

AZARIAH DEI ROSSI'S

ME'OR 'ENAYIM:

AN HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Including annotated translations of

Chapters 29, 35, 36, 37, and 38

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Four hundred years after its publication in Mantua, Azariah dei Rossi's Me'or 'Enayim is little read, has never been fully translated, and today provokes no more than scholarly interest. In its own day, however, the Me'or 'Enayim--The Light of the Eyes--became the center of a controversy which continued for some time after its author's death. Although superficially the controversy focused on the theological implications of dei Rossi's studies of biblical chronology, an examination of his own position in the Jewish and general communities and the general context in which he wrote indicate a deeper political significance to the work.

Our task is threefold: First, to translate the key chapters of Me'or 'Enayim which sparked the controversy, so that the reader will be able to form his own impressions in direct response to the text. Second, to discuss the direct consequences of the book's publication, in both their particular and general context. Finally, to approach the questions of dei Rossi's goals in writing the Me'or 'Enayim. What audience was he writing for? Was his book intended as a political document in an on-going controversy, or was it merely happenstance that it was used as such? In considering the impact of dei Rossi's work, we hope to move beyond the surface implications of his position in society and personal context into a discussion of how we can place his work in

relationship to the wider European political scene.

Others have dealt extensively with the internal structure and dynamic of dei Rossi's writings, and are noted as such in the bibliographical section. Since our goal is not to discuss dei Rossi's literary method or sources--interesting though such a discussion might be--the annotations to the translated chapters of the Me'or 'Enayim are usually limited to references within the text and to textual difficulties. At the same time, the discussion following the translated chapters is limited to dei Rossi's political, economic and societal context and its implications. A short review of dei Rossi's biography, immediately following, provides sufficient background for the translations proper.

A glance at the table of contents of the Me'or 'Enayim, translated in the Appendix,¹ reveals that the so-called "Yeme 'Olam" section of the third part of Me'or 'Enayim is the most extended and significant portion of the work. Beginning with Chapter 29, dei Rossi devotes sixteen chapters to a full range of problems relating to traditional rabbinic chronology. Chapter 35, on the First and Second Temples, appears to be the key chapter of the entire work, and certainly became the center of controversy even prior to its publication. Yet a listing by Zunz shows that only one of the chapters in the section has ever been translated, and he is unaware of major treatments to any of the chapters on chronology.² Indeed until our own day only one extended section, chapters three through six on Philo, has merited scholarly treatment.³ We have therefore

¹Page 111, infra.

²Leopold Zunz, "Toldot Azariah Min Ha-Adumim," in Me'or 'Enayim, by Azariah dei Rossi, ed. Isaac ben-Jacob (Wilna: R. M. Romm, 1864), p. 9. Zunz writes that chapters 19, 23, 25 and 32 were translated by Vorst, while chapters 50 and 60 were also translated, into Italian. He cites Buxtorf, Exercitatio Tertia.

³See Ralph Marcus, "A 16th Century Hebrew Critique of Philo" in Hebrew Union College Annual, XXI (1948), pp. 29-71.

chosen to translate the four most important chapters on chronology, namely, Chapters thirty-five through thirty-eight, as well as the introductory chapter to the section, Chapter twenty-nine. The latter is written in the nature of an apologia, and reveals more of dei Rossi's social position and intentions than do the more strictly analytical chapters which follow. In that introductory chapter, for example, dei Rossi affirms his faith in the perfection of God and Torah, and his devotion to study purely for the sake of Heaven. He states unequivocally that nothing in his writings may be taken as original, but that he is merely repeating the wisdom learned in earlier generations. He shows that even where a view might differ with traditional conceptions, "the gate of Heaven will still be open and the righteous shall still pass through,"³ anticipating the attacks which he was later to suffer. His apologetic includes a defense of his use of non-traditional sources in his presentation. These include citations of Latin and Greek scholars, the literature of the early Church Fathers, medieval and contemporaneous Catholics from throughout Europe, as well as the full range of rabbinic sources. While dei Rossi cites scores of non-Jewish philosophers and theologians in the following chapters (and more than a hundred in the whole work), he is careful to clarify that "it is suitable for us to honor our own sages on a higher level among ourselves."⁴ He is quite aware that his criticisms of traditional chronology will be controversial, and is trying to defend himself in advance as best he can.

The chapters chosen for translation represent a new comparative and critical approach to Jewish historiography. Yet as a product of

³Cassel ed. p. 278.

⁴Cassel ed. p. 276.

the late Renaissance, Azariah dei Rossi was both ahead of and behind his times. In comparison with the Jewish community, touched by the humanistic awakening only at the top of the social strata, dei Rossi's was a revolutionary approach to Jewish history not to be undertaken again seriously until the Wissenschaft der Judentums of the 19th century. Yet in terms of the general society, dei Rossi worked after the Renaissance had virtually succumbed to the Catholic reaction in the mid-sixteenth century. As we shall deduce in more detail later, the reaction had already touched the Jewish community by the time dei Rossi was ready to publish, aggravating the controversy beyond what he had probably intended. Yet his unfortunate timing is precisely the measure of dei Rossi's significance in Jewish history.

CHAPTER TWO

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF AZARIAH DEI ROSSI

Azeriah Benaiuto dei Rossi was born in Mantua between 1511 and 1514 of an ancient Italian Jewish family.¹ His family name is a direct translation from the Hebrew "Min Ha-Adumim," one of the four Italian Jewish families claiming direct descent from the exiles brought to Rome by Titus after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Zunz notes that dei Rossi's father, Moses, had been the first of his family to settle in Mantua.² Although evidence from this early period in dei Rossi's life is scanty, he apparently continued the necessary search for a Jewish haven, leaving Mantua at an early age. After staying briefly in Venice, Ancona and Bologna before the age of thirty, Azariah married in Ferrara about 1545, then returned to Mantua.³ Later, on medical advice, he drifted south in search of a better climate, moving for a time into the Papal States.

Paradoxically, dei Rossi expressed his first interest in and contact with the intellectual Catholic community at the same time that the Church's reaction to the Reformation was becoming most severe. Roth reports that dei Rossi was engaged as a Hebrew tutor to the future Duke

¹Salo W. Baron, "Azariah dei Rossi: A Biographical Sketch," in History and Jewish Historians, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), p. 167. Zunz, in "Toldot Azariah Min Ha-Adumim," in Me'or 'Enayim, by Azariah dei Rossi, ed. Isaac ben-Jacob (Wilna: R. M. Romm, 1864), p. 2 records his birth as in 1513 or 1514.

²Leopold Zunz, Ibid.

³Ibid.

Ferdinand, while Shulvass adds that he was one of several who participated in public disputations with the Christian community.⁴ Jews and Christians, even so late in the Renaissance, still respected and esteemed each other's respective views on religion, although on a theoretical level only. This tendency toward rapprochement, implied in the Humanists' Neoplatonic efforts at rationalism, was often expressed in such disputations. In Italy, unlike in Spain or Northern Europe, public debates were therefore not held under compulsion, but rather from a genuine interest in understanding and clarification.

By the Papacy of Paul IV (1555-1559) reaction to the Reformation had reached such severity that Azariah was again compelled to move, returning to Ferrara. We shall consider elsewhere the political relationships comprising dei Rossi's historical context.⁵ Paul IV, however, represented merely the result of a long process of reaction, dating back to the Ratisbon failure (1541) to reconcile differences between the two fundamentally different approaches. The history of efforts to publish the Talmud provides a good indication of the shifting ideological stand of the Church. Pope Leo X permitted publication in Venice (1520). Before the middle of the century the Councils of Trent (1546-1563) reaffirmed the Church as an "infallible authority," and in 1553 Pope Julius III ordered that the Talmud be burned. This was accomplished in Rome, Bologna, Venice, Ancona and Padua (1554), and in Cremona (1560).⁶ These were the same cities, of course, which institutionalized the first Italian ghettos (Venice, 1516; Rome, 1555, etc.)

⁴Cecil Roth, The Jews in the Renaissance (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1959), p. 147; Moses A. Shulvass, The Jews in the World of the Renaissance (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 207.

⁵Page 100, below.

⁶Zunz, Ibid., p. 2.

In 1554, Pope Paul IV permitted publication of the Talmud with the strict condition that rigid censorship be instituted. In response, the Jewish community of Ferrara called a Rabbinic Synod (1554), resolving that should censorship indeed be put into effect, the Jewish communities ought to have a system of precensorship. The following year, after Pope Paul IV reintroduced the Inquisition into Italy and established the Papal Index of heretical books, Jewish precensorship finally became necessary. There is evidence that dei Rossi may have been one of the censors, but it is unclear whether his position derived from the Jewish community or was an official governmental position. It is also not clear whether this was a salaried position or not, but we must assume at least the possibility that the House of Este, long noted for its liberal attitudes toward the Jews, worked cordially if not closely with the precensorship committee.⁷ This period saw dei Rossi's first literary activity, especially poems and marginal notes to Abravanel's Mercavat Ha-Mishnah (Sabionita, 1558).⁸

By 1560 we again lose dei Rossi's whereabouts, although Zunz feels that he again resided briefly in Bologna before 1567, when he was forced to flee as a result of the uprising against the Jews of that community.⁹ Pope Pius V expelled the Jews from the Papal States in 1569 (except for Rome and Ancona), but dei Rossi was probably already in Ferrara, again under the security of the House of Este.

The great earthquake in Ferrara (November 18, 1571) finally spurred dei Rossi to his major literary activity. By the end of 1571 he had published two short works, Kol Elohim (Ferrara, 1571), on the causes and nature of earthquakes, and a translation of the Letter of Aristeas from

⁷Baron, Ibid., p. 167.

⁸Zunz, Ibid., p. 3.

⁹Ibid.

Garbitius' Latin translation into Hebrew.¹⁰ He began his magnum opus, Imre Binah, in April, 1572, working nearly a year to polish and correct the sixty chapters of the work before completing it. Dei Rossi then spent six months trying to secure backing for the publication of the book, according to Zunz,¹¹ finally succeeding in publishing Imre Binah together with his two shorter works as a complete unit, called Me'or 'Enayim ("The Light of the Eyes"), in Mantua (November 18, 1573). Still not satisfied with the finished product, dei Rossi added so many marginal notes that a second, corrected edition was soon necessary, and was published in Mantua in 1575.

This second edition was published with two additions. The first, which dei Rossi called Mazref le-Kesef, was his rejoinder to objections raised by his Mantuan friend Moses Provenzel, who had criticized dei Rossi's tampering with traditional calculations of chronology. Isaac Finzi, Rabbi of Pesaro, had also criticized the work, primarily on the same grounds, and his thirteen objections were published with dei Rossi's responses in a short final section called Zedek 'Olamim. All subsequent editions have been published with these two sections.

Me'or 'Enayim became with its publication the symbol of a controversy at once broad and deep. On one level, the book was the stimulus for an unprecedented scholarly debate among both Jewish and Christian communities. On the political level, various groups representing opposing ideologies--indeed opposing power elements within the communities--used the book as a spokesman for their conflicting interests. Since this controversy is integral to the discussion of the general context and

¹⁰Baron, Ibid., p. 168.

¹¹Zunz, Ibid., p. 3.

perspectives in which dei Rossi wrote, we have deferred its description until the end of the translated chapters.¹²

Whether from ill health or for some other reason, dei Rossi did not live to see the resolution of the controversy begun with the publication of his great book. His death remains as much of a mystery as his birth, for we do not know either where or when he died. Baron reports merely that he died sometime during Kislev, 1577,¹³ while both Baron and Kaufmann assume without evidence that he died in Mantua.¹⁴

¹²See pages 92 ff., below.

¹³Salo W. Baron, Op. Cit., p. 170.

¹⁴David Kaufmann, "Luttes d'Azariah de Rossi," Revue des Etudes Juives, XXXIII (1895): p. 81.

CHAPTER THREE

Translations From Five Chapters of

Azariah dei Rossi's Me'or 'Enayim

Chapter Twenty-nine

An investigation into whether there is need to increase or decrease the number of years we count since the creation

In the chapters of this section, which I have designated Yeme 'Olam, it is my intention to enquire and explore the number of years we count since the creation; the basis of reckoning; and whether there are incontrovertible proofs for additions or subtractions.

The number of years from the Creation until the Second Temple is derived from the words of Torah and Prophets in such a way as to preclude doubt about their duration. But these words are not sufficiently clear. This results in reassessments by many scholars of our own time who have written opinions conflicting with those of our rabbis, as we shall explain, with God's help, in Chapter 35 and following. Here we cannot say anything new on the subject. It is not for us to add to the basic doubts that others have raised, but merely to recall and briefly clarify the words of the sages who first raised them.

In addition to citing our traditional commentators, steadfast guardians of the Torah from whom we shall always drink words of wisdom, we shall also not refrain from quoting the words of two early scholars from the Second Temple period. Although Jewish, they differed with our traditional views, not knowing about them.

In this regard, it is true that we are only quoting the words of others in this section. No one will derive anything new from our opinion; indeed, any calculation we might mention will doubtless in some way be acceptable. You, enlightened reader, will at some point hear from me about their contradictions, and about the merit of each of the various groups, especially our rabbis.

In any event, regardless of one's preference, the traditional number of years since creation "will not ever depart from out of your mouth."¹ The traditions of our forefathers remain "Torah" as they always have. The excuses of the various critics is also a form of apology by any investigator (who actually comes off as second best). This scholar, however, is from any point of view far, God forbid, from opposing the Torah or implying any defect in the honor of our rabbis of blessed memory.

This has already begun to be inferable in the previous chapters. With God's help, before we leave this chapter, it will be clearly evident to those who approach the subject with open minds. These things will become clear and evident, for every enlightened person will know and testify to the brilliance with which the sages determined the number of years. Indeed, I take it as axiomatic, pleasant reader, that you will say to yourself that this investigation is only highly theoretical. Moreover, you can say that throughout history what was good for the sages is good for us, and what was, was.

If you consider carefully how the truth, taken by itself, is the result of numerous scholarly investigations preceding my own, you can resolve your own doubts. Indeed it is the strength of God and a

¹The idiom of this phrase is similar to that of Joshua 1:8: "This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth."

characteristic of the healthy and vibrant soul that it will always seek the truth. More important, during this discussion you will see that we shall also learn the reasons for some of the statements in our sacred writings.

You understand that the sages made the point that we do not observe even an ideal Messianic law if promulgated in our own time, but we have to determine and investigate whether any former interpretation may be valid. (See the fourth chapter of Zebahim [45a] on one who renders a thing unclean; the chapter "'Arbah Mitot" [Sanhedrin 51b] on the daughter of a cohen who prostitutes herself; and the first chapter of Yoma [5b] on how Moses dressed Aaron in his vestments.)² This will be further explained in Section IV, Chapter 46, if there is anything of worth in our words on the priestly vestments.

There is a third reason for this discussion, without being vain. By our arguments a Messianic law can actually be foreseen, for in the opinion of many respected men the Messianic Age will soon be coming. To raise questions about our people's traditions, therefore, seems to us healthy and useful, especially with respect to what we will see with God's help before the end of this section, particularly in Chapter 43.

On account of these three reasons, and aside from what will be brought out in the course of the discussion, "I will judge [that nation]"³

²Zebahim 45a cites the principle that one may not benefit by Rabbinic law; in Sanhedrin 51b, R. Joseph says that although capital punishment is not enforced in his day, the law must be learned in preparation of Messianic times. Most commentators, according to Steinsaltz (Adin Steinsaltz, Talmud Babli: Masekhet Sanhedrin [Jerusalem: Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications, 1974/ p. 224), assume the point is a matter of opinion and not law; in Yoma 5b, the principle is derived from the order in which Aaron will don his garments in the Messianic future, based on Leviticus 8:5.

³Genesis 15:14.

for not only will the reader think this argument an interesting one in its own right, but a mitzvah as well. He may also hope that the God of Mercy will reward us.

It is very clear, as we have said elsewhere, that in secular matters such as this, the investigator need not observe each law and commandment. It is also worthwhile to believe gentile scholars who write on secular matters, especially those who appear unprejudiced in their views. In this regard, when we consider the resulting chronology, one would think that scholars could declare their opinions in scholarly circles. This should apply to all scholars, writing in any language, who have made an enduring name for themselves. I refer to scholars who have investigated, refined and perfected their ideas, expounding them continuously, and who have written for the sake of pure scholarship.

This view also approaches the view of mitzvah as firmly establishing the still vibrant words of the holy dead. We must not ridicule the words of these scholars for we may still find beauty in them.

It is suitable for us to honor our own sages on a higher level among ourselves. But although we differentiate between them and gentile scholars, we will not hear about them either in scorn or praise until we are first brought to some understanding of the verses in our holy writings. Otherwise, one might slander them, or overgeneralize, as in Kiddushin [6a].⁴ With respect to both, moreover, it is possible that they would teach something which we might need to later clarify by the words of our righteous and true prophets.

The author of the Yossipon⁵ has already written, in his second part,

⁴The discussion centers on how general or specific a declaration of betrothal must be.

⁵An historical pseudepigraphical work purporting to be a condensed account of Josephus' works, apparently written (from internal evidence) about 960 C.E. in southern Italy.

against Appian,⁶ that it is true that Scripture, even when translated piecemeal into various languages and among various nations, is still basically a unified document. One philosopher, in his seventh "rung," also said something similar, namely, that the voice heard among the differing multitudes is not harmful. These words are thus the foundation of the whole discussion of Scripture and the words of our prophets, as each reader will soon see.

Before I begin their defense, however, I have gathered some writings on chronology by gentiles, among whom we include two early Jews who wrote in Greek. This is possibly the reason why our Babylonian sages did not remember them. These Jews whom I quote first are therefore on a separate level among the five whom I will quote in this discussion. All five are from the period of the Temple or its destruction, rather than from the recent past.

They are, in order, Xenophon the Greek,⁷ who according to the chronological charts of Eusebius⁸ lived in the days of Artaxerxes Mnemon,⁹

⁶Appian of Alexandria (fl. 2nd century C.E.), Greek historian of Roman conquests from the Republican period until the 2nd century.

⁷Greek historian (b. 431 B.C.E., Attica; d. ca. 350 B.C.E., Attica) and disciple of Socrates, who developed a dislike for Athenian democratic institutions. According to Marcus (Ralph Marcus, "A 16th Century Hebrew Critique of Philo," HUCA XXI /1948/: p. 35), dei Rossi used Xenophon as a pseudonym for Annus of Viturbo.

⁸Sometimes called Eusebius Pamphili (fl. 4th cent. C.E. in Caesaria). Bishop, exegete, polemicist and historian whose Ecclesiastical History is a landmark in Christian historiography.

⁹Artaxerxes II (fl. late 5th cent. and early 4th cent. B.C.E.), Achaemenian King of Persia (reigned 404-359/8), son and successor of Darius II and surnamed (in Greek) Mnemon ("The Mindful").

the eleventh Persian king as we shall presently see; Metasthenes the Persian,¹⁰ who lived in the days of Selivko the Greek (known among scholars as Seleucus),¹¹ one of the four kings who arose after Alexander; Yedidiah the Alexandrian,¹² of Jewish stock, whom we described previously, and who defected to the other side before the Conflagration, that is, during the reign of Caius Caesar;¹³ Yossipon the Jew, whom we have already seen; and the gentile Eusebius, from Caesaria, who flourished in the days of Constantine.¹⁴ All of these are highly respected in the literature, and you will soon hear how well they address our problem. Although they may differ in their interpretations of Scripture, it should not be difficult for us to reconcile their differences.

Although scholars generally agree that the prophetic books are never self-contradictory, or that we might find some reason to doubt their validity, you, dear reader, a man of understanding, can testify that there is in the scholarly literature a kind of discord, as we have said from the beginning.

¹⁰Although "Metasthenes" is often quoted by dei Rossi, Cassel points out (David Cassel, ed., *Me'or 'Enayim*, by Azariah dei Rossi [Wilna: R. M. Romm, 1866], "Index II," p. 169) that dei Rossi is probably referring to Megasthenes (c. 350 B.C.E. to c. 290 B.C.E.), Greek historian and diplomat whose works have been largely lost. Cassel adds that "Metasthenes" never existed.

¹¹Seleucus I Nicatur (b. 358-354 B.C.E., Macedonia; d. 281 B.C.E., Thrace), founder of the Seleucid Kingdom and Governor of Babylon.

¹²Philo Judaeus (b. 15-10 B.C.E., Alexandria; d. ?, Alexandria), Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher and theologian whose philosophy was influenced by Aristotle, the Neo-Pythagoreans and especially Plato. According to Bentwich (Norman Bentwich, *Philo* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1910], pp. 75-76), most of his historical and allegorical works have been lost. Bentwich adds (*Ibid.*, p. 237) that dei Rossi was the first to use the name "The Alexandrian" for Philo.

¹³Grandson of Augustus Caesar (d. 4 C.E.).

¹⁴Roman Emperor (fl. c. 288-337 C.E.) who initiated the evolution of the Empire into a Christian state.

We already know that the majority of our seven major commentators, namely, Saadiah,¹⁵ Ibn Ezra,¹⁶ Nahmanides,¹⁷ Kimhi,¹⁸ Abravanel¹⁹ (especially with respect to the Second Temple and the prophecies of Haggai, Zecharia, Malachi, Daniel and Ezra, who find support for their statements in the Yossipon) and others, agree with the author of the Arukh.²⁰ On this account it is not legally valid to scorn any scholar, however much he may deviate from the truth. This is especially true if everything is for the sake of Heaven.

We know that the true believer would affirm that our chronology, dating from Creation and revealed to Moses at Sinai, does not fall under any investigations or criticisms, but is divine and perfect. This is also true of the prophetic tradition and the book of Chronicles. Who, indeed, could ever surpass our God the King?

That part which the Prophetic Spirit did not reveal, however, can only be confirmed by contemporaneous scholars. Even then they did not witness it, but heard it from their ancestors. Apart from any excuse

¹⁵Saadia ben Joseph (882-942), Jewish exegete, philosopher and polemicist. Appointed head of the Sura geonate in 928.

¹⁶Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (c. 1090-1164), Spanish Jewish grammarian and exegete, a Neoplatonic philosopher. He disseminated biblical lore throughout Europe after 1140, including visits to Lucca (1144) and Mantua (1145).

¹⁷Moses ben Nahman (c. 1195-1270), Spanish Talmudist and exegete whose writings reflect kabbalistic beliefs.

¹⁸David Kimhi (also called Radak, c. 1160-c. 1235), Narbonne, Talmudist, exegete and philosopher, a staunch supporter of Maimonides.

¹⁹Don Isaac ben Judah Abravanel (1427-1509), Jewish statesman, exegete and philosopher who quoted and was quoted by many Christian commentators despite his strictly traditional Jewish views. Ardent anti-rationalist and anti-Maimonist.

²⁰Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome (1020-1106). The Arukh is a lexicon and dictionary of all the words of Talmudic literature, alphabetically arranged.

already mentioned or which will be expressed further on, we know that due to the chaos of the times and instability of the tradition, it is possible that some mistake or confusion could have occurred. Scholars will work, therefore, fruitfully at it; and others will dwell on it so that the investigator can later come and study every word. Finally, all will be filled with knowledge and by divine knowledge no one will henceforth doubt the truth.

We know that should we count even a small part of our chronology since creation consecutively as is traditional, we would not think it illogical that some find contradictions. But their souls are not destroyed; we learn rather never to think of their words as sinful.

No one can with certitude calculate how the Torah and prophets determined our chronology, for the Prophetic Spirit had already died during the Second Temple. Rashbag²¹ commented in Genesis Rabbah 37 that even in his day no one could use it.²² Should we find it necessary to differ with our tradition, therefore, the gate of Heaven will still be open and the righteous shall still pass through it, no matter what we see in the prophetic books which conflicts with our traditions. Our goal is to explain the matter directly, not by absurdities, until we approach justice and truth.

Let us return, however, to the five scholars mentioned. You will presently see that I shall not desist from quoting short sections verbatim from Metasthenes and Yedidiah [Philo]. Even with respect to minor details

²¹ Simon ben Gamaliel, president of the Sanhedrin ca. 68 C.E.

²² Genesis Rabbah 37:10 (Jerusalem: Lewin-Epstein, 1967). Simon ben Gamaliel notes that in his generation the Prophetic Spirit is not used, but he does not state that it cannot be used.

it is possible that I will find a place for them later in this book, perhaps in connection with some other matter which might come to mind.

On the other three writers, I only wish to extract from their work the essence of their ideas. Blessed God, you ought now incline your ear and listen to their words.

Chapter Thirty-five

World chronology; years of Egyptian enslavement; the First and Second Temples. Tradition holds that the First Temple stood 410 years, but it must have stood at least 418 years.

I

There is no doubt (as we have noted in both Chapters 5 and 29) that everyone accepts the traditional chronological calculation going back to the creation, as tabulated in our sacred writings. From Adam on--through the flood, Abraham, the Exodus and the First Temple--and beyond until our time, this calculation has been tacitly accepted, and no one has dared to challenge it.

From a number of Greek royal documents, therefore, as well as from our sages' writings, according to the first chapter of Elilim,²³ it appears

²³Abodah Zarah, 9a-9b ff. The discussion of a "world era" in this passage is unique in the Talmud, and established the following basic chronology, referred to repeatedly by dei Rossi in his critique of the traditional chronology:

Adam to Noah	1056 years
Noah to Abraham	892 years
Abraham's birth to the Exodus	500 years
CREATION TO THE GIVING OF TORAH	2448 years
Exodus to the First Temple	480 years
Duration of the First Temple	410 years
Babylonian Exile	70 years
Duration of the Second Temple	420 years

that 380 years passed from the sixth year of Alexander's reign until the destruction of the Second Temple. As we explained in Chapter 24, there is not the slightest tendency by any scholar to add or subtract from this number.

Yet we see that the Septuagint counts a greater number of years for the ten generations from Adam to Noah than our "true" version.

We have already shown from the words of the Bishop Eugubino²⁴ (Chapter 8) in his commentary on the biblical portion Balak, and in the writings of Samotheus,²⁵ a contemporary Christian scholar in his first book, Chapter seven, how they concluded that any intelligent person has an equal claim to the truth. This is not to be confused with belief in the calculations contained in our sacred writings, familiar everywhere. But any who transgress the commandments in the Torah and prophets, from the time of Noah until the end of the prophetic period, has no claim to the truth. From all sides the truth will spring forth in the scholarly literature of those who wrote about the great number of monarchs who ruled the world.

Metasthenes the Persian,²⁶ whom we quoted in Chapter 31, knew the proper way to find the truth. In this way, as opposed to any other, it becomes clear; other versions appear erroneous, and the traditional total appears fraudulent. Our sacred Bible is only an interpretation, comprised of the Torah and Prophets; the gentile translator does not

²⁴Augustinus Steuchus (b. Gubbio, 1496), Bishop in Kisamo in the Candia Islands during the papacy of Pope Clement VII (1523-1534). Wrote Pentateuchi Recognitio ad veritatem Hebraicam.

²⁵Johannes Lucidus Samotheus (fl. 16th cent.), Venetian scholar of chronology. His De Emendatione Temporum is an historical chronicle through the year 1535.

²⁶See note 10, above.

disagree, as in the introduction to the calculation of chronology by Eusebius.

It is true that our patient people believe in Scripture, yet some say that people do change their opinions about chronology. This is so in particular in three places, namely, the duration of the Egyptian captivity; the duration of the First Temple; and the duration of the Second Temple from the time of its construction.

With respect to the Egyptian period it is written (Exodus 12:40), "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years." Our sages taught that we count from the seventieth year of Abraham. This was thirty years since Isaac's birth, and four hundred years passed from then until the Exodus. (Cf. Seder 'Olam²⁷ Chapter one; the Mekhilta²⁸ to "He went unto Pharaoh" 14; Exodus Rabbah 18;²⁹ Tanhuma³⁰ to Exodus 14, and the commentary by Jonathan ben Uzzial to the verse "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt...")³¹ According to the traditional counting, all of them say this was in the

²⁷Name given to two early historical works, Seder 'Olam Rabbah, edited by the tanna R. Jose ben Halafta and his school; and Seder 'Olam Zuta, dating from the 8th cent. Both are chronological summaries, although dei Rossi is probably referring to the former.

²⁸Tannaitic Midrash (Aram. "measure"), thought to emanate from the school of R. Ishmael, on the latter part of Exodus. Dei Rossi's reference is incomplete.

²⁹Based on Exodus 12:41, "And it came to pass at the end of 430 years," that is, "from the time when the decree was pronounced /to Abraham, at the Covenant of the Pieces/, for they were only 210 years in Egypt...."

³⁰Midrash Tanhuma, a homiletic midrash on the Pentateuch, redacted c. 1100-1200; named for a late 4th cent. amora, Tanhuma bar Abba of Palestine. The reference is to the portion "Bo," paragraph 9.

³¹"And the days that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt were thirty periods of release, counted as 210 years; the number 430 comes from when God spoke to Abraham on the 15th of Nisan at the Covenant of the Pieces, until the day when they left Egypt."

year 2448 after the creation [1312 B.C.E.]. This is explained in Seder 'Olam as we mentioned. It is also noted in the Pesikta which the editor quoted on Psalm 40 on the verse, "...thy thoughts toward us" (Ps. 40:6).³² We find, however, that among the later commentators many righteous ones never accepted this unquestioningly. They differed on this with our earlier sages, who indeed differed among themselves as well.

Rabbi Hananel,³³ for example, according to Rabbi Behayyi, commented on the verse "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt," that we count the 430 years from the time Isaac was born, so that the Exodus from Egypt did not occur until thirty years after the 448 taught by our rabbis.

You will also find that the scholar Abravanel concurs with this opinion in his commentary on the verse, "And he came unto Pharaoh" and in his book Zevach Pesach,³⁴ in the article "Baruch Shomer Hivtachto." He says there that the 400 years which the Lord designated for Abraham began with the birth of Isaac; thirty years were appended to them, however, because Israel had sinned, just as they were detained in the desert for forty years due to the sins of the spies.

Nahmonides, too, wrote that the Egyptian captivity was lengthened by thirty years due to Israel's sins. Perhaps Abravanel got his ideas from him, although according to Nahmonides the four hundred years began at the Covenant of the Pieces, which he feels is some time after his de-

³²Cycle of Midrashim (Aram. "section"), extant in two versions, the P. de Rabbi Kahana (redacted c. 7th cent.), and the P. Rabbati (c. 845). Since early scholars confused the two, and both with the 11th cent. Midrash Lekah Tov, tracing dei Rossi's references to Pesikta is difficult.

³³Hananel ben Hushiel (fl. c. 1015-1055), Talmudist, exegete and philosopher whose commentaries are strewn with historical notes.

³⁴A commentary on the Passover Haggadah, completed c. 1500 in Monopoli and published in Constantinople, 1505.

parture from Haran at the age of seventy-five. (See his two comments on the verse, "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt" [Ex. 12:40]). If Nahmonides is correct, then, the redemption was after the year 2448 by eight or ten years.

Rabbi Moses Latif, a Jerusalemite,³⁵ also used to preach that the number of years since creation has not been definitively calculated. Honest commentators sometimes lengthen their calculations. For example, I and trustworthy companions have seen in one of his articles that there are those who increased the period of Egyptian captivity in this way, following Nahmonides, by eight years. They assume that the redemption was not in the year 2448, but in 2456.

Since Zion was apparently established in 2456, some have cited this reason for the sum of 346 not being prophesied. This differs, however, from Chapter Forty-eight of Perkei Rabbi Eliezar: "Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria says 210, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh says 215, which are thought to be double."³⁶

Our teacher Moses, in his book of chronicles, also quotes 216 years, favored by the Latif. This is further supported by three prophetic hints, namely, the first and last letters of "And the fourth generation will return" [v'dor r'vi-i ya'shu-vu], and the word "v'dor" [and the generation] by itself, all of which equal 216! He holds that the 430 years began in the 76th of Abraham, when he went down to live in Egypt following his

³⁵Cassel comments that dei Rossi saw the Latif's commentary among the books of R. Joseph Hazak, his contemporary.

³⁶The figure 210 is found in the mnemonic "Rdu," [Descend!] which equals 210. This is added to the five years before Jacob came to Egypt, to make the 215. Since they were in bondage "night and day," this can be doubled to 430, in agreement with Ex. 12:40, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel ... was four hundred and thirty years."

departure from Haran. The Exodus thus occurred in 2456 as mentioned above. He found additional support from a well-known proof based on Israel's going forth from Egypt on a Thursday, according to Chapter Five of Seder 'Olam. When you give it some thought, the fixed cycles must be in the order of 29 days, 12 hours and 793 helakim.³⁷

From "Baharad"³⁸ until 2448, as well as from the 449, you will note that the new moon of that Nisan fell in such a way the the fifteenth of that month was a Thursday. This is an impossible situation, unless the Exodus was in the year 2456.

Because of this fact, Maimonides is courageous enough to differ with the Seder 'Olam. The latter claims to be the word of God in all respects, but I and this courageous scholar agree on this point. This is also the opinion of the Latif, as all who seek it will readily see.³⁹ If we assume that 2456 years have passed since the creation, we can prove it: the year 2456 [For the Exodus] was the sixth year in the 130th lunar cycle;⁴⁰ the year was therefore a leap year, so Heshvan and Kislev

³⁷ 793 helakim is equal to about 44 minutes.

³⁸ Baharad (ב'ה'ר'ד) represents the moment from which all chronological calculations are made. It corresponds to the 2nd day, 5 hours and 204 helakim of the molad preceding creation, where the hour is divided into 1080 helakim. "As the epoch is imaginary, having occurred before the assumed creation of the world, it is also called Molad Tohu or "Imaginary Molad." (W. M. Feldman, Rabbinical Mathematics and Astronomy [New York: Herman Press, 1965], pp. 189-90.)

³⁹ Cassel quotes Latif as follows: "I have dwelled for some time on the calculation of the fixed months handed down by the sages, to see how one would justify either 2448 or 2456. The Torah makes clear that they left on a Thursday, the 15th of Nisan, so that the new moon of the following Iyar was on a Saturday. The 15th of Iyar, when they begged for bread, was therefore also on a Saturday, and the manna fell from Heaven on Sunday, Iyar 16."

⁴⁰ This is based on the 19 years' cycle (19 שנה), first introduced by the Greek astronomer Meton in the 5th cent. B.C.E., according to Feldman, Ibid., p. 188.

were "short" months, and the new moon of Tishri in that year was on a Sunday at thirteen hours and fifty-two minutes. Rosh Hashanah was therefore on a Monday, and the new moon of Nisan fell on a Thursday. The fifteenth of Nisan was thus also a Thursday, just as Rashi wrote.⁴¹ But the anonymous Tanna who wrote Seder 'Olam, calculating 2448 years, did not base his calculation at all on the traditional chronology.

I cannot prove Latif's theory, only explain it, since the determination of fixed cycles did not begin until the days of Rabbi Hillel, due to persecutions in exile. This will be explained further in Chapter Forty. In earlier days they determined the new moon by direct visual evidence, as we have noted in Chapter 25 and will note in Chapter 40, below.

The sages would declare the new moon about one day after its "catching up" with the sun in its journey,⁴² as Maimonides wrote in "Laws of Sanctification of the Moon," Chapter One. Since the time of determination by a system of equal cycles, as Maimonides wrote in Chapter Five and elsewhere, it is indeed not proper to determine the new moon of Nisan by means of equal cycles, but only from the genuine ones. We will have more to say on this in Chapter 40, in our criticism of Rabbi Hananel.

To be a true "witness" according to the system of equal cycles, one

⁴¹Shabbat 87b says, "As to the Nisan in which the Israelites departed from Egypt, on the fourteenth day they slaughtered their Passover sacrifices, on the fifteenth they went forth ... and that day was a Thursday."

⁴²"For the moon to be visible at all, its true elongation must be not less than 90°; but at the rate at which elongation increases--vis., about 1/2° per hour—it must take about 18 hours on either side of a true conjunction for the moon to cover such an arc, so that an interval of about 36 hours must elapse between the disappearance of the crescent of the old and the appearance of that of the new moon." (W. M. Feldman, Ibid., p. 181. Maimonides, in Kiddushat Hachodesh 1.3 says that the usual period of invisibility of the moon is about two days.

had to know of this system previously, of course, as the Rambam explained in "Laws of the Sanctification of the New Moon," beginning of Chapters 6 and 15. Only in this way could his "sighting" be reasonable. Whatever you think, though, you can understand how he derives an addition of eight years, symbolized by $\text{ה'ת"ל} \overline{24587}$.

But more than these four scholars, Gersonides somewhat exaggerates⁴³ in his commentary on the portion Lech L'cha, on the verse, "He came in unto Pharaoh." Here he imagined the possibility that the four hundred years did not begin until Jacob's birth, and therefore their end was also later by around seventy-five years.

I have thus established before you and other scholars in our circle, including the author of The Generations of Isaac and Rabbi Behayyi, who in raising Rabbi Hananel's question follows him. The thing they more or less have in common is to delay the redemption until after 2448, that is, until 2456 or 2478.

After you see that we must derive our chronology from them you will understand why no one believes them, for they have not received their calculation by prophesy. Yet who can differ with them, since they stand solidly on Scripture. The Scripture will not lead astray even those who might err.

This helps to prove that the many years of slavery in Egypt, as we have said, should be increased, as well as the total number of years since creation.

⁴³Levi ben Gershom (1288-1344), mathematician, philosopher, Talmudic scholar and biblical exegete, whose philosophy was generally anti-Maimonidian.

⁴⁴Probably Isaac ben Joseph Kero (fl. 1440-1510), the uncle of Joseph Kero of Safed, the famous codifier.

Also, for your information, I cannot refrain from stating that there are differing opinions among the Christian scholars who have commented on this question of Torah, but the differences among them do not amount to more than five years.

It is apparent that if you consider the Golden Chain by Lipamanus,⁴⁵ you would see how Eusebius⁴⁶ made his own calculations. These were later confirmed by St. Augustine⁴⁷ in his commentaries on the book of Exodus. Tostatus,⁴⁸ in his commentary on the Covenant of the Pieces Gen. 15:17-18, and Hugo,⁴⁹ on the verse, "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt," both note that the four hundred years began when Abraham was 75 years old. They said that it would therefore be proper to count from the birth of Isaac, 405 years of the total 430.

The Torah is not precise with the exception of these years.

Other gentile scholars, including the late Cajetanus,⁵⁰ agreed with our sages. Rashi and Ibn Ezra, too, also hold that we count from his 70th year, based on more than just midrash.

⁴⁵Aloyzsius Lipamanus, Bishop in Bergamo (fl. 16th cent.). The Golden Chain is an eclectic commentary based on many sources on Genesis and Exodus, according to Cassel ("Index II," p. 169).

⁴⁶See note 8, p. 14, above.

⁴⁷St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), called by dei Rossi "their greatest gentile scholar. Generally recognized as the greatest thinker of Christian antiquity. He fused the religion of the New Testament with the Platonic tradition of Greek philosophy.

⁴⁸Alfonso Tostatus, Spanish Christian scholar (fl. c. 1550). His books were published in Venice and Cologne (Cassel, Ibid., p. 166).

⁴⁹Hugo a St. Victore, French Christian scholar (d. 1140). He wrote a commentary on the entire Pentateuch. (Cassel, Ibid., p. 161).

⁵⁰Cardinal and Bishop in Palermo. According to Cassel (Ibid., p. 164), Cajetanus differed with Pope Leo X's orders with Martin Luther, Augsburg, in 1518, and failed. Dei Rossi is quoting here his Bible commentary.

Chapter One of Seder 'Olam, however, cites an overwhelming number of sages who said that Abraham was then still in Ur Casdim. Yet the gentiles concluded from the literary evidence of the verse "And Abraham was 75 years old when he went out from Haran," that his exile dates from his departure from Ur Casdim." The verse, "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt" implies counting from the beginning of Abraham's exile, as was just said. This indicates a longer time than our sages designated for his exile. Philo, at the beginning of Chapter 32, counted 1556, 292, 425 and 80 as the main periods from the creation until the Exodus from Egypt. By adding these sums together, you will get 2453, according to those who use those figures, or five years more than the traditional rabbinic calculation.

II

The precise duration of both Temples is also in doubt, due to contradictory sources. The prophetic books do not progress as far as the Second Temple, describing only part of that period. They omit the length of its duration. Conflicts are also found in the prophetic literature with respect to the First Temple, although it extends through the temple's destruction. The prophets, like all men, differed in their understanding, and therefore calculated different numbers.

We will present our discussion on the duration of the Second Temple in the following chapters; here we will confine our remarks to the First Temple. Our goal is to explore the reasons for the aforementioned controversies.

Our sages have traditionally held that the First Temple stood for

410 years (See the first chapter of Yoma [9a],⁵¹ Tractate Elilim [9a],⁵² Chapter Two of Arakhin [12b],⁵³ and the last chapter of Zebakhin [118b].⁵⁴ We may derive a truer picture from the writings of scholars closer to our own time.

Philo, in his book on chronology (quoted in Chapter 32),⁵⁵ apparently counted 440 years from Solomon's fourth year, when he began the Temple, until its destruction. Josephus,⁵⁶ however, follows the Septuagint (Book X, Chapter 11), and calculates 470 years. Elsewhere (Book XX, Chapter 8),⁵⁷ he is more exacting, counting 466½.

From the chronology of the Judean kings, Ibn Daud Halevi,⁵⁸ in the beginning of his Book of Tradition, on the verse "They went forth from Egypt," that the Temple lasted 430 years. However, there is a

⁵¹"Rabbah b. Bar Hana said: What is the meaning of the passage, 'The fear of the Lord prolongeth...' (Prov. 10:27)? 'The fear of the Lord prolongeth' refers to the first Sanctuary, which remained standing for 410 years."

⁵²See note 23, supra. The traditional calculation is implied, but not stated explicitly.

⁵³"The Temple was built 480 years after the Exodus, which was 440 years after their entry into Eretz Israel. The Temple stood 410 years..."

⁵⁴The quotation is repeated almost verbatim from Arakhin 12b.

⁵⁵Although dei Rossi attributes the Sepher Ha-Itim ("Book of Chronology") to Philo, Marcus, Op. Cit., p. 42, n. 36 holds that dei Rossi is referring to a book by Annianus da Viterbo (fl. c. 500 C.E.), called Breviarium de Temporibus. The book was first printed in Rome, in 1498.

⁵⁶Flavius Josephus (38-c. 100 C.E.), Jewish priest, scholar and historian who wrote valuable works on the Jewish revolt of 66-70 and on earlier Jewish history. Cassel notes that in his edition, the reference is to Chapter 8, Paragraph 5, p. 528.

⁵⁷Although again not citing the edition, Cassel places this reference on page 979, Chapter 10, Paragraph 5.

⁵⁸Abraham ibn Daud (c. 1110-c. 1180), Spanish Jewish philosopher and historian. The first Jewish philosopher to draw on Aristotle's writings in a systematic fashion. His Book of Tradition was an answer to an attack on rabbinic authority by the Karaites.

slight error in his calculation, particularly in the reign of Jehoshapat, to which he accorded 28 years, while according to Kings and Chronicles it clearly should have been 25 years. We should therefore amend to 433 instead of 430.⁵⁹

A similar theory holds that the Temple stood for 427 years, then burned after a period of warfare lasting seven years. It is certainly appropriate to say "three years" quoting the end of the book of Kings. This then completes the sum of 430. This is indeed his opinion, stated in his own words. I shall quote him directly in the fourth part of the present chapter. Abravanel, however, in his "Introduction" to the book of Kings, said in Ibn Daud's name that the First Temple stood for 430 years. Levi ben Gershom, in his commentary on Daniel (Chapters 7 and 8, as well as in his notes at the end of the book), wrote 419½ years. And the scholar Kimhi, whose "kemah" [wisdom] we have already seen, counted 429½ years.

In the second book of Kings, 14:23, on the verse "In the 15th year of Amaziah," Kimhi also noticed that Rashi wrote, "When you calculate the duration of the Temple by means of the kings' reigns, if you do not subtract these fifteen years of Amaziah and Uzziah you would find that the Temple endured for 425 years." Kimhi wrote that the proof which Rashi brought for the duration of the Temple is no proof at all, for there are two ways to count the days of the First Temple:

If you count from the beginning of the Temple's construction until the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, in which Nebuchadnezzar attacked him, you will have 410 years and three months.

⁵⁹The arithmetical error is dei Rossi's: the sum should be reduced from 430 to 427, as implied also in the following paragraph.

But if you count until the Temple was utterly destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, you will have, according to Kimhi, 429½. This sum derives from the books of Kings and Chronicles, if you count all the years of the Judean kings, that is, from Solomon's fourth year until Zedekiah's exile.

If you would examine, however, all of Kimhi's old and newly published commentaries, you would find that one of them calculates 409 years, but this may be a typographical error. Certainly, it could not be less than the least of his calculations. I have seen, here in Ferrara, a great collection of books owned by Isaac of Fano.⁶⁰ The collection contains books from Judah Abravanel's estate, including four of Kimhi's handwritten commentaries. The oldest of these, and therefore the most truthful, calculates 429½ years. Exaggeration is usually in a positive direction. Thus from Jehoiakim's third year until Zedekiah's eleventh, Scripture indicates twenty years to the destruction.

Abravanel counted 430 years. In his "Introduction" to his commentary on Kings, after his table of Judean kings, he wrote, "The sages should know that this table, which I prepared according to the literal meaning of the text, implies that the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the house of our God took place in the 3358th year of creation. This follows those who minimized the years of Jehoram ben Jehoshafat and the reign of Uzziah by twenty years. I will investigate this, God willing, in the section "Yemot 'Olam."

At the beginning of his table, Abravanel wrote that the Temple was built in the fourth year of Solomon, that is, in the year 2928 of Creation,

⁶⁰ Cassel says that dei Rossi is referring to Isaac Berechiah of Fano, whose sons were later leaders of the Jewish community in Ferrara during the time of the earthquake (1571).

yielding a total of four hundred and thirty years. He also explicitly wrote in his "Introduction" that Saul, David and Solomon together ruled one hundred years (symbolized mathematically by the word "malchei" לַמְלָכִים "the kings of" 7, numerically equal to one hundred. From Rehoboam until the exile of Zedekiah, that is, through nineteen Judean kings excluding Athaliah, who should not be counted among them,⁶¹ 393 years elapsed. Since some kings were righteous and some evil, we can symbolize this mathematically by the phrase, "the evil with the righteous" לְרָאִים, "evil," is equivalent to 320; "v'tovim," "with the righteous," equals 737. From Jeroboam until Hosea's exile, that is, again through nineteen kings of Israel, all of them evil and sinners, passed 241 years. This is symbolized by the verse, "And God said to the sinners" לְעוֹל'רֶשָׁה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים, where "amar" is numerically equivalent to 2417.

At the end of that same page, Abravanel presented additional evidence for this by stating a rather incredible fact, namely, that nineteen Judean kings reigned 393 years while nineteen Israelite kings only reigned 241, "for the fear of God will add length of days," etc. He wondered how it could have happened that there could be nineteen kings of each.

Anyone who makes the calculation for himself, adding the thirty-seven years (remaining from Solomon's fourth year until the end of his reign), to the sum of 393 (for the Judean kings), will of course arrive at 430 years. This is the same as Kimhi's calculations and those of his aforementioned followers.

We mentioned the thirty-seven years since we included Solomon's

⁶¹ Athaliah was the wife of Jehoram of Judah, mother of Ahaziah and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. See II Kings 11:1-3, which describes her usurpation of the Judean throne.

fourth year itself. The building was begun in the second month, and they added eleven months to it. Thus Ibn Daud wrote that the rabbis reckoned 430 years from the end of Solomon's third year until the destruction of the Temple.

Incidentally, we might point out Abravanel's comment that the investigation of chronology is a matter on which many honored scholars are wont to exaggerate. Yet even if you add or subtract a thousand years from the traditional sum, your conclusions would not be worthless; nothing would render your conclusions invalid. Indeed scholars might even reconsider their own estimates and raise the years of the First Temple to 430.

We already know that any testimony on chronology suggests the comment of Halevi in his Kuzari, Chapter 1: "No diminution or exaggeration causes thereby a refutation of anything." (Cf. Chapter 42, infra.) Abravanel, on the verse [II Kings 15:1], "In the year twenty-seven of Jeroboam king of Israel ..." cites the Talmudists in support of the Seder 'Olam. Then, one by one, he refutes their opinions: This one does not have a foot to stand on, for if it was so ..." Kimhi had already presented additional contradictions directly from the Scripture.

Finally, Kimhi quotes Rashi on the verse where he says [II Kings 14:22], "When you count the years of the Temple according to the years of the kings..." He concludes saying, "From this evolved the differences of opinions as to the number of years of the First Temple, as I wrote in the introduction to this book."

Abravanel, however, rejects Rashi's comment to that verse. Without any doubt whatever, even without our having seen Yemot 'Olam, we know that he counts more than the traditional number of years since creation. This

derives from his having added the thirty years to the Egyptian slavery, as we pointed out in the first part of this chapter, as well as from his having added enough years for the Temple to total 430. You will see more of this characteristic elsewhere during our discussion.

In his book Zevach Pesach (in the section called "Baruch Shomer Hivtachto"), Abravanel wrote, "And the sages looked and beheld wondrous and awe-inspiring things, namely, that the Egyptian exile lasted 430 years. Prior to the building of the Temple they had settled in Israel for 440 years; the First Temple stood for 427 years (that is, without the three years of warfare, according to Ibn Daud, see above); and the Second Temple endured for 428 years. Thus everything happened according to tradition!"

You have seen now how these four recent scholars differ with each other and with earlier sages with respect to the 410 years for the First Temple. Only Philo and Josephus, among the earlier sages, do not follow the traditional chronology. I shall not refrain from citing another statement of the learned Abravanel on the years of the Israelite kings. He writes that from the beginning of Saul's reign until the end of Zedekiah's reign elapsed 493 years (Cf. Chapter 41, infra.). I believe you will agree that he is correct.

But let us return to the matter of the Temple.

I would not go out of my way to defend Josephus' calculation or to investigate how he derives it. We have, however, seen that some gentile scholars also differ with him on this. But if we consented to say that some error befell him due to his translation of Scripture, he would probably not alter his views on that account.

Gersonides' calculation of 419½ years is clearly shown by the three

places I cited earlier. But what does he see to separate himself from his three colleagues mentioned above, who count 430? One should not ponder too deeply on his system, apparently, although we may point out that he counts the 410 years according to the tradition, and merely adds Hosea's first nine years.

Philo's statements are strongly followed by gentile scholars; I will also not refrain from examining them, but I will say that his opinion is really the same as Ibn Daud's, Kimhi's and Abravanel's. His excess calculation derives from his faithful following of the Septuagint.

In the section of Torah before us, for example (Kings 21 and Chronicles 33), "Two years he ruled," they translated "twelve years." This was pointed out by Samotheus the gentile, in his second book, Chapter 9. When this error is corrected, it indeed approximates the aforementioned total of 430. There is no doubt (as we have shown with respect to the additional years of Egyptian slavery) that if the First Temple indeed endured more than 410 years, then the number of years since creation is definitely short by the same number of years. There is no need to consider mystifying the sum of these twenty years not affecting the general accounting, since in the opinion of the commentators cited they were just assimilated, whether previous to the First Temple or during its destruction. Furthermore, this matter is self-justifying, for once a number is within the sequence, it cannot be placed outside of it. The 480 years which passed from the Exodus from Egypt until the Temple, as well as the seventy years between the two temples, are not vague, but openly acknowledged. The chronology is reduced in the writings in order not to conflict with the tradition against diminution or exaggeration. In our opinion, the 480 years should unquestionably become 500 and the 70 should become 90.

Rashi, in the first chapter of Tractate Elilim⁶² (Cf. Chapter 23), supra), writes that the 1380 years which according to our great scholars passed from the Exodus until the destruction of the Second Temple is apportioned as follows: 480 years before the First Temple; 410 years during which it stood, totalling 890; 70 years for the Babylonian exile; and 420 years for the Second Temple, totalling 1380. By adding the twenty years mentioned above, the total becomes 1400, which is perfect.

You might ask, "Does our calculation of any of these divisions cause doubt?" One answer is that any who add these twenty years must cancel them in some way, and we find that the sum again becomes reasonable.

On the contrary, however, the entire tradition has a tendency toward addition, whether much or little, as you have learned about the five scholars who agree on the addition to the period of Egyptian slavery.

The calculation mentioned earlier for the period of slavery is likewise demonstrated by this solution, directly from the similar additions to the years of the Temple. On all of these you will in general be correct. In particular, the one who increases is preferred over the one who decreases.

If it is true that the duration of the First Temple was overstated, then we should no longer continue to accept the number of 410 years, followed by our rabbis. This is also true of the seventeen Jubilees, spoken of in Chapter 2 of Arakhin [12b] and the last chapter of Zebahim [118b].⁶³ These were counted from the Israelites' entry into Israel until the first destruction, according to Rashi's tabulation. Maimonides, in The Laws of Shemita, Chapter 10, based his laws on a duration of the Temple for 410

⁶²Avodah Zara 9a.

⁶³"It was taught: Seventeen Jubilees did Israel count from the time they entered the land [of Israel] until they left it." The passages in Arakhin and Zebahim are almost identical.

years.⁶⁴ This would appear to undermine the additions made by our later scholars.

You can see that the addition of those twenty years is really, of course, two additions to our chronology from the Creation. See, for example, the calendar composed by Ibn Habib in his Responsa, Section 143.⁶⁵ The difficulty is to see how these commentators differ, and each one's reason. Incline your ear towards me, and I will tell you.

III

If you calculate the years of the Israelite kings, from the beginning of Jeroboam son of Nebat until Hosea's exile, according to Scripture, you would find that they total 241. But the parallel Judean kings, that is, from Rehoboam until Hezekiah's sixth year (when Hosea and Israel were exiled), reigned a total of 261 years. We derive from this that 410 years passed from Solomon's fourth year until the destruction by way of the Israelite kings, but 430 years passed by way of the Judean kings. Look in the books of Kings and Chronicles and see that this calculation is correct.

So the scholar Abravanel, in his introduction to the book of Kings, wrote two tables: one for the kings of Israel, and one for the kings of Judah, as recorded in the book of Kings, and their reigns and totals arrived at in both lists were just as we have stated. But here the scholars diverged from any unanimity.

⁶⁴In the third paragraph of this chapter, the Rambam makes the following calculation: 40 years wandering in the desert; 14 years spent in conquest; 426 years from the conquest to the Temple; and 410 years for the First Temple itself. The total of 836 is equivalent to 16 Jubilees plus 36 years of a 17th Jubilee.

⁶⁵Levi Ibn Habib, whose Sh'elot v'Teshuvot was published in Venice (1565).

From any point of view Kimhi and his school properly believe in Scripture. In their day, it was still impossible to depart from the sum of 430, as you can see in his commentary on the six verses which I quoted in Chapter 14, and in his commentary on I Kings 15:13.⁶⁶ He says, "in the third year of Asa" represents one of the sums responsible for the shortening of the years of the Israelite king Nadab without being counted, since he had not established his reign due to surrounding wars. We can likewise recall Hosea's first nine years which everybody agrees have not been counted, for that or a similar reason.

The kings of Israel, therefore, apparently did not reign the same number of years as the Judean kings. There is solid proof of this, as any intellectual will understand, in Rashi's commentary on the reign of Uzziah: "If you do not subtract these fifteen years," he says, "you will find that the Temple endured 425 years." Yet this appears even to Rashi as a distortion of Scripture for the sake of upholding our rabbis. Kimhi, we note, already understood this.

Abravanel, who follows Kimhi's system of calculating 430 years, differs with Rashi on this. "Hath He smitten him as He smote those that smote him?"⁶⁷ Some scholars, however, believe it is easier to believe that the reigns of the Israelite kings were foreshortened by the vacancy of the throne from time to time, since their reigns did not always pass from father to son as did those of the Judean kings. At times, the throne was occupied by any strong man, explaining how the years of the Judean kings came to be counted twice.

⁶⁶Kimhi notes (I Kings 15:9) that Asa's reign was foreshortened by three years.

⁶⁷Isaiah 27:7.

This becomes even more apparent when we see how the 241 years for the Judean kings counted in the book of Kings are sometimes increased by the prophet who wrote the book of Chronicles.

Although you might assume that Kings and Chronicles are equally accurate (no calculation is better than its individual parts, of course), one might also think that the author of Chronicles, which is solely about the Judean kings, was more exacting with respect to their reigns. And with respect to the author of Kings, Rashi says (I Kings 22:52), "In the seventeenth year of Jehoshophat ... one must question.... I have found that for the majority of the Israelite kings Scripture is not exacting as to the numbers of their years...."⁶⁸ This is clear proof that some years of the Israelite kings were omitted.

In II Kings 15 Scripture says that Pekah son of Remaliah ruled over Israel for twenty years, and that Ahaz began his reign over Judah in the seventeenth year of Pekah. This implies that Pekah's twentieth year was Ahaz's fourth. Legally, the years of Hosea ben Elah, who ruled over Israel after Pekah, began in Ahaz's fourth year, yet Scripture says that in the twelfth year of Ahaz Hosea began his reign over Israel!

The reign of Hezekiah is always calculated based on its inception in the year just cited, so that eight or nine years have been omitted from the Israelite kings. Tradition records Hosea's reign as lasting nine years, rather than seventeen or eighteen.

Our sages have already clearly made this point. They had difficulty with Chapter Twelve of Seder 'Olam on the verse "In the twelfth year of the reign of Ahaz, Hosea ben Elah began his reign over Israel for nine

⁶⁸Rashi goes on to say that with respect to the Israelite kings it sometimes happens that they are counted from the beginning of the year in which their reign started, even though they might not have become king until the end of that year.

years." They write, "This may be possible, yet if he ruled from the fourth year of Ahaz, why does Scripture say nine? Because of his rebellion." With respect to Hezekiah's reign, therefore, in comparison to the reign of Hosea, they explained the discrepancy by his rebellion. They also discussed, in Chapter 22, the omission of Hosea's eight first years in their commentary on the verse II Kings 18:13, "And it was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah that Sennacharib rose up...." Eight years passed from the first exile to the second; eight passed from the second to the third; and eight more passed waiting for Judah to establish the prophesy Is. 8:23, "Now the former hath lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun...." Rashi, Kimhi, Gersonides and Abravanel agree with the commentary unanimously, as we learn from their commentaries on the verse we have cited.

Rashi, in particular, notes that the first exile was discussed in II Kings 15:29, "The Assyrian King came and took Ijon....," that is, according to Rabbi Schmu'el bar Nahmani in the proem preceding Lamentations Rabati, the entire land of Naphtali.^{69, 70} This was Pekah's twentieth year, or Ahaz's fourth.

The second exile was in Ahaz's twelfth year, when Gad and Reuven were exiled, and when Hosea ben Elah was allied with the Egyptian king Soh⁷¹ in rebellion against Assyria. The third exile was in Hosea's seventh year: "And there was a seige on Samaria...." Samaria was conquered after three years, and Hosea came in Hezekiah's fourteenth year to the cities of

⁶⁹According to present editions of the Hebrew Bible, Rashi does not comment on this verse.

⁷⁰The verse itself, of course, refers explicitly to "all the land of Naphtali."

⁷¹Soh may have been Shabaka (reigned 716-701 B.C.E.), the third king of the 25th (Napatan) Dynasty.

Judah.

This is the reference cited in Seder 'Olam to Hosea's first eight years, as we mentioned. Tostato, the greatest commentator among the gentiles, confirms and upholds the omission of the first nine years of Hosea, in his comment to I Kings 2:16. He also discusses why he rejects the traditional authorities, alleging that they only count the years of freedom after the aforementioned rebellion.

We may also apply this to Ahaz. Seder 'Olam, Chapter 22, clearly says, "Ahaz and Hosea were enslaved by the king of Assyria for eight years." They give two additional reasons, namely, because of the wars which occurred under Hosea with the family of Pekah, and because of a land not supportive of his regime.

Kimhi, similarly, reconstructed the length of Nadab's reign from the evidence on counting of Omri, in I Kings 16, despite the continuation of Omri's reign after Asa's twenty-seventh year, in which he murdered Elah son of Baasha, until Asa's thirty-eighth year, in which he died and Ahab his son began to reign. Because of his wars with Tibni and the people [I Kings 16:23] the verse says, "In the thirty-first year of Asa King of Judah Omri began to reign over Israel, and reigned twelve years; he reigned six years in Tirzah," that is, although his reign began in Asa's twenty-seventh year, we only count from Asa's thirty-first until his thirty-eighth, according to the early commentators.

All commentators, therefore, are quite clear that eight or more of Hosea's first years were not counted. Only his last nine years were counted, when he ruled in peace. Depending on the theory, this could have been after his rebellion or after he became established solidly on his royal throne. It makes no difference whether he was prisoner of the Assyrian

king during those first nine years or whether he was embroiled in warfare; in both cases, one must count his entire reign, from the death of Pekah until his exile, that is, eighteen years. His reign corresponds to a period from the fourth year of Ahaz, who ruled sixteen years, until the death of Hezekiah.

You have also seen that in calculating 241 years for the kings of Israel, our sages only counted Hosea's final nine years. I believe that Gersonides counted the first nine, not formerly ascribed to him, deriving the sum of 419½ years as we said above. But Abravanel, who is usually so reasonable in his commentaries, surprisingly ascribes to Hosea only these nine years, in spite of the chart of Israelite kings which he wrote in the beginning of his commentary on Kings, already cited. He forgot Hosea's earlier period, and only counted nine years for him.

We can therefore plausibly count 250 years from the beginning of Jeroboam until Hosea's exile, instead of 241, since we do not want to count anything except the actual reign of each king. We will discuss this further, but it is enough for our purposes to show here that the sum of Hosea's first years somehow disappeared. There is no escaping this in calculating the duration of the Temple; this also applies, of course, to the total number of years of the universe.

When I mentioned above Kimhi's opinion with regard to the eight years of Nadab's reign which were not counted, I did not suspect them as with these nine years of Hosea. Indeed Kimhi's opinion has not been adequately proved. Rashi, Levi ben Gershon, Abravanel et al have not admitted this point as with the nine years of Hosea, as I have shown; Rashi, on the verse, "In the twelfth year of Ahaz Hosea began to reign," says, "It is impossible to state that he reigned only nine years, for indeed he ruled

from Ahaz's fourth year until Hezekiah's sixth, which makes sixteen years. Why does Scripture say nine years? Because he revolted against the king of Assyria, as taught in the Seder 'Olam."

Gersonides wrote that during the first nine years Hosea was like a mere governor under the Assyrian king, and not yet thought of as king.

Sometimes you will find that Kimhi says that the First Temple endured 410 years, as in the verse in Haggai 2:9, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of hosts...."⁷² Lest you have difficulty with Kimhi on this point, please note that our rabbis there serve in particular to permit this scriptural difficulty. Consider too our reference to this in Chapter 51. Actually, I have read Kimhi's personal views on the sum of years for the Temple, and can testify to their veracity.

Samotheus the gentile (Book VI, Chapter 11) wrote that many gentile scholars also attempted to calculate the number of years of the Israelite and Judean kings and could not. He quotes a scholar who, in a note to one of his friends named Vitale, wrote to the effect that all who seek an explanation for the discrepancies among the verses will spend their time in vain. But he is only following the statement according to Titus⁷³ History, Book 23, and according to its commentary by the scholar Aquinas. He shows that already in the days of the Second Temple there was an argument among the Jews on this question.

Nevertheless, for all of the above reasons, gentile scholars, Philo, and Josephus (upon whom they all depend) agreed to abandon the calculation

⁷²Kimhi's comment is that the verse is not explicit whether the Second Temple will outlast the First in years or in physical eminence. He concludes that it does both.

⁷³Titus Livius (c. 59 B.C.E. - 17 C.E.), with Sallust and Tacitus one of the three great Roman historians. Book 23 was one of nine on the Second Punic War (until 201 B.C.E.).

of Israelite reigns as an unfinished task. With respect to the Judean kings, they follow Kimhi and his disciples as we have written.

IV

I really must now testify to the credit of our scholars, and explain why they counted 410 years for the First Temple.

There are two reasons. I will deem them sufficient until I hear something more compelling by a man of greater understanding, to whom I would be most grateful.

The first derives from what I said in Chapter 15: I heard a brilliant suggestion derived from our master and righteous teacher Moses, when he said Numbers 33:13, "I pray thee, show me Thy ways that I may know Thee." You, the reader, must also examine the ways of the great scholars, and know them well, for then you will become wise.

You will find one example in the laws of the Priesthood, as in the verse Lev. 15:25, "And if a woman have an issue of her blood...." A baraita in the Jerusalem Talmud, in Chapter Two of the tractate Yoma, comments on the verse Lev. 1:8, "And Aaron's sons shall lay the pieces...." The same baraita is quoted in the first chapter of Shevuot, on the matter of sacrifice.⁷⁴ I quote:

Two days can be many days: Rabbi Akiba said, "One who hears a generalization and understands a specification understands. One who understands 'much' does not understand, and one who understands 'little' does understand." Rabbi Judah ben Batyra said, "There are two degrees, one inclusive and one exclusive; we must calculate inclusively and not exclusively." Rabbi Nehemiah said, "What does Scripture come to teach? To expand or to contract? Indeed it does not come except to expand! If you say, 'ten days' they can be a hundred, two hundred or even a thousand! And when you say 'two days' you likewise expand."

⁷⁴Probably Shevuot 5a, which discusses the rabbinic principle of "generalization and specification."

We therefore have before us three witnesses. Even one would have been sufficient for us to prove that this estimate is in doubt, for if some say one thing and some say another, the issue is in doubt. No one here would object to the saying "cistus shrubs equally apportion their roots" [חֲצִי שָׁרְשֵׁי הַצִּטִּים יִשְׁתַּחֲצָוּ] with respect to those who come to differ by saying that it is not a true estimate.⁷⁵

This general rule is also cited in the first chapter of Hagiga [7a] and in Hulin, in the chapter on the law of the first of the fleece [137b], where Rashi explicates it at length.⁷⁶ The gentile Tostato explained that "many days" is merely "a long time." In his own words, "There is a difficulty, since the number is not precise, and the law remains unknown." It happens that I spoke about this with various religious scholars and they showed me to my satisfaction in the Papal Decretals⁷⁷ and in an old Regesma⁷⁸ of the Caesars a controversy over numbering.

A confirmed rule holds that conversation in the plural is justified by the presence of two persons. Another example is the difficulty our sages found with the first chapter of Hulin [24a]: "On the years of the work of the Levites it is written that one says, 'from the age of twenty-five' and one says 'from the age of thirty.'"⁷⁹ They compromised, saying that from

⁷⁵Betsa 25b quotes the phrase as "חֲצִי שָׁרְשֵׁי הַצִּטִּים יִשְׁתַּחֲצָוּ."

⁷⁶Hulin 137b discusses whether a 60th or a 40th is the proper measure for the first of the fleece, trumeh and pe'ah: "Rab and Samuel both ruled, the proper measure is ... one sixtieth part...."

⁷⁷Decretals, issued by Roman Catholic popes, are replies in writing to particular questions of church discipline or papal law. The only collection using the word in its title, apparently implied here, is the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX, promulgated in five volumes in 1234.

⁷⁸According to Cassel, Regesma is a printer's error for Regesta, and refers to the Regesta pontificum, a catalogue of papal letters and decretals.

⁷⁹The two conflicting verses are Numbers 8:24 and Numbers 8:25. The former says that Levites may begin to serve "from twenty-five years and upward," while the latter says "from thirty years old and upward."

the age of twenty-five one must study and from thirty one must work, since from the ages of thirty through fifty one can study but little. One must therefore begin at twenty-five.

There were two possibilities expressed in the Scriptures with respect to the duration of the Temple. One is long and one is short, as stated. If you do not know definitely which is correct, be assured that our rabbis and sages are together in saying that all who choose the lower amount are to be blessed. For although we must of course accept all possibilities based on Scripture, the righteous will follow the lower number, which is four hundred and ten.

Second, when the sages compare the two sums mentioned, they must of course chose between the two, either saying that from one Israelite king to another a vacant throne existed for twenty years, or that among the Judean kings they somehow counted twenty years twice. In the latter case they suspend their reason and balanced wisdom, and grossly err by deciding to count those years twice.

With all our being we must emphasize that we are not casting aspersions on the aforementioned commentators, but praising their going beyond the plain meaning of Scripture, which has not yet been explained by us. I praise them for this. Without looking back to ancient times, we find that great and honored leaders have not been lacking in our own times. They desire, however, to be separated from the cares of the world and to seek purification for their soul. Others desire merely to rest from the weariness of old age and sickness, or to lead their disciples toward righteousness. They dress their young ones in fine clothing, and lead them totally.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Cassel notes that dei Rossi is alluding to Charles V who, he says, vacated the throne in 1556 and chose a life of seclusion until his death.

They often live long afterwards so that historians can count the father's reign until the day of his death, and the son's from the day he is thought of as king, even if many years are counted twice in those last years of the father.

This is how our sages think of the Judean kings, a proof as obvious as "a slaughtered bull."⁸¹ This proof does not apply to the kings of Israel.

The one who logically deduces the years from this proof relies on the Scriptural discussions of the Judean kings, especially on Jehoram ben Jehoshaphat and Uzziah. Although the sages had decided to emulate the Israelite kings, their counting of them did not in any way change the number of elapsed years since creation. It never was their custom to relate to real time, as we have proven in Chapter 25. But, as we have shown, there is no fault in this teaching. The sages are accurate except for their counting of the reigns listed in Scripture.

The author of Seder 'Olam did not differ with Scripture in his numbering of the years of the Israelite kings, even with respect to Hosea. Both correctly count two hundred and forty one. This includes the thirty-six or thirty-seven years from the fourth year of Solomon to his fortieth, and the one hundred and thirty-three years which passed from Hosea's exile in the sixth year of Hezekiah until the destruction of the Temple. That makes about four hundred and ten years, without being too pedantic about the one month for the reign of Shallum son of Jabesh or the six months for Zechariah.⁸² Because of this, the sages refused to add the first years of

⁸¹ *פירוש רש"י*, quoted from Niddah 15a, and probably used in the sense of something immediately obvious.

⁸² Shallum, the son of Jabesh (II K. 15:10) and Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam (II K. 15:8) both reigned over Israel in 745 B.C.E., according to Israel W. Slotki's commentary to Kings (London: Soncino Press, 1950), p. ix.

Hosea to their calculations, even among themselves. (I refer to the author of Seder 'Olam who collates the opinions of our sages.)

Even were they to concede that the throne was at times vacant between one king and the next, they felt no need to count them even after understanding the text. Yet in the light of what has been made clear, Hosea's reign from Pekah's death until his exile lasted seven-teen or eighteen years. The only biblical support for this is the statement in II Kings 17, "Hosea ruled over Israel for nine years." They consider it a matter of wisdom among themselves to preserve the wording of the Holy Writings.

This is what Rashi said, as we quoted earlier: "When you calculate the years of the Temple by means of the reigns of the kings...."

After their commentaries became widely known on the First Temple's duration for 410 years, as derived from the reigns of the kings, they did not want to take their heads out of the sand or change their calculations, even if according to the truth they should have said 418. Rather they continuously confirmed the figure of 410, as in the beginning of Shebuot [4a] and Chapter One of Kiddushin [25a].⁸³ From the very beginning they have not budged from this position.

Another example: although several sources⁸⁴ count only several thousand as having left Egypt, after hearing the sum of 600,000 followers [Num. 11:21], they came to say, "The people ... are 600,000 men on foot...." This is perhaps a more plausible basis for their words on the 410 years.

⁸³The references, added by Cassel, are unclear, since neither citation is related to the subject.

⁸⁴Dei Rossi does not name them.

Since Hosea's reign did not end in peace, they did not think to preserve his other years in the tradition. So too Moses, in his aforementioned speech, did not trouble with the 3550 extra soldiers among the 600,000. Our sages therefore did not feel it incumbent on them to remember the total number of people, merely the 600,000. (See Midrash Kohelet 1:47,⁸⁵ on Deuteronomy 1:35, "This evil generation...." Also see the Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 47,⁸⁶ Shabbat Chapter "Rabbi Akiba" 88a,⁸⁷ Genesis Rabbah on Mahanaim Gen. 32:37,⁸⁸ and Song of Songs Rabbah 7:17,⁸⁹ on the camp Meholet. They only recall the 600,000 ministering angels singing their praises above the 600,000 in the Israelite's camp, even though there were slightly more who were worthy of the same praise.

In I Kings 6, you will note that Solomon began to construct the Temple in his fourth year, in the month of Ziv. He finished it in his eleventh year, in the month of Bul,⁹⁰ that is, in seven years and seven months. The Torah summarizes this by saying (I Kings 6:38), "And he built it in seven years," not recording those seven months.

The Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashanah, raises a similar

⁸⁵In commenting on the verse in Ecclesiastes "A generation goes and a generation comes ..." the midrash states that a "generation" is 600,000 souls, based on Deut. 1:35, "That generation numbered 600,000."

⁸⁶"...the sixty myriads of the mighty men of Israel [who received the Torah]."

⁸⁷"600,000 ministering angels came and set two crowns upon each man of Israel ..."

⁸⁸"600,000 angels danced at Jacob's departure from the house of Laban," but there is no mention of the Exodus.

⁸⁹"The Shehinah does not rest upon less than sixty myriads."

⁹⁰Ziv and Bul were biblical names for the second and eighth months of the year, which began with Aviv in the spring.

difficulty with the reign of David. In II Samuel 5, it is written that he ruled in Hebron for seven years and six months and in Jerusalem he ruled for thirty-three years, totaling forty years and six months. Yet in several places it is written only that he ruled for forty years. They solved the problem by recalling the maxim, "The many overwhelm the few." As we will see in Chapter Forty, this diminution of the number of years is suitable with respect to the sum of 410. The sages were not particular about the exact sum, since they forget their reduction of eight or nine years, as we have shown.

This is why our later sages refute the calculation of 410 years, for the duration of the Temple. In their opinion it endured a few years longer than that.

Ibn Daud, we should recall, found a third reason, presented in the beginning of his Book of Tradition. His difference is that "430 years passed from the construction of the Temple until its destruction (we showed earlier that 433 is an error). But our sages calculated 410, because from the beginning of Jehoiakim's exile the throne was not thought of as his." Kimhi also touch upon this in his criticism of Rashi, as we showed above.

Either for reasons we have cited, or for some other reason, the sages therefore established 410 as incontestable. Everything found in the midrash involving this number becomes sacred. For example, "And I dwelt" וַיֵּשְׁבֶה means "And He dwelt for 410 years," וַיֵּשְׁבֶה where the last two letters of the original word "וַיֵּשְׁבֶה" are numerically equivalent to the number 410. The Second Temple thus stood for 420 years [by rearranging the words of "וַיֵּשְׁבֶה" to make "וַיֵּשְׁבֶה", indicating numerically 420 rather than 410], as in the Torah Temimah. The midrash Nahum ben Ha-Kanah, in the beginning of Genesis, also says 410,

but its intention is the maintenance of the system rather than the exact number.

In the second chapter of Arakhin [12a] it says, "From their arrival in Israel until their departure passed seventeen Jubilees." Their intention is similar to Ibn Habib's. According to the traditional calculation it would have been proper to so count, except that in the last chapter of Zebahim [118b] they differed by seven years. This is one of the reasons for counting the Jubilees as mentioned. But although they have an estimate, they have no real proof. Rashi, for example, wrote there that "they differed by seven years" is merely a logical inference, for everyone knows that there can be no certitude whether our enumeration should be more or less.

This is similar to the words of Ba'al Ha-Terumah, Section 135. After he mentions the difficulty that both 419 years and 411 years are right from different points of view, he writes, "They took 420 as a calculation for the sake of compromise, following the language of the Bible [Dan. 9:24], "Seventy weeks are decreed." Seventy years are for the exile and 420 for the Temple.⁹¹

The reader must follow these investigations very closely, particularly their reasons for counting not more than 410 years, and why one rabbi differed with another. Consider the example of Rabbi Jose differing with Rabbi Jose: Why does he count 410 years for the Temple, yet many times in Seder 'Olam he says 418? Because of the first eight years of Hosea as we have shown. It will also be the reader's duty to watch for additional self-contradictions in other places.

⁹¹where "seventy weeks of years" indicates a total of 490 years.

I said "Rabbi Jose differing with Rabbi Jose." You should know that his words in Seder 'Olam⁹² on Hosea's eight years are also mentioned by Rashi. Yalkut Shimoni also mentions the book of Kings in the name of Rabbi Jose himself, quoting the Seder 'Olam, that he spoke vaguely. (See also Yebamot /82b/, Niddah /46b/ and an early anthology which I quoted in Chapter Nineteen.⁹³)

According to my statement here, you should not accept Abravanel's statement quoted earlier in this chapter: "According to the author of the Seder 'Olam, the conflagration was in the year 3338...." We should say 3346, or a definite eight years more. You would not agree with his statement because he calculates 410 years from the Judean point of view, after subtracting the twenty years lost during the reign of Jehoram ben Jehoshaphat and Uzziah.

We now face the difficulty that aside from the 241 years for the Israelite kings, we have the additional first eight years of Hosea. These years extended from the beginning of the divided monarchy until Hosea's exile, counting through the Israelite or Judean line. With Solomon's thirty-seven years and the 133 which passed from Hosea's exile until the conflagration the total becomes 418 years.

Although the sages counted the years of the Israelite kingdom as stated, their calculation is not unquestioned. Thus later commentators also agreed to add Hosea's eight years of captivity or war.

If you insist that they followed the line of Judean kings by

⁹²Tradition ascribes the Seder 'Olam to R. Jose b. Halafta, in the first half of the second century. See note 27, supra.

⁹³The statements in Yebamot 82b and Niddah 46b both declare Jose ben Halafta to be the author of the Seder 'Olam.

deducting the twenty years, we cannot then add these eight other years. We may then calculate in one of the ways we shall now suggest.

V

Despite all the fun we have poked at our sages for counting 410 years and not more, we have no doubt that the later commentators, such as the four cited, did not mean to ridicule or revile our rabbis or wish them evil.

They would not mind, were they with us today, our questioning their words; yet some scholars might think it counterproductive to probe so deeply into a minor controversy. After all, this calculation is not among the cornerstones of our faith. This controversy cannot lead to others questioning every law and commandment. Our topic of debate is not of the same nature as that of Moses on Sinai. Even a gentile coming in Messianic times--seen as certain, as they have testified--can prove that the Temple endured for 430 years, as with Kimhi and his followers. We should not refuse to give him an open ear.

Consider, enlightened reader, how a Christian scholar tried to refute me. He said, "From the tables of Eusebius of Caesarea, and according to Samotheus and other historians, it is clear that Rehoboam⁹⁴ began to reign in the thirty-fourth year of Alba the Latir king.⁹⁵ This was the thirty-third year of Laustinus,⁹⁶ the Assyrian king, and the ninth

⁹⁴Reigned 932-916 B.C.E.

⁹⁵Alba was the supreme head of a confederacy of thirty towns in ancient Latium. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946, XIII:756-57, the dating of Alba has always been extremely uncertain.

⁹⁶*o i / 6 o k k s*. The Assyrian king lists in William Hallo's The Ancient Near East (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971) do not contain any name even remotely approaching this, while dei Rossi's errors in dating make a precise identification impossible.

of Shishak,⁹⁷ the Egyptian king. Two hundred and sixty-one years passed from then until the twentieth year of Romulus,⁹⁸ the Roman king, that is, the seventeenth of Shalmanassar,⁹⁹ the Assyrian king, and the first year of Shabaka,¹⁰⁰ the Egyptian king. This was also the sixth year of Hezekiah and the last year of Hosea."¹⁰¹

If this is true, then certainly 261 years elapsed from Jeroboam until Hezekiah's sixth year. This clearly implies that our calculation of the Judean kings must be accomplished by recourse to their writings, without overlapping any years. We must not err as with the book of Kings, where they foreshortened their years. They would have increased them, had they imagined that there had been occasional vacancies on the throne for one reason or another.

I did not mention conflicting testimonies about this, in defense of our sages. Those which I used are often not very credible, but in the words of Halevi (Kuzaria, Chapter One), the accused investigator is worthy by virtue of his honest predecessors. He sees strong proofs of this; with respect to our innovation he without hesitation would choose to lean towards whatever would diminish his doubts. If he had a tradition or other clue which would compel him to believe otherwise, he would without a doubt not hesitate to see whether there was anything contradictory. To

⁹⁷Probably Sheshonq I (reigned 940-919 B.C.E.), of the 22nd (Libyan) Dynasty, according to Hallo, Ibid., p. 301. Slotki, in the Soncino commentary to Kings, p. 90, says that Shoshenk I ascended in 988 or 950 B.C.E.

⁹⁸Although Romulus was probably a mythological figure, he may have been a Latin prince who flourished in the eighth century B.C.E.

⁹⁹Shalmanasser III (858-824 B.C.E.).

¹⁰⁰Also known as Sabacon (716-695 B.C.E.), he founded the 25th Dynasty.

¹⁰¹The sixth year of Hezekiah and the last year of Hosea apparently correspond to 714 B.C.E. and 722 B.C.E., respectively, according to Slotki.

his credit, Ibn Habib also wrote along these lines.

Our sages count these years, as we have shown indicated by their relevant writings. All except the aforementioned Jews and Christians tended toward tradition, since chronology appeared to them just as it did to Kimhi and others like him. The majority of our legends also follow this, although the midrashim on this matter are far from being as clear as our sacred writings.

If we abandon any radical examination as having no value for us, we can say in general that we should not judge this difference between the sums of 410 and 430 superficially. It is no less important than the controversy among the later scholars. The contradictions came first, and were then solved by the early sages. This rule was first formulated in the Jerusalem Talmud, at the end of Seder Ta'anit.

I believe in the above resolution for the first years of Hosea. All agree that we cannot avoid joining them to the total. Even Scripture clearly implies this, as do the author of Seder 'Olam and the majority of Jewish and gentile commentators. They certainly prefer that the number of years since creation not overlap between sons and their fathers, as happens with some of the Judean kings. Rather, the Jerusalem monarchy continued from clan to clan and from tribe to tribe. We can explain the calculation of the years of each of them without any difficulty.

This brings us to combine their commentaries and say something our early sages did not, namely, that joining all the Judean reigns would yield a total of 410 years, as we have explained. Nevertheless, although we digress from them on the details of Israelite chronology, they have not changed their views.

But we must certainly not interfere with the dating of the conflagration, by any view of the Bible. I will not delay discussing this matter with you, enlightened reader. It is not right to postpone it, saying that our scholars did not count the seven years of construction, but rather counted them after its completion. Instead of those years they added the period of Hosea's exile. This causes a difficulty with the First Temple which it does not with the Second Temple. The sages said that the seven years passed during Ezra's arrival and that the eighth year saw the completion of the building. This will easily be seen in Maimonides' Laws of Shmitah, Chapter Ten.

Apparently, therefore, this is not their method. There is also a problem with their connection of the First Temple with Solomon's fourth year, 480 years after the Exodus [I Kings 6]. The sages clearly began to count, however, from the beginning of its construction. In the first chapter of tractate Elilim,¹⁰² for example, they assume a thousand years passed from the Exodus until the Greek period. Moreover of the 1380 years before the second conflagration, 410 years undoubtedly depends on the 480 (see this chapter, supra, and Chapter 23).

We should not pedantically conclude that the Temple stood for only 410 years. We should also not exaggerate. We realize, however, that the 480 years includes seven years seven years for construction. The 410 years, therefore, is also seven years longer, because we must not omit those seven years discussed in this chapter, and which we will again discuss (in Chapter Thirty-eight, on the Second Temple).

If Ibn Daud is correct that our rabbis only counted to the third

¹⁰²Abodah Zarah 9a.

year of Jehoiakim, we must certainly add the twenty years from then to the destruction. We cannot include them in the seventy years of exile between the temples.

VI

Do not hasten, however, to denounce the determination of the new moons and festivals. You should not say, "Is it not true that subtracting even a single month since the molad of creation prevents the first days of the festivals from being accurately determined?" We would then have to add or subtract one hour, twelve minutes and seven hundred and ninety-three helakim for each month, and the calculation would apparently return to utter chaos. But I have already defended the five commentators: our sages Nahmonides, Gersonides, Abravanel, and the Latif, who added on approximately thirty years.

We have also shown that four hundred years passed following the Exodus. The four commentators Ibn Daud, Kimhi, Gersonides and Abravanel, who add twenty years to the First Temple period, still seek definitive proof of this sum, for commentators usually do not accept their opinions as proof. If one perceives difficulty, he must request justification.

Although I have contradicted the sum of 410 years in discussing what our sages have said, I have not rejected and have no reason to reject the commentary of those four whom I have quoted. The plain meaning of Scripture will give its testimony and prove them correct. But I will not hide myself under their shawls. On the contrary, although I might now criticize them for such views, I will at times even defend them, not now but in Chapter Forty.

In the following chapters, especially in Chapter Forty, we will also investigate the duration of the Second Temple. Rest assured that you will stand there on the calculation of the "baharad"¹⁰³ and the wisdom of its discovery. Others, however, differed with this method of calculation, by adding or subtracting the sum of 876 to its plain meaning.

In truth, we do not generalize from earlier insights to those which come later, as with prophesy, but from the later to the early. We quoted the great rabbi Hai Gaon¹⁰⁴ to this effect in Chapter Two. Let there be a common understanding of our chronology, that we may rely upon it. You can clearly see that the additions or subtractions mentioned above will not change, or prevent or postpone any of the fixed times in any manner. You will still be able to say Hallel at the proper times.

But from now on you may consider as law that not all of the calculations of the moment of creation rests with a prophetic tradition. You must also realize that if the calculation of the moment of creation does rest with a prophetic tradition, nonetheless there are those who do not follow it. They rather prefer some other symbol. Maimonides explains this controversy at length in the Laws of the Sanctification of the New Moon, Chapter Six: "Our Rabbi Hai Gaon did not write these words; we must rely on the molad based on six days and twelve hours, and not on the molad 'baharad.'¹⁰⁵ They calculated the molad 'baharad' to teach students only...." Rabbi Abraham Ha-Nasi recalled this in his Book of Intercalation, Article Three, Gate Seven. His words were also quoted by the scholar Ibn Habib in

¹⁰³See note 38, supra.

¹⁰⁴Hai ben Sherira (939-1038), last outstanding Babylonian gaon, head of the Pumbeditha academy.

¹⁰⁵The comparison is not clear. See Cassel's edition, pp. 305-306.

his book Teshuvot Ha-Shemita, 143.

But we will take up these matters in Chapter Forty.

In any event, let us repeat that no man has any right to accuse our sages of error on the subject of this chapter. No one may say that they were not aware of anything discovered by us, since apart from everything which we will cite in their favor in Chapter Forty, they indeed immersed themselves in the laws of chronology. We noted this in Chapter Twenty-five and will recall it again in the chapters before us.

Concerning the duration of the Temple, they themselves repeatedly calculated in Seder 'Olam how the 410 years were derived. They based their calculation on the reigns of the kings in the Bible, and did not budge from this position.

Therefore any one of us who says that they erred is himself in error, because he does not understand what they have done.

Chapter Thirty-six

Differing rabbinic traditions on Second Temple chronology

We have already noted in Chapter Twenty-four that the Second Temple traditionally lasted for 420 years; that 380 years passed from the beginning of the Greek period, determined by recourse to the documents, until its destruction; and that 386 years passed from Alexander's¹⁰⁶ conquests of Darius¹⁰⁷ and the Persian Empire until then.

¹⁰⁶Alexander III The Great (356-323 B.C.E.), king of Macedonia (336-323), great general who laid the territorial foundations of the Hellenistic world of territorial kingdoms.

¹⁰⁷Darius III, called Codommanus (reigned 336-330), last king of the Achaemenid dynasty, overcome by Alexander the Great in 333 at Issus and in 331 at Gaugamela.

The seventy years which passed between the First Temple's destruction and the construction of the Second Temple are also well established, as Rashi noted in tractate Elilim¹⁰⁸ (See Chapter 23, supra.). We therefore deduce that thirty-four years passed from the beginning of the Temple's construction until Alexander's reign, according to Rabbi Jose in Seder 'Olam, Chapter Thirty and Elilim, Chapter One: "The Persian Empire lasted thirty-four years; the Greek Empire 180; the Hasmonean Empire 103; the Roman Empire 103."

It is appropriate to note that Isaac Abravanel, in his commentary on Daniel 2:3, differed with Rabbi Jose on most of the above. With respect to the Greeks he wrote, "According to an exact reckoning the years of their hegemony would be 145." For the Hasmoneans he said, "Eleven kings reigned 142 years" and for the Roman Empire he wrote, "After the Hasmoneans the House of Herod reigned, six kings in ninety-nine years, for that is the current calculation."

Without disputing here the thirty-four years of the Persian Empire, we note that the calculation is certainly not universally accepted. The appropriate place for one to investigate it is in Yemot 'Olam, which apparently determined it in the introduction to Kings, but did not prove it.

In any event, we have already shown how it differs with the book Zevah Pesach, namely, that the Second Temple lasted 428 years.

With regard to the Seleucid Empire, here I agree with Seder 'Olam, although you must agree that the printer of his book made a typographical error in printing "145" instead of "148." You will find in the beginning of Hasmonaim, Chapter One, as well as in Josephus, Book XII, Chapter 7,

¹⁰⁸Abodah Zarah 9a.

that the dedication at the end of the Greek period was in the year 148 of the Seleucid Empire. Antiochus Epiphanes the Evil therefore began to render his evil unto Israel in 143 of the Seleucid Era. Antiochus sorely oppressed them by setting up his image in the sanctuary, in 145. After three years, in 148, the Lord saw the poverty of His people, and He exiled Antiochus. The latter left in great anger, and died of his illness, in the 149th year. He has not since been matched in his evil.

According to a number of documents our sages were not unanimous that 380 years passed before the destruction of the Temple. Abravanel, for example, counted 386, beginning, according to the Sifra of Elilim /Abodah Zarah 9b/, from Alexander's conquest of Darius. He also differed with the sages, just as Daniel erred when he differed with Rabbi Judah Halevi, according to Ibn Ezra's commentary on Chapter 9 of Daniel.

With respect to the sum of thirty-four years, moreover, in the first part of Rabbi Jose's statement, their words do not contradict Abravanel directly, but are explained there [10:7]. He wrote that they are more or less correct, as if he felt himself on shaky ground. He thus basically supports them, saying that if their calculation is too small, they merely add or subtract until they approach the proper count. The sensitive man will surely consider that if we allegorically assume that the number 5331 is not precise but merely approximate, the critics were correct to thereby increase it, calling it "5351 or so." Tullius, an important gentile commentator,¹⁰⁹ was correct in his three chapters described as paradoxes (those ~~are~~ indeed wonderful things), which on balance have misled young and old.

¹⁰⁹ Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.E.), Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar and orator.

The same occurred when the error confronted him; but his error was to exaggerate what should have been less. Of course it makes no difference if we calculate too many or too few years, since we have erred.

The Tosaphists, in the first chapter of Elilim [Abodah Zarah 9b], asked about Simon ben Gamaliel, "Where does he find difficulty?" since he said that the Temple was destroyed 421 years after its construction.

Simon ben Gamaliel himself raised the further difficulty that everything assumed as literally true in the traditional chronology since the creation is a lie, since we ought to count one year higher. But let us leave this problem now and look into the additions to the aforementioned sum of 420 years.

After examining the period from the beginning of Alexander's Empire until the Temple's destruction, as well as from then until now, we realize that the controversy will continue over the dating of thirty-four years for the Persian Empire. Some critics hold that they should actually be more. They explicitly say that the Persian Empire surpassed thirty-four years.

Our later scholars made few calculations, and I do not clearly understand what they said against the sages. Only Gersonides, in his commentary to Daniel (Chapters Seven and Eight), wrote that the Second Temple stood for $437\frac{1}{2}$ years; Abravanel, as I said, wrote 428. The author of the Kuzaria, whom all agree is among the few who still understands the sages' words, writes (Chapter Three), "Prophecy continued for forty years during the Second Temple period, for Haggai, Zecharia and Ezra remained among the people after their return to the Temple site. After the forty years came a

multitude of scholars called Men of the Great Assembly; then followed the generation of Simon the Righteous, the High Priest...."

The author of the book A Knop and a Flower /Kaphtor U'Perach, after Genesis 25:33⁷,¹¹⁰ which we quoted at the end of Chapter Twenty-three, said, "Know that the beginning of Alexander's Empire, that is, the end of the period of prophesy, was the fortieth year of the Second Temple. This was 360 years before the destruction, and the first year of the Great Assembly."

They both date Simon the Righteous very late by saying that the Men of the Great Assembly convened after the forty years, and that Simon the Righteous was at the end of that assemblage. We know from the words of our sages that Alexander's conquests of Darius were in the days of that same Simon. We must therefore recognize that the end of the Persian Empire was a long time after the thirty-fourth year of the Temple's existence.

Although other sages continue to maintain the sum of 420 years, following our rabbis, I suspect the translator of the Kuzaria did not maintain a belief in this calculation. Indeed, if he is from the Ibn Tibbon family at all, he could not have been Samuel Ibn Tibbon,¹¹¹ since he translates each verse in his own style, and is therefore not trustworthy. In the second chapter, on the question of laws based on the land, he writes, "You today are greatly confused by these obligations...." This is very

¹¹⁰ Written by Estori ha-Parhi (1282-1357), of Andalusia and later of Palestine. The book is an encyclopedia on all things related to Palestine.

¹¹¹ Cassel notes that dei Rossi errs in thinking that Moses Ibn Tibbon translated Halevi's Kuzari, since Judah Ibn Tibbon, Samuel's father, did it. Judah (1120-1190) also translated Saadia's Beliefs and Opinions and Bahya's Duties of the Heart. His son Samuel (c. 1150-c. 1230) is best known for his translation of Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed, while the latter's son Moses ben Samuel (fl. 1240-1283) is known for his translation of the commentaries on Aristotle by Averroes.

strange and the commentator Caspi¹¹² worked in vain to reconcile it.

I do remember that Judah ben Cardinal, who translated part of the Kuzaria, did solve it. I quote: "Today you are in quietude and rest." By this transposition he returns the matter to the truth, as anyone looking into that passage will understand.¹¹³ The rest of the book, moreover, teaches us to beg that God "engrave the heart of every one of His children and students with commands and warnings: 'Be mindful lest you abandon the Levite.'" Moses Ibn Tibbon is recognized by his style, for he does not understandably explain to us some things. Compare this with the recognized symbols and direct style of Rabbi Judah Halevi, the author. Halevi is clear and straightforward, but who will properly interpret him for us?

I submit, however, that we are obligated to the aforementioned Ibn Tibbon for the good which we have received from him. But I cannot apologize for the Knop and a Flower. I cannot condone the way he speaks to us, especially since in Chapter Six he writes that the Persian Empire lasted only thirty-four years during the Temple; yet we know that Alexander was the conquerer who rose up against them!

We should admit that the early commentators who wrote during the Second Temple period were opposed by our later scholars. Witness Jedidiah the Alexandrian in his Book of Time and Josephus, for example. They lengthen the days of the Persians by more than 103 years. Josephus wrote, in his tenth Book of Wars, Chapter Seven, that the Second Temple endured for 639½

¹¹² Joseph Caspi (1297-c. 1340), Jewish philosopher and exegete.

¹¹³ Cassel adds, "In every edition of the Kuzaria appearing after the author's, apart from the Leipzig edition, the word 'confusion' has been changed to 'rest' /in this passage/. But the ... word 'confusion' refers to the Hebrew version /only/."

years.

From the words of Eusebius the Caesarian and others in the Christian scholarly community, we learn that they calculated lower or higher numbers of years. All fell somewhat short, however, until Samotheus (Book II) proposed a period of 587 years for the Temple. Before we continue to show how each part of traditional chronology has tended to become longer and longer, we must first clarify why the sages differed with each other.

Consider how our sages each approached the dating of Simon the Righteous, the first High Priest after the return to Jerusalem from the Exile. With this knowledge, we can work back. You will, for example, understand the words of the great Maimonides, who wrote in the introduction to his Mishnah commentary: "Haggai, Zecharia, Malachi, Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, Azariah, Ezra, Nehemia, Mordecai and Zerubbabel were the Men of the Great Assembly. Accompanying them were 120 Elders, from craftsmen to locksmiths. Simon the Righteous was the last of this great and pure group and the first of the Mishnaic sages. He was High Priest in his generation."

Maimonides, in the beginning of his great Mishnah Torah, wrote, "Simon the Righteous was the last of the 120 Elders. He received the Oral Law from all of them, and lived twenty-three years after Ezra."

Abraham Ibn Daud, in his Book of Tradition, wrote, "Simon the Righteous served in the second generation of the Great Assembly. His name was Ado ben Jeshua ben Jehozedek. Alexander conquered the Persian Empire in his generation...."

Samson of Chinon,¹¹⁴ moreover, in his Sepher Keritot, wrote in the

¹¹⁴Samson of Chinon, France (c. 1300-c. 1350), wrote The Book of a Love Covenant on Talmudic methodology. He is generally known as a Tosaphist.

beginning of the section called "Vemot 'Olam," "Simon the Righteous was among the last survivors of the Great Assembly, founded as the court of Ezra." Abravanel, too, wrote in the introduction to his Legacy of the Fathers¹¹⁵ that the last of them was the High Priest, Simon the Righteous. He noted that he was the son of Jeshur ben Jozelek, Ezra's brother.

Rabbi Bertinoro,¹¹⁶ in his commentary to the first chapter of Ethics of the Fathers, also wrote, "There were 120 Elders in the Great Assembly, including Zerubbabel, Shariah, Raaliah and Mordecai. The last was a linguist who went up with Ezra to the Second Temple...."

He continued, "Simon the Righteous was among the remnants of the Great Assembly. After the death of all the others the tradition remained in his hands. He was a High Priest after Ezra."

From these quotations, the sayings of the sages should certainly be clear to you. (See Brachot /33a/, Megila /17b/, Yoma /69b/, Genesis Rabbah "Parashat Ha-Keshet," and Midrash Psalms /36:1/). Their intention was that all of them lived in a single generation, including Simon the Righteous. He was apparently rather youthful, as he remained after them into the beginning of the second generation. Ethics of the Fathers, therefore, describes him as "...among the remnants of the Great Assembly."

Rashi comments that he was not among them at the beginning of the Temple, as was Ezra, nor late enough to follow Joshua.

Our tradition holds that thirty-four years is sufficient to encompass the years of the priests. Our tradition also accepts that Alexander, who conquered Darius, lived in the days of Simon the Righteous. The thirty-four

¹¹⁵ Commentary on Ethics of the Fathers, completed in Monopoli in 1496.

¹¹⁶ Obadiah ben Abraham Yare di Bertinoro (c. 1450-1516), rabbinic authority whose commentary on the Mishnah is a standard work of Jewish literature.

years did not surpass all of the Persian kings who reigned during the Second Temple period, nor were there more than four kings in the Babylonian Empire listed in Seder 'Olam (Chapter Thirty). Genesis Rabbah counted three (Chapter Forty-four): "The Median Empire was then in thirds, under Cyrus, Darius and Ahashuerus."

We must clarify that these kings apparently reigned more than the number of years indicated for Persia in the Holy Scriptures. Our text refers to a single reign [Neh. 5:14]: "In the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes ... after some days I asked leave of the king" [Neh. 13:6]. These verses could only have referred to the same king, as they said in Seder 'Olam (Chapter Thirty) and Rosh Hashanah [3b]: "Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes are all the same."

This is the opinion of our sages on this matter, despite a small group who oppose them. We have seen that on their own authority some have counted seven high priests prior to Simon, each the father of the next, continuing for many days: Jeshua, Joiakim, Eliashib, Joiada, Jonathan (also called Jochanan, apparently, according to Josephus, Book XI, Chapter 7 and the gentiles according to Book V of Honorius Augustus),¹¹⁷ Jeddua and Hanio who fathered Simon the Righteous. They related how the saga of Alexander was related to Jeddua, the sixth high priest....

The Persian kings themselves numbered this period as far longer than had our rabbis, the least of whom, the Yossipon, assumed that Darius built

¹¹⁷ Honorius Autun, possibly Honorius III, pope from 1216-1227, one of the great administrators in papal history. His Fifth Compilation, a collection of his decretals, is regarded as the first official book of canon law.

the Temple. Xerxes,¹¹⁸ his son, followed him. He wrote of Ezra's merit and, after him, of Nehemiah's for building the walls. Artaxerxes reigned after Ahasuerus, during whose tenure Haman flourished. One must also recall Darius,¹¹⁹ conquered by Alexander.

We have just learned the reason for the two contradictory schemata. Now we shall see in the coming chapter whether either is supported by the Holy Scriptures.

Chapter Thirty-seven

Problems raised by the rabbis relating to the
chronology of the High Priesthood

Three genealogical chronologies are apparently indicated by Scripture in support of the critics, namely, the chain of high priests; the chain of Persian kings; and the chain of Jachiniah's descendants. All three began during the early Second Temple period before Alexander rose up to conquer Darius.

Nehemiah refers to the six high priests discussed by the critics in Chapter Twelve. Each ruled in succeeding generations, fathers and sons in order, as listed in the beginning of the chapter. This section describes the leaders of the priests and levites who went up to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel the Prince and Jeshua the high priest. After listing the priests' leaders (Seraiah, Jeremiah, and so forth), and the levites' leaders (Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, and so forth), the chapter returns to Jeshua the High Priest: "And Jeshua begot Joiakim, and Joiakim begot

¹¹⁸Xerxes I (c. 519-465 B.C.E.), son and successor Darius I, best known for his defeat by the Greeks at Salamis (480), marking the Achaemenid's decline.

¹¹⁹Darius III, called Codommanus (d. 330 B.C.E.), last Achaemenid king.

Eliashib, and Eliashib begot Joiada, and Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua" Neh. 12:10-11.

We cannot say whether the Jeshua who "begot" Joiakim was Jeshua the Levite or not. A related passage reads Neh. 12:26, "This was in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua son of Jozadak." Rashi comments, "this verse only names the high priests. Even if the text did not clearly define each of them as a high priest, however, the time is unspecified. They were therefore leaders of the people...."

This teaches that he was indeed a high priest, as they said earlier, "In the days of Jeshua ..." We also clearly see that Nehemiah counts the leaders of the priesthood and levites who lived in the days of Joiakim. But elsewhere it states Neh. 12:12, "And in the days of Joiakim were priests...." and Neh. 12:22, "...the levites..." who served in the days of Joiakim. It further counts the Levites who lived in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, although each of these four lived in his own generation, in the manner of the verse Is. 1:1, "In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah." Johanan ben Eliashib is without doubt the aforementioned Jonathan, as we have written, and as Rashi commented, a certain Henan was high priest, as he explained that Joiakim too was a high priest. Nehemiah wrote, too, with respect to the construction of the wall Chapter Three, that Eliashib the High Priest built the Sheep Gate. At the end of the book, on the other hand, he wrote that among the sons of Joiada the High Priest one married Sanballat,¹²⁰ as with Manassah, Jaddua's brother. The priest's brother prevented Manassah from "cleaving" to the inheritance of the Lord,¹²¹ and he built for himself a bimah on

¹²⁰Known as Sanballat of Beth-horon. Satrap of Samaria, c. 445 B.C.E.

¹²¹See I Sam. 26:19.

Mount Gerizim. (See Josephus, Book XI, Chapter 8 and Book XIII, Chapter 6).

Jaddua was the son of Jonathan, in Nehemiah's traditional view. He wrote that the six high priests were on the same level, each son serving after his father's death. This accords with the Torah, where they taught (Chapter Two of Sanhedrin [21a7]), "In the priestly law His word will be blessed by a priest in place of his father." This generalizes to all the leaders of Israel (Duet. 17:20), "...to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children...."

Ba'al Ha-Riv was therefore justified in saying that Rabbah did not teach the plain meaning of the text, since it is a supportive text. By two witnesses does an answer endure against our sages. Indeed, we learn that Simon did not live in the second generation and yet after Jeshua, for Joiakim was the second high priest after his father; Simon the Righteous did not live until after Jaddua.

If you respond that Simon was Joiakim, then apart from why he should have changed his famous name, a second problem arises. After Alexander's conquest, traditionally in the days of King Artaxerxes of Persia who built the walls of Jerusalem, we find that his strength and his administration were all-powerful. This is a famous falsehood. Moreover, although you might suddenly interpret this as Jeshua's and Ezra's generation, for they said, "Why so?!" yet they intended that those six generations were not the same as the seven sons of Kimhit¹²² who praised her, saying, "Every flour is just flour; yet the flour of Kimhit is the finest."

¹²² Kimhit, from the same root as the word "flour" (חמץ), was the mother of seven sons who served as high priest in turn. See Talmud Jerushalmi to Mevilla and Yoma, Chapter 1; Talmud Babli, Yoma 47a; Numbers Rabbah, Chapter 20.

Since they were brothers, it is possible that all of them served as priests for a few years. If each filled the place of the other like Judah, who ascended in the place of his brother Simon; or if he was not yet high priest; or even if he had ruled but a day or two, in my opinion these brothers are the ones referred to in Josephus, Book XX, Chapter 8, although he only recalls five.

But we are investigating six high priests who served in orderly succession. Their total service must have been far longer than thirty-four years. This is proven by the text, when it says about each of them, "In the days of Jeshua ... in the days of Joiakim ..." the leaders of the priests and levites were thus and so....

If you object that there was even a slight difference between them, note that the point is clarified in Scripture. Eliashib III apparently built the Sheep Gate in Artaxerxes' twentieth year. He was also a high priest for many days after the thirty-second of Artaxerxes. For after Nehemiah's return from Jerusalem to Shushan in that thirty-second year (Nehemiah 13), Eliashib built the chamber mentioned there for the sake of the Tobiads.¹²³ He had not wanted to do this while Nehemiah was still in Jerusalem: "And it happened after some days that Nehemiah returned to Israel and found it built and filled with the artifacts of Tobiah; and he had them put out." There is no doubt that the deeds related here did not happen instantaneously, but required a fairly prolonged time.

It is possible that Eliashib, the third of the six high priests

¹²³A wealthy Jewish family during the Second Commonwealth, apparently descendants of "Tobiah the Ammonite slave" mentioned in Nehemiah, and Tobiah the officer of the Ptolemaic army (c. 259 B.C.E.) referred to in the Zenon papyri. The latter was probably the father of Joseph son of Tobiah, the famous tax-gatherer. See Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 64-65; 127-142.

following those thirty-two years, lasted some additional days. His death, however, is not recorded.

This is, of course, precisely the difficulty. We can have only one high priest at any one time, yet according to Rabbi Jose the Persian Empire stood for only thirty-four years. The total service of Eliashib, Joiada and Jonathan could not have been more than a few hours! Certainly, this cannot be accepted logically. We shall omit Jaddua for the time being, as he served during the Alexandrian conquests.

If we were to believe Philo, Josephus and their followers, it would become apparent that each of those three kept his position for somewhat longer than traditionally counted. Only a few have courageously testified to this.

Although the first chapter of Yoma [9a] says, "The years of the wicked will be shortened; these are the high priests of the Second Temple," do not be confused. There are two proper responses to this point.

First, that it is certainly not true that this is the reason for the foreshortening, except following Simon the Righteous. They said in the Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma, in the first chapter, "...They also accepted contributions in the second sanctuary. There are those who say that they would kill each other over the money collected by eight high priests." Sifre, at the end of the portion Balak, adds, "Since they sold the priesthood for contributions, their years began to be shortened."

The generations from Jeshua to Simon were not guilty of these sins. Each was the father of the one succeeding, so their inheritance did not change from one generation to the next. In contradistinction to these words, which we have been forced to read, moreover, fear of God will increase one's days. The sages already said this in Genesis Rabbah,

"Parashat Ha-Keshet." In the days of the Great Assembly, in which Simon the Righteous served last, they were apparently not as righteous as in Hezekiah's generation. We derive this from their military songs.

Thus in the midrash on Psalms, on the verse Ps. 36:11, "O continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee," they equated that generation of the Great Assembly with Hezekiah's, for their knowledge of the Divine name¹²⁴ (See Part 4, Chapter 6). They righteously did not turn from their appointed task, and each son succeeded in the place of his father. This process was later abandoned. The priests and levites, for example, went beyond their office to purchase ma'alot by "donations," as Josephus wrote in Book XX, Chapter 8: "For by the days of the destruction the levites were in dire straits; their money, achieved by bribery, was used to purchase power and the authority to wear linen tunics like the priests wore during the divine service. The priests, too, being unsuited for the high priesthood, would have to purchase it...."

Our sages, too, wrote similarly in the Jerusalem Talmud, in Sifre, and in the Babylonian Talmud Voma 18a: "Martha, the daughter of Bitus, gave King Jannai a tarkab-ful¹²⁵ of dinars to nominate Joshua ben Gamla as one of the high priests to be elected by the electors."

The Yossipon, too, quotes this in the chapter I cited of his (Chapter 21, supra). Since the first six generations did not act in that fashion, therefore, we believe that their days were numerous, and not as limited as the sages had thought.

¹²⁴Based on Jeremiah 21:4, "Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war..." which is assumed to refer to the Divine Name.

¹²⁵A dry measure, originally two kabs (אני קב = ארבע קב), later three kabs. "A medium size basket is no less than a tarkab" according to the Iosephta to Ma'aser Sheni 2:7.

But if you, enlightened reader, would examine this from another aspect, namely, that Alexander of Macedon who conquered Darius was the same who defeated Persia, you raise another difficulty. Both Talmuds, and all midrashim, agree that Simon the Righteous served the high priesthood for forty years. (See the Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim; Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, Chapter 1 [9a], the beginning of Chapter "Taraph" [39a], and Menahot, Chapter 13 [109b]). It is therefore easy to determine that Alexander's conquests took place during the fourth or fifth year of those forty. But even were it in the first year, we must also abandon the sages' calculation, for Simon the Righteous was the son of Hanio ben Jaddua, probably the same Jaddua. Yet Eliashib the Third had already surpassed the thirty-two years of Artaxerxes, the limit of time mentioned in Nehemiah 13:6: "And after some days...."

If Eliashib indeed served longer than thirty-two years, then what time remains for Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua? The latter's grandson, too, did not serve according to the sages' calculation, but was actually the son of Jaddua.

We do not intend to belabor the point, although the period normally implied by "at the end of some days" until the end of thirty-four years should be lengthened. Our own Jewish kings, too, used to count a period of time as a week or two, afterwards turning around to declare it but a moment.

Zechariah declared, moreover [Zech. 8:4], "There shall yet be old men and old women sitting in the broad places of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for every age," and particularly promised Jeshua ben Jozedek [Zech. 3:7], "If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep

my charge, and wilt also judge my house, and wilt also keep my courts, than I will give thee free access among these that stand by." These are both promises for length of days, as hinted in the Targum Jonathan. Philo, in his work on chronology, believed that Jeshua lived for 130 years and held the high priesthood for fifty-six years. This is symbolized by the letters vav-nun, which appear at the beginning of Zechariah 3:7, "And I will give you free access...."

This is God's covenant: Whoever walks in His ways will have a life of peace, for him and his seed after him.

We have already quoted from Genesis Rabbah, "Parashat Ha-Keshet," to the effect that during the Great Assembly the priests were just and deserving of blessings and length of days in abundant measure. Some, perhaps, will dare to say, "Look how Eliashib, the aforementioned builder of the chamber, is described in Scripture as a 'priest' and not as the 'high priest' who built the gate." But we may answer that in some places Eliashib is described as a high priest. Our citations have already been numerous, although admittedly those of Jeshua have been without that precise designation. An author may either use that designation or rely on the reader's understanding.

This view of Eliashib proves that he could only have been the high priest, since he apparently constructed the wide steps in the Temple and made them into a private entry. Only a high priest could have done that. If he had been but a common priest, this would have been beyond his authority.

Rashi comments, "This Eliashib was close to Tobiah, Sanballat's friend. When Tobiah gave the Temple some family ritual objects, he did not imagine that to the request of Tobiah, when he would persecute the Jews, some common priest would have the wherewithal to contemplate all this."

That whole period, however, is obscure. No one can document what happened, but we can assume that many high priests have been forgotten through time, until the reign of Darius. Eliashib should have been the last high priest, yet we saw that Eliashib lived in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes. How then can one logically accept that he served just fourteen years, not to mention the years of Joiada, Jonathan, Jaddua, Hanio, and Simon the Righteous?

Nahmonides, in his commentary on Joheved, points out that 370 years passed from their arrival in Israel until the birth of King David. They, of course, were righteous; we have also shown that they had no mistakes in their understanding.

I would like to see the Catalogue¹²⁶ of deeds of the French, Spanish, Portuguese and British kings. Their successions are well-known, with the exception of the Israelite kings, the popes and the Caesars. The latter group changed dynasties often, while the exaggeration of an era was easy for them.

I have only found chains of high priests surpassing seventy years. No generation was foreshortened. No generation ended with one priest assuming for himself the years of the entire chain. With respect to the Judean kings, twenty generations reigned in order, aside from Athaliah. The shortest chain, continuing for six kings consecutively, was ninety-five years.

Chronicles, too, lists fifteen kings of whom the six shortest reigns together extended for eighty years.¹²⁷ Can we possibly contend

¹²⁶ Catalogus Regum Gallorum.

¹²⁷ II Chronicles 10 to II Chronicles 36.

that these are examples of exaggeration? Has someone tampered with the numbers?

I have already written in Chapter Twenty-two against Ibn Daud, Isaac Ha-Israeli¹²⁸ and Abravanel for identifying Simon the Righteous with Hananiah, and assuming seven names as with Yitro (see there).

Let us continue the discussion on the chain of high priests and their succession. Maimonides quotes the first chapter of Hulin [24b], in Chapter Four of the "Laws of the Temple Vessels," as follows: "When the priest is grown and becomes an adult,¹²⁹ he becomes kosher for sacrifices, but his fellow priests did not allow him to sacrifice in the Temple until he became twenty years of age."

The Jerusalem Talmud, at the beginning of "Perek Lulav Ha-Gazul," adds, "He is not permitted to pass in front of the ark, nor can he raise up his hands¹³⁰ or stand on the pulpit, until his beard is full. Rabbi says, 'All of this is from the age of twenty years and upwards, as it says in Ezra 3:8, "...and they appointed the levites, from twenty years old and upwards..."' If this is true even of the levites and the common priests, how much more that it would apply to the high priest, for they said about him, 'The high priest must be greater than all of his fellow priests, in beauty, strength and appearance....'"

Maimonides, in the aforementioned chapter, continues, "Strength and appearance are not complete without length of years, by which the young

¹²⁸ Isaac ben Suleiman Israeli (845-954), identified by Cassel as the author of the Seder 'Olam.

¹²⁹ According to Rabbi in Hulin 24b, a man is considered "grown" when he has grown two hairs, although he should not intentionally act as a priest until the age of twenty.

¹³⁰ In the priestly benediction.

priests will regard the high priest's majestic appearance and revere him." Apparently, therefore, this became halakhah. The early national laws, by which the high priest was chosen, imply the same thing.

This was not only true of the high priest himself but of his associates in the priesthood too. We learn from our sages' words that high priests had to be elderly. They explicitly use the word "elderly" based on the midrashic story on Psalms 9:7, "...their very memorial is perished...." Malachi is then quoted (1:4), "They will build but I will throw down" on which Phillipus commented to Rabbi Elasah, "Every year they sat in council until an old man came to disrupt their plans." We must therefore abandon the belief that Joiada and his associates after Eliashib were young men when appointed in place of fathers who died before their time.

The critics might then say that the traditional thirty-four years calculated in the days of Simon the Righteous are not enough to encompass all of the high priests who served during the Persian Empire. We must retroactively expand the length of that period, perhaps spacing the terms of service farther apart. We may do this from the Darius who built the Temple, to Artaxerxes, who lived in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time; or from him to the Darius who fell at the hands of Alexander.

One should also differentiate among Jeshua, Joiakim and Eliashib, who were earlier. After we found that Eliashib built the Sheep Gate in Artaxerxes' twentieth year, we must admit that Jeshua and Joiakim only served for fourteen years (plus Eliashib's remaining years). Zechariah appointed Jeshua some time afterwards, saying [Zech. 3:7], "...Judge My house and ... also keep My courts." Nehemiah, during the story cited above, also wrote [Neh. 12:12], "In the days of Joiakim were priests,

heads of fathers' houses..." so and so and so and so, "...the levites in the days of Eliashib..." so and so, and so and so....

Joiada and his associates thus cannot have expired so early, as we showed above. It appears, however, that we have lost the truthful reigns of the Persian kings.

With respect to Maimonides' comments (supra) and Bertinoro's commentary on the verse, "Simon the Righteous was twenty-three years after Ezra"¹³¹ we should recall that if the six cited by Nehemiah were indeed high priests, then we should continue to judge their comments in two ways:

First, that Ezra, even if he actually was a priest in Babylon and Jerusalem, never served as high priest in the Lord's Sanctuary. His own words prove this. Further, Rashi comments on I Chronicles, at the end of Chapter 5, "Since Ezra son of Shariah, the grandson of his brother ben Jozedek, was not a high priest, Jeshua had to ascent to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel several years earlier."

Second, that Simon the Righteous, even if he was a high priest, was not so close to Ezra's time that one could somehow connect their tenures directly. From the Scriptural point of view we are forced to say that Simon did not live until after Jaddua, the last of the six priests cited. He may have been his son or his grandson, as Philo and Josephus point out. They say that Jaddua was the father of Hanio, and Hanio was the father of Simon. Josephus, Book XII, Chapter 2, has, "He was called 'righteous' since he pursued righteousness and mercy."

Ibn Daud and Abrevanel also wrote that Simon the Righteous was the son of Jeshua son of Jozedek, as I have shown in Chapter Twenty-two.

¹³¹ Ethics of the Fathers, 1:1.

Rashi, in his statement on those six mentioned in Nehemiah 12, unsurprisingly writes, "All mentioned in this verse served twenty-three years! Our sages erred." He merely interprets the plain meaning of the text. Elsewhere, at the beginning of his commentary on the portion Vaera, he writes, "I say, let the text return to its plain meaning and the commentary will be explained," as I noted near the end of Chapter Fourteen.

Rabbi Hisdai the Levite, expanding on the words of Hai Gaon's Chapter Forty-five of his Kan Zippur, as well as in various responsa, wrote on the return of wisdom at the end of Chapter Eight of The Laws of Kings.

In any event, Nehemiah's words are seen as an aid to the critics, as we intended to show in this chapter.

Chapter Thirty-eight

Problems raised by the rabbis
relating to royal Persian chronology

We may ask how the Persian kings could also have reigned for only thirty-four years. If we assume that those years did not commence until the Temple had been completed in Darius' sixth year, we still question how Darius later exaggerated the period between himself and Artaxerxes. Another king may have reigned between them. We see from Nehemiah 13 that Artaxerxes alone ruled for thirty-two years and a considerable number of days after that. It is also possible that he afterwards continued to rule, although Nehemiah had no need to recall that.

We must also consider the effect on the calculation since creation.

The seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation, apparently, concluded in Darius' second year, according to Zechariah, who prophesied in his second year in the name of the angel, and complained, saying 1:12, "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have compassion on Jerusalem ... these seventy years." Ezra also records Ezra 4:24 - 5:2, "It ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius.... Then rose up Zerubbabel ... and began to build...." making four or five years. We may certainly add them to the years of creation. This year is number 5331. The calculation includes seventy for the Babylonian Exile and 420 for the duration of the Temple. Of these, 34 are under the Persian Empire, 180 under Greece, 103 under the Hasmoneans and 103 under Rome, according to the Seder 'Olam (Chapter 30).

There is no escaping that if we add those extra years to the total sum, we are now in 5335 or 5336, and not 5331! If the thirty-four Persian years began in the second year of Darius, we still face the difficulty with the sum of thirty-four years, because of the five years ascribed to Darius and the thirty-two ascribed to Artaxerxes, totalling thirty-seven. Add to this the period described in Nehemiah 13:6, "For in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes King of Babylon I went unto the king."

It is true that Seder 'Olam (Chapter 30) claims that Artaxerxes was Darius himself, who was also called Artaxerxes. But dear reader, if you have forgotten, or possibly never read, then look at our definitive answer in Chapter Eighteen. Even if you agree that Artaxerxes was Darius, we must still look further into the matter. It is written that Nehemiah stood in Jerusalem for the first time from Artaxerxes' twentieth year until his thirty-second year, when he returned to the king. According to tradition, not less than two or three years passed from then until the end of his days.

In our opinion, furthermore, they had already lengthened the days of his rule, so that Artaxerxes clearly ruled a minimum of thirty-five years. So you may abandon the idea that Artaxerxes was Darius, who in his second year began the thirty-four years ascribed by Rabbi Jose. Among that period are thirty-four years for him alone. The sages apparently have no doubt that Artaxerxes built the Temple.

It is virtually certain that the thirty-four years began from the beginning of the construction, that is, Artaxerxes' second year, and not from when it was completed. Even the period of construction, of course, was longer, as we showed earlier. We also know that the sages count the seventy years of exile and append to them part of the Temple's duration.

Maimonides, for example, in the Laws of Shemita, Chapter Ten, wrote, "In the seventh year of its construction Ezra went up, and this was his second coming. They began a fresh counting from that year, and took thirteen years to build the Second Temple." He took this, I believe, from Arakhin 71a, "Six years passed before Ezra went up, but they did not count the dedication for a shemita."¹³²

You must therefore say that the Temple period began not from the second Persian year, but from the first, that is, in the previous year. For although it is written, "And they began to build in the second year," it is possible that the sages added the year of Cyrus' decree, making a total of seven. The difficulty is then magnified, since of Rabbi Jose's tradition of thirty-four years, thirty-two passed in Artaxerxes' reign alone. The thirty-two years may even have been more, as hinted in the verse, "And after some days I asked...."

¹³² Ezra reintroduced the laws of release and jubilee only after the dedication had taken place.

Since Artaxerxes probably ruled more than thirty-two years, where is there time for Darius, and someone else? Kimhi and his colleagues, as we know, said that there was yet another king. All the critics cited above state that other kings reigned. The last to reign before the conquest ruled for six years.

Tradition holds that the Persian Empire fell after thirty-four years. If you want to pursue this point of halachah, and say that Artaxerxes himself ruled in the other year, you should ask yourself two questions:

The first is whether Cyrus alone, as in tradition, permitted the Jews to rebuild the Temple. While he was yet alive they had to postpone the building. Isaiah the prophet, speaking wondrous things about him, said [45:17], "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him...." In spite of our enemies and pursuers he commanded that the Temple be reconstructed in the days of Zerubbabel, apparently first by means of donations and contributions, then because of the merit of Ezra.

And because of Nehemiah's merit he wrote from one "great" to another,¹³³ so that the city was reconstructed on its hill, and the holy dwelling on its site.

How can we think that the Lord of Justice, our God, turned away from them suddenly, and destroyed His city by a tight hand in flaming fury? "These are the commandments yet such is their reward." See, for example, Pesachim [118a7], ("He should not withhold the reward of anyone");¹³⁴ Genesis Rabbah Thirty-one (about the commandment [Exodus 22:307], "...Ye shall cast it to the dogs");¹³⁵ the first chapter of Kiddushin [31a7] about Dama ben

¹³³ 216 81c 216a.

¹³⁴ God himself saved Abraham from the "fiery furnace" after Nimrud had thrown him in, because Abraham's merit was so great.

¹³⁵ The Israelites were commended (Ex. 22:30) to cast to the dogs all

Natina;¹³⁶ and on the four Steps of Nebuchadnezzar, in "Perek Helek"
/Sanhedrin 96a/.¹³⁷

The author of the Kuzaria, Chapter One, writes, "We do not deprive any man the reward of his deeds and good works, from whichever people he may come." Maimonides, too, in his commentary on the Mishnah (Tractate Terumah, Chapter 3), wrote that the terumah of the gentile and sectarian is acceptable: "Although gentiles are obligated to observe the commandments, if they do any of them they are entitled to some reward. And this is one of our basic principles...."

You might say, "Look at Josiah about whom it was said (II Kings 23:25), 'And like until him was there no king before him....'" Yet it is also written (II Kings 23:29), "In his days Pharaoh-nechoh¹³⁸ king of Egypt went up...and slew him...." For Israel, apparently, the judgment of God applies only for their righteous, according to what the sages have shown in "Perek Helek,"¹³⁹ "They do have a place in the world to come." Compare this with Maimonides, "Hilchot Teshuvah," Chapter 3;¹⁴⁰ "Hilchot Issure Biya," flesh "that is torn of beasts in the field." When God slew the firstborn of Egypt, the dogs barked all night at the Egyptians burying their dead, implying that the Egyptians were unholy.

¹³⁶ Described as a heathen from Ashkelon, who turned down a business deal because the key to his merchandise was under his sleeping father's pillow. Though a heathen, and not required to so honor his father, he was rewarded.

¹³⁷ Refers to Is. 39:1, which refers to Baladan, King of Babylon, whose scribe Nebuchadnezzar mistakenly erred in his wording of a letter to Hezekiah, but was only allowed by Gabriel to run "four steps" after the messenger before he was stopped.

¹³⁸ Neko II, second king of the 26th (Saite) Dynasty (reigned 609-594, B.C.E.). He deposed the Judean king Jehohaz and replaced him with Jehoia-kim, who was more favorable to the Egyptian cause, in 607 B.C.E.

¹³⁹ Described by Cassel as a tract in which they designated those who in general do or do not merit a place in the world to come among gentile nations.

¹⁴⁰ "The righteous among the nations have a place in the world to come." This is almost identical to the citations from "Hilchot Edut" 11:10 and "Hilchot Malachim" 8:11.

Chapter 14;¹⁴¹ "Hilchot Edut," Chapter 11; and especially "Hilchot Malachim," Chapter 8.

Rabbi Eliezar, in the Iosephta to Sanhedrin, Chapter 13;¹⁴² Midrash Psalms, on the verse [9:18], "The wicked shall return to the nether-world, even all the nations that forget God;"¹⁴³ and the Pesikta found in the Yalkut on the verse [Jer. 20:17], "Lord, thou hast enticed me," discusses laws applying to pagans. They merit nothing after death but that God will repay them according to the word of Johanan ben Zaccai in Chapter One of Baba Batra [70b], "The righteousness of the gentiles is an atonement for them in this world."¹⁴⁴

There is also no point in discussing the statement in the first chapter of Rosh Hashanah [3b] that Cyrus became embittered, because we have no proof that they refer to the same Cyrus. We only have unfounded traditions.

We wonder when Cyrus became embittered. Nehemiah returned in the thirty-second year of his reign, according to the customary calculation. Counting the additional time it took him to return to the affairs of Jerusalem, thirty-four years was not enough total time, after this righteousness, to become embittered.

¹⁴¹"You should note that the world to come is only assured for the righteous, namely Israel." This contradicts the three other citations from Maimonides.

¹⁴²"The righteous among the foreign nations of the world have a place in the world to come."

¹⁴³Rabbi Eliezer taught: "None of the nations has a portion in the world to come." Again, as with Maimonides, Eliezer contradicts himself.

¹⁴⁴Discussing Proverbs 14:34, Johanan ben Zaccai says, "Just as the sin-offering makes atonement for Israel, so charity makes atonement for the heathen."

Even if he sinned grievously, as the sages hold, we should consider the writings of other commentators and Tosaphists. In Chapter One of Rosh Hashanah [3b7], they said, "If this Darius was the son of Esther, how did she depart from the ways of God?" For she was the Queen of Righteousness among the gentiles, especially Arrianus the Greek¹⁴⁵ who based his book on the works of Ptolemy son of Lagus¹⁴⁶ and Aristobulus the Jew.¹⁴⁷ He wrote how at Darius' cruel fall his mother's legions fell too, along with his wife and sister. In Arrianus' second book, and according to Curtius, the faithful scholar,¹⁴⁸ Book Ten, his mother was called Sissigambi. He wrote that she grieved bitterly on the death of Alexander, since she believed he would watch over her and the remnants of her house. Finally, she strangled herself because for five days she had endured with but a single morsel in her mouth.

We shall not linger on this matter, to raise additional points of difficulty with the Jossipon; it says that the latter Darius apparently arose after Esther's Ahasuerus. If so, he was the one who constructed the Temple, but there are two answers to this:

First, an additional king is not even mentioned, although Jossipon intends not to count the Persian kings but just to record the events which

¹⁴⁵ Flavius Arrianus (Arrian), Greek historian (died c. 180 C.E.), who wrote Anabasis on Alexander's military exploits.

¹⁴⁶ Ptolemy I Soter, son of the nobleman Lagus (b. 367/6 B.C.E., d. 283/2 B.C.E.). Friend and general of Alexander the Great, and king of Egypt (305-283/2); founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty (323 B.C.E.).

¹⁴⁷ Probably Judas Aristobulus (d. 103 B.C.E.), Hasmonean king of Judea, who seized the throne in 104 B.C.E.

¹⁴⁸ Quintus Curtius Rufus (fl. first cent. C.E.), principally known for a biography of Alexander. His is one of only five surviving biographies from that period, no eye-witness compositions having survived.

touched our people under any king, as I have indicated. The Jossipon, after referring to the matter of mannah (Chapter 4), writes, "And our forefathers worshipped all the Persian kings in secret and quiet, until the reign of Darius II." With respect to the words of our rabbis on the sum of thirty-four years, moreover, they are like "honey and thorns." We should not believe them, for they said that in the days of Darius the Temple stood for seven years, after which arose Artaxerxes, mentioned "to the merit of Ezra and Nehemiah." He ruled for at least thirty-two years and then some, followed by Ahasuerus. On the latter it is written, "In his twelfth year he threw down lots." Finally came Darius, the one who was conquered.

We have a problem with Nehemiah, who wrote to teach us about his times. How is it conceivable that he did not know about the famous events which occurred when Alexander passed through Jerusalem to make war with Darius? Why did he not sing the praises of Daniel, whose prophesy was realized, or proclaim the compassion of God on us when Darius was fighting all the surrounding people? All were bowing low and subjugating themselves to Darius as slaves. Yet when the high priest went out to greet him he did not bring evil upon him but goodness and mercy.

Surely this could not have been the same Darius conquered by Alexander and mentioned by Nehemiah. Ezra certainly could not have lived until that time or known of his deeds.

We also learn this from Josephus, Book XI, Chapter Five. We thus assume at least the possibility that more than the traditional number of years passed from Darius (the builder of the Temple) to Artaxerxes (the builder of the walls), to Darius (who fell conquered).

Now, I do not criticize any understanding person in whose opinion

Nehemiah (Chapter 13) describes Artaxerxes as the king of Babylon, for it may be in doubt. Perhaps he was not a Persian king, but Scripture only confuses us. The Babylonian Empire, certainly, did not return after the fall of the Persian Empire, but was absorbed by the Persians in their Empire. (See Chapter 21.)

He himself is even called, in Ezra 1:7, "Artaxerxes King of Persia," while in Nehemiah 13 he is called "King of Babylon," as in the verse above (Ezra 1:8), "Those going up with him in the reign of Artaxerxes King of Babylon." He is referred to as the king of Assyria in the verse at the end of Chapter Six on Darius, "For the Lord turned the heart of the King of Assyria unto them...."

And Chronicles 11:33, on the matter of Menassah and his tribe, has, "And the Lord brought upon them the heads of the army of the Assyrian king, and they conquered him and brought him to Babylon." Nehemiah reveals that this king was in "Shushan Ha-Birah," as it was then known.

Josephus (Book XI, Chapter 6), indicates that they could describe the ruler all three ways: as king of Persia, Babylon or Assyria, depending on where he happened to be residing.

If this seems too simplistic for you, consider Ptolemy's Guide to Geography, Books Five and Six.¹⁴⁹ In the fourth and fifth tables of Asia, and also in the drawing of the world map, these four countries appear adjacent to one another, all northeast of Israel.

"Assyria," of course, is "Asshur" Assyria, on the west of which are Aram Neharaim and Babylon, and to the south of which are all the troops

¹⁴⁹ Ptolemy's Guide to Geography was the ancient world's most considerable attempt to place the study of geography on a scientific basis. Books Five and Six contain part of his systematic tabular location of places in terms of latitude and longitude.

of Susyana, that is, Shushan, the Persian capital city.

Solinus,¹⁵⁰ in Chapter Forty-nine, writes on Babylon as follows:
 "Babylon was built by Semiramis,¹⁵¹ and to its everlasting glory the lands
 of Assyria and Aram Niharaim have also been called by the name of Babylon."

We still teach, however, that those opposed to this have merit. Any
 sensitive man might still have difficulty with it, saying, "How can it be
 that there were several additional Persian kings beyond those three or four
 counted by the sages in the Seder 'Olam (Chapter Thirty) and in Genesis
Rabbah (Section Forty-four)?" It says there, "And it happened that the
 angel, in the first year of Cyrus, said (Daniel 11), 'Behold, three kings
 will yet rule Persia.'"

I would answer according to Jewish law. Although this was originally
 accepted, the majority of our texts prove that there could not have been
 less than six, as Abravanel also noted (2:10): Darius the Mede; the
 aforementioned Cyrus; and three other kings, plus a fourth who was parti-
 cularly wealthy, making of course six. There is reason to doubt Xenophon
 the Greek, whom we mentioned in Chapter Thirty. He said, "There were two
 Cyruses" and wrote on each a long book. But perhaps the Cyrus mentioned
 first is really the second Cyrus; very possibly, their reigns could be
 lengthened.

Aside from this, consider that Daniel said with respect to the
 Persian Empire [Daniel 7:5], "...and it had three ribs in its mouth
 between its teeth...."

If he meant that Persia was to have only three ribs, then they

¹⁵⁰ Gaius Julius Solinus, third century grammarian and geographer,
 author of Collection of Memorabilia, a summary of Pliny the Elder's
Natural History.

¹⁵¹ Sammu-ramat (Greek Semiramis), Assyrian queen and legendary heroine,
 the mother of the Assyrian King Sargon II (reigned 720-705 B.C.E.).

indeed had a total of three kings. He had no need to add to the number of kings "between the bear's teeth." But he says that Persia would have many mighty and weak kings, recorded and not recorded. This is like the vision of various kinds of teeth where there are three strong ones and a fourth which falls at the hands of his enemies, greater than any who preceded them.

Since the kings were of unequal might, and actually disdained counting each other, it is possible that later kings foreshortened some earlier reigns so that some would be foreshortened out of existence! Already according to the aforementioned commentators there are those who describe some ruling only seven or eight years. They claim that their deeds were not worthy of recording. You can thus see their foreshortening, aside from Artaxerxes, as we showed in Chapter Eighteen; and Ahasuerus, for his greatness, as described in Esther 10:27, "And all the acts of his power...."

Perhaps because of his valor the great king Alexander Macedon was also worthy, and desired to be called Magnus. The Romans after him are known by their terrible deeds, yet called themselves "Pompeus Magnus" and similarly.

When we return to the subject at hand, therefore, we see that according to Scripture, it is not impossible that Persia had other kings, besides the three or four we have mentioned. Indeed you can see that Abravanel, after a succession of comments on this question, writes (11:3), "Therefore I stated that our sages did not deny the existence of more than three Persian kings, but they did not count them. However, they said that aside from those from whom Israel derived good or evil, namely, Cyrus, Ahasuerus and

Darius, the rest of the kings did not do anything with respect to them. Others, like Cambyses¹⁵² son of Cyrus, were not firmly established on their throne after their fathers, since Ahasuerus rose up and overthrew the kingdom...."

I can also help by quoting the words of Rabbi Aliezar (Chapters of Rabbi Eliezar, Chapter Forty-eight), "Come and see the wealth of Ahasuerus over all the Median and Persian kings, and on whom the verse says [Dan. 11:27], 'And the fourth shall be far richer than them all.'" Eliezar thought he was Ahasuerus, although everyone agrees that there were kings in Persia besides him afterwards, especially the one who fell before Alexander.

But I was surprised at Abravanel, who appears as an authority, describing more Persian kings. He does not care about being exact with respect to the two kings described as "between Persia's teeth," and changes the meaning of the verse "And there were three ribs" as representing three kingdoms, Babylonia, Persia and the Median Empire which were subjugated to the Persians (See 8:3). You recognize that this was taken from our rabbis at the beginning of "Perek Juchasim" [Kiddushin 72a7], where they said, "'Three ribs in its mouth' represents a snail, a bear and the way they grow, for sometimes one swallows them and sometimes one throws them up."

But Abravanel apparently stole these details from the Christian translator,¹⁵³ in his commentary on Daniel (see there). The truth of the matter on the "three ribs" is what he said in his second prophesy, that three kings are standing over Persia, and two of them are "between its teeth," namely, the lords of the earth and the most powerful leaders, apart

¹⁵² Cambyses II, Achaemenian king of Persia (reigned 529-522 B.C.E.), who conquered Egypt in 525. Eldest son of Cyrus II.

¹⁵³ Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus, ca. 347-419 C.E.), Latin Father, monastic leader and Bible translator.

from those who are humble.

At any rate, returning to the matter raised in this chapter, from the plain meaning of the text we can see how Rabbi Jose's proposal of thirty-four years is too short to encompass all the Persian kings. They ought to be counted from the period of the Temple's construction until their fall at the hands of Alexander.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

A. Results of Publication: The Controversy

The preceding chapters of the Me'or 'Enayim, and especially Chapter Thirty-five, became upon publication the center of a controversy which continued for decades after Azariah dei Rossi's death. Although his studies of traditional chronology would seem at first glance to be merely of esoteric intellectual importance, dei Rossi's personal position in the Jewish community and his general context combined to make the book something of a pawn to be used by rival factions within the Jewish organizational hierarchy. More than that, the book became a symbol for the Christian community as well, in their own struggles between the ideologies of rationalism and Catholic reaction. Although material on dei Rossi's participation in the controversy is scarce,¹ we can perhaps draw some parallels between reactions and attitudes in the various Jewish communities and their non-Jewish counterparts.

Dei Rossi knew that his book would be controversial. Baron feels that precisely because he anticipated strong opposition, he devoted so much space to his chronological studies.² Even before publication of the

¹David Kaufmann, "Luttes d'Azaria de Rossi," Revue des Etudes Juives, XXXIII (1895): 77-81 (hereafter cited as RED).

²Galo W. Baron, "Azariah dei Rossi's Historical Method," in History and Jewish Historians, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), p. 234.

first edition of Me'or 'Enayim, dei Rossi was circulating manuscripts of his studies on chronology, especially Chapter Thirty-five in the section Yeme 'Olam, to his friends and confidants Judah Moscato and Moses Provençal of Mantua.³ Dei Rossi, Moscato and Provençal apparently entered into a fairly extensive correspondence in which they discussed the probably consequences of the book's publication.⁴ Moscato and Provençal, like dei Rossi, were both wealthy and respected members of the Mantuan Jewish community, with many contacts in the upper classes of the Christian world. The Provençal family, in particular, enjoyed a long-standing and warm relationship with dei Rossi, which involved him in their efforts to establish a Jewish College in Mantua (1564) for the teaching of both humanistic and Jewish subjects.⁵ The college never got off the ground,⁶ but its very proposal is testimony to the position of dei Rossi and the Provençal family, for the idea was inconceivable without considerable high-level Jewish and non-Jewish backing.

We can assume, therefore, that when Moses Provençal and Judah Moscato decided to undertake dei Rossi's public defense, even before the book's publication, they represented not just themselves, but a large segment of the intellectual upper class as well.⁷

³Zunz, Op. Cit., p. 29, notes that Moses Provençal taught dei Rossi his Italian.

⁴David Kaufmann, Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁵Jacob R. Marcus, The Jew in the Medieval World (New York, N.Y.: Atheneum, 1969), p. 361.

⁶According to Marcus. Shulvass (pp. 255-256) says without corroboration that the university did open its doors in 1564, and existed for at least ten years, producing an unknown number of graduates. Shulvass adds that a similar university was conceived in Sicily.

⁷Salo W. Baron, "Azariah dei Rossi: A Biographical Sketch," in History and Jewish Historians, Op. Cit., p. 171.

Satisfied with the reaction in Mantua, dei Rossi probably distributed advance copies of the book to other friends as well, although the only evidence for this is a letter which he wrote (in Italian) to the Abbot of Monte Cassino, enclosing a copy of Me'or 'Enayim. Monte Cassino was a great center of intellectual activity in southern Italy during the late Renaissance, so it is not surprising that dei Rossi would be interested in their reaction. More important is that he sent the book to a leader of the Catholic community, and the latter was apparently able to read the work!⁸

In Venice, however, the rabbis unanimously opposed the proposed work, without even seeing the text.⁹ The chief rabbi of Venice, Rabbi Samuel Judah ben Meir Katzenellenbogen, upon learning the intended content of Chapter Thirty-five, denounced the book, and started a movement to "make Azariah's life sad."¹⁰ After consolidating the position of Venetian rabbis behind him, Katzenellenbogen announced that only those who had local rabbinic authorization would be given permission to read the book. Since his decree applied only to Venice, however, Katzenellenbogen went further, seeking backing from other communities to pass similar measures.

Dei Rossi himself was not condemned, only his book. His personal life as a traditional Jew was beyond the reproach of the Venetian rabbis, who were also undoubtedly aware of his position of prestige throughout Italy. The only threat of actual excommunication came from outside Italy, from Joseph Caro of Safed, but Caro died in 1575, one day prior to publication of the revised edition, and was unable to carry out his intention.

⁸Cecil Roth, The Jews in the Renaissance (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1959), p. 325.

⁹David Kaufmann, Ibid., pp. 77 ff.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 78.

Throughout the entire controversy, Mantua remained the strongest defender of dei Rossi, with the Venetian rabbis the most antagonistic. A clash was inevitable, and took the form of a broadside tract written in Venice by Rabbi Abraham Menahem Cohen Porto. According to Kaufmann, Porto was merely a front for Katzenellenbogen, writing his tract at the express invitation of the chief rabbi.¹¹ He also distributed the tract to the rabbis of Cremona, urging them to ban the book as well. The reaction in Mantua, again led by Provençal and Moscato, was to solidly confirm their renewed support for dei Rossi.

Finally, in the spring of 1574, Katzenellenbogen called a meeting of the leaders of a "reunited rabbinate," which resulted in a number of other communities in northern Italy agreeing to place the book under a ban.¹² In the meantime, Azariah's supporters apparently were successful in consolidating their own position, because Porto renounced his own tract, and apologized to dei Rossi by letter.¹³ This did not end the controversy; Porto had written his tract on behalf of the Venetian rabbinate, but wrote his letter of recantation in his own name only. By that time, of course, the damage had been done and the book banned both in and outside of Venice. Kaufmann quotes documents¹⁴ showing that in 1619 a descendant of dei Rossi still needed permission just to keep the book in his home library. As late as 1635, moreover, specific application had to be made, at least in Ferrara, for the privilege of reading the book. The book was praised, however, by

¹¹Ibid., p. 79.

¹²David Kaufmann, "La Defense de Lire le Me'or 'Enayim," RED XXXVII (1909): 280-281. Kaufmann's citation of the phrase, "reunited rabbinate" perhaps indicates that there had already been a tendency toward a split in the Jewish community, for which Me'or 'Enayim became a focal point.

¹³David Kaufmann, "Luttes d'Azaria de Rossi," Op. Cit., p. 80.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 80-81.

Amatus Lusitanus, Leon da Modena, Joseph Salomon del Medigo of Candia, Menasseh ben Israel, David Gans and Yom Tob Lippmann Heller of Prague, as well as by equally illustrious Christian scholars Johannes Buxtorf, Jean Morin and Joseph de Voisin.¹⁵

The ban on reading the Me'or 'Enayim, announced in Venice in the spring of 1574, took effect in the Jewish communities of Venice, Pesaro, Ancona, Cremona, Padua, Verona, Rome, Ferrara and Siena.¹⁶ A ban was also signed by some of the rabbis of Safed and published in Venice. According to Zunz, this action was lead by Joseph Alsheich.¹⁷ Although the public reasons given by the rabbinate of these communities for the prohibition against reading the Me'or 'Enayim were theological (one rabbi argued that if dei Rossi were correct in his revision of biblical chronology, then it would follow that all divorce decrees ever issued were wrongly dated and invalid), the line-up of communities on both sides of the controversy indicates that something much deeper was at stake.

On the one hand, all of the communities which banned the book were directly or indirectly related to either Venice or the Papal States. Other important Jewish communities, however, which did not subscribe to the ban, were all intellectual centers resisting the papacy or domination by Venice. In the latter category, we find the Jewish communities of Milan, Soncino, Turin, Genoa, Lucca, Pisa, Florence and, of course, Mantua, none of which prohibited reading or ownership of Me'or 'Enayim. Of those communities where the book was banned, Padua, Verona and Cremona

¹⁵Salo H. Baron, "A Biographical Sketch," Op. Cit. pp. 172-73.

¹⁶Moses A. Shulvass, The Jews in the World of the Renaissance (Chicago: Spertus College of Judaica Press, 1973), p. 256.

¹⁷Zunz, Op. Cit., p. 9.

(since 1499) were directly under Venetian control; Pesaro, Ancona, Roma and Siena were directly under papal control (although Siena somewhat less directly); Ferrara was coming increasingly under the sway of the papacy, and finally became part of it shortly after dei Rossi's death (1597). We can only conclude that this line-up is no accident, an assumption which is strengthened by the realization that the general lines of conflict outlined above were strongly reflected in the larger Christian political world as well. Even more striking, the prohibitions against reading the book began to lapse (early in the seventeenth century) at just about the same time that the realignment of Western Europe was becoming stabilized, following the Catholic reaction to the Reformation and the resolution of the wars of religion of the sixteenth century.

Ultimately, we hope to approach the question of why Azariah dei Rossi wrote the Me'or 'Enavim. Before we can speculate on his motivations or intended audience, however, we should review the background of the Jewish communities in northern Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries against their general societal context.

The humanistic spirit which pervaded Italy during these centuries--which emphasized a broad commitment to inquiry of classical philosophy and the developing "humanistic" studies--was itself based on fundamental changes within the political spectrum preceding the Renaissance by several centuries. "When the reformed and reforming papacy first defied the German emperors," Garrett Mattingly has written, "forces were set in motion which finally burst for Italy the feudal ties in which all the rest of Europe long remained entangled."¹⁸ After the popes withdrew to

¹⁸ Garrett Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 47-48.

Avignon, their revolt paradoxically produced what amounted to purely secular states, enjoying the only truly temporal power in Christendom. By 1400, the developing Italian states, depending on power for their survival, had achieved a roughly balanced equilibrium of rival states, each seeking to profit from the others.

The Jewish position early in this period was precarious. Assumed to have economic skills and a "cosmopolitan sense," the Jews apparently posed a threat to the developing Catholic trade relationships. After usury was forbidden them, however, the Catholic traders found that they needed the Jews to play an economic role; at the same time, the Catholics themselves were more sophisticated economically, and no longer feared the Jewish interference.¹⁹ From the late thirteenth century, therefore, small groups of Jews began to settle, by express invitation and permission, in various northern Italian communities. Usually, their sole permissible occupation was that of loan-banker, but the benefits derived from this occupation were four-fold: first, the Jew found refuge from persecutions in Germany, at the same time receiving compensation for his services; second, the needy receiving short-term loans were grateful for a necessary service; third, the papacy certainly received a fee for the indulgence; fourth, and probably most important, the city became enriched by selling licenses to practice at exorbitant fees.

The result was a situation almost unique in Jewish history, for most of the Jewish communities in northern Italy originated through the wealth and position of small groups of financiers who quickly became part of their local aristocracies. The labor was not difficult, moreover, "since money

¹⁹ Cecil Roth, Op. Cit., p. 5.

lending mostly consisted of waiting for interest to accumulate."²⁰ While never able to enter totally into gentile society, many Jews were left free to pursue cultural and literary interests, just as their gentile counterparts were doing.

The papal policy was also generally benign, if somewhat inconsistent, for the Jews became a source of steady and lucrative taxes, in the hope of ameliorating the conditions of less fortunate Jewish communities in other parts of Italy. This in turn led to the organization of regional community councils, a system favored by both Jews and papacy. The papacy, of course, favored regional organizations as a means of centralizing the collection of taxes. The Jews favored such a system for what they assumed would be increased leverage with the papacy in influencing Church policy with regard to the Jews. Shulvass notes that Jewish wealth reached its highest point during the sixteenth century, primarily as a result of the broadened international trade of the recently-settled Sephardic Jews and the accumulated profits of the loanbank business.²¹ By that time, Jews had been in the loanbank business in northern Italy for more than two centuries. An influx of immigrants from Palestine in the middle of the same century also began to achieve prominence and contribute some wealth to Jewish communities in northern and central Italy. This very influx, from the Near East and the Iberian Peninsula, undoubtedly was an important contributing factor in the rising Jewish self-interest in historiography. Shulvass adds,²²

The tendency among immigrant thinkers to use history as a means of probing social problems found a hospitable ground in the general interest that seized both Christians and Jews.

²⁰ Cecil Roth, *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²¹ Moses A. Shulvass, *Op. Cit.*, p. 157.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 296-97.

The social status of Jews involved in the humanistic Renaissance is of particular interest in a study of Azariah dei Rossi, for as in Spain their material support depended upon the patronization of the same wealthy bankers. We may therefore assume that dei Rossi was not one of the power elements in his community, but was certainly familiar and perhaps even comfortable with them. Although we have no direct evidence, if he fit the paradigm he would have depended for his support upon the upper echelons of the communities where his work was most familiar, namely, Mantua and Ferrara. He was not independent; yet whatever compromise dei Rossi might have been compelled to make to maintain his backing, the benefits of participating in the humanistic Renaissance were substantial. In the general aristocratic society, the developing interest in antiquity included not just Greek and Roman antiquity, but biblical antiquity as well. Hebrew was studied on a far smaller scale than Latin and Greek, of course, but the need for Jewish scholars and historians drew men in dei Rossi's position into the courts of the aristocracy. Significantly, Roth writes that the study of Hebrew by Christian humanists was particularly widespread at Mantua.²³ We would probably not be incorrect to conclude that dei Rossi had some, perhaps considerable, contact with both the Jewish and non-Jewish aristocracy. He was, however, probably not himself of the aristocracy.

B. The Political Background: Context and Perspective

An understanding of the political context must go beyond a discussion of the events which shaped the social and political milieu of dei Rossi's

²³ Cecil Roth, Op. Cit., p. 142.

own day to a consideration of the underlying developments in Italy and Europe, going back a century or more before the Me'or 'Enayim was published. The single greatest event of the sixteenth century, in terms of its social, economic, political and theological impact, was undoubtedly the Reformation, which surfaced in 1517.

The Reformation was essentially an urban movement. One may trace its origins to the economic revival coinciding with the rise of capitalism and trade, themselves made possible by newly discovered overseas territories. The increased concentrations of wealth in non-aristocratic hands, coupled with what amounted to the secularization of the papacy under Alexander VI, made the Reformation inevitable. As a response to political developments within the Catholic Church, the Reformation in Germany was similar to the Renaissance in Italy, and indeed involved the same approach and tools to scholarship. As the sovereign rights and power of the aristocracy were apparently diminished, long before Luther, Germany became ripe for the social and political revolution which Luther was to spark. As in all such revolutions, the Reformation was the product of educated classes, but mainly supported by the working class who welcomed the opportunity to witness and aid the dissolution of aristocratic power. Contemporary historians of the Reformation, it should be noted, considered that the Reformation may have been an organized Protestant plot to overthrow the monarchies of France and Spain "and deliver Europe to anarchy and the Turk.... Serious historians long repeated this...."²⁴

There is no evidence whether dei Rossi accepted this theory, but in Italy, too, old republical traditions were clashing with new monarchical

²⁴Garrett Mattingly, Op. Cit., p. 167.

forces during the sixteenth century.²⁵ Baron feels that Azariah dei Rossi probably would have favored a monarchical system of government, since he enjoyed relative stability under the absolute monarchs in Mantua and Ferrara.²⁶ Even if he had lived in Venice, a state ruled by a merchant class under a republican system, he probably would have favored a monarchy. In Venice, as we shall note later, the Jewish community was placed under increasingly strict measures in the sixteenth century, probably due primarily as a result of their economic competition. This would have driven them into the camp of the monarchists as well.

The Reformation had a profound effect on Italy. During the last half of the fifteenth century, Italy had generally enjoyed a peaceful prosperity under the Treaty of Lodi (1454). Under this treaty, an equilibrium was achieved, supported by Milan, Venice, the papacy, and small states throughout northern Italy. Had Italy remained unchallenged by the revolutionary developments in the rest of Europe, the Treaty of Lodi might have lasted far longer than it actually did. In 1496, however, France effected an alliance with Venice against Milan, in recognition of the increasing Venetian desire to develop land trade routes.²⁷ This shift in the Venetian economic strategy was itself a direct result of the fall of Constantinople (1453), which signalled the growing Ottoman threat to the once secure Middle East trade enjoyed by Venice. Beginning in 1498, therefore, the two most consistently mutually hostile states in Italy were Milan, which controlled the overland trade routes, and Venice.

²⁵ Baron, "Attitude to Life," in History and Jewish Historians, Op. Cit., p. 189.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 188-89.

²⁷ H. Hearder and D. P. Waley, eds. A Short History of Italy (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 89.

This competition was to color the entire relationships between their societies as well, including their Jewish communities.

By 1508, still nine years before the Reformation, Venice had become so strong that she found herself faced by an alliance of the Holy Roman Empire, France, Spain, the papacy, Milano, Ferrara and Mantua (Ferrara and Mantua were both closely allied with Milan). Alliances continued to shift after the entry of the European powers. In 1519, northern Italy found itself the battlefield on which the Habsburgs (under Charles V) and the Valois (under Frances I) waged wars, attracting mercenaries from among the local populations.

Finally, in 1517, the Spanish sack of Rome can be said to have ended the Renaissance, as Rome became caught between the forces of Counter-Reformation and the Spanish monarchy.²⁸ The latter introduced the papacy to the ideas of a locally effective inquisition, the establishment of an index of proscribed books, and the Jesuit Order, all of which were to have a profound effect on the tenor of life in the papal dominions. The period of Spanish domination, which continued until 1713, was strict and oppressive, forcing intellectuals within the community to flee northward. Significantly, only Venice remained reasonably independent and healthy during this period, aside from the states under Milan.²⁹ Venice, however, was sharply weakened after the Battle of Lepanto against the Ottoman Empire (1571). The Battle of Lepanto was fought by Venice, we note, in the same year in which Azariah dei Rossi began his literary activity, so harshly condemned by the Venetian Jewish community. During the Venetian wars with the Ottoman Empire (1571-74), most of the other Italian and

²⁸ The principle of monarchical absolutism was formally sealed in Holloona between Clement VII and Charles V (1530).

²⁹ Hearder and Maley, Op. Cit., pp. 98-99.

European states were unwilling to support Venice, envious of her earlier monopoly of trade with the Levant. Frustrated by shifting alliances to her northwest, losing ground in the trade wars to the east, it is little wonder that the entire community in Venice was increasingly hostile to Mantua, Milan and Ferrara.

For the Jewish community of Venice, jealousy of the relative stability in northwestern Italy may also have played a role in explaining their hostile reaction to dei Rossi's work. Ferrara, especially, had a relatively dense Jewish population, enjoying a very liberal regime under the House of Este.³⁰ During most of the period under discussion, the Este in Ferrara and the Gonzaga in Mantua were closely, sometimes by marriage. Giovanni Francesco Gonzaga III (d. 1519), for example, was married to Isabella d'Este. His father, Federico I Gonzaga (d. 1484), "upheld the rights of the house of Este against Pope Sixtus IV and the Venetians, whose claims were a menace to his own dominions of Ferrara and Mantua."³¹ The Gonzaga, in turn, were in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian against Venice.³²

Ferrara and Mantua, as noted above, were closely allied with Milan. This alliance was concluded by Ferrante Gonzaga (1507-1557), during a long military career in the Habsburg service in which he administered the duchy of Milan for the Emperor (1546-1554). Thus the line-up of reaction versus the forces attempting to withstand that reaction involved much more than merely the Jewish communities which favored or opposed publication of the Me'or 'Enayim. More important, the line of demarcation

³⁰Shulvass, Op. Cit., p. 20.

³¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1946 ed., s.v. "Gonzaga."

³²Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974 ed., s.v. "Gonzaga, Francesco II."

between the two was fully parallel from one to the other with respect to their attitudes toward reaction. In other words, in each Jewish community backing dei Rossi, whether passively or actively, we seem to find that the general society was under the influence of the Holy Roman Empire. The Jewish communities which banned the book following its publication, however, were in allied states opposing the Holy Roman Empire. The League of Cognac (1526), in which Venice joined Frances I of France, Pope Clement VII and the dukes of Sforza against Charles V, symbolized these relationships.

The League of Cognac was the first formal attempt to counter the Reformation. From the Church's point of view, reconciliation with the Protestants had become impossible during the papacy of Pope Clement VII (1523-24); for although he had been a generally wise and humane pope, he blundered in his attempts to play German and British Protestants against each other, and apparently influenced creation of a French-Ottoman alliance as well, to the detriment of papal power. The attempt made in Ratisbon (1541) to reconcile differences also failed, ostensibly because of fundamentally different approaches to the definition of the Eucharist. Even Paul III, who as a Renaissance pope had support Michaelangelo and Titian, had to take a hard line against the German Reformists. He seems to have feared that a reunited Germany would have been a threat to the temporal and civil power enjoyed by the papacy.

The Counter-Reformation reached its greatest severity during the papacy of Paul IV (1555-1559), between the second and third periods of the Council of Trent (1545-47; 1551-52; 1562-63). After the principles of Counter-Reformation had become fairly crystallized during the second

session, the papal attitude toward the Jews of practical necessity became less friendly. No effort, furthermore, was able to alter the basis for the new anti-Jewish policy of the Church. Within the Jewish communities, a direct result of the hostile Church was the revivification of community and regional councils. Congresses were projected in Bologna and Forlì, and actually met in both Ferrara and Padua.³³ Virtually the only area still open for discussion was republication of the Talmud, which had been ordered burned by Julius III (1553). Julius III had declared that the Talmud and kindred works are heretical, and decreed that the book be burned throughout Italy. Significantly, compliance with the order was especially drastic in Venice, where social relations between Christians and Jews were rapidly and intentionally being severed.³⁴ There is no evidence that the decree was followed in Mantua.

These burnings constituted the most important stimulus toward strengthening the Jewish communal organizations during this period. The endeavors of several congresses in Ferrara (1554) were focused on obtaining permission from the Church for the Jews to keep their books. Such efforts continued for decades.

Pope Paul IV did permit publication of the Talmud in 1554. One of the congresses in Ferrara resolved that the Jewish community should be responsible for its own censorship, rather than leaving the certain censorship responsibilities in the hands of the Church. As noted earlier,³⁵ dei Rossi may have served as a pre-censor of Jewish books, and probably

³³Moses A. Schulvass, Op. Cit., p. 89.

³⁴Cecil Roth, Op. Cit., pp. 187-88.

³⁵See page 7, supra.

achieved his scholarship and later status within the community as a result of this position. The position of precensor would also have offered dei Rossi the enviable opportunity to become familiar with a wide range of contemporary scholarship then being published in northern Italy. According to Baron, dei Rossi was instrumental in publishing Karo's Shulhan Aruk, for example.³⁶ He was undoubtedly familiar, moreover, with the Zohar after its publication in both Mantua and Cremona (1558). The latter is not directly alluded to in the Me'or 'Enayim, but there is evidence that dei Rossi was influenced by the mystical tendencies of his day, in spite of his more prominent rationalism.

C. The Influence of Mysticism

Mystical tendencies, always inherent in any body politic, always seem to surface into public consciousness during periods of political instability. During the sixteenth century, in particular, the Jewish situation was particularly unstable, for several reasons. Beyond the very unsettled conditions in Italy during this period, the Jewish expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula was attached with mystical and Messianic implications. Kabbalistic theory, recently introduced into northern Italy, held that the Messiah's arrival must be preceded by an era of unnatural disaster for the Jewish people. The expulsion, catastrophic beyond the level of earlier persecutions, was seen as the final precursor to the Messianic redemption. The rise of the Ottoman Empire,

³⁶Salomon W. Baron, Op. Cit., p. 167. One wonders if more than coincidence played a role in Karo's later attempt to excommunicate dei Rossi, since the Shulhan Aruk was published in Venice, where the Me'or 'Enayim was so poorly received.

moreover, was rapidly approaching its greatest extent, forshadowing the imminent collapse of Catholic hegemony; this was another indication that the Messianic Age was drawing near. From 1520 to 1566 the Ottoman Empire included Hungary (past Budapest), Transylvania, most of what is today Jugoslavia, and Austria up to a point just before Vienna. This was its greatest Western expansion, although it continued to expand along the eastern and northern borders of the Black Sea until 1583. With the Turks' seige of Vienna came the hope that a power greater than Christianity--and incidentally more lenient to Jews--might finally conquer her. Of all the European heads of state, only the Mameluk and Ottoman sultans received the Jews with any degree of humanity: Sultan Bajazet II welcomed Jews to Constantinople, Izmir and Salonika for their trade, crafts, knowledge of medicine and cosmopolitan outlook.

The Reformation, of course, was seen as a further harbinger of the break-up of Catholicism. The Jews witnessing this turbulence invested each development with complex symbolism to prove just how imminent the Day of Judgment really was. When David Reubeni proclaimed from a white horse in Rome that he represented a Jewish king with 300,000 subjects in Arabia (1524), therefore, it is not surprising that multitudes were ready to listen and follow.

Dei Rossi himself writes,³⁷ "By our arguments a Messianic law can actually be foreseen, for in the opinion of many respected men the Messianic Age will soon be coming." Indeed Baron writes,³⁸

At the time of the composition of the Me'or 'Enayim there was in many circles of Italian Jewry a very

³⁷Cassel ed., p. 276.

³⁸Salo W. Baron, Op. Cit., p. 186.

strong belief in the immediate imminence of the end of days. It was generally expected to occur in the year 5335 (1575).

Baron also cites dei Rossi's acceptance of the Kabbalah as "containing the real truth," and his esteeming kabbalistic theory--believing it to be Tannaitic--above even Maimonides. Although kabbalistic studies were strongest in Safed and Poland, a continuous and strengthening bond existed between the Jewish communities of Safed and northern Italy, aided by streams of immigration in both directions. Inevitably, dei Rossi's conception of the universe is similar to the concept of spheres first developed by Isaac Luria of Safed (1534-1572).³⁹ Dei Rossi is apparently not particularly concerned with the practical side of Lurianic kabbalah, but the general premises had certainly become important elements in the theological and mystical concepts of the entire people. It is for this reason, incidentally, that Baron labels dei Rossi's historiography as Medieval rather than "modern," since it was far less scientific than sixteenth century Christian historiography.⁴⁰ Comparing dei Rossi with his Jewish predecessors and contemporaries, however, we wonder not that his writings reflect the influence of Lurianic kabbalah, but that he was able to resist the reaction and anti-secularism of his day.

D. Summary and Conclusions

Dei Rossi lived in two worlds. On the one hand his knowledge of All that was intellectually current presented him with vast new horizons

³⁹ Ben-Jacob ed. (Vilna, 1865), XI, 130-146.

⁴⁰ Baron, Ibid., p. 196.

for his own speculations and researches. Yet on the other, he lived as a traditional Torah Jew and accepted every word of Torah literally. He held to the rigid historical assumption that the antiquity of a source was clear evidence of its superior authority, although his historiography demonstrated a substantive advance from what had frequently been merely the writing of chronicles. From a literary and scholarly point of view, his contributions to the study of Jewish history cannot be underestimated.

Politically, however, dei Rossi was a failure. It can be said that he published his Me'or 'Enayim both too early and too late: too early, because the general Jewish world would not be prepared to accept a rationalist study of Jewish history until after its emergence into the modern world following the Napoleonic era; and too late, because by 1575 the Renaissance had passed and the humanistic spirit had retreated from the onslaught of reaction and political instability. Dei Rossi's work was doomed to obscurity by the Counter-Reformation, which caused both Jewish and Catholic leaders to withdraw back into their halakhah and the Tridentine Council dogma.

Alvin Gouldner has written, "People in the aristocracy understand well the practical value of religion in maintaining social order."⁴¹ We have no evidence that dei Rossi wrote the Me'or 'Enayim for any political purpose, although it certainly was used as such by the Venetian rabbinate. In a society as fraught with turbulence as Venice in the 1570's, the rabbinate latched onto any means available in their struggle for the maintenance of their own place in the social order, and for the place of the Jews in the larger social and political world of northern Italy as well. In the process, the Me'or 'Enayim became a pawn--a useful symbol around which to rally.

⁴¹ Alvin W. Gouldner, The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (New York: Equinox Books: 1970), p. 132.

APPENDIX

TABLE OF CONTENTS, ME'OR 'ENAYIM

- I. "Kol Elohim" ("The Voice of God"), on the causes of the Ferrara earthquake of 1571, and the nature of earthquakes according to rabbinic literature.
- II. "Hadrat Zekenim" ("Glory of the Elders"), a translation of the Letter of Aristaeus into Hebrew from Garbitius' Latin translation.
- III. "Imre Binah," consisting of sixty chapters divided into four major sections. The descriptions of each chapter's contents are dei Rossi's:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Title</u>
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I

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| 1 | How studies involving multifarious aspects differ from those involving a single aspect; how it was decided to concentrate on the ever-changing twigs of learning. |
| 2 | Of necessity, we briefly introduce the words of non-Jewish authors. |
| 3 | Jedidiah the Alexandrian <u>Philo</u> is also called upon to speak briefly on these matters, and their benefit for us. In this connection we will mention Jewish sects during the Second Temple period. |
| 4 | Jedidiah's good points are found suitable for our inquiry. |
| 5 | Four problems not in our Torah possibly related to Jedidiah. |
| 6 | Possible excuses for Jedidiah regarding everything which has been said to accuse him, and a summary of what we have learned about him. |
| 7 | Traditions relating to the Septuagint regarding several scholars outside the Jewish tradition (except for Aristaeus, since we have already translated his book). In what do they differ and in what do they agree? |
| 8 | The origins of several differences between the Septuagint and later translations, and the correct version of our holy writings. |
| 9 | We still have the obligation to explain this difficulty which we have raised. |
| 10 | Questions our rabbis asked about Alexander, preserved in Tractate <u>Tamid</u> ; what Plutarch wrote about them. |
| 11 | In Tractate <u>Tamid</u> <u>we learn that</u> in matters of science and logic each generation has its own understanding. Since their understanding does not come from Sinai, we may argue with it. |

12 There appears to be a controversy about the sages' willingness to discuss who cut off the Alexandrian Jews' funds. Abravanel gives the answer.

13 How can it be possible that the riches mentioned in rabbinic literature in Jerusalem and Alexandria were lost and rediscovered? Can we say that the ten lost tribes returned in the days of Jesus?

II

14 Many recent commentators have found controversies among the biblical commentators.

15 The purpose and intent of Midrashic literature is found not in its plain meaning but in its hidden meaning.

16 The story of the mosquito who according to legend entered Titus' brain.

17 On the sages' writings; the earliest generations of sages bore children of eight years with respect to the "rebellious son."

18 On writings about Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes.

19 Some notes on the book Seder 'Olam and how the work was weakened by later additions.

20 The resolution of the problem of the number of high priests in the Second Temple. Tarfon and Jose's refutations regarding the number in the First Temple.

21 Differing attitudes among Jews and Christians toward the bimah at Mount Gerizim. How many Jannai's were there?

22 Could there have been more than one Simon the Righteous? Different conceptions of him.

23 On Saadia, Maimonides, the author of Yesod 'Olam and the author of A Knop and a Flower.

24 Why is it that until now there has never been a controversy on the chronology after the Greek period?

25 Chronology has only extended back to the creation since the composition of the Talmud.

26 Problems with Rabbi Jose's two articles, and their solution.

27 Apology to our sages because my book has statements without any foundation in the Torah.

28 Three subjects are the basic foundations of knowledge of Oral Law.

III

Yeme 'Olam

- 29 An investigation into whether there is need to increase
or decrease the number of years we count since the creation.
- 30 Xenophanes the Greek on the years of Cyrus I and II, kings
of Persia.
- 31 The words of Metasthenes the Persian in his book on chronology.
- 32 Jedidiah the Alexandrian's Book of Time translated from Greek
into Latin and then into Hebrew.
- 33 Implications of Josephus on the number of Persian kings and the
twenty-three who ruled in the beginning of the Temple period.
- 34 Eusebius on the number of Persian kings and the high priests
who were in the beginning of the Temple period. Quintus Curtius
Rufus and Saint Jerome on the total number of Persian kings.
- 35 World chronology; years of Egyptian enslavement; the First and
Second Temples. Tradition holds that the First Temple stood
410 years, but it must have stood at least 418 years.
- 36 Differing rabbinic traditions on Second Temple chronology.
- 37 Problems raised by the rabbis relating to the chronology of
the high priesthood.
- 38 Problems raised by the rabbis relating to royal Persian
chronology.
- 39 Problems raised by the rabbis relating to the offspring of
Caleb.
- 40 Traditional responses to the problems raised in the above-
mentioned passages.
- 41 We have no belief or proof of any existing chronology for
the Second Temple period. Perhaps we can find an answer in
Daniel's number of "seventy weeks."
- 42 Conversations between the author and his friend on the matter
of raising doubts about our numbering of the years since creation.
- 43 We cannot count on any year (for example, 1575) being the one
when the Messiah might come, for all years are equal in the eyes
of the Lord.
- 44 On the article "Six Thousand Years of World Creation and One
Calamity."

- 45 On the idea that Onkelos is Aquila and how Aquila was only translated into Greek. This is the famous Aquila, known as a translator among the nations--and the years of Onkelos and Aquila were the same.
- 46 Different opinions among our commentators on the form of the priestly garments.
- 47 Aristeeas' exceptions on the form of the priestly garments.
- 48 Yedidiah the Alexandrian's exceptions on the form of the priestly garments.
- 49 On one who takes exception to Josephus about the form of the priestly garments.
- 50 Saint Thomas Aquinas' exceptions on the form of the priestly garments; drawings of the crown.
- 51 On Haggai the prophet: the last verse will garner more honor than the first.
- 52 How Helena, the Queen of Adiabene, and her sons converted to Judaism, according to Josephus Antiquities Book II, Chapter 2, and a summary of the chapter on the false prophets: a confession.
- 53 Josephus on the number of high priests from Aaron the Priest until the desolation of the Temple (may it be built speedily and in our own day).
- 54 On signs which are sometimes seen for good or evil.
- 55 How the Jews are always traditionally praying for the peace and welfare of the kingdom in which they live during their exile.
- 56 The Samaritan alphabet.
- 57 On the antiquity of Hebrew and its relation to Aramaic.
- 58 On the antiquity of the Hebrew alphabet.
- 59 On the antiquity of the Masoretic vowels and accents.
- 60 On poetry written in the Hebrew language.

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