and placed the role of religion second, unlike the Shi'a. This battle between the Sunnis and the Shiites over succession, policy, and authenticity is still explosive today and is one of the major issues dividing the Muslims of the Middle East, not surprisingly in modern day Iraq.

³ Lapidus, pg. 45

⁴ Lapidus, pg. 47

⁵ There was a third group created as well called the Kharijis. This group held that the caliphate should not be determined by relation to Mohammad or by succession from Muawiya, but should be elected democratically from among the community of Muslims at large. Each of the three groups subsequently created their own forms of Islam.

Muawiya ceremoniously held his induction as caliph in Jerusalem⁶ and established the capital of the empire in Damascus. This new caliphate ruled over a large empire from Central Asia and the Indian border to the Atlantic Ocean. Prior to coming to the caliphate, factionalism and tribalism were prevalent and in an attempt to unite the Muslim world, Muawiya moved away from tribalism and to create a unified centralized monarchy. This included expanding the powers of the military and the state. He also pursued new sources of income, including revenues from private incomes, confiscated Byzantine and Sasanian crown lands, and from investments in reclamation and irrigation. Syrian Christians were used in a variety of capacities within the administration of the state.

Even with these changes and attempts at unification, there were constant uprisings and eventually this led to unrest and civil war (680-692). After an Umayyad victory, with continued opposition from the Shi'a and the Kharijis, the caliphate continued to centralize political power and create a stronger unified identity. Syrians were used more and more within the state and the language of official documents began to change from Greek and Persian into Arabic.⁷ Eventually the caliphate also began to mint its own coins instead of using Byzantine and Sassanian money. This continued development did not stop the internal strife and the diverse population and interests continued to become vaster. Umar II (717-720) exacerbated the issue by calling for the conversion of all the peoples of West Asia to Islam. All of the dissention led to a third civil war (736-740), the assassination of Caliph Hisham in 743, and the fall of the Umayyad Empire. This threw

⁶ Baron, viii, pg. 88

⁷ Lapidus, pg. 50

the Islamic world into chaos and numerous groups began fighting for power. The Abbasids, descendants of an uncle of Mohammad (Abbas), would be victorious.

Chapter Three-The Jews in the Muslim World in the 10th Century

Population

Under the Abbasids, specifically Caliph Al-Mansur (763-766), Jews flocked to Baghdad. As the city became more cosmopolitan, opportunities for Jews became more abundant. The Jewish mathematician and astrologer Masha'allah, along with a Persian astronomer An-Naubakht, drew up the measurements for the new capital city.⁸ However, even with the influx of Jews during this time, they consisted of no more than 2% of the city's population, which worked out to be about 40,000 Jews. At the height of this time period, they maintained twenty-eight synagogues and ten academies of learning. Further, there were also significant numbers of Jews in neighboring cities: Harbal (15,000), Hilla (10,000), Kufa (7,000), and Mosul (7,000).⁹

Even though Jews had been oppressed by the last Byzantine rulers, they made a return to Palestine during this time period and became a force that challenged the rule of the Babylonian Geonim, even though the Geonim still maintained control over world Jewry. While it is difficult to ascertain the numbers of Jews who lived in Palestine, it had a significant community, both Rabbanite and Karaite, which was supported by other Jewish communities. It was difficult for these Jews, especially in Jerusalem, as they were treated somewhat harshly by both the Muslim and Christian communities and were devastated in 1099 by the Crusades. Tiberias was an example of a community that had lived relatively uninterrupted, and had to give up its academy and transfer it to Jerusalem. Until the 10th century, the community of Tiberias was a haven for Hebrew poetry, exegesis, and

⁸ Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. III. Pg. 99-100, pg. 100

⁹ Ibid, According to Benjamin of Tudela, 276-277

linguistic studies. There were also growing Jewish communities in Gaza, Haifa, Ashkelon, and other cities.¹⁰

At the same time, there were also Jewish communities, albeit smaller than Palestine and Babylonia, in Tripoli, Tyre (where the Jerusalem academy relocated to after the Seljuk occupation in 1071), Damascus (about 10,000), and Fustat-Cairo, which reportedly in the eleventh century had a larger Jewish community than Baghdad. Alexandria had around 3,000 families.

There were also communities in central and western Africa, Spain, southern France, and southern Italy. In Morocco, Fez, which was the capital of the Shi'ite Idriside dynasty (founded in 808), was a major center of Jewish culture.¹¹ The Persian Jewish community also flourished. According to a report which reached Moses ibn Ezra in Spain, the number of Jews in Khorasan was 40,000 and another 40,000 in the provincial communities. Samarkand was at 50,000.¹²

Economic Activities

Jews were engaged in a variety of occupations during the 9th and 10th centuries, including but certainly not limited to: bankers, dyers, merchants, moneychangers, and tanners. Christians served as the doctors and clerks. This was a certainly a change from the roles they played under the Umayyad Empire, as Christians were the money-changers,

¹⁰ Ibid, 100-102

¹¹ Ibid 108

¹² Walter Fischel. *Jews in the Political and Religious Life of Medieval Islam*. pg. 7

secretaries, court attendants, medical men, and druggists. Jews at that time served as dyers, tanners, barbers, and butchers.¹³

As *Al-tujjar*, or merchants, the Jewish community of Babylonia was connected to the entire Diaspora, including Khorasan, Persia, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain, among other places. Jewish merchants were able to be financially successful because of these ties. Additionally, they were able to get money when they needed and were able to support other Jews when they were in need. These Jewish merchants also played a major role as the ones primarily responsible for spreading the authenticity of the Babylonian Talmud to the Diaspora Jewish community. This is what also solidified the authority of Babylonian Jewish community and their institutional life.

Beginning in the ninth century, and much more so in the tenth, we hear the term. The *jahbadh* was not only someone converted money, but who was a money-expert, someone experienced in most intricate affairs and very well versed in matters of cash.

When the silver standard (*dirham*) was changed to the gold standard (*dinar*) at the end of the ninth century, this new currency system necessitated the conversion of the coins received by the public *exchequer*. To address this major change and to facilitate the conversion of money, the Abbasid government established the position of *Diwan al-jahbadha* in 928. Jews, many of whom were in the merchant class, were well prepared and were selected to fill this vital position.

¹³ Fischel, pg. 30

Not only were Jews valued as *jahbadhan*, they were chosen to be bankers ("court bankers"). Joseph b. Phineas and Aaron b. Amram are excellent examples of court bankers, ones who were politically savvy and were able to establish intimate relations with Caliph al-Muqtadir and his viziers. These two bankers were associated with each other most of the time, until the Great Controversy when they seemed to have a falling out, showing some type of business arrangement. This relationship can be represented as Joseph, Aaron and heirs, or Joseph, Aaron and Co., Head Office, Baghdad. This may have been the first established Jewish banking firm.

They appear to have been appointed in the time of Mohammed b. Ubaidallah b. Yahya, who was vizier under Caliph al-Muqtadir. (Around 912-913). Due to their prestigious positions as court bankers, they had significant influence with the Caliphs, as their roles required a higher level of trust which did not exist within other public roles.¹⁴ As court bankers, Joseph and Aaron were responsible for three main functions: (a) Administration of funds; (b) Remittance of funds (letters of credit-*suftaja*); (c) Supply of funds.

It is important to note that Nathan the Babylonian writes about this banking firm and their relations with Rav Saadia. The sons of Aaron and the sons of Netira were contemporaries and had close relations with Rav Saadia. Sahl ben Netira was a student of R. Saadia and Joseph b. Phineas was Netira's father-in-law and b'nei Netira's grandfather.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 37

¹⁵ Ibid, pg.40

Organization

Geonim

Gaon was the formal title of the heads of the academies of Sura and Pumbeditha in Babylonia. It eventually became an honorific title for any rabbi or anyone who had a great knowledge of Torah. The Geonim were considered the spiritual leaders of the entire Diaspora and their decisions and responsa had absolute legal validity in most Jewish communities. The Geonim were recognized by the Jews as the highest authority of instruction from the end of the sixth century or somewhat later to the middle of the 8th. The Geonate also had jurisdiction over the organization of the courts in all the districts of Babylonia. However, judges were appointed by the exilarch with the assent of the geonim.

Unlike the Talmudic period, during the Geonic period the gaon was chosen by the exilarch, along with the scholars of the academies. It was general practice for individual scholars to create a good name for themselves, based on knowledge and scholarship, and rise up within the system. The eventual goal was to become a gaon and a head of an academy. In particular, candidates interested in becoming head of the academies had excelled academically, but they also had to possess administrative talents. Descent was a factor; six or seven families provided most of the *geonim* of Sura and Pumpeditha.¹⁶ Once a new gaon was chosen, there would be an installation ceremony, just like the one held for an exilarch.

¹⁶ Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Gaon*

The geonim were interpreters of the Talmud and their main purpose was to make the Talmud the accepted code of law in all social and religious matters. Further, the geonim strived to make the academies a supreme court and source of instruction for all Jewry. Thousands of people would assemble in the academies during the *kallah* months of Elul and Adar in order to hear lectures on *halakhah*.

She'elot and Teshuvot

As a result of the political and ideological unification of the Islamic world under the Abbasid Empire, the geonim and the Babylonian Jewish community also enjoyed this same type of control over the Jewish world, including the Diaspora communities. The Diaspora Jewish communities, initially, were unfamiliar with the language of the Talmud, Aramaic, as well as its format so they turned to the scholars of the Babylonian academies for help.

These communities would ask for decisions on the many disputes which arose between different local scholars and also asked for opinions concerning new *halakhic* problems for which they could find no precedent. The local scholars in these communities would send letters with their questions, along with a significant sum of money, to the geonim. This money was extremely important and supported the geonim as well as the academies. These terms appear in the rabbinic world, particularly in the world of the geonim, and connote a process of where *halakhic* questions are asked, answers are prepared and then sent back to the one who asked the question. The questions and answers make up what is known as response, or responsa literature. This process also played a crucial role in

helping the geonim to establish the Babylonian Talmud as the sole authority in the life of the Jewish people.

The process of answering these questions took place during the *kallah* months. At the end of the *kallah* months, the students would be gathered together and would conduct research, under the supervision of the head of the academy, to find the answers to the questions. The head of the academy would listen to each of them individually, and what they had to say about the various letters. He would then give a lecture to the students, recounting each of their opinions and then would give his ruling. The students would be responsible for drafting the responses and then sending them back to their owners.

The Talmud

The Babylonian Talmud is the Babylonian Jewish community's commentary and elaboration on the Mishnah. Additionally, the Talmud is the primary source of law which the *geonim* sought to perpetuate throughout the Jewish world. It is customary to date the period of the Babylonian Talmud from the days of Abba Arika (usually called Rav) and Samuel, in the first half of the third century, to the end of the teaching activity of Ravina in 499.¹⁷

The Talmud can be characterized as encyclopedic. "Its editors included everything that was taught in the rabbinic schools and considered worth preserving: many kinds of legends, anecdotes about the rabbis, historical reminiscences, knowledge about medicine, biology, mathematics astronomy, astrology, etc. Thus BT is less a thematically closed

¹⁷ Encyclopaedia Judaica CD-ROM, *Babylonian Talmud*

book than a national library of Babylonian Judaism whose structure emulates the Mishnah."¹⁸

While there are six orders of the Mishnah, made up of 36 tractates, the *Gemara* on the six orders was not complete.¹⁹ It would seem that the tractates without *Gemara* had no practical application to the Diaspora world of the Babylonian Jewish community: the agricultural laws were tied to the land of Israel; the purity laws were not practical because there was no longer a temple cult.²⁰ Still, there are exceptions to this assumption, particularly in regard to *Kedoshim*, for which one could say there is no practical application but there is *Gemara*. However, since according to Talmudic teaching, the study of the Temple service was equal to its actual performance (Men. 110a), and for this reason the study of the order had contemporary meaning.²¹

Whatever the rationale was for creating *Gemara* for the tractates of the Mishnah, the entire six orders were studied in the Babylonian academies. It is stated in various places in the Babylonian Talmud that all six orders including *Ukzin*, the last tractate in *Tohorot* (Sanh. 106b), were discussed in numerous houses of study.

¹⁸ Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. pg. 192

¹⁹ With the exception of *Berakhot*, there is no Babylonian *Gemara* to the order *Zera'im*. The order *Mo'ed* is complete save for tractate *Shekalim*, as are orders *Nashim* and *Nezikin*, apart from tractates *Eduyyot* and *Avot*—probably because the subject matter does not require it. *Kodashim* is almost complete, with the exception of tractates *Middot*, *Kinnim*, and part of *Tamid*. In the order *Tohorot* the only tractate that has *Gemara* is *Niddah*.-From Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Babylonian Talmud*

²⁰ Strack and Stemberger, Pg. 191

²¹ Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Babylonian Talmud*

Chapter Four- Antecedents of the Jewish Communities in the Abbasid World

The Ummayyad World

The Ummayyad dynasty took place from 660–750, where the Muslims established their empire, extending from Central Asia and the Indian border to the Atlantic Ocean. The religious ties which had unified the Muslims under the first four Orthodox caliphs were weakened under Uthman. Muawiya, the first Umayyad caliph (661–680), transformed the community of the faithful into a secular Arab state in which religion took second place.

For the first time leadership was in the hands of a person who had not been one of the Prophet's associates. Mu'awiya was proclaimed caliph in Jerusalem in 660, but was not finally recognized as such until 661 after Ali had been assassinated and his son Hasan had abdicated. Muawiya organized the empire on the Persian and Byzantine model, introduced a postal service, and was the first to create an Arab fleet. The capital of the Umayyad caliphate was Damascus, and Syria and Eretz Israel were the center of the Muslim world. Muawiya built a wooden mosque on the Temple Mount and he and his successors confiscated land from the Jews of Eretz Israel and distributed it among the new Arab settlers. This caused great disappointment to the Jews among whom the Arab conquest of Eretz Israel had caused messianic stirrings. Muawiya established the principle of heredity for the caliphate and four years before his death appointed his son Yazid as his successor. The majority of the tribal chiefs supported the appointment.

After Yazid's death, opposition to Umayyad rule resulted in civil war, with the main centers of the unrest being in Persia, Iraq, and the Hejaz. Abdullah ibn Zubayr proclaimed himself caliph in Mecca, having gained the support of the Muslim

aristocracy. Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock (691–2), the costs being covered by the tax revenue which he received from Egypt for a period of seven years. He also built the Al-Aqsa Mosque. A group of Jewish attendants were in charge of cleanliness in the mosque and on the Temple Mount and responsible for the maintenance of the lighting, for which service they were reimbursed by exemption from the poll tax.²²

This monopoly was inherited by their descendants until it was abolished by Omar II. The Umayyad caliphs employed both Jews and Christians, some of whom attained high posts in the government hierarchy. Toward its end the Umayyad regime was plagued by natural catastrophes and internal strife. Between 746 and 749 a number of earthquakes occurred in Eretz Israel. The most severe took place in 748 and caused a heavy loss of life and the collapse of the Dome of the Rock.

Against a background of inter-Muslim sectarian strife, Shiite opposition to the ruling house, and wars against the Byzantine Empire, which raised messianic hopes among the Jews of a Muslim victory over the Christians, Jewish sects came into being in the East in the beginning of the eighth century. Some of these sects advocated revolt against the established order, hoping to bring about redemption by force. One of these sects was headed by Serenus (or Severus) of Syria, who was active at the time of Yazid (720–4).

The climax of anti-Umayyad stirrings in Persia came in the 740s, when an insurrection headed by Abdullah ibn Muawiya was successful in establishing a short-lived independent kingdom. This was the background for the rise of the Jewish pseudo-messiah Abu 'Issa (or Obadiah) from Isfahan, who lived during the rule of Marwan II (744–50),

²² Mujir al-Din (Jerusalem, 1456–1521)

the last Umayyad caliph. The internal strife in various parts of the empire was among the major causes for the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty and paved the way for the rise of the Abbasids.

The Amoraic Era

The Amoraim were the scholars who were active from the period of the completion of the Mishnah, c. 200 C.E., until the completion of the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, end of the fourth and end of the fifth centuries respectively. The name *amoraim* may be explained by the fact that they regarded it as their function to "explain" or "interpret" the Mishnah and derive from it the final *halakhah*. The Talmud differentiates between the authority of the *tanna* and that of the *amora*. The latter was not permitted to dispute a statement of the Mishnah or even of a *baraita*.

One of their tasks was to derive conclusions from the *halakhah* in the Mishnah and other tannaitic collections, to clarify the details emerging from the tannaitic *halakhah* and the expansion or limitation of its prescriptions. The formulation of these concepts acted as a considerable stimulus to the development of the *halakhah* during the period of the *amoraim*. The Amoraim also concerned themselves with *aggadah*, which had already developed in every sphere during the tannaitic and amoraic periods, both for popular discourses and within the framework and teachings of the academies. There is no line of demarcation between the *aggadah* of the tannaim and that of the *amoraim*, whether from the point of view of internal development or in external form. Although the aggadic discourse was known during the tannaitic period, it nevertheless appears that it was only

during the period of the *amoraim* that it reached perfection in construction, artistic arrangement, and rhetorical devices.

Beside being engaged in actual teaching and delivering public discourses, many Amora'im also filled the offices of lay leaders of the community as disposers of charitable funds and particularly as judges. The *amoraim* supervised the establishment of schools and the curriculum and appointment of teachers. There were pairs of scholars, mostly *amoraim*, who went to cities and villages in order to teach Torah and generally supervise congregational needs. In principle the scholars accepted no remuneration for their communal activity, or for the instruction they gave, and certainly not for studying. Like their predecessors the *tannaim*, the *amoraim* in Palestine and Babylon engaged in every kind of economic activity: agricultural work, craftsmanship, commerce, shipping, etc.; at the same time they pursued their studies, often in straitened circumstances. During this period however, various methods of supporting scholars were developed in compensation for their communal activity (Hul. 134b; Git. 65b). Methods of support included donations from a central fund organized by the yeshivot (Git. 60a), or by generous individuals (Pes. 53b)

"Redaction" of the Talmud

There is no one definitive explanation for the redaction of the Talmud. In regards to the "who", we read in Bava Metzia 86a,

*"Rabbi and R. Nathan [are] the end of the Mishnah, Rab Ashi
and Rabina [are] the end of the hora'ah."*

Rashi further elaborates on this, stating,

"Up to their days [R. Ashi's and Ravina's] there was no ordered Gemara. When a question was asked about the reason of a mishnah, about a decision in monetary suits, or a decision regarding the forbidden and the permitted, each gave his opinion, R. Ashi and Ravina then put the opinions of the amoraim of the preceding generations in proper order by placing them according to the sequence of the tractates, referring each opinion to the Mishnah to which it rightly belongs. They asked questions and gave the right answers, they and their colleagues, and they set it all in the Gemara."

All of this would lead us to believe that R. Ashi and Ravina were the final redactors. However, not only do we know of passages which were introduced after the death of R. Ashi, but there are also passages written by the *savoraim*, who were the disciples of the *amoraim* and their immediate successors. This could lead us to the conclusion that the *savoraim* continued the work of the *amoraim* and were the final redactors of the Babylonian Talmud around the middle of the sixth century.²³ Furthermore, Sherira Gaon mentions a R. Yose of the *savoraim* in whose days the ultimate end of Talmudic teaching (*sof hora'ah*; the same phrase which the Talmud applies to R. Ashi and Ravina) and the conclusion of the Talmud was achieved. This would clearly date the redaction later than the *amoraim*. However, we cannot be sure.

In regards to the "how", scholars differ on the form and structure the redactors followed. Jacob Neusner believes in a homogeneous reaction of the Talmud. He believes that it was well considered and was planned from the beginning to the end using an outline that is definitive throughout. Further, he asserts that the material in the Talmud took about a half century to shape. It was then grouped around material from the Mishnah, which led to its final redaction. J.N. Epstein argues the opposite. He believes that it is not one piece but many, which include different eras and generations, authors, redactors, and schools.

²³ Encyclopaedia Judaica CD-ROM, *Babylonian Talmud*

"Every single tractate is a book in itself."²⁴ Taking both of these arguments into account, in addition to countless others, there is no definitive conclusion that can be reached in regards to the "who" as well as the "how" to the redaction of the Talmud.

²⁴ H.L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Pg. 194

Chapter Five-The Problems of the Jewish World during the Abbasid Decline

The Decline of the Academies

There were several different causes which all contributed to the decline of the academies and of the institution of the gaonate. The gaonate and the Babylonian Jewish community were supported by the caliphate and once it and their support began to decline, the gaonate was not far behind. The gaonate also suffered from both internal and external strife, which eventually decreased the influence it had upon the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. The main academies of Sura and Pumpeditha engaged in bitter disputes, particularly concerning the appointment of the geonim, which caused the institutions to suffer. Additionally, the geonim no longer lived in the cities of the academies; rather they chose to live in Baghdad, where the exilarch and the center of authorities were located.

During this same time period, the Diaspora communities had begun to establish their own Talmudic academies, resulting in less dependence on the academies and the gaonate, which meant that the Diaspora scholars would no longer send their questions and financial support to the geonim. Without this crucial financial support from the Diaspora communities, the Babylonian Jewish community became impoverished. Letters of solicitation were written by various geonim in order to generate additional funds for the academies. Only Saadia's language was eloquent enough to disguise the desperate situation that they were in, and this contributed to the decrease honor that the office of the gaon received.²⁵ Additionally, as the reputation of the academies decreased, the numbers of students also significantly diminished, to the point where Sherira Gaon complained in

²⁵ Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, volume 5. pg. 21

987, the year when he wrote his famous epistle, that he only had one student in the month of Elul.²⁶ Other external conditions, like the persecutions by the Abbasid and Seljuk rulers, brought down the gaonate around 1040.²⁷

Saadia Gaon

Saadia ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi (882–942), was an author, scholar, halakhist, philosopher, and served as head of both the prestigious academies of Pumpedita and Sura. Among his most distinguished accomplishments are: the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Arabic with a commentary; the first systematic compilation (in Arabic w/ Hebrew translation) of Jewish liturgy-*Siddur Rav Sa'adyah Ga'on*; and the first real comprehensive doctrine of Jewish philosophy, The Book of Beliefs and Opinions.²⁸

He was born in 882 in the village of Dilaz, in the in the Fayyum district in Upper Egypt. Very little is known about his family, his youth, or his education. However, his father had been the subject of interest to Saadia's opponents, who refer to him as "*not a scholar and [someone who] earned his living from manual labor*."²⁹ Sherira Gaon, in contrast, had great respect for him.³⁰

At the age of 23, Saadia left Egypt, and spent time in Aleppo and Palestine before arriving in Baghdad. Before this journey even began, he was already a learned scholar of Torah and the secular sciences, and had many disciples. He had written a Hebrew dictionary and

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Gaon*

²⁸ Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*. Pg. 24

²⁹ Encyclopaedia Judaica, *Saadia Gaon*.

³⁰ *Iggeret Rav Sherira Ga'on*, ed. by B. M. Lewin (1921), 112)

a refutation of the views of the founder of Karaism, Anan ben David. While he was in Aleppo, a great controversy broke out between the head of the Palestinian Jewish community, Aaron ben Meir, and the Babylonian Jewish community over the fixing of the Jewish calendar.³¹ Saadia became intensely involved on behalf of the Babylonian community and, in the process of his successful refutation of ben Meir's claims, proved himself valuable to the leadership who, in 922, made him an official member of the Academy of Sura and conferred upon him the title of Alluf.³² In 928, he was appointed to the Gaonate of Sura by the Exilarch, David ben Zakkai. This was unprecedented, as never before had there been a gaon who was not a member of the Iraqi aristocracy, not to mention one who was a foreigner.³³ However, soon after, a vicious controversy would arise between the two, one that would split the Babylonian Jewish community.

The Saadia-David ben Zakkai Controversy

During the 10th century, the Babylonian world was in crisis. The Abbasid Empire became increasingly fragmented and independent caliphates and emirates began to arise. At the same time, crisis also existed within the Jewish world. Many Diaspora communities, such as Egypt, North Africa, Spain, and Italy, had cultivated their own Jewish scholars and the need to consult the Gaonate about questions of Jewish law became less of a necessity. This resulted in decreased revenue for the Jewish political and spiritual institutions of

³¹ Unlike Ben Meir, who argued that the Palestinian scholars deserved control over the calendar, Saadia argued that the calendar actually was promulgated by Moses on Mount Sinai and that Ben Meir, therefore, was violating a Sinaitic ordinance and also Palestinian precedent, as they had never used any other calendar. -Ellis Rivkin, *The Saadia-David ben Zakkai Controversy: A Structural Analysis*. pg. 393-394

³² *Saadia Gaon: The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*. Samuel Rosenblatt. Introduction.

³³ Ellis Rivkin. Pg. 393

Baghdad, fostering a major political and power struggle among the academies and the exilarch in order to support their ongoing activities. The Babylonian Jewish community could no longer support two major academies as well as the exilarch. The internal struggle and hatred that ensued ripped apart the Jewish world, which in turn activated minority groups fighting for power and authority, including the greatest threat to the splintered rabbinic world, the Karaites. This struggle came to a climax in 930 with the Saadia-David ben Zakkai controversy.

The decision to appoint Saadia gaon of Sura must have been somewhat difficult for David ben Zakkai. Apparently, he was warned of Saadia's "boundless ambitions"³⁴ and could be someone who could challenge the exilarchate, if needed, to push his own agenda. Further, Saadia was a foreigner and appointing someone like Saadia would have been unprecedented. To assuage his doubts, upon assuming the office of gaon, David ben Zakkai made Saadia take an oath that he would be loyal to the exilarch and would never set up a rival exilarch.³⁵ The wording may actually have been so unusual as to include language such as pledging that Saadia, "would not transgress my words [David ben Zakkai], nor conspire against me, nor recognize anyone else as prince of captivity, nor side with any of my opponents."³⁶ Taking all of this into account, the exilarch was apparently somewhat nervous, and justified, with his choice of Saadia as gaon of Sura.

³⁴ Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, v. 5, pg. 21

³⁵ *Zikhron leRishonim*, ed. A. Harkavy (Berlin, 1891), vol. v., pp. 231-34

³⁶ Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, v. 5, pg. 21

It will come as no surprise that the exilarch was quite angered when Saadia refused to sign an official document sent to him involving the settlement of an inheritance. Saadia offers no specific rationale for his stance. However, after continued pressure on Saadia to sign the document, Saadia states that he will not sign because the exilarch has transgressed the Biblical commandment, "Thou shalt not show favoritism in judgment."³⁷

The refusal to sign along with the accusation of Biblical transgression publicly challenged David ben Zakkai and also questioned his integrity. The exilarch's response was swift and punishing. Saadia was immediately excommunicated and Joseph ben Jacob was put up as gaon of Sura in his place. Saadia responds by excommunicating David ben Zakkai and appoints Hasan, the brother of David ben Zakkai, as exilarch.

This enflamed the Jewish community and the power players took sides, splitting the community in two. As Nathan ha-Bavli reports, Saadia was supported by Bene Netira, and the wealthy of Baghdad. Netira was a leading Jewish notable of Baghdad and carried much political influence as he had close ties with Caliph al-Muqtadir. In fact, he may have collected the poll tax from the Jewish community for the caliph at this time. Bene Netira, the sons of Netira who were Saul and Isaac, inherited their father's business and well as a significant amount of power and influence. Even more significant was the fact that Netira's father-in-law was no other than Joseph ben Phineas, who was a court banker

³⁷ Deuteronomy 1:17

יז לא תִּזְכֹּר פְּנִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט בְּקֶטֶן כְּגֹדֶל תִּשְׁמַעוּן לֹא תִּגְדֹּר מִפְּנֵי אִישׁ כִּי הַמִּשְׁפָּט לְאֵלֹהִים הוּא וְהַדָּבָר
אֲשֶׁר יִקְשֶׁה מִכֶּם תִּקְרְבוּן אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּיו:

You shall not be partial in judgment, hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is God's. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it.

along with Aaron ben Amram to Caliph al-Muqtadir.³⁸ On the other hand, David ben Zakkai had on his side Caleb ibn Sarjado, a very wealthy man who occupied a front row seat in the academy of Pumpeditha and who happened to be the son in law of Bishr ben Aaron, one of Saadia's fiercest opponents and the son of Aaron b. Amram. We have here a battle which engulfs the wealthiest and most politically connected individuals within the Jewish community and there is no doubt both sides had much to gain plenty to lose.³⁹ Each one charged the other with bribery, exploitation, and dishonesty. Saadia accused David ben Zakkai of perverting justice and he accused Saadia of exploiting the people, of deception, and of violating a sacred oath.⁴⁰

According to Nathan ha-Bavli, this controversy went on for seven years when a court case arose between two men involved in litigation. One man chose Saadia to be his spokesman and the other man chose the exilarch. David ben Zakkai sent his henchmen

³⁸ Walter Fischel, pg. 38-43

³⁹ Ellis Rivkin, *The Saadia-David Ben Zakkai Controversy*, pg. 413

"We must assume that they [the banking families of Joseph ben Phineas and Aaron ben Amram] performed vital banking and political functions for these institutions [the academies and the exilarch]. Through this role they came to have a decisive voice in the affairs of the gaonate and exilarchate. The influential position enjoyed by these bankers gave them powerful political leverage."

According to Rivkin, these bankers must have performed the following to critical functions: (1) The transmission of funds from Babylonia for the exilarch and from Babylonia and the communities throughout the world for the gaonate; (2) The advancement of large sums of money to the geonim and the exilarchs on the security of future income.

⁴⁰ According to *Zikhron le-Rishonim*, Caleb ibn Sarjado, who supported David ben Zakkai in the controversy, accused Saadia of using strong-arm tactics and violating the Sabbath in seeking to bribe state officials. He also charged him with homosexual practices and produced witnesses that Saadia performed these acts in front of the Torah. Because Caleb sat in the First Row in the academy of Pumpeditha, he was respected and these accusations were taken seriously. -Ellis Rivkin, *The Saadia-David Ben Zakkai Controversy*. Pg. 418

out to find the man that chose Saadia and had him beaten up. This man cried out to the community, explaining to them what had happened. The community took up his case and went to Bisher ben Aaron for support. Bisher convened a meeting in his home, where the exilarch was present, reprimanded the exilarch for his behavior, and ordered him to make peace with Saadia. Bisher also asked Saadia for his help in this matter. They scheduled a time when they could all get together and Bisher facilitated the reconciliation.

However, after the death of Saadia, the academy of Sura was closed and controversies continued to arise over who would head the academy of Pumpeditha, including ones involving Caleb ibn Sarjado, who would become gaon of Pumpeditha in 943.

The Decline of Sura and the Ascent of Pumpeditha

Up until the year 926, all unassigned income which was received by the academies would be split between the two major academies, Sura and Pumpeditha. Sura would receive two-thirds of this unassigned revenue and Pumpeditha would receive one-third. This indicated, along with Nathan ha-Bavli's description of the installation ceremony of the exilarch, that Sura enjoyed pre-eminence over Pumpeditha. However, in 926, when Kohen Zedek became gaon of Pumpeditha, a dispute arose concerning this unassigned revenue. This was such an important issue that a meeting was convened with the pillars of the community. The outcome of this meeting was that all unassigned revenue that would come into the academies would be split equally between the two academies.

According to Ellis Rivkin, this single event had a profound effect on the relationship between Sura and Pumpeditha. "In the tenth century, however, certain changes had

occurred which pushed the gaon of Pumpeditha to the fore. Indeed, it seemed that Sura might close down. Though this did not occur, Pumpeditha secured equality with Sura in the year 926 when it was agreed that unassigned income, that is moneys and gifts that were sent to the Academies without specific designation were henceforth to be divided equally....It thus may have been that in the year of the Great Controversy, the gaon of Pumpeditha may have had prestige equivalent to that of the gaon of Sura-though the name of Sura probably still carried with it an aura that Pumpeditha lacked."⁴¹

When the 10 century began, the Abbasid Empire was in trouble and in turn so was the Jewish world in Babylonia, which directly affected those Jews who were involved with the caliphate. Additionally, as revenue from the Diaspora was greatly reduced because of the growing authority of local scholars, tension increased dramatically between the Jewish institutions in Babylonia over finances. The financiers of the Babylonian Jewish community could not support three major institutions and took sides, ones which would benefit them personally and financially.

When the Great Controversy arose between Saadia and his benefactor, the Exilarch David ben Zakkai, the Jewish community became even more splintered. The bankers and the wealthy of the community carried much political weight and used it to push forth their own agendas. The Great Controversy had substantial repercussions for the academies and the exilarchate. Bene Netira supported Saadia and Bisher ben Aaron supported David ben Zakkai. Bene Netira were relatives of Joseph ben Phineas and Bisher ben Aaron was a relative of Aaron ben Amram. Therefore, this controversy was

⁴¹ Ellis Rivkin, *The Saadia-David Ben Zakkai Controversy*. Pg. 392-393

not just about Saadia and David ben Zakkai, but the affluence and political struggle between two wealthy families in a time of immense turmoil. As a result of the Controversy, Pumpeditha surfaced as the pre-eminent academy with Caleb ibn Sarjado becoming Gaon of Pumpeditha. Sura was subsequently closed for 45 years, followed by feeble attempts to reopen the academy by different followers over time, with the academy's eventual demise. It would never again regain the same stature as it once had.

It is of importance to note that during this time, Caliph Muqtadir died, and with his death came the eventual elimination of influence for Bene Netira and the supporters of Saadia. It seems that when the caliph was still alive, Bene Netira had more influence in his court than did Bene Aaron and Caleb ibn Sarjado. Saadia, knowing this, was able to launch this controversy and he must have thought that with the caliph's support, he would be guaranteed to win. However, upon the caliph's death, they lost this crucial support and Bene Aaron, along with David ben Zakkai and Caleb ibn Sarjado, gained the influence of the court.⁴² And, with this victory, Pumpeditha gained prominence over Sura.

The Jewish World of Baghdad at the end of the 10th Century

Clearly, the Jewish world of Baghdad was very much torn apart after the Great Controversy. Additional controversies continued to occur that caused further deterioration of what was left of the Jewish institutional life of Baghdad. In fact, the geonate and the exilarchate would never again regain the power and influence which it held during this time period. By the end of the 10th century, the influence of the Baghdad Jewish community locally and throughout the Diaspora had decreased significantly and

⁴² Ellis Rivkin, *The Saadia-David Ben Zakkai Controversy*, pg. 421

the local Jewish communities were very much self-sufficient and no longer reliant on the academies and the geonate to respond to its questions of Jewish law. While the geonate lasted until around 1040, the Diaspora Jewish communities continued to grow and would be where the future of Judaism would reside.

Chapter Six-Nathan ha-Bavli

The Sociopolitical Reflections of his text

The supreme authority of the Jewish world during the time of Nathan ha-Bavli was enjoyed by the three major institutions which governed the Babylonian Jewish Community: the Exilarchate and the two Academies of Sura and Pumpeditha. Their authority was solidified by the world-wide acceptance and pre-eminence of the Babylonian Talmud as well as the crucial support they enjoyed from the Abbasid government. However, as Nathan ha-Bavli's account documents, these institutions were filled with political tension and controversy in which no part of the community was left unscathed. There was a constant struggle for authority and control, supported by the power players of the community, and much of the conflict can be attributed to the struggle over scarce financial resources. The decline of the Abbasid Empire, along with the internal strife and tension eventually ripped apart the community. By the year 943, when Caleb ibn Sarjado became gaon of Pumpeditha, in the aftermath of the Saadia-David ben Zakkai controversy, the Babylonian Jewish community was in the midst of rapid decline and its authority over the communities of the Diaspora was severely diminished.

Nathan ha-Bavli attempts to capture this incredible complex world, one which he seems to be immersed in, and all of its sociopolitical dynamics. He clearly is a member of the Suran community and this has a large influence on the document as a whole. He begins Seder HaYeshivot by describing the beauty of the world of Babylonian Jewry, with Sura as the pre-eminent academy. He identifies the leadership of the community, as much as he was able, and then seems to list all the reasons why Sura is the dominant academy. At

the end of this description, he briefly mentions that a dispute arose, initiated in the year 917 by a newly appointed gaon of Pumpeditha, over revenue from the academies. This newly appointed gaon, Kohen Zedek, didn't think it was fair that Sura received more revenue than Pumpeditha, and apparently turned this into a big issue which involved the major players of the Jewish community. As a result, the revenue coming into the academies would be split evenly between the two. Nathan seems to emphasize that the major players had to become involved in this issue, one clearly initiated by the leaders of Pumpeditha. He, and therefore his contemporaries as well, must not have been so happy about this resolution.

Nathan continues by offering a variety of situations where Pumpeditha and its leaders were responsible for initiating conflict within the Jewish community. He tells the story of another dispute which arose between the Exilarch Ukba and Kohen Zedek, head of the academy of Pumpeditha, regarding the revenue of Khurasan. The revenue does not seem to be the major issue to Nathan, who makes a big deal about Kohen Zedek and his stance against appointing another exilarch after Ukba gets banished. Clearly, not having an exilarch was politically and financially beneficial for Kohen Zedek and the academy of Pumpeditha. When the vacancy in the exilarchate became a real problem for the Jewish community, they decided to appoint David ben Zakkai to the position. Kohen Zedek immediately objects to this and Amram ben Solomon, the gaon of Sura, gets involved in the debate. Nathan's objective here seems to be to show the power and influence of Sura over the Jewish community. When Amram gets involved and insists the members of his community accept David ben Zakkai as the exilarch, they, "welcome him, accept him, address him with great warmth and enthusiasm, and ritually recognize him as exilarch

over them." In order to get Pumpeditha and specifically Kohen Zedek to do the same, a powerful and influential man who was a well known *paytan* and a *resh kallah* of Sura, Nissi al-Nahrawani, payed Kohen Zedek a visit. When Nissi asked Kohen Zedek to "...accept the exilarch and acknowledge him as your leader," he responded that he would do according to Nissi's word. Nathan seems to have wanted the reader to understand the power that Nissi, who also happened to be a *resh kallah* of Sura, had over Kohen Zedek who was the gaon of Pumpeditha.

The next account that Nathan provides for the reader is the description of the Great Controversy between Saadia al Fayyumi, someone who was greatly respected as someone of great character as well as a scholar, and the Exilarch David ben Zakkai. He recounts how Saadia is appointed as gaon of Sura by David ben Zakkai and how the exilarch insists that Saadia take an oath of loyalty to him. Saadia does so and soon thereafter a controversy arises between the two over an apparent financial matter involving the settlement of an inheritance. This controversy engulfs the entire Jewish community as everyone takes sides, especially the power brokers of the community. Caleb ibn Sarjado was a counselor to the exilarch at the time and therefore aligns himself with David ben Zakkai. Supporting Saadia was Bene Netira, and the wealthy of Baghdad. Therefore, this was not simply a struggle between Saadia and David ben Zakkai, but was a power struggle among the power brokers of Baghdad over control. The two major families of Baghdad, Aaron ben Amram and Joseph ben Phineas had much at stake as it seems that their former relationship as court bankers for Caliph al-Muqtadir had disintegrated. With the success of Bisher and therefore also of Caleb ibn Sarjado, another power shift takes place putting the power behind Caleb and Pumpeditha. Through this account, Nathan

may have been pointing out that Pumpeditha employed dirty politics to gain power and influence. This account also shows the importance of Sura's connection with the Abbasid government. By the time the Abbasids really lose their influence and control within the Muslim world, Sura also loses their government support and can no longer rely on the Caliph to help resolve the internal issues of the Jewish community.

Nathan's description of the Installation of the Exilarch shows once again the clear bias in favor of Sura. Besides the fact that the gaon of Sura sat to the right of the Exilarch while the gaon of Pumpeditha sat on his left, the gaon of Sura was also given the permission to speak after the Exilarch, and if he so desired, the gaon of Sura could give permission for the gaon of Pumpeditha to speak. While the gaon of Sura spoke, Nathan accounts that entire congregation was silent. He also points out the exceptional homiletical abilities that the gaon of Sura had and how he had complete control over the congregation. Further, after the Exilarch finished reading Torah, the gaon of Sura would offer a translation for the congregation as they couldn't understand the Hebrew. There is no mention of the gaon of Pumpeditha speaking or having any function during the reading of the Torah.

Nathan's accounts which follow the description of the Installation ceremony of the Exilarch never again mention either Sura or Pumpeditha. It seems as though Nathan may have been satisfied with his description of the struggle between the academies and of Sura's pre-eminence that he wanted to focus on the role of the exilarch and of the internal functioning of the academies. He describes the Kallah months in great detail, including the description of how questions received from the Diaspora community are addressed and a response is drafted by the students with the help of the head of the academy. The

description is so vivid that Nathan probably was present either assisting the head of the academy or actually drafting responses himself. He seemed to want to make sure that the process of she'elot and teshuvot was documented properly. Also of some importance to Nathan seemed to be the scholarship of those who came to study during the Kallah months and the chastisement of those who came unprepared.

His Agenda

Nathan ha-Bavli's *Seder HaYeshivot* is the primary document that a great many scholars use, including the Encyclopaedia Judaica, to describe the Babylonian Jewish community under the Abbasid Empire. It describes the politics, economics, and Jewish communal life under Muslim rule as well as reveals the infighting and power players no other primary source document can do. However, exactly why Nathan ha-Bavli wrote *Seder HaYeshivot* is unknown. However, a thorough study of *Seder HaYeshivot* reveals both external and internal factors which may have provided Nathan the impetus to write this extremely informative piece of work. Externally, the decline of the Abbasid Empire is inherently tied to the decline of the Babylonian Jewish community. This sparked internal strife between the major Jewish institutions, and to complicate matters, revenues were at an all time low as the Diaspora Jewish communities became more self-sufficient and didn't need to rely on responses to questions regarding Jewish law as they had cultivated their own Jewish scholars.

It is known that the stability of the Babylonian Jewish community was intrinsically tied to the strength of the Abbasid Empire. Therefore, as the Abbasid Empire began its decline, so did Babylonian Jewish institutional life. This was a time of extreme instability and

resulted in a major power struggle, which would ultimately be a battle for survival. The Jewish community could no longer support three major Jewish institutions. Nathan ha-Bavli, who clearly is pro-Sura, has front row seats for this battle and spins the story in Sura's favor. The supporters of Pumpeditha, even though they eventually achieve pre-eminence over Sura, a fact that could not be suppressed, are made out to look corrupt, both politically and morally.

The Jewish community had serious economic problems as the Diaspora communities cultivated local Jewish scholars and had less need for responses to their questions regarding Jewish law. This resulted in a decline in revenue and caused Jewish institutional life to scramble to find additional sources of income. Local power brokers, who were already supporters of the Jewish community, were forced to take sides and subsequently became more crucial and wielded more power because of their wealth. This facilitated Pumpeditha's ascent and dominance over Sura. Symbolic of this power shift was the appointment of Caleb ibn Sarjado to the gaonate of Pumpeditha in 942. Caleb was the son of Bisher ben Aaron who was one of the wealthiest men in Baghdad and a fierce opponent of Saadia. In Nathan ha-Bavli's account of the Great Controversy between Saadia and David ben Zakkai, Caleb supported David ben Zakkai and Bisher eventually got involved and was the impetus behind the controversy's resolution. Interestingly enough, after Saadia dies in 942, the academy of Sura is closed and remains that way for 45 years.

Internally, as the decline of the Babylonian Jewish community progressed, there was a need to chronicle the events that took place, especially when the author watched as his

world crumbled around him. Therefore, Nathan's writing is an attempt to show the Jewish community as it was before its decline under the leadership of Sura. Further, his writing attempts to document that, in his perspective, the decline took place while Pumpeditha was at the helm. Pumpeditha's corrupt, selfish, and immoral behavior, which was only concerned about its own survival, was the cause. The content and structure of Nathan's document shows internal strife, the apparent shift of power from Sura to Pumpeditha, and the decline of the Jewish community. He places full responsibility in the hands of the academy of Pumpeditha and its leaders, particularly of Kohen Zedek, gaon of Pumpeditha from 917-936.

Nathan ha-Bavli's world has changed dramatically and it was a time a major transition and confusion. His work seems to have been a possible public relations campaign for the Babylonian Jewish community and its institutional life. However, the threats that existed were real, including ones from the Palestinian Karaites, and the pain of watching an empire fall and lose much of its power and authority may have sparked a real polemical war against anyone and everyone involved in its demise.

The Idealization of the Academy

While it was certainly important for Nathan to document the politics that ripped apart the Jewish community, it seems almost just as important to him to describe in great detail what happens at the academies and how the academies functioned. Despite his bias towards Sura, he clearly had high regard for the functioning of the academies and for the services they provided for the Babylonian as well as the Diaspora Jewish communities. He must have been in great anguish to watch the institutions which made the Babylonian

Jewish community so great decline and become shadows of what they once were. Because of this, he wanted to make sure the beauty and magnificence of the academies, particularly of Sura, was maintained for future generations. Therefore, the specifics he uses to describe, for example, the Installation of the Exilarch and the events which took place during the Kallah months served to honor and memorialize the glory and respect that the academy once enjoyed. However, by the time Nathan writes *Seder HaYeshivot*, the academies were in the midst of major decline and may not have enjoyed the same magnificence and splendor as they had during the height of Babylonian Jewish life. His writing could not have taken place before 946 and the rule of Caleb ibn Sarjado in Pumpeditha. By that time Jewish institutional life was very different and Nathan may have wanted to preserve the honor and dignity of his world, even though circumstances had changed dramatically. It is therefore somewhat inaccurate to assume that Jewish life had functioned exactly as Nathan described it at the time he wrote *Seder HaYeshivot*.

Chapter Seven-The Post-History of Nathan ha-Bavli

What happened to the Academies?

After the death of Saadia in 928, the academy of Sura was closed and was not reopened again until the year 987 under the leadership of Zemah b. Isaac who was a member of the clan of Pumbeditha *geonim*. There are an additional five geonim that served Sura between the years of 997 and 1037. During this time period, there were financial struggles between Sura and Pumpeditha, which certainly had pre-eminence at the time. According to Benjamin of Tudela who visited Sura in 1170, there were no Jewish settlements left and the town was in ruins.⁴³

Pumpeditha was the pre-eminent academy beginning right after the Great Controversy and lasting until the demise of the academies around 1058 when Hezekiah ben David served as the gaon and as exilarch. The Cairo Genizah provides us with information that there were nine geonim that led the academy of Pumpeditha during the 12th and 13th centuries. They considered themselves heirs to the Pumpeditha academy. The last gaon appears to have been Samuel ben Daniel ha-Kohen, who served in the year 1288. Benjamin of Tudela apparently also visited the academy of Pumpeditha in the 1170s and wrote that there were approximately 3,000 Jews living there at the time.

The Apogee of Karaism

From the downfall of the Umayyad Empire and throughout the rule of the Abbasids, there was much transition and uncertainty, especially for the poor and downtrodden. Rabbinic Judaism was flourishing, with the help and support of the Abbasid Empire, and the

⁴³ Encyclopaedia Judaica CD-Rom, *Sura*.

Babylonian Talmud had been established as the law of the land, and was spreading throughout the Diaspora. However, there were many dissident groups at the time and many fought the rule of the Rabbanites and the authority of the Oral Law. None was as powerful or threatening to Rabbanite authority as the Karaites.

It is extremely hard to fully understand how Karaism developed and grew as a distinct movement because of the source material, which is rather meager in content, and each of which contain an apparent bias towards their own constituencies. However, most would agree that the origins of Karaism seem to take place in Baghdad during the 8th century and can be attributed to its founder Anan ben David, who initially called his group the "Ananites." Anan was steeped in Rabbinic tradition and was alleged to have studied under Yehudai Gaon of Sura. Some of our sources tell us that Anan had dreams of achieving high ranks within the world of Rabbinic Judaism and, as the story goes, he was passed over for the position of exilarch in favor of his younger brother Hananiah.⁴⁴ Out of jealousy and anger, he goes out and forms another sect, one that attempts to recruit from the Rabbanites.

Regardless of what the story actually was, it is clear that the Rabbanites perceived Karaism as growing threat and one that had to be dealt with swiftly. In 905, a 23 year old Saadia writes a refutation against Karaism and Anan, which elevates Saadia's stature in the eyes of the Rabbinic establishment in Baghdad. In Jacob al-Kirkisani's 10th century pro-Karaite *Book of Lights and Watchtowers*, he writes of the threat that Anan ben David posed for the Rabbanites, "Anan was learned in Rabbinic lore and claims that the

⁴⁴ Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, volume 5, pg. 210

Rabbanites would have killed him had God not foiled their efforts.” The Karaites are still a threat even as late as 1161 as shown in Abraham ibn Daud’s *Sefer ha-Kabbalah*. He states that Anan was “a descendent of David which implied a close relationship to the family of the exilarch.” It also mentions, “envy and hatred” as Anan’s motivations in creating what Ibn Daud calls “heresy” and in “seducing” Israel to follow him.⁴⁵

The tenets of Anan ben David’s Karaism were laid out in his book entitled *Sefer HaMitzvot*, which constituted its “counterconstitution” to the Rabbinic way of life. Anan’s writings relied on Biblical proof text to support its creation and adaptation of a Karaite system of Jewish law, but interestingly enough reflected a Talmudic paradigm at the same time. Anan created a stricter system of law for his adherents, including prohibitions on the consumption of practically all meats, the drinking of wine as well as other fermented beverages. Further, he imposed stricter rules than the Rabbinic world regarding circumcision, sex, marriage and instituted new and extended fast times, including a seventy day fast, similar to that of the Muslim fast of Ramadan, from the thirteenth of Nisan to the twenty-third of Sivan.⁴⁶ Going even further, Anan pushed for a total separation between Jews and Gentiles, even to the point of forbidding Karaite Jews to drink milk prepared by a non-Jew.⁴⁷ While Karaism was criticized as being too restrictive and oppressive, it had plenty of adherents who believed in its teaching, certainly enough for it to have been a threat to the Rabbanites.

⁴⁵ Martin A. Cohen, *Anan ben David and Karaite Origins, part I*. The Jewish Quarterly Review, pg. 132-133

⁴⁶ Ibid, pg. 142-143

⁴⁷ Baron, pg. 219

Karaism truly became a real threat under whom many call a co-founder along with Anan, Benjamin ben Moses Nahawendi, who lived in the time around the mid-9th century.

Nahawendi was an author, a theologian, a served as a jurist in the Iranian community of Nahawend. He was much more practical than Anan and allowed for more flexibility in the law, and was also open to allowing outside influences help to shape Karaite law and practice. Further, because he was living in Palestine, Nahawendi wrote in Hebrew, unlike Anan, and in this way was able to appeal to a broader spectrum of people. However, in some cases he was more extreme than Anan, and believed that as soon as children could speak that were obligated to follow the commandments.

The missionary style of the Karaites during the "Golden Age of Karaism"⁴⁸ (between 900 and 1050) and the aggressive nature of their leaders to challenge the Rabbanites make them a significant threat.

The "Success" of the Babylonian Talmud

While it is true that the Jerusalem Talmud was completed a century and half before the Babylonian Talmud, the Babylonian Jewish community was the intellectual and spiritual center of the Jewish world and was more respected not only locally but also in the Diaspora communities. Students who would study at the Babylonian academies would study the Babylonian Talmud before the *Kallah* months. All questions of Jewish law that would come in to the academies from the Diaspora would be answered after studying the Babylonian Talmud and consulting with the geonim. Additionally, Jewish merchants from the Babylonian Jewish community had access to and traded with many of these

⁴⁸ Ibid, pg. 268

Diaspora communities, spreading the word that the Babylonian Talmud was the authoritative edition.

Isaac Alfasi explains the pre-eminence of the Babylonian Talmud using the *halakhic* principle of *halakhah ke-vatra'ei*, meaning that the final decision of Jewish law goes follows the latest Talmudic authority. Further, in cases where the Babylonian Talmud does not address a certain piece of Jewish law, the Jerusalem Talmud may be followed.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ From the Encyclopaedia Judaica CD-ROM
(cf. Abraham b. Isaac, *Ha-Eshkol*, *Hilkhot Sefer Torah*, ed. by S. Albeck, 1 (1935), 159)

Pumpeditha. In both situations, each individual group fought intensely for authority, authenticity, and dominance over the other. Each group believed they were the ones who deserved to be in charge at the expense of the other as well as their constituency. Instead of coming to an agreement for the better good of society, they let their differences rip them apart and in turn engulf their citizens into a world filled with tension, war, and strife. Unfortunately, in these circumstances, no one comes out a winner.

The question of how to fight Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorism that plagues the international community and how to unite the Islamic world is a real challenge. Just as difficult is the struggle to unite the Jewish world and find a way to co-exist and work together for greater good and continuity of the Jewish people. In order for these goals to be accomplished, individual groups need to put aside their egos as well as their partisan politics and work together towards a compromise. Maybe what we need is someone like Bisher ben Aaron to step forward and take the first step.

Chapter Eight-Conclusion

Nathan ha-Bavli's *Seder HaYeshivot* provides us with incredible information as well as a rare look inside the incredible world of the Babylonian Jewish community and into its institutional life. He writes at a time a great transition caused by the fall of the Abbasid Empire and in turn the decline of Babylonian Jewry. From this unique insight a great deal can be learned not only about tenth century Babylonia and its sociopolitical dynamics, but also about the contemporary world in which we live. Alphonse Karr, the French novelist and critic, stated it the best when he wrote in 1849, "The more things change the more they stay the same."

In *Seder HaYeshivot*, we see a world that is in the midst of falling apart. The Abbasid government no longer had control over its vast empire, partisan politics divided the country, and fringe groups sprouted up everywhere fighting for authority and power. Loyalties that were once honored and respected were cast aside in the midst of a fight for survival. Individual needs took priority over the greater good of the community. No arena in this complex sociopolitical world was left unscathed, including politics, economics, and religion. Unfortunately, this was also the case for the Jewish community. The politics were intense and the power brokers and influential citizens came out in force to support to push their own agendas, which clearly was about power and economics. Unfortunately, the same issues hold true in the twenty-first century world we live in today.

It is quite fascinating to note that in the time period that Nathan ha-Bavli writes about, two major splits occur, ones which are plaguing our world today: the Muslim Sunni-Shia split and the division of the Jewish community into the two camps of Sura and

PART TWO

TRANSLATION OF NATHAN HA-BAVLI'S SEDER YESHIVOT

The Structure of the Academies

The Advantages of the Academy of Sura over Pumpeditha

At first, in the days of Rav⁵⁰, who marked the end of the Tannaitic period and the beginning of the Amoraic, there was as of yet no academy in Babylonia⁵¹. Rather, the principals who were there were called "heads of the order," as we read, "Who was the head of the order in Babylonia?" He was answered, "Abba Arika," that is Rav.⁵²

⁵⁰ Rav, a leading *amora* also known as Abba b. Aivu and Abba Arikha, was born during the latter half of the 2nd century and was the founder of the Academy of Sura. He was born in Kafri, in southern Babylonia, and belonged to a distinguished family, one of which was his uncle Rav Hiyya. He studied in the academy of Judah ha-Nasi, in which he was ordained, and became a very distinguished figure, serving on the Bet Din of the Exilarch and having the honor of being the only Babylonian Sage allowed to disagree with a *tanna* without basing his view on another *tanna* (Ket. 106a).

⁵¹ Babylonia was located in Western Asia between the Tigris and the Euphrates; corresponding approximately to the modern Iraq.

⁵² Chullin 137b

אמר ליה: מאן ריש סדרא בבבל? אמר ליה: אבא אריכא, אמר ליה: אבא אריכא קרית ליה! זכירנא
כד חוה יתיבנא אחר י"ז שורן אחוריה דרב קמיה דרבי, ונפקי זיקוקין דנור מפומיה דרב לפומיה דרבי,
ומפומיה דרבי לפומיה דרב, ולית אנא ידע מה הן אמרין, ואת אבא אריכא קרית ליה! אמר ליה איחו:
ראשית הגז בכמה? אמר ליה ר' יוחנן: בששים, והאנן בכל שהן תנן? אמר ליה: אם כן, מה בין לי ולך?

He [R. Johanan] then enquired, 'Who is the head of the Academy in Babylonia'?

'Abba Arika', he replied. 'And you simply call him Abba Arika!' said [R. Johanan]. 'I remember when I was sitting before Rabbi, seventeen rows behind Rab, seeing sparks of fire leaping from the mouth of Rabbi into the mouth of Rab and from the mouth of Rab into the mouth of Rabbi, and I could not understand what they were saying; and you simply call him Abba Arika!' Then the other asked, 'What is the minimum quantity subject to the law of the first of the fleece'? — 'Sixty [sela's]', he replied. 'But', said the other, 'we have learnt: Whatever [their fleeces weigh]!' 'Then what difference is there between me and you?' he retorted.

And after Rav passed away, an academy was created in Babylonia on the model of Eretz Yisrael, and that was Sura⁵³. Rav Huna⁵⁴ presided over it for forty years. He was the first of among all who served as academy heads in Babylonia. After him, Rav Hisda⁵⁵ presided for a term that lasted ten years. At the end of Rav Hisda's life, Rabba bar Nahmani⁵⁶ established an academy in Pumpeditha. From that time on there has been an academy of Pumpeditha, which has become the major academy of the Diaspora. Rabba bar Nahmani presided for twenty-two years and was succeeded by Rav Yosef⁵⁷ for two

⁵³ Sura, the important center of Torah studies for several centuries, was located in southern Babylonia where the Euphrates divided into two rivers.

⁵⁴ Rav Huna, an *amora*, lived in the second half of the third century, and came from Drukeret, a town near Sura. He was a disciple of Rav's, and upon his death and upon the death of Samuel, he became the head of the Academy of Sura. He was quite distinguished and belonged to the family of an exilarch, even though he was quite poor and made his living as a farmer working with cattle. He is alleged to have died in the year 296 C.E., according to the letter of Sherira Gaon.

⁵⁵ Rav Hisda, a Babylonian *amora* born in Kafri to a priestly family, lived during the second and third generations of the *amoraim* and died in 310 at the age of 92. He was a disciple of Rav and Avimi, and eventually rose to become the head of the Academy of Sura, which occurred during the last ten years of his life. Early on in his life he was quite poor, but gained significant wealth as a brewer and rebuilt the Academy of Sura in 294 when it fell into disrepair.

⁵⁶ Rabba bar Nahmani, a Babylonian *amora* born to a priestly family which could trace its lineage to Eli the high priest, lived from 270-330. He was a disciple of Huna at Sura as well as Judah b. Ezekiel at Pumpeditha. After Judah died, Rabba became head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, and presided there for 22 years until his death. Under his leadership, Pumpeditha rose in esteem, with the number of students climbing to 400 and during the Kallah months, the attendance reached 12,000.

⁵⁷ Rav Yosef ben Hiyya, a Babylonian *amora*, lived during the 4th century and, after the death of Rabba, served for two and a half years as head of the Academy of Pumpeditha. He was a disciple of Judah ben Ezekiel and was known for his incredible knowledge and high ethical standards, particularly his humility. While he was well studied in Mishnah and well known for his biblical exegesis, he also delved into mysticism and was one of the "masters of the merkavah." He died in the year 333.

and a half years. Then Abbaye⁵⁸ presided for fourteen years. Following Abbaye, Rava⁵⁹ presided over Pumpeditha, while over Sura there was a group belonging to the school of the blessed Rav Yosef. As we learn, "He said to him, 'That thy head be raised over the whole city.'" ⁶⁰And his presidency lasted for fourteen years. After him, Rav Papa⁶¹

⁵⁸ Abbaye, who lived from 278-338, was a Babylonian *amora* from a priestly family, one of which supposedly was descended from Eli the high priest. He was raised by his uncle Rabba b. Nahmani, as his father died before he was born, and his mother died in childbirth. He was a disciple of his uncle Rabba as well as R. Yosef ben Hiyya, and served as the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha after R. Yosef died, for fourteen years until his own death.

⁵⁹ Rava or R. Abba b. Joseph b. Hama, was a fourth century Babylonian *amora* who was a disciple of Hisda and Nahman b. Jacob, the heads of Sura and Pumpeditha respectively.

⁶⁰ Yoma 53b

אמר ליה לרב יוסף: הכי עבד רבא. אמר ליה: יהא רעוא דתרזם רישך אכולה כרכא! אמר רבי אלכסנדרי אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: המתפלל צריך שיפסיע שלש פסיעות לאחוריו, ואחר כך יתן שלום. אמר ליה רב מרדכי: כיון שפסע שלש פסיעות לאחוריו - התם איבעיא ליה למיקם, משל לתלמיד הנפטר מרבו, אם חוזר לאלתר - דומה לכלב ששב על קיאו. תניא נמי הכי: המתפלל צריך שיפסיע שלש פסיעות לאחוריו, ואחר כך יתן שלום. ואם לא עשה כן - ראוי לו שלא התפלל. ומשום שמעיה אמרו שנותן שלום לימין ואחר כך לשמאל, שנאמר +דברים לג+ מימינו אש דת למו ואומר +תהלים צא+ יפל מצדך אלף ורבה מימין. מאי ואומר? וכי תימא: אורחא דמילתא היא למיתב בימין, תא שמע יפל מצדך אלף ורבה מימין. רבא חזייה לאבבי דיהיב שלמא לימינא ברישא. אמר ליה: מי סברת לימין דידך? לשמאל דידך קא אמינא, דהוי ימינו של הקדוש ברוך הוא. אמר רב חייא בריה דרב הונא: חזינא להו לאבבי ורבא דפסעי להו שלש פסיעות בכריעה אחת.

The people told R. Joseph that Raba did that, whereupon he said to him: May it be the will [of God] that you raise your head above the whole city. R. Alexandri said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: One who prays [the 'Amidah] should go three steps backwards, and then recite 'peace'. R. Mordecai said to him: Having taken the three steps backwards, he ought to remain standing, as should a disciple who takes leave of his master; for if he returns at once, it is as with a dog who goes back to his vomit. It has also been taught thus: One who prays shall take three steps backwards and then pronounce 'peace'. And if he did not do so, it would have been better for him not to have prayed at all. In the name of R. Shemaya they said: He should pronounce 'peace' towards the right, then towards the left, as it is said: At His right hand was a fiery law unto them, and it is also said: A thousand may fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand. For what reason 'and it is also said'? — You might have said it is the usual thing to take a thing with the right hand, come therefore and hear: 'A thousand may fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand'.

Raba saw Abaye pronouncing 'peace' first towards the right and he said to him: Do you mean that your right hand is meant? It is your left hand, which is the right of the Holy One, blessed be He. R. Hiyya the son of R. Huna said: I saw Abaye and Raba who were taking all three steps with one genuflexion.

presided for seventeen years and was followed by Rav Ashi⁶² for sixty years. Rav Tavyomi⁶³, the son of Mar son of Ashi, presided after him. Then came Rabban Yose⁶⁴ during whose presidency the Talmud as completed. When Rabban Yose passed away, the two academies remained without a gaon, until the Saboraim, who followed the sages of the Talmud, who came to an agreement that they should create two academies, like in the days of Rav Huna. This was because the Saboraim, even though they did not add to the Talmud or subtract from it, nevertheless were academy heads and were geonim, that is presiding and adjudicating, and disseminating their decisions throughout Israel. Such has been the custom in their academies until this day.

The following are the degrees of superiority of the Academy of Sura over Pumpedita:

⁶¹ Rav Papa, who lived from 300-375, was a Babylonia *amora*, and was a disciple of Rava and Abbaye. After Abbaye died, he founded his own academy at Naresh, which was near Sura, and served as its head for 19 years, until his own death. Papa came from a wealthy family, and because of his affluence with business, increased his wealth through the sale of poppy seeds and by brewing date beer.

⁶² Rav Ashi, also known as Rabbana, lived from 335-427/28, and was the most celebrated Babylonian *amora* of his generation. He studied with many distinguished scholars, including Rava and Papa. After Rav Papa died, Rav Ashi was appointed head of the Academy of Sura, occupying the position for 60 years. Rav Ashi is notably the one who began the task of editing the Babylonian Talmud, assembling and arranging the tractates that had been collected for more than 200 years. Even though Ashi died before the redaction was complete, he is still credited for completing the work as he did compile the bulk of it.

⁶³ Rav Tavyomi, also known as Mar bar Rav Ashi, was the son of Ashi, the redactor of the Talmud. He was well respected and in 455, he became the head of the Academy of Mata Mehasya, where his father had been the head some years before. He died in 468.

⁶⁴ Rabban Yose, also known as R. Yose b. Zevida, was a Palestinian *amora* and lived during the first half of the fourth century. He was a close associate of R. Jonah, and together they were business partners, in production of wine, and the two succeeded to the rectorate of the Academy of Tiberias, where they gained many disciples. R. Yose was known as the leader of the Palestinian Jewish community, after R. Jonah's death, and received *she'elot* from as far away as Egypt.

First, that there be no geonim in Pumpeditha, only in Sura, in the person of the head of its academy.

Further, if the heads of the two academies came to a meeting with the Exilarch in the capital at Baghdad⁶⁵ on the Shabbat where it was customary to do so, the head of the Academy of Sura and his disciples would read the Torah in the presence of the Exilarch and because of his greatness, while the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha and his students would read and interpret it.

Further, if the Exilarch sat upon the bench designated for him, the head of the Academy of Sura would sit on his right and the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha would sit on his left.

Furthermore, if they sat at a table during a *seudat mitzvah*⁶⁶ with the Exilarch, the head of the academy of Sura would break bread and say grace. Further, when entering or exiting, the head of the Academy of Sura would precede the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha. Even if the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha was an old man of eighty and the head of Sura was younger, the primacy was always with Sura.

⁶⁵ Baghdad was the capital of the Abbasid dynasty from its foundation in 762. From then a Jewish community existed there which eventually became the largest Jewish community of Iraq, and the seat of the exilarch.

⁶⁶ *Se'udat Mitzvah* -also known as *se'udah shel mitzvah*. These were banquets held in connection with religious acts, such as weddings, circumcisions, etc., participation in which is regarded as a religious duty.

Furthermore, when they corresponded with one another, the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha would write, "This document is for the Gaon and the scholars of Sura." But the head of the Academy of Sura would write, "This document is for the scholars of Pumpeditha." He would not include the word "Gaon." Furthermore, when the Exilarch would read from the Torah, the head of the Academy of Sura would provide the translation while the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha would sit silently.

Furthermore, whenever the Exilarch died, all his revenues would be given to the head of the Academy of Sura and there would be no portion for the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha. In former times, the Academy of Sura would take two thirds of the income for the academies and the Academy of Pumpeditha would take one third. But when Kohen Zedek⁶⁷ became head of Pumpeditha and number of its scholars increased, one third which had been their custom was not enough for them. Therefore a dispute arose between them regarding this until the pillars of the community gathered together and forged a compromise between them, namely that they should henceforth equally divide all the income that normally came to the academies and that is what they have been doing until this day.

⁶⁷ Kohen Zedek, lived during the 10th century and was head of the Academy of Pumpeditha from 917-936. After the death of Judah b. Samuel in 917, the Academy appointed Mevasser Kahana b. Kimoi to the position of Gaon, while the Exilarch David b. Zakkai appointed Kohen Zedek. They both served a head of the Academy, until Mevasser Kahana died in 922/925, when Kohen Zedek served by himself until his death in 936.

The Exilarch Ukba and David son of Zakkai

The following is what Nathan ha-Kohen bar Yitzhak the Baghdadi says regarding what he saw in part and what he heard in part regarding the Exilarch Ukba⁶⁸, who was from the seed of David and who went to North Africa after he had presided in Baghdad for many years of indeterminate number. In his day, Rav Kohen Zedek the son of Yose was head of the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, that is Alamber in Arabic, for about four years. After that time, a dispute arose between them regarding the income from Khurasan⁶⁹. In the past, the administration of the Jewish community of Khurasan was under the jurisdiction of Pumpeditha: Pumpeditha appointed a judge was over it and all the income that it generated would go to Pumpeditha.

Now Rav Ukba tried to appoint a judge of his own to rule over it and to send its income to him. But Rav Kohen Moreh Zedek objected with the support of Joseph the son of Phinehas⁷⁰ and his son-in-law Netira,⁷¹ Avi Sahal and Isaac, in addition to a number of the other important men of the time. It reached the point where Moreh Zedek banished

⁶⁸ Mar Ukba was the Exilarch in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, and succeeded his uncle Zakkai b. AHunai.

⁶⁹ Khurasan was a province of N.E. Persia. Jewish history has a long association with Khurasan, which in some Hebrew sources was believed to be the dwelling place of the lost Ten Tribes.

⁷⁰ Rav Joseph b. Pinchas was a businessman in Baghdad during the late ninth and early 10th centuries, and partnered with Aaron b. Amram. They were quite savvy, as they had financial dealings with the vizier and in 911/912 were appointed court bankers to the caliph al-Muqtadir, and they served in this position until 924. Rav Joseph was a big supported of the Babylonian Jewish community and used his power to support and further the community and its standing.

⁷¹ Netira was a businessman who held considerable influence in Baghdad during the 8th and 9th centuries.

Ukba from the Babylonian region and Ukba went into exile in a place called Karmisin⁷², five days journey to the east along the road to Khurasan. And, at that time, Amram the son of Solomon, was the head of the Academy in Sura.

Now, Ukba stayed in Karmisin for a number of months, at which point the Caliph came out of Baghdad to vacation in Karmisin because it had lakes, gardens, orchards, and all the crocuses that grew in Babylonia came from it. And outside of Karmisin, about a half a mile, was a place called Shafran, in which there was a beautiful building. And, when the Caliph went there, he used to walk around its grounds.

There was a big building in that town, measuring about two stories high. In the building there were two statues, one was of the Persian King Cosroes⁷³, and the other was of his consort Sirin. Underneath him was a statue of a hollow horse. Water from a nearby mountain was ducted into the horse and came out of his mouth. The Caliph had the habit of going to this place daily to walk around there.

So, Ukba used to mark the appointed time, the time when the Caliph would normally go there, and stand in front of him and regale him with pleasant words and beautiful songs. He did this everyday for the whole year. The Caliph's scribe would record his poems and his words every day, and he noticed that what Ukba said on one day he never repeated even once. He did this for the whole year, from the beginning until the end. And after the

⁷² Karmisin, also known as Kermanshah, was a town northeast of Baghdad.

⁷³ Chosroes II was "the Victorious" (Parvez), king of Persia, son of Hormizd IV, grandson of Chosrau I, 590-628. His wife was Queen Sirin, who was a Christian.

end of the year, the scribe told the Caliph that Ukba never repeated himself from the beginning of the year to its end. The Caliph demanded some evidence, for he did not believe it. So the scribe brought him his notebooks with the poetry of Ukba written therein, and nothing was repeated, let alone used for a third time. The Caliph then sent for Ukba and when he came in, the Caliph said, "What can I do for you?" Ukba asked if he could get his job back. So, the Caliph wrote a letter on his behalf.

And when Ukba returned, Netira, Joseph ben Phineas, and their entire crowd were greatly distressed. They objected to the Caliph about it to the point where the Caliph ordered Ukba to leave his entire realm. He thus exiled him for a second time. Letters were written to all the people in the Babylonian realm that Ukba was no longer welcome in the territories under Babylonian control. If he should enter any of them, all of his possessions would be confiscated. Since none of the lands of the east were open to Ukba, he went out westward.

The Exilarchate remained vacant for about four or five years, until it became intolerable for the Jewish people. They spoke to David ben Zakkai, a relative of Ukba, the previous Exilarch, to make him Exilarch. But, Kohen Zedek, the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, was distressed over this because he did not want the leadership of David ben Zakkai because of his relationship with Ukba, the previous Exilarch. The head of the Academy of Sura acknowledged his leadership and wrote to all the members of his Academy: to his scholars and to their disciples⁷⁴ that they should welcome him, accept

⁷⁴ To their advanced students=Taana'im

him, address him with great warmth and enthusiasm, and ritually recognize him as Exilarch over them. They did as they were told.

This lasted until they reached a place called Katzar, to the south of Baghdad, about seven miles between Baghdad and Sura. This was the residence of David ben Zakkai and the place of his birth. They greeted him and they acknowledged his leadership. Yet, withal, Kohen Zedek, head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, refused and held fast for three years.

There was a blind man in Baghdad, renowned for his miracles. He was a Resh Kallah⁷⁵ of Nahrawan⁷⁶ who intervened diplomatically for the purpose of elevating David ben Zakkai over the Academy of Pumpeditha through the acknowledgment of its principal, Kohen Zedek. He became so involved that one night he proceeded to magically open all the locks in Baghdad. That day he opened 14 locks, until he finally reached Kohen Zedek and stood by him and found him at study in the middle of the night. When Kohen Zedek saw him, he trembled and asked for the reason of his coming. He said to him, "For heaven's sake, my lord, I had to open fourteen locks to get here." So Kohen Zedek said to him, "What can I do for you?" And he said, "I have come to ask you to accept the

⁷⁵ Resh Kallah was a title that was awarded to the leading sages in Babylonian academies during the Talmudic and geonic periods. The specific duty of the *reshei kallah* was to preach publicly in the academy. In Talmudic times the *reshei kallah* were accustomed to preach only during the *kallah* months, whereas in the geonic period the *reshei kallah* were accustomed to give sermons also on the rest of the Sabbaths. In the geonic period the *resh kallah* also bore the title of *alluf*. In this period the title was awarded also to *hakhamim* who excelled in their studies in the academy, as well as *hakhamim* who resided in places other than Babylonia, such as Kairouan and Spain.

⁷⁶ Nahrawan was a town in Iraq, E. of Baghdad. It was a flourishing town during the time of the Abbasid caliphs (8th and 9th centuries) because the main highway to Persia passed through the town, crossing the Nahrawan canal at this point. The Nahrawan community belonged to the "domain" of the exilarch.

Exilarch and acknowledge him as your leader." So, he answered that he would do according to Nissi's word.

Nisi went out to the Exilarch and informed him and set a date for Kohen Zedek to come. He returned to Kohen Moreh Zedek and informed him of the date.

Then, Kohen Zedek, all his associates, the members of the Academy, and all of the people who were with him gathered together and formed ranks to go forth to greet the Exilarch. They approached him in a place called Zarzar, about a half day's journey from Baghdad. When they approached the Exilarch, he was already advancing with a large multitude, and with him were all of his associates and all the others who joined with him.

Now they had already appointed a place of meeting in a well known section of the old city. When they reached the gate of the city of Baghdad, they were sang pleasant songs and recited beautiful poetry until they arrived at the courtyard which had been prepared for him. And he entered and stayed in Baghdad, along with all of his men, their wives, and all the members of his household.

After five years, the head of the Academy of Sura died and Mar bar Kiyumi took his place. He was the leading figure of his generation and presided over the Academy of Sura for 20 years and then he died. Kohen Zedek, head of the Academy in Pumpeditha, was still alive.

Rav Saadia Gaon and his Dispute with the Exilarch

When the head of the Academy of Sura died, the Academy was in distress. The Exilarch took counsel as to whom to appoint in it. He sent for Nisi Nahrawani ⁷⁷ and asked him to be the head of the Academy. Nisi said to him, "This is impossible, for the head of the Academy is called, "A Light to the World," and I am "Dark to the World"⁷⁸." So the Exilarch said to him, "What is your opinion in this matter?" He replied, "Do whatever you want." So, the Exilarch focused on Rav Saadia the Fayyumite⁷⁹ and Zemah b. Shahin, the brilliant scion of an illustrious family. The Exilarch told him what he was thinking of, namely that he had narrowed the field down to Rav Saadia or Zemah b. Shahin. Nisi told him to appoint Zemah b. Shahin, and not Rav Saadia, even though Saadia was a luminary with extraordinary knowledge because Saadia was afraid of no one in the world and showed no partiality to people because of the greatness of his wisdom, his candor, his eloquence, and his integrity. The Exilarch said to him, "Well, I have already made up my mind and my decision is for Rav Saadia Fayyumi." And Nisi said to him, "Do whatever you want, I will be the first to heed him, sit before him, and to follow him." So, they appointed Saadia at that very time, in the presence of Kohen Zedek

⁷⁷ Nissi (Nissim) ben Berechiah Al-Nahrawani (late ninth–early tenth century.) Nissi came from Nahrawan in Persia and was one of the most important *paytanim*, poets, of his time. He is well known for his known is his confession for the Day of Atonement, which begins: "Lord of the Universe, before all else, I have no mouth to answer." He served as a *Resh Kallah* of the academy of Sura.

⁷⁸ חשוכה דעלמא - "Dark to the World"-This is a euphemism for blindness.

⁷⁹ Saadia (Ben Joseph) Gaon (882–942). Saadia was born in Pithom (Abu Suweir), in the Faiyum district in Egypt. He was an esteemed halakhist, liturgist, and philosopher, who served as a *Resh Kallah* over the academy of Pumpeditha. He was the first to put his halakhic works into the form of monographs, assigning a separate one to each topic of Hebrew law. His philosophy is captured in his Book of Beliefs and Opinions.

and the associates of the Academy of Pumpeditha, and they named him to be the head of the Academy of Sura.

Not long thereafter a controversy arose between the Exilarch and Rav Saadia, and the realm of Babylonia was split in half. All of the rich men of Baghdad and the associates of the Academies and the important people were with Rav Saadia to help him with money and influence at the court of the Caliph, his princes, and his counselors. But there was a very important man in Baghdad named Caleb ibn Sarjado, who was a counselor to the Exilarch. He was also a wealthy man and gave 60,000 zuzim to unseat Rav Saadia, but he was unable to do so because with Rav Saadia were the sons of Netira and all the wealthy of Baghdad. Now, Caleb was jealous of Rav Saadia, because although Caleb was eloquent and learned and whenever people asked him a question he could give them a rounded answer, Rav Saadia could do ten times as well, and Caleb envied him because of this.

The essence of the controversy between Rav Saadia and the Exilarch dealt with legal matters concerning some people under the jurisdiction of the Exilarch and involving a great deal of money, an inheritance where they wished to receive their share. A dispute flared between them, to the point where they pledged to give a tenth of their receipts to the Exilarch in exchange for his removal of complaints against them and a satisfactory settlement of their case. The Exilarch would share seven hundred gold pieces from the tithe that was given to him. So the Exilarch drew up the appropriate documents, signed them, and ordered them to go to the heads of the Academy for their confirmation. When

the documents reached Rav Saadia, he mulled over them and saw things that did not seem right. Nevertheless, he affably said to the messengers, "Go to Kohen Zedek, the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, let him confirm this writ and I will confirm after him." And he said all this because he wanted to conceal the objectionable matter which he saw in the language of the document but which he did not want to reveal.

So the messengers did as he had instructed them. They went to Kohen Zedek, the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, and he signed off. And after Kohen Zedek signed off, they returned to Rav Saadia asking him to sign off and confirm them. Rav Saadia said to them, "Why do you ask for my signature? Look, you have the signature of the Exilarch and Kohen Zedek, the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha. You do not need my signature." They said to him, "Why do you refuse to sign?" He said to them, "I don't know." And he refused to reveal the reason until they made him swear to reveal what he saw in their writ. Unable to transgress his oath and conceal, he told them what objection he saw in their writs and the reason for their inadequacy.

They returned to the Exilarch and informed him. The Exilarch sent for his son Judah and said to him, "Go tell him in my name to confirm the writs." So, Judah, the Exilarch's son, went to Rav Saadia and told him in the name of his father, to sign the documents. Saadia said to him, "Go back to your father and tell him that it is written in the Torah, 'You should not show favoritism in judgment.'"⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Deuteronomy 1:17

יז לא תלכידו פנים במשפט פקטון כנדל תשמעון לא תגורו מפני איש כי המשפט לאלהים הוא והדבר אשר יקשה מכם תקרבון אלי ושמעתי:

So, the Exilarch sent his son a second time, saying, "Tell him to 'sign the documents and not to be a fool.'" The young man went and told Rav Saadia pleasantly. He did not give him the message that his father had instructed him to give. Rather, he spoke to him entreatingly that he sign off on the documents, in order to avoid a falling out between him and his father. Saadia refused, and the Exilarch sent his son several times, yet the son did not wish to disclose to Rav Saadia exactly what his father had said to him, but rather he greatly entreated him to sign the documents to avoid a falling out between him and his father over this matter.

When the young man's father continued to pressure him to go back and forth, the young man lost his temper and he lifted his hand against Rav Saadia, saying to him, "If you do not sign the documents like my father said, I am going to beat you up." No sooner did these words leave Judah's mouth when Rav Saadia's henchmen grabbed him, threw him out the door and shut the gate in his face.

When the young man arrived back to his father, his eyes visibly filled with tears, he asked him what had happened and Judah explained everything that had occurred. When his father heard this, he excommunicated Rav Saadia and appointed Rav Joseph bar Jacob as head of the Academy of Sura in his place. Also, when Rav Saadia heard about this, he excommunicated the Exilarch and he sent Hasan, the brother of David ben Zakkai, who

You shall not be partial in judgment, hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is God's. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it.

was the same as Yashu, to be the Exilarch in the place of David ben Zakkai, his brother. He ruled three years and died.

The dissension continued for seven years, until a court case arose between two men who were involved in litigation. One chose Rav Saadia as his spokesperson and the other chose the Exilarch. The Exilarch sent his henchmen to catch the man that had chosen Rav Saadia. The man fled but they caught up with him, and they beat him up. The victim, his clothes, cried out to the entire community, telling them what had happened to him. This created a sad state of affairs because there was a custom that anyone under the jurisdiction of the Exilarch was exempt from the authority of the heads of the academies. So too, anyone under the jurisdiction of the heads of the academies was exempt from that of the Exilarch, nor could they complain to any leader other than the one in their respective jurisdiction. And if there was a foreigner in the land, and was not under any specific jurisdiction, he could go to any jurisdiction of his choice. Because the man who had been beaten up did not belong to the jurisdiction of the Exilarch, the people took up his case and they came as a group to Bisher son of Aaron, who was the father in law of Caleb ibn Sarjado, an important man in Baghdad and highly esteemed. They wrote to him about the origins of this controversy between Jews and about their present plight. They said to him, "Come, because you have to deal with this. We are your followers and perhaps we can put an end to this contentiousness which is the sole responsibility of your son in law, Caleb ibn Sarjado."

So Bisher ben Aaron contacted all the prominent men of the time and assembled them in his house and with them the Exilarch. Bisher said to him in their presence, "What is this that you have done? And how long will you persist in this controversy without being exposed to divine retribution? Fear God and remove yourself from this dissension, for you know how great the power of dissension can be. And now, give some thought to the repair of your relationship with Rav Saadia. Make peace with him and put aside your rancor at him." The Exilarch heeded these words and answered him irenically that he would do as he had said. So, Bisher got up and went to Rav Saadia, to bring him to his house along with his followers and his advisers. He repeated what he had said to the Exilarch, and Saadia also agreed peacefully.

[This is how the reconciliation was accomplished:]

The Exilarch and all his advisers and associates were in one house, and Rav Saadia was with all his advisers and associates in another house, facing the first. The two principals were in the courtyard of Bisher who had intervened peacefully and conciliatorily between them. The representatives of the heads of the congregation divided into two sections: one row accompanied the Exilarch and the other row Rav Saadia. The two of them came from opposite directions towards one another until they met and kissed and embraced.

All of this took place on the Fast of Esther. When this matter between them was over, Bisher was very happy because they made peace with one another through his help, and he entreated them and all their followers to stay with him for that night and read the Scroll of Esther in his house. But the Exilarch and Rav Saadia did not want to do this. So the Exilarch said, "Let Rav Saadia stay with me or let him stay with you." They cast lots

and the lot fell on the Exilarch that Rav Saadia should spend them time with him. So he did and went to his place. He dined with the Exilarch for the Purim meal, and he stayed with him for two days. On the third day, he left with joy and contentment.

And when the agreement between them was concluded, Rav Joseph bar Jacob, whom the Exilarch had brought in and made head of the Academy in place of Rav Saadia all those years when the dispute flared between them, now that the dispute had come to an end, Rav Joseph retired to his home. Nevertheless, the salary that he received when he was head of the academy was not taken away from him but rather was sent to him at home.

When the Exilarch died, there was a successful effort to elevate his son in his place. But he only survived his father for seven months until he died. Now he had a young son of approximately twelve years. And, Rav Saadia took him under his wing and supported his education until Rav Saadia died.

In those days, there was no one regarded as suitable to be Exilarch, except a man that was from the children of Heman, who lived in Nisibis. But before they could appoint him, something happened to him: He got into a fight with a non-Jew in the marketplace. He was accused of having cursed an icon and was put to death.

After the death of Rav Saadia, Rav Joseph ben Jacob presided over the Academy of Sura. And after the death of Kohen Zedek, the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha, Zama bar Kafni presided over his academy for thirteen months. Then he died and Hananya ben Rav

Yehuda presided for five and half years and then he died. And after him came Caleb son of Joseph, also known as Caleb ibn Sarjado⁸¹.

The Installation of an Exilarch

This is what Rav Nathan haKohen said regarding the installation of an Exilarch and his confirmation at the time of his installation. It goes as follows:

If there was a popular consensus to nominate the Exilarch, then the two heads of the academies convened with their members, and all the leaders of the community and the elders would gather in the house of an important man in Babylonia, one of the pillars of the generation such as Netira or the like. And the person in whose house the gathering took place derived great honor from this matter. He received considerable recognition for it and his power increased because of the gathering. Then they all assembled in the synagogue on Thursday to greet the nominee, show him support, and sound the shofar to inform all the people, both young and old. And, on hearing this, every person sent an offering to the nominee according to his means. All the heads of the community along with the wealthy sent him fine clothing and beautiful jewelry, and vessels of silver and gold, in accordance with their means. The nominee devoted himself to the banquet on

⁸¹ Caleb ibn Sarjado, also known as Aaron ben Joseph ha-Kohen Sarjado, was the son-in-law of Bisher b. Aaron, one of Baghdad's wealthiest and most respected citizens. He served as *gaon* and head of the academy at Pumbeditha 942–60. Caleb wrote an Arabic commentary on the Pentateuch and some of his teshuvot are still extant, found in *Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim*. Fragments of his commentary on other parts of the Pentateuch are cited in Abraham ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch. Maimonides mentions Aaron among the older Jewish scholars who opposed the view of the Greek philosophers that the universe is eternal.

Thursday and Friday with all kinds of food, and drink, and desserts, like all kinds of sweets.

When they arose to go to the synagogue on Shabbat, many of the pillars of the congregation gathered to accompany the nominee. Now, prepared for him in the synagogue on Friday afternoon was a wooden platform, seven *cubits* long and three *cubits* wide, on which had been placed beautiful cloths made of silk, blue, purple and crimson, to the point where the entire platform was covered and nothing could be seen. Underneath the platform entered the choir chosen from the notables of the community with experienced, beautiful and pleasant voices, with musical talent and repertoire, skilled in prayer in all its dimensions.

Now the Exilarch himself was concealed by the heads of the academies. The choir would stand under the platform, and no one sat on the platform.

The presiding officer of the synagogue would begin with “ברוך שאמר”⁸² and the choir would respond to every expression beginning with “ברוך שאמר” and “ברוך הוא.” And when he chanted the “מזמור שיר ליום השבת”⁸³ they would respond him with, “טוב להודות

⁸² ברוך שאמר is the first prayer in the section of liturgy known as “P’sukei D’Zimra”, or morning psalms. This prayer itself consists of eighty seven words, and according to Philip Birnbaum in his *Siddur Hashalem*, can be found in the 9th century siddur of Rav Amram.

⁸³ Song for the Sabbath Day, Psalm 92, is found in the Shabbat Morning service and precedes the Hallel, which consists of Psalms 145-150.

לה." Then, all the people together would recite the "פסוקי דזמרה"⁸⁴ in their entirety. The presiding officer would rise and open with "נשמת כל חי"⁸⁵, and the choir would respond, "תברך את שמך." And after every phrase the choir responded, until he reached the "קדושה". The community would recite it quietly and the choir would respond aloud. Then at a point, the choir stopped and the presiding officer would continue alone until "גאל ישראל." All the people would then stand for the "תפילה." And when the leader began the *amidah* and reached the "קדושה", the choir would respond "האל הקדוש." When he finished the "תפילה" the congregation would sit down. At that point, the Exilarch would emerge from his hiding place. When the congregation saw him, they stood up and remained standing until he sat down upon the platform prepared for him. Then the head of the Academy of Sura would emerge and take his seat after a ceremonial bow of subordination. Then the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha would emerge and likewise bow down in subordination to the Exilarch before he took a seat at his left. During all of this, the congregation stood on their feet until the three of them had taken their seats. The Exilarch sat in the middle, with the head of the Academy of Sura on his right, and the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha on his left. Between them and the Exilarch was a vacant space over which had been spread a beautiful fine linen cloth fastened with cords of fine linen and purple cloth. The presiding officer of the synagogue then covered his head with the garment in front of the platform and blessed the Exilarch with formal

⁸⁴ פסוקי דזמרה-P'sukei D'Zimra. According to Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman in *My People's Prayer Book*, vol. 3, the P'sukei D'Zimra is, "best regarded as the prayer before the prayer." It is a warm-up before the actual prayer service and consists five subsections: Baruch she'amar, biblical material, Hallel (Psalms 145-150), a second subsection of Biblical material, and Birkat HaShir (Blessing of Song.)

⁸⁵ נשמת כל חי-Nishmat Kol Hai. This is after the second subsection of Biblical readings in the P'sukei D'Zimra and is the closing prayer of this section. The Mishnah, in Pesachim 118a, identifies this as Birkat HaShir, the Blessing of Song.

blessings which had been prepared for him in advance. He spoke in a low voice, so that no one in the congregation would hear him, except for those seated around the platform and the choir. When he uttered this blessing, the choir underneath would softly respond, "אמן," while the entire congregation was silent until he completed his blessings.

Then the Exilarch took his turn and preached on the subject of that day's portion. He then granted permission to the head of the Academy of Sura to speak. And the head of the Academy of Sura similarly granted permission to the head of the Academy of Pumpeditha. They ceremonially displayed respect for one another, until the head of the Academy of Sura began to speak, with a translator beside him to explain his words to the people. He preached with reverence with his eyes closed, his head covered with his prayer shawl, even covering his forehead. While he preached no one in the congregation said a word or uttered a sound. If he perceived anyone speaking, he opened his eyes and fear and trembling gripped the congregation. And when he finished, he began with a question and said "Now, it is time for you to study." And then a wise and experienced elder stood up, responded appropriately, and sat down. Then the presiding officer stood up and said *kaddish*. And when he reached, "בחייו וביומיו," he said, "In the life of our prince, the Exilarch, in your lives and in the lives of all the house of Israel.⁸⁶" When he finished the *kaddish*, he blessed the Exilarch and then the heads of the academies. When he finished the blessing, he remained standing and said, "Such and such a donation has come from this and this town and all its suburbs." And he recognized all the cities that

⁸⁶ בחיי נשיאנו ראש גלות ובחייכון ובחיי דכל בית ישראל

had sent gifts to the academies. Then he blessed the donors of these places for their charitable contributions, culminating with the academies.

Then he took out the *Sefer Torah*. A *kohen* read first and a *levi* would follow after him. The presiding officer of the synagogue would then bring the *Sefer Torah* down to the Exilarch while all the people were standing. The Exilarch received the *Sefer Torah* in his hands and would stand and read from it, with the heads of the academies standing at his side. The head of the Academy of Sura offered a translation and then handed the *Sefer Torah* to the presiding officer, who returned it to the ark. And at this point, he took his seat and then the congregation sat down. Next, they called the heads of the regional assemblies to read followed by the associates of the academies. But, the heads of the academies do not read the *Sefer Torah* on that day, because of the Exilarch's preemption. And, when the reader finished the *maftir*⁸⁷, an important man would rise and provide a translation from which he derived considerable recognition and honor. And when he finished, he again blessed the Exilarch in front of the *Sefer Torah*, and all the prayer leaders of the congregation who were skilled and knowledgeable in liturgy would encircle the ark and say, "אמן." He then blessed the two heads of the academies and returned the *Sefer Torah* to its place. Then they said *musaf* and left.

⁸⁷ *Maftir* is the name given to the three or more concluding verses of the weekly Sabbath *sidrah* ("Torah portion") as well as to the final verses of the portions read on festivals and public fast days. The person who is called up to the reading from the Torah of these passages and who then recites the *haftarah* from the Prophets is also called *maftir*.

When the Exilarch left the synagogue, all the people would accompany him in front and behind, singing poetry and praise until he arrived at his home. But, the heads of the academies would not go with him. All of the associates accompanied him home; the Exilarch did not permit any of them to leave his house for an entire week. From that time on, he himself never left his house. But people convened there and prayed with him regularly, whether a weekday, Shabbat, or festival.

If the Exilarch wished to leave his house to conduct business, he rode in a princely carriage bedecked with beautiful cloths, just like the carriages of the Caliph's ministers. Accompanying him would be as many as fifteen men, followed by his personal servants. When he passed by a Jew, his retinue ran to him to embrace and bless him. He did this with every Jew he met, until some 50 or 60 gathered around him to accompany him to his destination. And when he returned home, they did the same thing in reverse. But he never went out unless he was accompanied by his entire retinue. And during such trips, he was entirely like one of the Caliph's princes.

When he wanted an appearance before the Caliph for a request or just to have an audience, he sought permission from the Caliph's princes and his attendants to speak. They complied and instructed the gatekeepers to let him enter. When he entered, all the servants of the Caliph ran before him.

Now, the Exilarch came prepared with a pouch filled with gold coins and zuzim to distribute to these servants to accompany him until he enters the inner chamber. He

would put his hand in his pouch and give each one whatever came to hand. They would show him honor, take his hand and accompany him until he finally stood before the Caliph and bowed down to him. The Caliph made a gesture to him that he should kneel on one knee. Then the Caliph signaled to one of his servants to take him by the hand and seat him in the designated place which the Caliph had selected. Then the Exilarch spoke with the Caliph. The Caliph asked him about his well-being, his activities, and the purpose for his visit. The Exilarch would ask the Caliph for permission to speak, and it was granted. The Exilarch began with appropriate praises and blessings that he had memorized in advance. He then mentioned to the Caliph the customs of his ancestors and theirs, and cajoled him with pleasantries until he finally came around to making his request, which the Caliph granted in full and committed to writing. Then the Exilarch departed happily and at peace.

The Revenue of the Exilarch and the Judges

These were the revenues belonging to the Exilarch, collected on an annual basis from a place called Nahrawan and its suburbs. Nahrawan was about a half a day east of Baghdad. The Exilarch appointed a judge on his authority and that of the heads of the academies. He wrote to him on their behalf that he has received their permission. The judge imposed a tax on that place and collected for himself something in the neighborhood of sixty or seventy gold pieces.

And when he arrived in that place, the judge selected two notables of the area to be associated with him over all cases that he adjudicates. If the judge who was appointed

was proper in his ways and learned in the law, the leaders and notables of the region would write to the Exilarch singing his praises. If perhaps, heaven forbid, he had a blemish or some impropriety was found, they would write to the Exilarch and to the heads of the academies: "In the case of so and so, his actions are flawed and his ways are flawed." He is then removed from his position and someone else is appointed in his stead.

This was the income which the judge took from the people of the area. Each person twenty years and older would pay two zuzim a year, one on Passover and one on Sukkot. For a marriage writ, a divorce writ, a writ of debt, a writ of dispensation, or a writ of sale, the principals involved would have to give the judge four and one third zuzim in Arabic money. As for the scribe, he did not derive any income from this. Rather, his only income was what the judge decides to give him on an annual basis. The rest belonged to the judge. This was the custom: to give all revenue to the judge, whether he is present in that given place or whether he has gone off elsewhere.

The judge would appoint two people who looked at, examined, and oversaw his entire domain so that no individual should do any of the things we have mentioned except on the authority of the judge. If anyone prepared a writ in secret, the judge could excommunicate him and fine him for the fee of the writ, and could flog him. If he were poor and not able to pay the stipulated amount, the scribe would accept whatever he could afford, with the permission of the judge. The judge would also get a zuz from the butchers on a weekly basis.

In addition, the Exilarch received twenty gold pieces annually from the area of Persia, in accordance with the same custom. He had within his jurisdiction another place called Haluwan, about a five day journey from Baghdad, from which he received one hundred and fifty gold pieces annually in accordance with the aforementioned procedure. Also, he had another place called Katzar, his birthplace, from which he received thirty gold pieces annually. He also had a place in Baghdad where he resided and which was under his jurisdiction. There he received two zuzim from each Jew during Passover and Sukkot. He did not take anything from the poor because the rich make up the difference. The butchers would give to him one quarter of a gold piece each year. In sum, he received from all of the places within his jurisdiction each year a total of seven hundred gold pieces.

If he wished he could write abroad so that they could honor him by their help. When he wrote, they would comply. If the Exilarch's son traveled anywhere, he was well received, honored, favored, and given a tribute. Nothing would be withheld from him. He was always treated in accordance with his dignity and position. If he was not treated with respect and honored with gifts, his father would send warnings and excommunications.

Rav Natan said he once saw the son of David ben Zakkai, who went to the territory of Persia, which was in the jurisdiction of his father. He was not honored and respected. He sent word of this to his father, who sent forth warnings and excommunications. He sent word to the viceroy, who in turn informed the Caliph. The Caliph called on the governor of Persia for support and help. When the governor of Persia learned about this from the

Caliph's letter, he went after the perpetrators and exacted a considerable sum of money from Persia and from all its suburbs, since they were under the jurisdiction of his father. Then, he went forth and he returned to Baghdad and neither academy head complained regarding this matter.

When a head of the academy dies, all of his income is to be given to the head of the academy of Sura. The scribe of the Exilarch takes his earnings from the Exilarch.

But the Exilarch has no part in the pledges and donations that the communities of Jews send to the academies because they are sent only with their questions, with which the Exilarch is not involved.

Such also is the custom for the installation of the heads of the academies. The procedure for an academy head is the same for them as is for the Exilarch, except in the case of the Torah scroll, which is not brought down to him. Rather he would go up to it like anyone else.

This is the procedure followed by the heads of the academies in all areas of their jurisdictions: each would appoint their own judges as we have indicated in the case of the Exilarch who appointed a judge over his jurisdictions.

And these are their jurisdictions:

Under the authority of the head of the Academy of Sura is a place called Wasit, from which this area and its suburbs, he annually receives one hundred and fifty gold pieces. From Basra, also called Kalah, and its suburbs, he receives three hundred gold pieces a year. There is another place within his jurisdiction called Qumis, which is a two day journey from Ophir, which is also under the jurisdiction of Sura. In short, Sura receives one thousand five hundred gold pieces on an annual basis from the areas within its jurisdiction, in addition to pledges and gifts. In the Babylonia region, there are districts in the north, the south, the east, and the west. These are treated the way the Exilarch treats the areas which are in his jurisdiction in Babylonia, as we have described above. The butchers in the jurisdiction of Sura give the head of the academy one fourth of a zuzim each week.

Sometimes there would be difficult economic times for the academy of the Sura.⁸⁸ When this occurred, they would send letters to all the communities of Israel, informing them of the dire situation. Every community would send gifts according to its ability and income. This was also the custom for the head of the academy of Pumpeditha within his entire jurisdiction.

In the case of all questions that are sent to one head of academy in his name, the other academy heads have no part in their accompanying pledges and gifts. When the questions

⁸⁸ The text reads ראש גלות. However, based on the context, this could not be correct as the Exilarch was not in charge of an academy. Therefore, in juxtaposition to the last sentence of the paragraph referring to the head of the academy of Pumpeditha, the text should have read head of the Academy of Sura.

are sent in their names, they would take the pledges and gifts along with them. If they are sent without names, the two academies would split the money. This has been the custom in the apportionment of all income in the form of pledges and gifts each year.

They place everything in the hands of a trustworthy person for the maintenance of the expenses of the scholars who come from all the places where they serve, and they come from all over, for the month of the *Kallah*. This would occur during the month of Elul in the summer and the month of Adar in the winter. Each of the associates will have studied and perused a tractate that the head of the academy had assigned when they left after the last *Kallah*. For example, in the month of Adar he would say to them, "This and this Tractate we will expound in Elul." And similarly, he would say to them in Elul, "This and this Tractate we will expound in Adar." All of them would come and sit before the heads of the academies in Adar and Elul, and the head of the academy would preside over their study and examine them.

The Structure of the Academies

This is the structure of the academies:

The head of the academy sits and before him are ten men. This is called the first row of scholars. They face the head of the academy. Of the ten men seated before him, seven are called heads of the *Kallah* and three are called associates. Why are they called heads of the *Kallah*? Because each one of them is appointed over ten people from the Sanhedrin and they were called "captains."

This was their custom:

If one of the heads of the *Kallah* dies and he has a son capable of taking his place, he does so. Then he inherits the place of his father and sits there, even if he is a minor. This is also true for the associates. When one of them dies and leaves a son capable of taking his place, he sits in it. No one can usurp his place. But if he does not have anyone to fill his place, and there is someone qualified to sit in one of the seven spots, he may do so. But, if he is not of that stature, he would sit with the general audience and with the remaining disciples, who were approximately four hundred in number.

The seventy men constitute the Sanhedrin, consisting of namely seven rows. The first row is arranged as we have mentioned. After that, there sit more rows of ten until the seventh row. All of them face the head of the academy, and all the associates sit behind them. None of the latter has an assigned seat, but in the case of the seventy in the seven rows, everyone keeps his place and no one can sit in the place of their colleague. If one from the seven rows more learned than another, he does not replace him as he did not inherit it from his father. Instead, he is given a higher stipend because of his wisdom.

When the head of the academy wishes to test their learning, they all assemble on the four Sabbaths of the month of Adar. He sits in his place and the first row recites before him, and the other rows listen to them quietly. When they reached a point of participation, they discuss matters among themselves. The head of the academy hears and understands what they have to say. Then, he reads and they are quiet, and they realize that he understands their differences. When he finishes, he expounds and reviews the tractate of their

individual winter study. He debates on their words, where the disciples had differences of opinion. At times, he asks them for an explanation of the laws. They are respectful of one another, honor the head of the academy, and ask him for his opinion on the matter. Not one of them is permitted to speak unless he gives them permission. Each one of them speaks according to his knowledge. The academy head provides a detailed exposition of every point of *halakha* until he has clarified everything. When he had finished, a man from the first row stands and expounds on it publicly for all, small and great, hear him. Everyone who sees him standing knows that he stands solely to explain a *baraita* from which one could clarify the learning for the purpose of clarifying what had been discussed. The other disciples now raise questions him for further clarification. This is how they proceeded all the days of the month.

On the fourth Sabbath, the entire Sanhedrin and all the students recite, and the head of the Academy inspects and examines every one of them, challenging them until he can determine the degree of knowledge of the participant. And when the head of the academy sees a participant whose learning is inadequate he continues to challenge him. He rebukes him, scolds him, and exposes his inadequacies in preparation and where he has been lazy. He admonishes him and threatens him that if he repeats this insufficient preparation, he would not receive any further money. Accordingly, all of the disciples would sharpen each others knowledge and work hard on their studies so none would be found *halakhically* deficient by the heads of the academy.

None of the rows depart until he has assigned the tractate for the winter. For the other students, such assignments were not necessary as each of them could study the tractate of their choice.

This is their custom in the case of questions and answers:

Every day from the beginning of the month of Adar, the head of the academy presents all the questions that have come to him and gives the audience permission to provide an answer. They honor him and say to him, "We will not answer in your presence", until he really insists and then all of them speak, each of them according to his knowledge and experience. They argue, they differ with one another and they debate every point with careful deliberation. The head of the academy listens to their arguments and comprehends everything they say. He stands up and examines their positions until the correct answer has become clear to him. Then, he orders the scribe to answer in writing.

This was the custom which took place daily until answers were prepared for all of the questions that had arrived from the communities of Israel during that year. At the end of the month, the answers and the questions are read in a meeting of the entire convention. The head of the academy then signs them and afterwards they are sent to their questioners. And, he distributes the money brought in from the questions among them.

Bibliography

Agha, ali Said. The Revolution which Toppled the Umayyads: Neither Arab or Abbasid. Boston, MA: Brill, 2003.

Ashtor, Eliyahu. The Jews of Moslem Spain. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973.

Ashtor-Strauss, L., "Saladin and the Jews," Hebrew Union College Annual 27, 1956.

Baron, Salo W. A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vols. 1, 4-9. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957.

Ben Hanina, Sherira, Gaon. Igeret rav Sherira Gaon/... Him heHarot...Hal yede...Binyamin Menasheh Lewin. Haifa: [s.n.] 1921

Benjamin of Tudela. The Itinerary, ed. trans. M.N. Adler. London, 1907.

Ben Sasson, Menahem, "Varieties of Inter-Communal Relations in the Gaonic Period," The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity, ed. Daniel Frank. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995

Birnbaum, Philip. HaSiddur HaShalem. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1999.

Brockelmann, Carl. History of the Islamic Peoples. New York, Capricorn Books, 1960

Brody, Robert. The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture. Yale UP, 1998.

Brunswick, Sheldon R., Ed. Studies in Judaica, Karaitica, and Islamica. Ramat-Gam, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982

Brüll, Jacob. Mevo ha-Mishnah. Frankfurt am Main: [s.n.], 1876-1884 or 1885.

Cohen, Mark. Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt. Princeton, 1980.

Cohen, Martin A. "Anan Ben David and Karaite Origins, Parts I and II," in The Jewish Quarterly Review. Philadelphia: 1977

Cook, Michael. "Anan and Islam: The Origins of Karaite Scripturalism," JSAI 9, 1987.

Dozy, Reinhart and Pieter, Anne. Spanish Islam: a history of the Moslems in Spain. London, Chatto & Windus, 1913.

Encyclopaedia Judaica - CD-ROM Version 1.0. Keter Publishing House, Israel. 1997

Fischel, Walter. Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Medieval Islam. New York: KTAV, 1969.

Fischel, Walter Joseph. The Jews in Medieval Iran from the 16th to the 18th Centuries: Political, Economic. Jerusalem: The Institute of Asian and African Studies and Ben-Zvi Institute.

Fischel, Walter Joseph. Kehilat ha-Anusim be-Paras: mear le-toldot ha-Yehudim be-Asyah ha-Tikhonah. Yerushalayim, 1935 or 1936.

Frankel, Zacharias. Darkhe ha-Mishnah, ha-Tosefta, Mekhilta, Sifra ve-Sifri. Tel Aviv: Sinai, 1959.

Gil, Moshe. "The Radhanite Merchants and the Land of Radhan," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient. 1974.

Ginzberg, Louis. Geonica. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1909

Ginzberg, Louis. An Unknown Jewish Sect. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1976

Goitein, S. D. Jews and Arabs. New York: Schocken, 1967

Goitein, S.D. A Mediterranean Society, vol. 1. California, 1967

Goitein, S.D. Studies in Islamic History and Institutions. Brill, 1966.

Halevy, Isaac. Dorot ha-rishonim. Jerusalem : [s.n.], 727 [1966 or 1967]

Hoffman, Rabbi Lawrence H. My People's Prayer Book, vol.3. Woodstock, NY: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001.

Hyman, Aaron. Sefer Toldot Tanaim ve-Amoraim. Yerushalayim: Mekhon "Peri ha-Arets", 1987.

Ibn Daud, Abraham, The Book of the Tradition, ed. G. Cohen. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967.

Jewish Tradition in the Diaspora: Studies in Memory of Professor Walter J. Fischel. Berkeley, Calif.: Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1981.

Kahana, Abraham. Sifrut ha-historiya ha-Yisreelit. Jerusalem: Makor, 729 [1968 or 1969].

Kennedy, Hugh. The Court of the Caliphs: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004.

Kennedy, Hugh. When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005

Kobler, F. Letters of Jews through the Ages, vol. 1. Philadelphia, 1978

Lasker, Daniel J., "Rabbinism and Karaism," Great Schisms in Jewish History, ed. R. Jospe, S. Wagner. New York, 1981.

Lewin, Benjamin Manasseh. Metivot: Talmud HaHan le-seder Moed, Nashim u-NeziHin. Yerushalayim: [H. mo. 1.], 1933

Lewin, Benjamin Manasseh. The Origin and Nature of the Gaonic Works Metiboth and Sepher Hefez. Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1934

Lewin, Benjamin Manasseh. Otsar ha-geonim : teshuvot geone Bavel u-ferushehem al pi seder ha-Talmud. Yerushalayim: H. Vagshal, 744, 1984

Lewin, Benjamin Manasseh. Otsar iluf minhagim ben bene Eretz Yisrael u-ven bene Bavel. Jerusalem: Maor, 1972

Lewin, Benjamin Manasseh. Rav Sherira Gaon. Jaffa: [s.n.] 1917

Lewy, Hans. Three Jewish Philosophers. New York, 1969.

Malter, Henry. Saadia Gaon, rept., NY, Hermon, 1969.

Mann, Jacob. The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim as a Source of Jewish History. New York, Arno Press, 1973

Nemoy, Leon. "Anan ben David: A Re-Appraisal of the Historical Data," Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Loew, ed. A. Sheiber. Budapest, 1947.

Nemoy, Leon. Karaite Anthology: Excerpts from the Early Literature/Translated from the Arabic. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955

Neusner, Jacob. A History of the Jews in Babylonia. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999

Qirquisani, Yaqub, Ed. Kitab al-Anwar wal-maraqib: Code of Karaite Law. New York: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1939-43

Rivkin, E., "The Saadia -David ben Zakkai Controversy: A Structural Analysis," Studies and Essays in Honor of A.A. Neuman, ed. M. Ben-Horin. Brill, 1962.

Rosenthal, J., "Hiwi al-Balkhi," Jewish Quarterly Review, vols. 38, 39. 1947-1948.

Stillman, Norman. The Jews of Arab Lands : a History and Source Book.
Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979.

Thomson, W., "The Character of the Early Islamic Sects," I. Goldziher Memorial Volume. Budapest, 1948.

Umar, Faruq. Aspects from Abbasid History: Notable Articles Written by Orientalists and Others. Amman: F.O. Fawzi, 2003.

Zinberg, I., A History of Jewish Literature, vol.1. Cleveland, 1972.

APPENDIX A

Text of Nathan Ha-Bavli's *Seder HaYeshivot*

אברהם כהנא

ספרות ההסטוריא הישראלי

מן מגלת תענית
עד רבי משה בן מימון

תרפ"ב

ווארשה



ירושלים, תשכ"ט

נרמס מחדש ע"י הוצאת מקור בע"מ

LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

לוח הענינים

צד		צד	
141-159	ספר יוסימון IX	IV	הקדמה
141-144	פתיחה	V-VIII	מבוא
144	א. תרגום השבעים	1-8	I מגלת תענית
	ב. מתתיהו חשמונאי	1-2	פתיחה
145 159	ובניו	3-8	מגלת תענית
160-165	X מגלת אביתר	9-13	II סדר עולם רבה
160-162	פתיחה	9	פתיחה
162-165	מגלת אביתר	10-11	א. הנביאים
166-185	XI גזרות תתנ"ו	12-13	ב. חרבן בית ראשון
166	פתיחה	14-20	III מגלת בני חשמונאי
	מספור ר' שלמה ב"ר	14-16	פתיחה
167-185	שמעון	17-20	מגלת בני חשמונאי
	ספר הקבלה לראב"ד	21-29	IV אלדרד הדני
	והשלמתו לר' אברהם	21-22	פתיחה
186-205	בן ש"מה	23-24	א. שאלת אנשי קירואן
186-188	פתיחה	24-26	ב. תשובת רב צמח גאון
	א. המעשה בארבעה	26-29	ג. כספור אלדרד הדני
189-191	שבריים	30-56	V הכוזרים
192-196	ב. שלשה דורות ברבנות	30-35	פתיחה
197-199	ג. על הקראים	35 41	א. מכתב רב חסדאי
199-205	ד. השלמת ספר הקבלה	41-45	ב. תשובת יוסף המלך
	מסעות של רבי	45-49	ג. אגרת מן הגניזה
206-217	XIII בנימין		ד. לקוסים מן הסופרים
206-207	פתיחה	48-50	הערבים
207-211	א. ארץ ישראל		VI סדר הישיבות וספור
211-214	ב. בגדאד	57-72	על נטירא ובניו
214-215	ג. דוד אלרואי	57-59	פתיחה
216-217	ד. ארבעת השבטים	59-70	א. סדר הישיבות
	XIV סבוב העולם לר'	70-72	ב. נטירא ובניו
218-229	פתיחה	73-112	VII אגרת רב שרירא גאון
218	סבוב ר' פתחיה	73-77	פתיחה
219-229	פתיחה	73-112	האגרת
230-264	XV רבי משה בן מימון		VIII ספר יוחסין לר'
230-236	פתיחה	113-140	אחימעץ
236-252	א. מאגרותיו של רמב"ם	111-116	פתיחה
	ב. בענין המחלוקת על	117-140	יחוסיו
252-261	רמב"ם		

6. אברהם איפשטיין, סקורות לתולדות הגאונים וישיבות ככל (ספר היובל לכבוד הרבני, צר 169-172).

7. אברהם אליהו הרבני, נטירא ובניו (פי ברכת אברהם לכבוד ברלינר, ברלין תרס"ג, צר 34-43).

8. M. Steinschneider, Geschichtsliteratur § 16.

9. H. Maltz, Saadia Gaon his life and works, Philadelphia 1921, pp. 89-134.

א. סדר הישיבות.

התיכודות ישיבות סורא ופומבדיתא ומעלותיהן.

אלה המעלות שנתעלתה בהן ישיבת סורא על פומבדיתא.

בתחלה בימי רב, שהיה סוף תנאין ותחלת אמוראין, לא היתה עדין ישיבה בבבל, אלא הנשיאים שהיו שם לא היו קורין אותם אלא רישי סדרא, כדאמרינן: "מאן ריש סדרא בבבל?" אמר לו: "אבא אריקא" - והוא רב. ולאחר שנמסר רב עשו ישיבה בבבל על דרך ארץ ישראל, והיא ישיבת סורא. ומלך בת רב הונא מ' שנה. והוא היה ראשון לכל מי שהיה ראש ישיבה בבבל. ואחר כך מלך אחרי רב חסדא, ונמשכה מלכותו י' שנים. ובסוף ימיו של רב חסדא הלך רבה בר נחמני ועשה ישיבה בפומבדיתא. ומאותו היום ואילך היתה ישיבה בפומבדיתא, והיתה ישיבת גולה. ומלך רבה בר נחמני כ"ב שנה, ואחרי רב יוסף ב' שנים ומת, ואחרי אפי' י"ד שנה, ואחרי רבא על פומבדיתא ועל סורא כסיעתא דשמיא ובבבליה רב יוסף, כדנקטינן: דאמר ליה: "הא רבא דתרומה רישא אבא אריקא". ושני מלכותו י"ד שנה. ומלך אחרי רב רבא י"ט שנים, ואחרי רב אשי ס' שנה. ואחרי מלך רב קביומי דביה דהוא מר בר רב אשי. ומלך אחרי רבא יוסף, שבימיו נסתם התלמוד. וכשנפטר רבא יוסף נשארו שתי הישיבות בלא גאון, עד שהסכימה דעתם של רבנן סבוראי, והם שהיו אחר חכמי התלמוד, שיהיו עושין ב' ישיבות, כמו שהיו בימי רב הונא, מפני שרבנן סבוראי אף על פי שלא הוסיפו על התלמוד ולא גרעו ממנו, אף על פי כן היו ראשי הישיבות, והן הגאונים, יושבין ודורשין, והיתה הוראה יוצאת מהן לכל ישראל. וכך היו נוהגין בישיבתן עד היום הזה. ואלו המעלות שנתעלתה בהן ישיבת סורא על ישיבת פומבדיתא: א', שלא יהא גאון מפומבדיתא, אלא מסורא. על פי ראש הישיבה שלה. ועוד, אם יתקצו ראשי הישיבות שתיהן על ראש גלות בארץ: עתיקה בבבלי בשבת שרגילין לחתקבץ אליו, ראש ישיבת סורא ותלמידיו קורין על ראש גלות ספר התורה מפני גדולתו, וראש ישיבת פומבדיתא ותלמידיו קורין ומתרגמין עליו. ועוד, אם ישב ראש גלות על הספסל שעושין לו - ראש ישיבת סורא לימינו וראש ישיבת פומבדיתא לשמאלו. ועוד, אם יסבו בסעודת מצוה אצל אחד

י חולין קל"ז ב. - י יומא נ"ג ב. - י כעור. כנראה, היה בספור הערבי כתיב סרינה ושענינו עיר, ולכן תרגם בעברית בלשון ארץ. - י = בנדרא.

מראשי גלות, ראש ישיבת סורא בוצע תחלה והוא מברך ברכת המזון. ובין בכניסה ובין ביציאה ראש ישיבת סורא קודם לראש ישיבת פומבדיתא. ואפילו היה ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא זקן בן שמונים שנה וראש ישיבת סורא קטן בשנים ממנו, השררה לעולם לראש ישיבת סורא. ועוד, כשהיו משלחין אגרות זה לזה, ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא כותב: "יְתִקְרֵי הַדִּין דִּי־קָאָ קָמִי יִגְאֹן וְיִפְקֹן דְּסוּרָא", וראש ישיבת סורא: "יְתִקְרֵי הַדִּין דִּי־קָאָ קָמִי וְיִפְקֹן דְּפומבדיתא", — ואינו כותב לו "גאון". ועוד, אם קורא ראש גלות בספר התורה, ראש ישיבת סורא מתרגם עליו, וראש ישיבת פומבדיתא יושב ודומם. ועוד, כשימות ראש גלות, כל הקריות שלו יתנו לראש ישיבתו סורא, ואין בהן לראש ישיבת פומבדיתא חלק כלל. ובראשונה היתה ישיבת סורא נוטלת שני חלקים וישיבת פומבדיתא חלק אחד, עד שמלך כהן צדק בפומבדיתא נרצח בני הישיבה, ולא הספיק להם חלק השלישי, שהיה מנהגם לקחת, ונפלה קטטה ביניהם על זה הדבר, עד שנתקבצו ראשי הדור ועשו פשרה ביניהם שיהיו חולקים כל מה שיבא להם חלק בחלק בשנה. וכך היו נוהגים עד היום הזה.

ראשי הגלות עוקבא ודוד בן זכאי.

ואשר אמר ר' נתן הכהן בר יצחק הכבלי ממה שראה בבבל ובמקצת וספרו במקצת: על ראש גלות עוקבא, שהוא מורע דוד, שבא לאפריקא ונהג שררה בבבל שנים רבות, שלא עמד במספרן. והיה ראש ישיבה בימיו מר רב כהן צדק בר רב יוסף בפומבדיתא, "היא אֶלְעָמָאָר, כמו י"ד שנים, עד שנפלה קטטה ביניהם על רשות פִּרְסָאָן. מפני שבראשונה היו נוטלין רשות פִּרְסָאָן מפומבדיתא וממנה יוצא אליה דיין וכל הנאה שתבא ממנה לפומבדיתא הגיע. ובקש רב עוקבא זה "להוציא אליה דיין מלפניו למשל עליה ו"להשיב הנאתה אליו, וקנעו רב כהן מורה צדק, והיו לו י"י עוזרים יוסף בן פנחס וחתנו נטירא אבי סהל ויצחק י"י עם קצת פנות הדור, עד שהוציא עוקבא מבבל וגלה למקום הנקרא קְרִיסְטִין י"י דרך ה' ימים במזרח בבל בדרך כרסאן. ובעת ההיא היה עמרם בן שלמה ראש ישיבת סורא. וישב עוקבא בקרמיסין ירחים אחדים עד שיצא המלך מן בבל לטייל בקרמיסין, מפני שיש בה מים, גנות ופרדסים, וכל כרכום שבבבל ממנה הוא בא. וחזק ממנה י"י, כמו חצי מיל, מקום הנקרא שְׁקָאָן, ויש בו בנין יפה, וכשיבא המלך לשם בו היה מטייל. והיה בו בית אחד גבוה כשיעור שתי קומות, והיו בו שתי צורות אחת של

¹ יְתִקְרֵי הַדִּין דִּי־קָאָ קָמִי יִגְאֹן וְיִפְקֹן דְּסוּרָא — "קריאות של הכנסת סמים, שיש לו הרשות עליהן. — יכלו ר' נתן לסדר קצת מצי הראיה וקצת מצי השמועה. — ר' נתן לא עמד על כך לידע כמה שנים נהג עוקבא שררה בבבל. — יכל המופת בסימן כמו זה הוכנס מתוך הטוב הערבי. — ר' רשות הדיוטין להורות ולדון בברסאן. — יכלהן צדק נגד עוקבא. — האחים סהל ויצחק ומהל היה גדול מיצחק י"י שנים היו אנשים חשובים וידועים בתורתם ובצדקתם: סהל היה תלמיד ר' סעדיה גאון (ע' הרבני בספר היובל של ברלינר צד 43-44). וסהל שהוא טיחם את נטירא על בניו נראה שכשעט כתיבתו כבר לא היה נטירא בחיים. — קְרִיסְטִין = קְרִיסְטִין. — כרסאן. — חוץ סקרמיסין. —

מלך: סקראן¹⁰ וואחת של פילגשו: טירין¹¹, ובהתחתיו: דמות סוס הלול, ויצאו
מים מן החר וינקסו בו ויצאו מפיו. והיה המלך בכל יום ויום יוצא לאותו מקום
לטייל בו. והיה עוקבא מכון אותה שעה שהיה המלך שם, ועומד לפניו ומברך
אותו בדברים ערבים ובשירים נאים. וכך היה עושה לו בכל יום ויום עד
מלאת לו שנה. וסופר המלך כותב שיריו ודבריו בכל יום ויום, וראה שמה
שאמר היום אינו אומר למחר פעם אחרת. וכן עשה כל השנה מראשה ועד
סופה. לאחר מלאת השנה הגיד הסופר למלך, שלא היה עוקבא שונה הדבר
מראש השנה ועד סופה. בקש ממנו המלך שיתן סימן לדבריו, כי לא האמין
בדבר. הביא לו פנקסו ושירי עוקבא כתובין בו, ואין בהן דבר שגוי ומשולש.
צוה המלך שיכנס עוקבא אצלו. וכשנכנס אמר לו המלך: „שאל מה אתן לך.“
וישאל ממנו וישקתו על כנו. כתב לו המלך מכתב כשאלתו. וכיון ששב היה קשה
הדבר על נטירה ועל יוסף בן פנחס ועל הנָּקִיָּים עמהם, והיו מדברים עליו אל
המלך עד שצוה המלך שיצא מכל מלכותו, והגלה אותו פעם שנית. וכתבו עליו
מכתב לעם הארץ שלא יכנס בכל מלכות בבל לעולם, ואם יכנס יקצרו כל
רכושו. ולא נשא אותו ארץ מכל ארצות מורת, ויצא אל המערב¹², ונשארה
השררה כמו ד' או ה' שנים בלא ראש, עד שהיה קשה הדבר מאד על ישראל.
ודברו על דוד בן זכאי, שהוא דודו של עוקבא נשיא שעבר, שיעשו אותו ראש
גלות. והיה כהן צדק, שהוא ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא, קשה עליו הדבר, שלא
רצה בשררות דוד בן זכאי, לפי שהיה קרובו של עוקבא ראש גלות שעבר.
אבל ראש ישיבת סורא הנהיג אותו על עצמו, וכתב לכל אנשי ישיבתו,
לתלמידים וְלַתְּנָאִים¹³ שבה, שיברכוהו ויכתבו לו על נפשם וינהיגו אותו ראש
גלות עליהם. ועשו כאשר צוה, והלכו כולם לקראתו, עד שהגיעו למקום אחד
הנקרא קָצֵץ¹⁴, בדרום בבל, בינו ובין סורא ד' מילין, והוא מקום דוד בן זכאי,
והוא ארץ מולדתו, וברכוהו והנהיגו אותו ראש עליהם. ועם כל זה היה ממאן
כהן צדק ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא ואינו רוצה בדבר עד ג' שנים. והיה שם
אדם אחד מאור עינים¹⁵ נודע בנסים ראש פְּלָה נְהוֹרָאֲנִי¹⁶, והיה נכנס ביניהם
בדרך שלום, אולי יוכל להנהיג אותו על ישיבת פומבדיתא, שיתרצה בו כהן
צדק ראש הישיבת, עד שהלך לילה אחד והיה פותח כל מנעולי בבל בשם¹⁷.
ופתח אותו הלילה י"ד מנעולים, עד שהגיע אליו ועמד על ראשו, ומצא אותו
גורם בחצי הלילה. כיון שראהו כהן צדק חרד לקראתו ושאל לו על עסקי

¹⁰ הוא המלך הפרסי כששפתת האמאנידין Khorsau II Parvêz נבשרבית
(Abarwêz) = כסרא השני המנצח (QJR XVII, 757). — ¹¹ טירין = שִׁירָן, ויחזה
ספורסט ביפיה. — ¹² שם המלך, כלומר בשמל היה סנור המלך כשהוא יושב על הסוס. —
¹³ אפרוקה הצפונית. עוקבא נתישב בקירואן ומהו תונס) ושם קבלוהו בחבה, והביגו לו
כסא של כבוד בבית הכנסת מצד הארון, ולאחר שקראו בתורה כהן ולוי היו מורידין
לו התורה והמנהיג הי שבת מיי ניהו. — ¹⁴ תְּנָאִים היו שונים לפני התלמידים בבית
הסדרש תורת התנאים בעלי הבריתא ועי' באכיר (Exeget. Termin. II, 241). —
¹⁵ משמנו בערבות מנדל, והרבה מקומות יש שנקראו בשם זה. — ¹⁶ מני נהור. —
¹⁷ מעיר נְהוֹרָאֲנִי, דרך הציונים בסורא של בנדאד ולקמן עמוד 67. — ¹⁸ בשם הספורש.

ביאתו, ואמר לו: "חי נפשך, אדוני, לא הגעתי אצלך עד שפתחתי יד מנעולים". ואמר לו: "ומה רצונך עכשיו?" ואמר לו: "בקשתי שתברך ראש גלות ותנהיגהו על עצמך". השיבו, שיעשה כדבריו. יצא משם נסי אל ראש גלות והודיעו, וקבע לו זמן ביום אשר יבא בו, וחזר אצל כהן מורה צדק והודיעו הזמן. אז צוה כהן צדק לכל תלמידיו ולבני ישיבתו וכל אשר היו עמו להקהל ולעמוד על נפשם ולצאת לקראת ראש גלות. ויצאו לקראתו אל המקום הנקרא צרצר, מהלך חצי יום מבבל. כיון שהגיעו אצל ראש גלות, והנה גם הוא בא במחנה כבוד מאד ועמו כל תלמידיו וכל הנזקקים אחריו, וחזרו אחריו. וכבר הכינו לו חצר בכפר ידוע בארץ עתיקה לחיות בה. וכשהגיעו לשער מדינת בבל היו אומרים שירים ערבים ומוזמונים נאים עד שבאו אל החצר אשר הכינו לו. ונכנס ושכן בבבל, הוא. וכל אנשיו ונשיו וכל נפשות ביתו.

ואחר חמש שנים מת ראש ישיבת סורא ומלך אחריו מר הוא בר קיומי והוא היה ראש דורו באותו זמן, ונהג ישיבת סורא כ' שנה וימת, וכהן צדק ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא עודנו חי.

רב סעדיה נאמן ומהלכתו עם ראש הגלות.

וכשמת ראש ישיבת סורא נשארה ישיבת סורא גלמודה, והיה ראש גלות מתיעץ מי ינהיג בה, וושגר אל נסי נהרואני להיות ראש ישיבה, ויאמר לו: "לא יתכן, כי ראש ישיבה נקרא נהורא דעלמא, והוא חשוכא דעלמא". אמר לו: "מה תראה בדבר זה?" אמר לו: "כל אשר הפצת עשה". ונמלך לבו על רבינו סעדיה פיומי ועל צמח בן שהין, כי הוא היה בר אבהן ובר אורין. והודיעו ראש גלות מה שבלבו לעשות, וכי נפלה עצתו או על רבינו סעדיה או על צמח בן שהין. השיבו נסי שינהיג צמח בן שהין, ולא רב סעדיה, אף על פי שהוא אדם גדול ומוטלג בחכמה, אינו מתירא מאדם בעולם ואינו מסביר פנים לשום אדם בעולם מפני רוב חכמתו ורוחב פיו ואריכות לשונו ויראת חסאו. אמר לו ראש גלות: "כבר נפלה עצתי והסקקתי על רבינו סעדיה פיומי". השיבו נסי: "עשה מה שאתה חפץ, כי בתחלה הראשון שישמע לדבריו וישב לפניו אני הוא, ואני אחיה ראש הרוצים בו". הנהיגהו אותה שעה בפני כהן צדק ובפני תלמידי ישיבת פומבדיתא ומינהו להיות ראש ישיבת סורא. ולא היו ימים מועטים עד שנפלה קטטה בין ראש גלות ובין רב סעדיה, ונחלקה מלכות בבל לשנים. וכל עשירי בבל ותלמידי הישיבות והשובי המקום היו עם רב סעדיה לעזור אותו בכח ממנוגם ובהסברת פנים אצל המלך ושריו ויועציו. והיה בבבל אדם חשוב אחד ושמו קלב בן שקר'אדו²² עוזר לראש גלות, והיה בעל ממון, ונתן מממנו ס' אלף זוז כדי להסיר את רב סעדיה ממקומו, ולא היה יכול, מפני שהיו עם רב סעדיה בני נמירה²³ וכל עשירי בבל. ונתקנא כלב זה ברב סעדיה, מפני שהיה כלב זה

²² עיר. - ²³ נסי נהרואני, ראש כלה, היה פני נהור. - ²⁴ שמו העיקרי היה בערבית קלף, ורי נתן משתמש בשם העברי קלב. לפי שטיינשניידר (Arab. Lit. § 34) יש לקרא כנזי בצורה זו: פרינאדה. - ²⁵ מהלך ויצחק ועי' לקמן עמודים 70-72.

בעל לשון ואדם גדול בחכמה, וכל שאלות שישאל היה נושבים עליהם טעם אחד ושנים, אבל רב סעדיה מוסיף עליו עשר ידות, והיה מהקנא בו בדבר זה. ועקר מחלוקת רב סעדיה וראש גלות היה על עסקי חצרות, שהיו לאנשיו שהיו מתחת ראש גלות, וממון הרבת שנפל להם בירושתם ובקשו חלוקתם. ונפלה ביניהם קטטה עליו עד שנתנדבו לתת מעשר מכל מה שנפל להם בירושה ולראש גלות להסיר התלונות ומעליהם ולהוציא לאור משפטם. והגיע לראש גלות בחלקו ז' מאות זהובים מן המעשר שנתנו לו, וכחב להם מכתבות וחתימים עליהם, וצוה להם שילכו אל ראשי ישיבות לקיימם. וכשתגיעו הכהבים אל רב סעדיה עמד עליהם וראה בהם דברים שלא ישרו בעיניו, ואף בכל זה אמר להם בסבר פנים יפות: "לכו אצל כהן צדק ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא וויקיים כתב זה ואני אקיים אחריו". וכל זה אמר מפני שבקש להטמין הדבר הכעור שראה באותם הדברים ושלא רצה לגלותו. עשו כאשר צוה והלכו אצל כהן צדק ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא, וחתימים שחתם בהם כהן צדק חזרו אצל רב סעדיה שיחתום בהם ויקיים אותם. אמר להם רב סעדיה: "למה תבקשו כתב ידי, הנה בידכם חתימת ראש גלות וחתימת כהן צדק ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא. אינכם צריכים לחתימת ידי". אמרו לו: "למה אינך חותם?" אמר להם: "איני יודע". ונמצא מלגלות להם הדבר, עד שהשיעורו כמה פעמים שיאמר להם מה ראה בשטרותם. ולא יכול לעבור על השבועה ולכחד מהם, והודיעם מה שראה בשטרות ומאיוזה טעם נפסדו. חזרו אצל ראש גלות והודיעוהו. ושלחו אליו ראש גלות יהודה בנו ואמר לו: "לך ואמר לו בשמי שיקיים את השטרות". והלך יהודה בנו של ראש גלות ואמר לרב סעדיה בשם אביו שיחתום את השטרות. אמר לו: "חזור אצל אביו ואמר לו כי כתוב בתורה, לא תכירו פנים במשפט". חזר אליו פעם שניה ואמר לו: "אמר לו חתום את השטרות ואל תהי שומה". חזר הנער ואמר לרב סעדיה בסבר פנים יפות, ולא אמר לו דברי אביו, אבל אמר לו בבקשה ובפיוסין שיחתום את השטרות, כדי שלא תפול מחלוקת וכינו ובין אביו. ומאן, ושלח אליו פעמים רבות, ולא רצה הבן לגלות לרב סעדיה כל מה שאמר לו אביו, אבל מפייס ממנו פיוסין גדולים שיחתום הכתבים כדי שלא תהא מחלוקת בינו ובין אביו בדבר זה. כיון שהטריחו אביו בהליכה ובחזרה חרה אמו והרים ידו ברב סעדיה, ואמר לו: "אם לא תחתום השטרות כמו שאמר לך אבי, אז אשלח ידי בך". הדבר יצא מפי הנער ואנשי רב סעדיה גררוהו והוציאוהו הוץ לפתח ונעלו השער בפניו. כיון שהגיע אצל אביו וראה עיניו זולגות דמעות, שאל אותו על מאורעו, וספר לו כל המעשה. כיון ששמע אביו כך, החריס ברב סעדיה והנהיג רב יוסף בר יעקב שיהיה ראש ישיבת סורא במקומו. וגם רב סעדיה, כששמע הדבר, החריס גם הוא בראש גלות ושלח את חסן אחי דוד בן זכאי, שהוא יאשיה, להיות לראש גלותו במקום בן דוד בן זכאי אחיו. ונהג ג' שנים ומת. ונתחזקה המחלוקת ביניהם עד ז' שנים, עד שאירע דין בין שני אנשים שנתעצמו בדין. האחד ברר לו רב סעדיה ואחד ברר לו ראש גלות. שלח ראש גלות אל האיש אשר ברר רב סעדיה וברח מעליו והכוהו ופצעוהו. הלך האיש המוכה קרוע בגדים וילך הלך וזעק אל כל הקהל ותגיד להם מאורעו. והיה הדבר קשה עליהם עד

מאד, כי היה מנהגם שכל איש שהוא מרשות ראש גלות אין לראשי ישיבות עליו לא דין ולא משפט, ווכל שהוא מרשות ראשי ישיבות אין לראש גלות עליו לא דין ולא משפט ולא לערער על אחד מהם על חברו בשום דבר כיהיה מרשותו. ואם היה צר בארץ, ובא מארץ זכריה ואינו לא מרשות זה ולא מרשות זה, ילך למקום שירצה. וממני שהאיש הזה המוכה אינו מרשות וראש גלות קנאו הקהל למאורעו ונתקבצו כלם על דרך בן אהרן, שהוא חותן כלב בן שרן אדון, שהיה אדם גדול בבבל והיה מהשובי מקומ, וספרו להיכן הגיעה מחלקתם של ישראל וכמה קשה מאורעם. אמרו לו: קום, כי עליך הדבר, ואנחנו עמך, ואולי נוכל להסיר המחלוקת שאינה תלויה אלא בתחבך כלב בן שרן אדון. וחלף אצל גדולי הדור וקבצם לותך ביתו. והיה עמם ראש גלות, ודבר אליו בפניהם: מה המעשה הזה אשר עשית, ועד מתי אתה מהזיק במחלוקת ולא תשמור עצמך מן העונש? ירא את אלחנך והסיר עצמך מן המחלוקת, כי אתה ידעת כמה גדול כח המחלוקת ועתה ראה איך תתקן דרכיך עם רב סעדיה ותשלים עמו ותניח מה שבלבך עליו. השיב ראש גלות לדבריו וצנחו לשלום שיעשה כדבריו. ועמד והלך אצל רב סעדיה להביאו לביתו הוא וסיעתו הנלוים עמו ודבר אליו כל אותן הדברים שדבר אל ראש גלות, וצנחו גם הוא לשלום. והיה ראש גלות בבית אחד הוא וכל הנלוים עמו וכל אנשיו, ורבינו סעדיה הוא וסיעתו וכל אנשיו בבית אחר כנגדו, ושניהם היו בחצרו של בשר זה שהלך ביניהם בדברי שלום. ועמדו אנשים מראשי הקהל ונחלקו לשני חלקים, חלק אחד תמכו בידיו של ראש גלות והחלק השני תמכו ביד רב סעדיה. והלכו אלו מכאן ואלו מכאן עד שפגעו זה בזה ונשקו זה את זה וחבקו זה את זה. והיה זה הדבר ביום תענית אסתר. וכשנשלם דבר זה ביניהם שמח בשר על הדבר כשנשלמו על ידו, והשביע אותם ואת כל העומדים שם עמם שילינו שם אצלו אותו הלילה ושיקראו המגלה בביתו. ולא רצו לא ראש גלות ולא רב סעדיה. אבל אמר ראש גלות: ואני יסעד אצלי רב סעדיה או יסעד אצלי. הסילו גורלות ביניהם ונפל הגורל על ראש גלות שילך רב סעדיה אצלו. וכך עשה: הלך אצלו וסעד עמו סעודת פורים וישב עמו ב' ימים, וביום הג' יצא בשמחה ובטוב לבב. וכשנעשית הפסדה ביניהם, אותו רב יוסף בן יעקב, שהחזיר ראש גלות ועשה אותו ראש ישיבה במקום רב סעדיה כל אותן השנים שהיתה המחלוקת ביניהם, עכשיו שבטלה המחלוקת, ישב לו אותו רב יוסף ראש ישיבה בביתו, ואעפ"כ החוק שהיה לוקח כשהיה ראש ישיבה לא מנעוהו ממנו אלא היו שולחין לו לביתו. נפטר ראש גלות ובקשו להנהיג בנו במקומו, ולא עמד אחריו של אביו אלא ד' חדשים בלבד, ונפטר גם הוא. והיה לו בן קטן כמו בן י"ב שנים, ואספו אליו רב סעדיה ונתן אותו בבית הספר עד שנפטר רב סעדיה. ולא נמצא באותן הימים מי שהיה ראוי להיות ראש גלות, אלא איש אחד שהיה מבני הימן, שהיה בנציבין, ולא הספיקו למנותו עד שאירע לו דבר, שנתקוטט עם גוי אחד בשוק, והעידו עליו שקלל את הפסול, ונהרג. ואחר פטירתו של רב סעדיה נהג רב יוסף בן יעקב ישיבתו בסורא. ולאחר פטירת כהן צדק ראש ישיבת פומבדיתא, נהג אחרי צמח בר כפנאי ישיבתו י"ג חדשים ונפטר.

וּמֶלֶךְ אַחֲרָיו חֲנִיָּה בֶן ר' יְהוּדָה ה' שָׁנִים וּמֵתָהּ וּנְפָאָרָה. וּמֶלֶךְ אַחֲרָיו קָלֶב בֶּן יוֹסֵף הַנֶּקֶרָא קָלֶב בֶּן שֶׁרָג' אֲדוּרָה.

סדר התפנות ראש גלות.

וְהָיָה שֶׁאִמְרָה עוֹד ר' נָתָן הִכְתֵּן עַל דְּבָרֵי רֹאשׁ גְּלוּת הַיָּאךְ יִתְמַנֶּה וְהַיָּאךְ יִכְרֶתוּ לוֹ כָּל הָעָם בְּרִית בִּשְׁעָה שִׁיתְמַנֶּה, כֵּךְ הוּא הַדְּבָרִי:
אִם הִסְכִּימָה דַּעַת הַקָּהָל לְמִנּוּחָהּ, מִתְקַבְּצִין שְׁנֵי רֹאשֵׁי הַיְּשִׁיבוֹת עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם כָּל רֹאשֵׁי הַקָּהָל וְהוֹקְנִים בְּבֵית אָדָם גָּדוֹל שֶׁבְּכָל מַגְדוּלֵי הָדוֹר, כְּגוֹן נְטִירָא וְכוּצָא בּוֹ. וְזֶה שֶׁמִּתְקַבְּצִים בְּבֵיתוֹ מִתְכַּבֵּד בְּדִבְרֵי, וְיֵשׁ לוֹ שֶׁבַח גָּדוֹל בּוֹ, וְכַבֻּדּוֹ מִתְעַצֵּם, בְּהִקְבֵּץ הַגְּדוּלִּים וְהוֹקְנִים בְּבֵיתוֹ. וּמִתְקַבְּצִין בְּבֵית הַכִּנְסָה בְּיוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וּמִבְרִיךְ אוֹתוֹ וְנוֹחֲנִין יָד עָלָיו וְתוֹקְעִין בְּשׁוֹפָר לְהַשְׁמִיעַ אֶת כָּל הָעָם מִקֵּץ וְעַד גָּדוֹל. וְכִשְׁשׁוֹמְעִין הַדְּבָרִי, כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִתְקַהֵּל מִשְׁגֵּר לוֹ מִנְחָה כְּפִי כָחוֹ וְהַשְׁנָה יָדוֹ. וְכָל רֹאשֵׁי הַקָּהָל וְעֹשִׂירֵיהֶם שׁוֹלְחִים לוֹ בְּגָדִים נָאִים וְחֲשִׁיטִים יָפִים וְכָלִי כֶסֶף וְכָלִי זָהָב, כָּל אִישׁ וְאִישׁ כַּמֶּתֶנֶת יָדוֹ. וְהוּא טוֹרֵחַ בְּסַעֲדוֹת בְּיוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וּבְיוֹם הַשֵּׁשִׁי בְּכָל מִינֵי מֵאֵכֶל וּמִינֵי מִשְׁתֶּה וּמִינֵי מַגְדִּים, כְּגוֹן מִינֵי מַתִּיקָה.
וְכִשְׁמִשְׁכִּים לִלְכֵת יוֹם שַׁבָּת בְּבֵית הַכִּנְסָה, רַבִּים מַגְדוּלֵי הַקָּהָל מִתְקַבְּצִין עִמּוֹ לִלְכֵת בְּבֵית הַכִּנְסָה. וְכִכֵּר הִכִּינוּ לוֹ בְּבֵית הַכִּנְסָה מִבְּעוֹד יוֹם מַגְדָּל עַץ, אֲרֻכּוֹ ו' אַמּוֹת וְרֹהֲבוֹ ג', וְפּוֹרְסִין עָלָיו בְּגָדִים נָאִים מִן הַמָּשִׁי וּמִן הַתְּכֵלֶת וּמִן הָאֲרָגָמָן וּמִתּוֹלַעַת הַשֵּׁנִי, עַד שִׁיתְכַסֶּה כּוֹלוֹ וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מִמֶּנּוּ כְּלוּם. וְכִנְסִים תַּחְתּוּיָּם בַּחֲזָרִים שֶׁנִּבְחָרוּ מִנְּשֵׂאֵי הַקָּהָל וּמַגְדוּלֵיהֶם, בַּחֲזָרִים וְהִתִּיקִם, בְּעָלֵי קוֹל בְּעָלֵי נְעִימָה, וְקוֹלֵם עָרֵב וּבִקְיָאִין בַּתְּפִלָּה וּבְכָל עֲנִינָה. וְרֹאשׁ גְּלוּת עֲצָמוֹ יִהְיֶה מְכוּסֶה בְּמָקוֹם עִם רֹאשֵׁי הַיְּשִׁיבוֹת, וְהַבְּחֻרִים עוֹמְדִים תַּחַת הַמַּגְדָּל, וְלֹא יֵשֶׁב עָלָיו אָדָם.

וְחֹזֵן הַכִּנְסָה מִתְחִיל בְּ, בְּרוּךְ שֶׁאִמְרָה, וְהַבְּחֻרִים עוֹנִים וְאַחֲרָיו עַל כָּל דְּבָרִי וְדְּבָרִי מְ, בְּרוּךְ שֶׁאִמְרָה: "בְּרוּךְ הוּא". וְכִשְׁהוּא אוֹמֵר, מוֹמָר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת עוֹנִין אַחֲרָיו, טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת לָהּ. וְקוֹרִין כָּל הָעָם כְּאֶחָד פְּסוּקֵי דוֹמֶרָה: "עַד שְׁגוֹמְרִין אוֹתָן. וְעוֹמְדֵי חֲזוֹן וּפְתוּחַ בְּ, נִשְׁמַת כָּל חַי", וְהַבְּחֻרִים עוֹנִין אַחֲרָיו, תְּבָרַךְ אַת שֶׁמֶךְ".
הוּא אוֹמֵר דְּבָרִי וְהַבְּחֻרִים עוֹנִין אַחֲרָיו, עַד שֶׁמִּגִּיעִין לְקְדוּשָׁה, וְאוֹמֵר אוֹתָהּ הַקָּהָל בְּקוֹל נִמּוֹךְ וְהַבְּחֻרִים בְּקוֹל רֹם, וּמִיד שׁוֹתְקִין הַבְּחֻרִים וְהַחֲזוֹן לְבַדּוֹ מְשַׁלִּים עַד, גָּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל". וְעוֹמְדִין כָּל הָעָם בַּתְּפִלָּה. וְכִשְׁעוֹבֵר לִפְנֵי הַתִּיבָה וּמִגִּיעַ לְקְדוּשָׁה עוֹנִין הַבְּחֻרִים אַחֲרָיו, הָאֵל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּקוֹל רֹם, וּמְשַׁלִּים הַתְּפִלָּה וְיוֹשְׁבֵין כָּל הַקָּהָל. וְכִשְׁיוֹשְׁבֵין כָּל הַקָּהָל, יֵצֵא רֹאשׁ גְּלוּת מִתְּמָקוֹם שֶׁהָיָה מְכוּסֶה בּוֹ. וְכִשְׁרֹאִים אוֹתוֹ כָּל הָעָם עוֹמְדִים עַל רַגְלֵיהֶם עַד שֶׁיֵּשֶׁב עַל הַמַּגְדָּל שֶׁעָשׂוּ לוֹ. וְיֵצֵא רֹאשׁ יְשִׁיבַת סוּרָא אַחֲרָיו וְיֵשֶׁב עַל הַמַּגְדָּל, לְאַחַר שִׁתָּן לוֹ כְּרִיעַה כְּפוּף וְיִחְזֹר לוֹ. וְאַחַר כֵּךְ יֵצֵא רֹאשׁ יְשִׁיבַת פּוֹמְבִּדִיתָא, וְיִתֵּן לוֹ גַּם הוּא כְּרִיעַה, וְיֵשֶׁב לְשִׁמְאָלוֹ. וּבְכָל זֶה כָּל הָעָם עוֹמְדִים עַל רַגְלֵיהֶם עַד שִׁתְּקֵנוּ שְׁלֹשָׁתָם יְשִׁיבָתָם. וְיוֹשֵׁב רֹאשׁ גְּלוּת בְּאֲמָצֵעַ, וְרֹאשׁ יְשִׁיבַת סוּרָא יוֹשֵׁב לִימִינוֹ, וְרֹאשׁ יְשִׁיבַת פּוֹמְבִּדִיתָא יוֹשֵׁב לְשִׁמְאָלוֹ. וּבִינָם לְבֵין רֹאשׁ גְּלוּת מָקוֹם פְּנוּי. וְעַל מְקוֹמוֹ פָּרְשׁוּ עָלָיו בְּגָד

י' תחת אותו מגדל. - י' ההלים קמיה-קין. -

נאה על ראשו, מבעל למגדל, אחוז בחבלי בוך וארגמן. וחזן הכנסת מכניס ראשו בסדינו בפני המגדל ומברך אותו בברכות מתוקנות, שהתקינו לו מאתבול שלשום, בקול נמוך, כדי שלא ישמעו אותו אלא היושבים סביבות המגדל והבחורים שהם תחתיו. ובשעה שהוא מברך אותו עונין אחריו הבחורים בקול רם: "אמן!" וכל העם שותקים עד שהוא גומר ברכותיו. ופוחה ראש גלות ודורש בענין הפרשה של אותו היום, או יזן רשות לראש ישיבת סורא לפתוח ולדרוש, וראש ישיבת סורא נותן רשות לראש ישיבת פומבדיתא, והם נוהגים כבוד זה לזה, עד שפותח ראש ישיבת סורא. והתורגמן עומד עליו ומשמיע דבריו לעם. וכשדורש דורש באימה, וסותם את עיניו, ומתעסף בסליתו, עד שהוא מכסה פדחתו. ולא יהיה בקהל, בשעה שהוא דורש, פוצה פה ומצפצף ומדבר דבר. וכשירגיש באדכ שמדבר, פותח את עיניו, ונופל על הקהל אימה ורעדה. וכשהוא גומר מתחיל בקצין ואומר: "ברם צריך את למילף". ועומד וקן אחד, חכם ורגיל, ומשיב בענין ויושב. ועומד החזן ואומר קדיש. וכשמגיע "בחייכון וביומיכון" אומר: "בחיי גשיאנו ראש גלות ובחייכון ובחיי דכל בית ישראל". וכשגומר הקדיש מברך ראש גלות, ואח"כ מברך ראשי ישיבות. וכשהוא גומר את הברכה עומד ואומר: "מדינה פלונית וכל בנותיה, כך וכך יבא מהן". וזוכר כל המדינות שהן משלחות לשיבתה, ומברך אותן. ואח"כ מברך האנשים שבהן, שמתעסקים בגדבה, עד שתגיע לשיבותה. ואח"כ מוציא ספר תורה וקורא כהן ואחריו לוי. וחזן הכנסת מוריד ס"ת לראש גלות, וכל העם עומדין. והוא מקבל ס"ת בידיו ועומד וקורא בה. וראשי הישיבות עומדין עמו. וראש ישיבת סורא מתרגם עליו, ומחזיר ספר תורה לחזן, ומחזירה לתיבתו. וכשהוא מגיע לתיבתו, ישב הוא במקומו. ואז ישובו כל אדם במקומם. ואחריו קורין ראשי גלות, ואחריהם תלמידי ראשי ישיבות. אבל ראשי הישיבות עצמן אינם קורין בס"ת באותו היום, מפני שקדמן אחר. וכשמפסיד המפסיד, עומד אדם גדול ועשיר ומתרגם עליו, ויהיה לו שבח וכבוד בדבר זה. וכשמשלים, יוסיף לברך ראש גלות בס"ת, וכל עילוי צבור שהן רגילין ובקיאין בתפלה עומדין סביבות התיבתו ואומרים: "אמן!" ומברך אחר כך ראשי ישיבות שניהם, ומחזיר ס"ת למקומה, ומתפללין הפלת מוסף ויוצאין.

וכשיוצא ראש גלות, כל העם יוצאין לפניו ולאחריו, ואומרים לפניו דברי שירות ותשבחות עד שהוא מגיע לביתו. אבל ראשי ישיבות אינם הולכין עמו עד ביתו. וכל התלמידים שהולכים עמו ומלוין אותו עד ביתו אינו מניח אחד שיצא מביתו עד ו' ימים. ומאותה העת ואילך אינו יוצא מפתח ביתו. והעם מתקבצין ומתפללין עמו תמיד בין בחול בין בשבת בין בימים טובים.

ואם רוצה לצאת ולעשות צרכיו רוכב במרכבת המשנה כמרכבת שרי המלך בבגדים נאים. והולכים אחריו עד ס"ו אנשים, ועבדו יהיה רץ אחריו. וכשעובר על אחד מישראל רצים אליו ומחויקים בידיו ומסבירין פניו. וכן עושה כל אחד מישראל שיעבר עליו, עד שיתקבצו עליו כמו נ' או ס' עד המקום אשר הוא בא שם. וכשהוא חוזר אל ביתו עושין פה הפנהג. ולעולם אינו יוצא עד שתולכין אחריו כל סיעתו. ודומה בהליכתו כאחד משרי המלך.

וכשהוא רוצה ליכנס לפני המלך לבקש ממנו דבר או לראות פניו, מבקש משרי המלך ועבדיו הנכבדים אליו תמיד לדבר אל המלך שיתן לו רשות ליכנס

אליו, ונותנין לו רשות וקצתו על השוערים להכניסו. וכשהוא נכנס רצין לפניו כל עבדי המלך. והוא כבר הכין בחיקו זהובים וזוים שיתן לאותם העבדים הרצים לפניו עד שלא יכנס, והוא מכניס ידו לחיקו ונותן לכל אחד ואחד מה שיומין לו הקב"ה. והם מכבדין אותו ואוחזין בידו עד שהוא בא ועומד לפני המלך, ומשתחוה לו, והוא רומז עליו, שהיה עומד על רגל אחת וסומך בשנית, עד שרומז המלך לאחד מן העבדים עליו לוקחו בידו ומושיב אותו במקום שרמו לו המלך במקום שיושיבנו בו. ואח"כ מדבר עם המלך, והמלך שואל אותו על שלמו ועל דבריו ועל מה נכנס אליו. והוא מבקש רשות ממנו שידבר בפניה, והוא מרשה אותו. ואז מתחיל בהלולים וברכות המוכנים לו מקודם לכן, ומסדר לפניו מנהגות אבותיו ואבותם ומפייס בדברים ערבים עד שעושה בקשתו ונותן לו שאלתו וכותב לו כל תפציו שיבקש ממנו, ויוצא משם ונפטר ממנו בשמחה ובשלום.

החקים של ראש גלות ושל הריונים.

ואלה החקים אשר היו לראש גלות לקחתם בכל שנה ושנה ממקום אחד הנקרא נהרואן וכל פרנקיית, והוא רחוק מבבל כמו חצי יום במזרח, ומוציא אליהם דיין ברשותו וברשות ראשי ישיבות, וכותב לו אליהם כי לקח רשות מהם. ומוציא אליו מן המקום ההוא נקנים לו משם כמו ט' או ע' זהובים. וכשהוא מגיע לשם בדרך לו שנים מחשובי המקום להמנות עמו על כל פסקי דינין שעושה. ואם היה אותו דיין הממונה ישר בדרכיו ובקי בדיניו כתבו ראשי המקום והחשובים אל ראש גלות ומשבחין אותו בעניו. ואם שמא ח"ו שיהיה בו דבר רע או ימצאו בו שום דופי, כותבין אל ראש גלות ואל ראש הישיבות: פלוני כמה מקולקלים מעשיו וכמה מקולקלים דרכיו. והן מסירין אותו וממנין אחר תחתיו.

וזה החוק שהדיין נוטל מאנשי המקום: מכל אחד שחוא מבין עשרים שנה ומעלה שני זוים בשנה, וזו בפסח וזו בסוכות. ומהכתובה וגט ושטר חוב ושטר מתנה ושטר מכירה יש לבעלים לתת ד' זוים ושליש במשקל ישמעאל. והסופר אין לו אלא הקבלנות שפוסק הדיין לתת לו בשנה, והכל לדיין. וכך היה המנהג לתת כל זה לדיין, בין שהיה שם בין שהלך למקום אחר. והדיין יש לו שני בני אדם שמעיינין וחוקרין ומשקימין על כל רשותו, שלא יהא אדם עושה מאלה הדברים שכתבנו אלא על פיו. וכל מי שכותב שטר בסתר מנדה אותו וקונס אותו שיתן שכר השטר ומלקחו. ואם היה עניי שלא יוכלו לתת הדבר הקצוב, נוטל ממנו הסופר כפי השגת ידו ברשות הדיין. ויש לדיין על הטבחים וזו בכל שבוע ושבוע. וגם לראש גלות יבא אליו מרשות מדינת פרס בכל שנה עשרים זהובים על זה המנהג. ויש לו מקום אחר הנקרא חלואן, כינו ובין בכל מהלך ה' ימים, ומקבל ממנו ק"ג זהובים בשנה על החוק הנזכר. וגם יש לו מקום אחר הנקרא קצר, והיא ארץ מולדתו, ויוצא לו ממנו ל' זהובים בשנה. ויש לו בבבל מקום ששם ביתו והוא ברשותו, ויש לו שם על כל אחד ואחד מישראל שני זוים בפסח ובסוכות. ואינו נוטל מן העניים כלום, כי העשירים מקילין מעליהם. והטבחים נותנין לו רביע זהוב בכל שנה. וכללו של דבר, שמגיע אליו בכל

שנה ושנה מכל אלו המקומות ת"ש זהובים. ואם רצה כותב למקומות רחוקים שיסמכוהו ויכבדוהו וכותב להם ועושין לו בקשתו. ואם יצא בנו של ראש גלות לכל מקום שירצה נושאין לו פנים ומכבדין אותו ונותנין לו מנחה, ואינם נמנעים מזה הדבר, אבל עושין עמו כל אחד ואחד לפי כבודו ולפי גדולתו. ואם לא ישאו לו פנים ולא יכבדוהו במתנותיהם שולח אכיו פתיחות וחרמות ואמר ר' נתן שראה את בנו של דוד בן זכאי, שיוצא למדינת פרס, שנטא מרשות אביו, ולא כבדוהו ולא נשאו פניו, ושולח להודיע את אביו, ואביו הוציא עליהם פתיחות וחרמות, והודיע למשנה, והמשנה הודיע למלך, וכתב המלך למלך פרס לסמוך ידו ולעזרו עליהם. וכששמע מלך פרס והגיע כתב מלך בבל לידו, שלח ידו בהם ונטל מהם ממון הרבה מפרס, שהוא רשות אביו, ומכל פרוריה, והגיע וחזר לבבל. ולא היה אחד מראשי הישיבות מי שיערער עליו בדבר זה.

כשימות ראש גלות כל הרשיות שלו ינתנו לראש ישיבת סורא. וסופר ראש גלות נוטל שכרו מראש גלות. ואין לראש גלות בגדרים ונדבות שמשגרין קהלות ישראל אל הישיבות כלום, כי אינם משגרים אותם אלא עם שאלותיהם, ובשאלות אין לראש גלות עסק בהן. וכמו כן מנהג וראשיו ישיבות כשיתמנה אחד מהם, כן מנהגם לעשות לו כדרך שעושין לראש גלות כשממנין אותו. חוץ מס' שאין מורידין אותה אליו, אלא הוא עולה אליה כדרך כל אדם. וכך היו נוהגין ראשי ישיבות בכל מקומות רשיותיהן שמוציא אליו הדיין שלהם, כמו שכתבנו, שמוציא דיין ראש גלות מרשותיו.

ואלו הרשיות שיש להם: לראש ישיבת סורא (מקום הנקרא וסאס, ויוצא אליו ממנו ומפרוריה ק"ן זהובים השנה, ומבצרה ומפרוריה ש' זהובים השנה, והוא הנקרא כלת. ועוד לו מקום הנקרא ג' מוס, בינו ובין אופיר מהלך ב' ימים, וכן אופיר עצמה ברשות סורא. כללו של דבר, מה שיוצא לסורא מרשיות שלה בכל שנה אלף ות"ק זהובים השנה, לבד הגדרים והנדבות. ויש להם בבבל רשיות צפונה דרומה כורחה וימה, נוהגין עמחן כמו שנוהג ראש גלות במקומות שלו שיש לו בבבל, כמו שכתבנו למעלה. וטבחי רשיות סורא גותנין לראש ישיבת שלהם רביע זוז השבוע. ופעמים שיהיה לישיבת ראש גלות צוק הזמן, ושולחים כתבים לכל קהלות ישראל ומודיעים להם ענינם ולחצם, וכל קהל וקהל שולחים להם מתנות כפי כחן וכפי השגת ידן. וכמו כן מנהג ראש ישיבת טומבדיתא בכל רשיותיו.

וכל השאלות שמשתלחין לאחד מראשי הישיבות בשמו אין לראש ישיבה האחר כלום בגדרים ונדבות הבאות עם השאלות, וכאשר נשתלחו השאלות בשמם הם יקחו גדרים ונדבות הבאות עמהן. ואם משתלחין סתם חולקות שתי הישיבות בשות. וכך היה מנהגם בחלוק כל מה שמגיע אליהם מגדרים ונדבות בכל השנה: הן מניחין הכל ביד אדם נאמן לצורך הוצאת התלמידים הבאים מכל המקומות שהם יושבים, ומתקבצין ובאין מכל המקומות בחדש פקת, שהוא חדש אלול בימי הקיץ ואדר בימי החורף. וכל אחד ואחד מן התלמידים במקומו גורם ומציין כל אותם ה' חדשים המסכתא שאמר להם ראש ישיבה בצאתם מעצא. ובאדר אומר להם: מסכתא פלונית נפרש באלול, וכמו כן

באלול אומר להם: "מסכתא פלונית נגרוס באדר". ובאין כלם ויושבין לפני ראשי הישיבות באדר ובאלול, וראש הישיבה עומד עליהם על גרסתם ובודק אותם.

סדר הישיבה.

זה סדר ישיבתם: ראש ישיבה יושב ולפניו עשרה אנשים, והיא נקראת דרא קמא, ופניהם אל פני ראש ישיבה. והעשרה שיושבין לפניו ז' מהם ראשי כלות וג' חברים. ולמה נקרא שמם ראשי כלות? שכל אחד מהם ממונה על עשרה מן הסנהדרין, והם הנקראין אלופים. וכך היה מנהגם: אם נפטר אחד מראשי כלות, ויש לו בן הממלא את מקומו, יורש מקום אביו ויושב בו, ואפילו היה קטן בשנים. וכן מן החברים, כשיפטר אחד מהם, אם היה בנו ממלא את מקומו יושב בו, ואין אחד מהם דולג על מפתח חבירו, ואם אינו כמלא מקום אבותיו והוא ראוי לישב באחת משבע דרי ישב בה. ואם אינו ראוי לישב עמהם, יושב עם בני רב ועם שאר התלמידים, שהם כארבע מאות איש. והשבעים סנהדרין, שהם ז' שורות, שורה ראשונה יושבת כמו שזכרנו, ואחריהם עשרה עד ז' שורות, ופני כלם אל פני ראש ישיבה, וכל התלמידים יושבין אחריהם, ואין אחד מהם מכיר את מקומו, אבל הו' שורות כל אחד ואחד מכיר את מקומו, ואין אחד מהם יושב במקום חברו. ואם יהיה אחד מהם, מן ה' שורות, גדול בחכמה מן האחר, אין מושיבין אותו במקומו, מפני שלא ירשה מאביו, אבל מוסיפין לתת לו יותר מחוקו מפני חכמתו. וכשירצה ראש ישיבה לנסותם בגירסתן יועדו עליו כלם בד' שבתות של חדש אדר, והוא יושב והשורה הראשונה גורסין לפניו, ושאר השורות שומעין ושותקין. וכשמגיעין למקום הצריך להם לדבר ודברו בו בינם לבין עצמם, וראש ישיבה שומע אותם ומבין את דבריהם, ואח"כ קורא והם שותקין ויודעין שכבר הבין מחלקותם. וכשישלים קריאתו דורש וגורס באותה מסכתא, שגרסו בימי החורף כל אחד ואחד בביתו, ומפרש בכלל דבריו הדבר שנחלקו בו התלמידים, ועתים שהוא שואל מהם פירוש הלכות. והם מכבדין זה את זה, והכל מכבדין את ראש ישיבה ושואלין אותו פתרון. ואין אחד מהם יכול לדבר בפניו עד שיתן לו רשות. והם מדברים כל אחד ואחד כפי חכמתו, והוא מרחיב להם דבריו בפתרון כל הלכה והלכה, עד שיתברר להם הכל. וכשמתברר להם הכל יפה עומד אחד מדרא קמא ודורשה ברבים עד ששומעין אותה כקטון כגדול. וכל מי שרואה אותו עומד יודע שאינו עומד אלא לברר הברייתא שממנה סיוע השמועה, ואז מדקדיקין בה שאר התלמידים וחוקרין אותה ומבארינן אותה באר היטב. וכך היו עושין כל ימות החדש. ובשבת רביעית קורין כל הסנהדרין וכל התלמידים, וראש ישיבה מעיין וכל אחד ואחד מהם וחוקר אותם ומנסה אותם עד שיתברר לו המהיר בחכמה מחבירו. וכשרואה את אחד מהם שאין תלמודו סדור בפיו יקשה עליו יותר ויגרע לו מחוקו וגוער בו ומוכיחו ומודיעו המקומות שנתרשל בהם ושנתעצל עליהם ומזהירו בנפשם ומתרהו שאם ישנה כן פעם אחרת ולא ישים לבו על תלמודו שלא ינתן לו כלום. ולפיכך היו מתחדדין ומתעסקין בלמודם עסק יפה, כדי שלא יכשלו לפניו בדבר הלכה. וכל השורות אינן הולכות מעמו עד שמודיען המסכתא שיתעסקו בה כל אחד ואחד בביתו.

ולשאר התלמידים אינו צריך להודיע, אלא כל אחד ואחד גורם באיזו מסכתא שירצה.

וכך היה מנהגם בתשובת השאלות: בכל יום מהחדש אדר מוציא אליהם כל השאלות שהגיעו אליו ונותן להם רשות שישבו תשובה עליהן, והם מכבדין אותו ואומרים לו: „לא נשיב בפניך“, עד שהוא תוקף בהם, ואז מדברים כל אחד ואחד לפי דעתו ולפי חכמתו, ומקשין ומפרקין ונושאים ונותנים בכל דבר ודבר ומעיינין יפה יפה. וראש ישיבה שומע את דבריהם ומבין כל מה שאומרים ומקשין זה לזה, ועומד ומעייין בדבריהם עד שיתברר לו האמת. ומיד יצוה לסופר להשיב ולכתוב. וכך היה מנהגם לעשות בכל יום ויום, עד שמשיבין תשובת כל השאלות שבאו להם השנה מקהלות ישראל. ובתכלית החדש יקראו התשובות והשאלות במצמד כל החבורה כלה, וחותם עליהם ראש ישיבה, ואח"כ שולחין אותן לבעליהן, ואז מחלק הממון עליהם.

ב. נטירה ובניו.

נטירה א.

והכליף אלמעת צדי הוציא גורה נוראה לרעת היהודים. הגורה היתה בעצתו של היועץ אבן אבן אלבגל, והוא ערך כתב הגורה אל שרי המדינות כדי להוציאה אל הפרעלו.

— — — וכתב מכתבים אל כל הנציבים שהיו רצויים לו, ובא במכתבים אל השולטן שיחתם עליהם, ומצא שהשולטן היה טרוד והשאיר אצלו המכתבים לחתימה, כדי שיטלם בבקר. ואירע באותו לילה ואלמעת צד היה ישן על משכבו יפה, ואירע שבא אליו בחלומו איש והכה בידיו על שוקיו והתנפל בחרי אף עליו. אחר כך אמר לו: — הזהר. — אחר כך ואמר לו שנית: — הזהר לבל תגע ביהודים, שמא אענישך ואקטע ירך ורגליך. — ונטירה יראה גדולה ונתפחד והיה חרד לנפשו. ונדמה לו שזהו בהקיץ ושהיה מסביב למקום שנתו.... היו צרים עליו ושומרים עליו וחלקו הלילה.... והיו ערים מהם ארבעים איש בכל משמר מן ומשמרות הלילה. וצוה שיכנסו אנשי המשמר. והם מ' אנשים. ונכנסו כלם ונרדם. ובא אליו האיש שנית ואמר לו: — מה יכריחך לשפך דם אנשים נקיים שאין להם דרך לראות אותי ולא אפשרות לידע דברי, כי אני אליהו. וכבר אמרתי לך פעם אחת, והזהר לבל תגע ביהודים באופן מן והאופנים, שמא אעשה עמך, ואעשה.... — והקיץ שנית מתפחד פחד גדול, ושלא אחר נטירה באותה שעה. ולא היה נטירה מסופק שאבד, ושלא יהיה לו דבר לאבן אבן אלבגל. והיה מכין עצמו ולבש תכריכין, ונכנס אל השולטן, והושיט לו ידיו ולא הכירו מהנתנתו ומלבושיו, לא ראה דוגמתו. ושאל על הסבה והודיעהו שהכין עצמו ולבש תכריכין ופרש מביתו ונתיאש מן החיים. והבטיחו מפחדו, והודיעהו כי שלח את ידיו. בענין שלוחצו ומרגיו. אחר כך אמר לו:

— מי הוא אליהו? — ואמר: — אלוה יחוק למושל המאמינים! — הוא אלכצ'ר יי. — ואמר לו: — האם אליהו דואג ליהודים? — אמר לו: — כן אדוני! כך קבלנו וירשנו מספרי הנביאים עליהם השלום. והיהודים הם אומה חלשה, לא ימסרם אלוה בשום אופן, כי כן הבטיח להם על ידי משה נביאו עליו השלום ואף גם זאת יי. — קרא לפניו כל הפסוק כולו. אמר לו: — תרגם אותו לי. — ותרגם אותו. והודיעו בזה מה שאירע לו. והוציא לו המכתבים וצוהו לתפוס לאבן אבן אלבגל ולשלט בנפשו ובנכסיו ובכל מה שחננו בו מלכו. ויצא נטירא עם משרתי השולטן, וחפס אותו בלילה והטיל עליו עונש עצום, עד שהוציא לו כל מה שהיה לו בגלוי ובסתר והעביר כל זה לדירתו הוא עם כתביו, והפרישהו. אחר כך שם עליו משמר. ובבקר בא אל השולטן ומסר לו הכתבים והודיעהו על כל מה שמצא מן הממון והתכשיטין והמלבושים והאבנים הטובות והכלים והשפחות והעבדים. ואמר לו: — הנה נתתי לך כל מה שהזכרת, תניח לנפשך. — ובקש ממנו רשות שירצה לקחת השפחות והעבדים, ומיין בזה. אבל אמר לו: — עשה בהם כחפצך, כי לא חכנס להיכלי מהם נפש חיה ושום דבר ממה שהיה לו. — והוליד נטירא כל קניניו, נקבות וזכרים, והרבה מרכושו, ומה שבסתר ובגלוי, אל הויזיר וכל אנשי השולטן, והניח לעצמו השאר.

אחר כך צוה לו אלמעת'צד לבטל המס מישראל, ואמר לו: — אי אדוני! היהודים ישמרו דמם רק במס, ואם יבטלו מהם יהא דמם מותר. אחר כך לא יהיו בטוחים בעתיד, שלא יהיו נלחצים, בסבת היות הביטול קודם לכן, וימאנו לסלק הכל בפעם אחת, ויאבדו ויהיו עניים. ויותר טוב להם לסלק המס לפי ראות עיני מושל המאמינים, יאריך ה' ימיו, בעין טובה ובחסד ורחמים. — ואמר לו: — קבץ אותו מהם לפי מנהג הנביא עליו השלום, כמו שהיה הדבר בזה בימיו. —

ועשה כן.

והיו ישראל בשלום והשקט ס' שנים ומחצה, יתר ימי אלמעת'צד, לא היה להם צער ולא היה להם יגון. והיו לובשים בבגדי בני אלעבאס יי, מלבושים שחורים. והיו הגוים חיים עמם בטוב ולא היו עליונים להם בשום דבר. עד שהתנשאו עליהם הרבה מן אלצופיה יי שהתנאו עליהם וצוררו להם אצל הפנס. וזה היה אצל פנס השולטן ובגד היכלו על שפת חדקל יי, וצוה השולטן להביאם זוגות זוגות בסירות אל היכלו, וצוה עליהם להשאר שם עד שנתחבאו. וכשהיה הלילה צוה להוציאם זוגות זוגות בשקים וצוה להלקותם במקל עד רציצת עצמותיהם, והחזירם לסירות וטבצם בחדקל. ולא העיז אחר זה איש להביט אל יהודי זמן רב.

ואחר מותו ישב על כסאו בנו אלמק'תדר יי והיה עמו נטירא באותה מעלה ח' שנים עד מותו, ירחמהו האל. ואחריו היו בניו סה'ל ויצחק, ולא היו לו בנים זולתם, לא זכרים ולא נקבות.

¹¹ כך קורין חישמעאלים אליהו הנביא. — ¹² ויקרא כז סד. — ¹³ משהתה הכליפין. — ¹⁴ כת של בעלי הסוד אצל המושלמים. — ¹⁵ אלדנלה. בערבית. והוא Tigra. — ¹⁶ Al-Moktadir 908-932 לס' לאלף עיר בסוף שט' שנים (902-908 לס' ה'י) אחיו אלמכ'ת' (Al-Moktafi). —

סהל בן נטירא.

ונכנס סהל במקום אביו. ודירתו וברוהבו דרב גמיל, בחלק אלרביעי. היה רוכב בכל יום להיכל השולטן. ולא היה מקבל שום שכר. והיה מוציא בכל שנה ת"ק שקלים, והיה מחלקם בין הויזירים של השולטן, ולא היה משאיר מהם כלום. ולישראל היה ממנו תועלת גדולה: היה עוזר לקטן ולגדול מהם, ולא אירע שישמע על אחד שהיתה לו סבה שלא הצילו, והרחיק ממנו והצרהו ועזר לו בממונו. וחזן מזה הצדקה הארעית בסתר ובגלוי בצרור הדרחמים והמלוכמים.

ובכל שבת היו מתפללים אצלו אנשים, והוא היה קורא לכל מי שהיה נכנס אליו. ומשרת היה עומד לפניו, ואם היה רוצה להשאיר איש, שישב אל שלחנו, היה מרים עיניו אליו ומביט עליו והיה מבין המשרת חפצו ומשאירו. וכשנגמרה התפלה היו יוצאים האנשים דרך הפתח השני, ולא בפתח שיכנסו בו. והיה משאיר מי שרצה בו באחד החדרים. והיתה מתחילה הכנסת עניים מן ת' אנשים עד ר', פחות לא היו, והיו יושבין עשרה על כל שלחן. ומנהגו, שהיה מכין ג' תנויות שהיו עושים פת מיום החמישי עד יום הששי בצהריים. והיו מקבלים כל הנכנסים אליו פת עם בשר בסתר. ומה שהיה ומה שנשאר מן הפת היה עושה ממנו יום השבת לעניים, לכל איש לחם ושתי חתיכות בשר, עד שאכלו לשובע, והיה עומד בעצמו עליהם במניפה, עד שיגמרו הסעודה, והיה משקת אותם ומחלק להם מה שהיה מן הפירות וכדומה לזה. והיה אוכל כדי לוגמיו ומברך עמהם ברכת המזון ומוציאם. אחר כך היה יושב. והוא עם חבריו לאכול. וכשהיו מטלקים השלחן היה מצוה להביא משקה והיה שותה עם חבריו עד סוף הסעודה. והיו לנים, וכשהיה הבקר היו מתפללים והולכים הל אחד לעסקיו.

גם היה גומל חסד לגוים בצדקה ובמתנות, וקונה ת"ק בגדים, יותר או פחות, ומחלקם בין הגוים, ושולח לועירי כופה גם כן ממון שיחלקו בין בני עליהם ובין בני האשם. ובוה המנהג כבר קדמחו אביו. ולו בשרם כבר של שוק שהיה מכניס לו מכס אלפים דרחם במדה בכל שבוע.

והיה חזק כח זכרונו בידיעת המקרא והמשנה והתלמוד, והיה יודע כל מה שדרוש מדיעת הדין וההלכה. והוא תלמידו של רב סעדיה, וכל מיני מעלותיו היו נמצאות אצלו. והוא היה בן ארבעים שנה. היה בקי יפה בכתב ערבי וחיבור כתבים. ולו בן ושמנו נטירא, בן שמונה שנים בשעה זו.

יצחק אחיו.

הוא אחיו של סהל זה, והוא בן עשרים ושבע שנים, שותף לאחיו סהל ב....

"הרובע. כך נקרא אותו חלק העיר בנצרת. - "בתקאל. - "מרוחה. -
 "תתן קחסר. - "משפחת קחסר. -

APPENDIX B

Maps of the Islamic World in the Tenth Century

THE ROUTLEDGE ATLAS OF JEWISH HISTORY

6th Edition

Martin Gilbert

Dedicated to the memory of Terry Bicknell, cartographer and friend

First published 1969 as *The Dent Atlas of Jewish History*
by J. M. Dent Ltd

Second edition published 1976

Third edition published 1985

Fourth edition published 1992

Fifth edition published 1993

Reprinted 1995

by Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge

29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Sixth edition first published 2003

Reprinted 2003 (Twice)

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 1969, 1976, 1985, 1992, 1993, 2003 Martin Gilbert

The right of Martin Gilbert to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Bell & Bain Ltd, Glasgow

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-415-28149-0 (Hbk)

ISBN 0-415-28150-4 (Pbk)

JEWISH TRADERS 800-900 A.D.

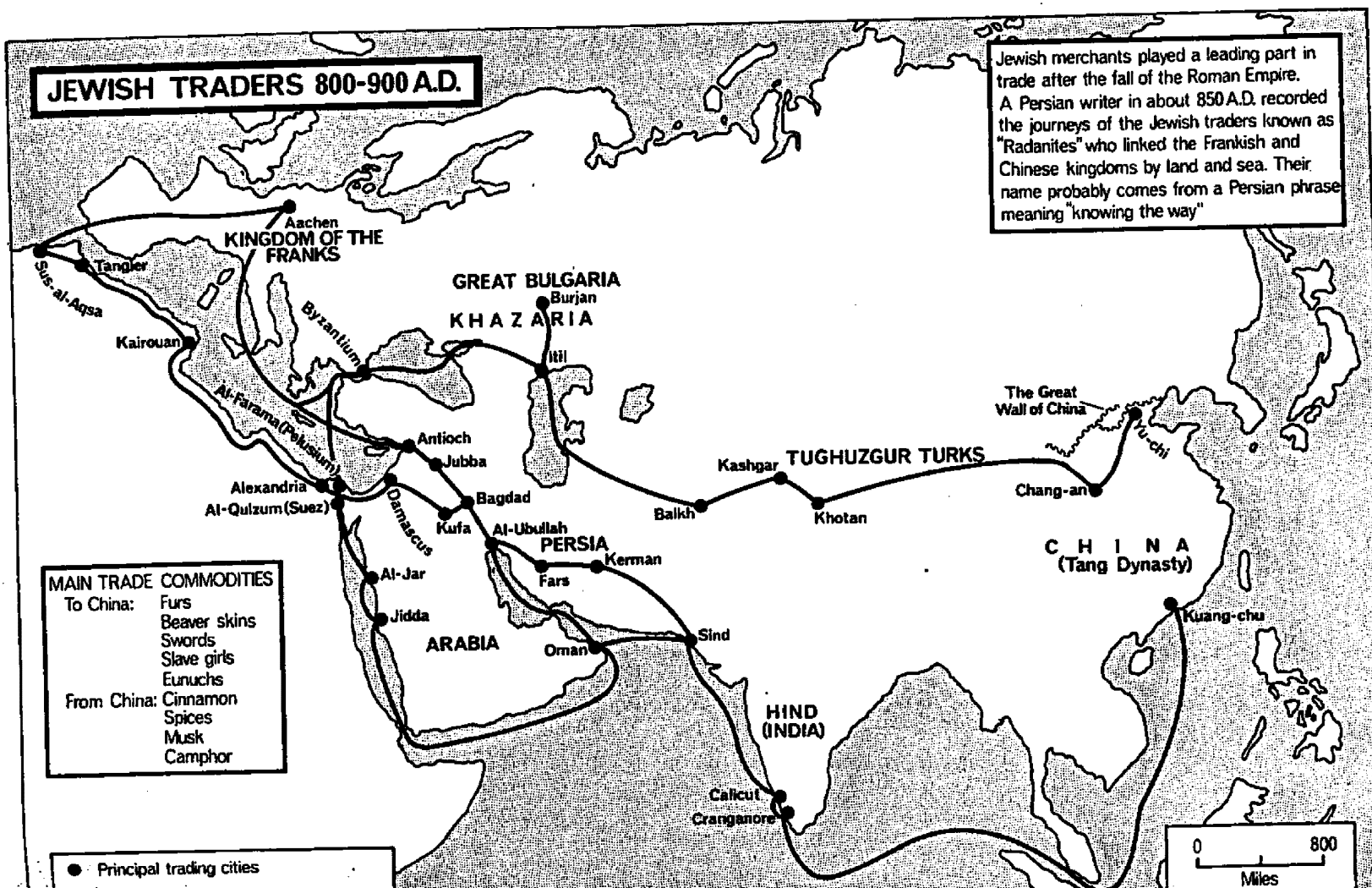
MAIN TRADE COMMODITIES

To China: Furs
Beaver skins
Swords
Slave girls
Eunuchs

From China: Cinnamon
Spices
Musk
Camphor

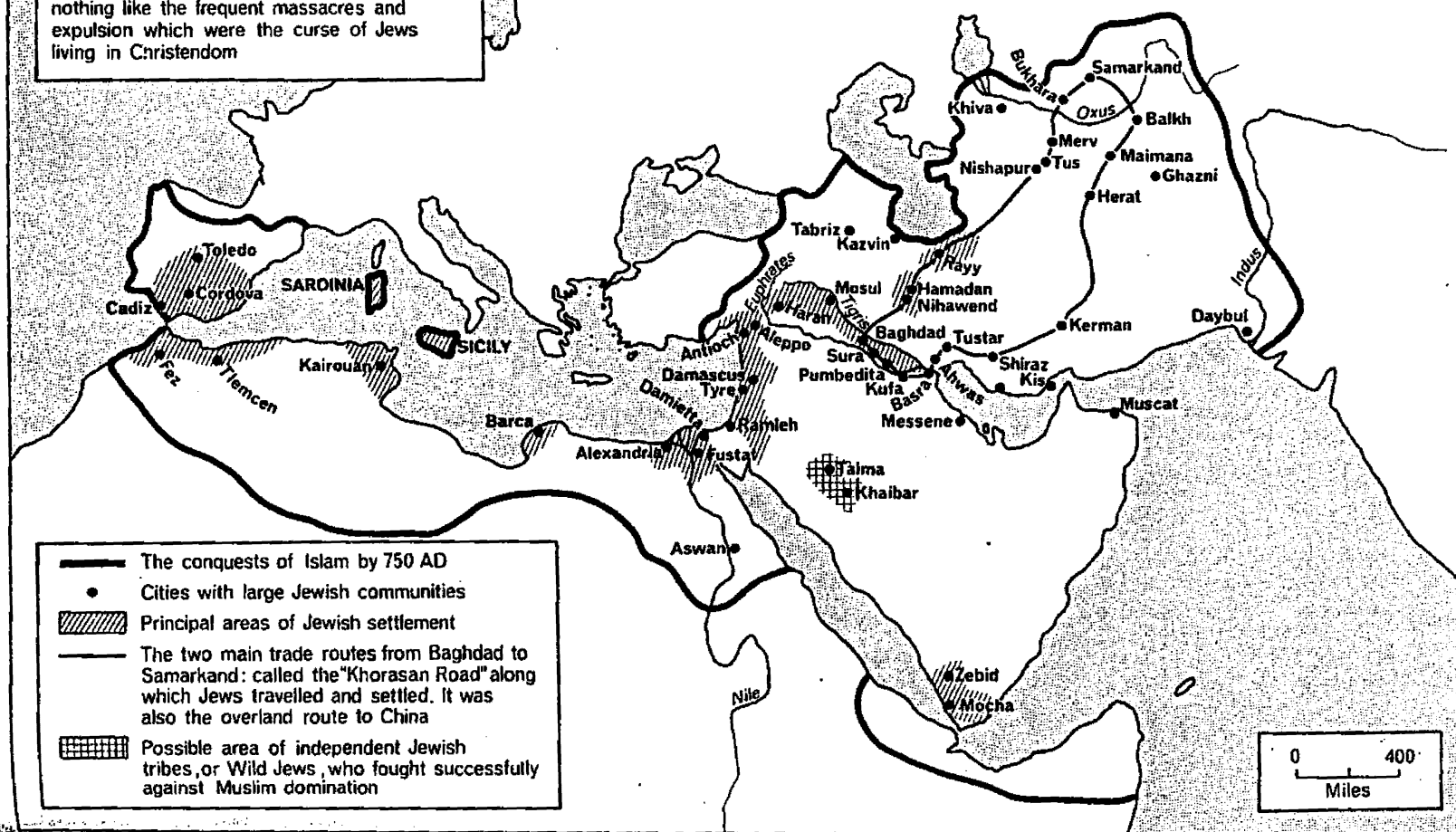
● Principal trading cities

Jewish merchants played a leading part in trade after the fall of the Roman Empire. A Persian writer in about 850 A.D. recorded the journeys of the Jewish traders known as "Radanites" who linked the Frankish and Chinese kingdoms by land and sea. Their name probably comes from a Persian phrase meaning "knowing the way"



Under Muslim rule the Jews found greater toleration than under Christianity. Thus the Jews of Toledo opened the gates of the city to welcome their Muslim liberators. There were nothing like the frequent massacres and expulsion which were the curse of Jews living in Christendom

THE JEWS AND ISLAM 750 AD



HISTORICAL ATLAS OF ISLAM

by

G. S. P. FREEMAN-GRENVILLE

and

STUART CHRISTOPHER MUNRO-HAY

THE KLAU LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
BROOKDALE CENTER
ONE WEST FOURTH STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10012

CONTINUUM
New York • London

2002

The Continuum Publishing Group Inc
370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017
The Continuum Publishing Group Ltd
The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX

HISTORICAL ATLAS OF ISLAM

Revised and expanded edition

Portions of this volume have been published previously as
Historical Atlas of the Middle East
The New Atlas of African History

Managing Editor: Lorraine Kessel

Maps: Lorraine Kessel

Illustrations: Vladimir Shestakovsky

Map Scans: Tsahi Ben-Ami

Copyright © 1991, 1993, 2002

Carta, The Israel Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Freeman-Grenville, G. S. P. (Greville Stewart Parker)
Historical atlas of Islam / by G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville and Stuart
Christopher Munro-Hay.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8264-1417-6

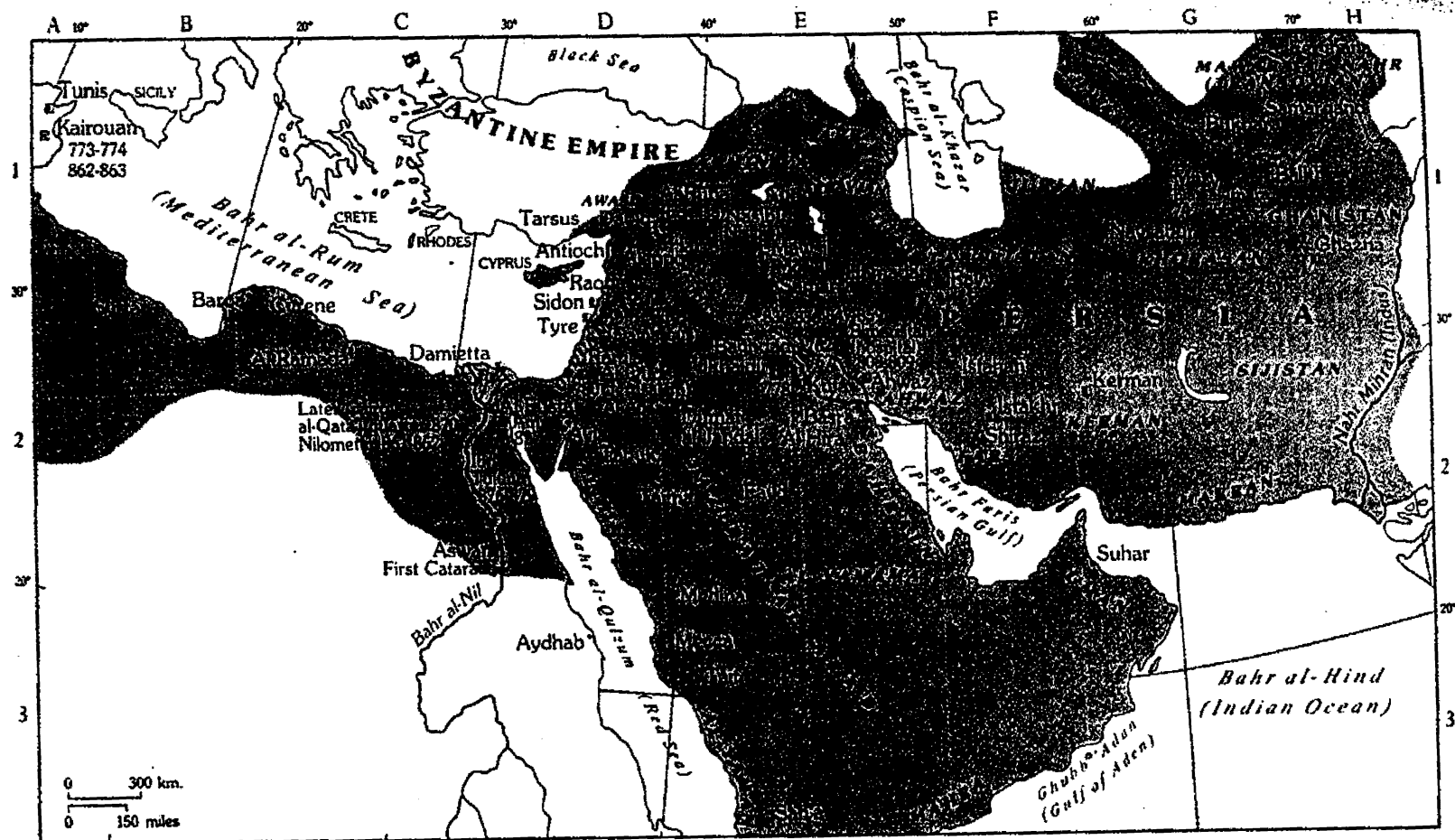
1. Islamic countries--Historical geography--Maps. 2. Islamic
countries--Civilization--Maps. I. Munro-Hay, S. C. (Stuart C.), 1947-
II. Title.

G1786.S1 F7 2002

911'.17671--dc21

2002031019

Printed in Israel



■ Extent of Abbasid Caliphate

KERMAN Abbasid province

□ Intellectual centers

▲ Mosque

■ City built

✱ City rebuilt, mosque rebuilt

■ Palace

THE ABBASID CALIPHATE

