

## Object Lessons #5

### Jews in the Holy Land

#### Timeline

622 Beginning of Islam

638 Muslim conquest of Jerusalem, Jews allowed back under certain restrictions

691 Ummayyad caliph Abd el Malik builds the Dome of the Rock and expands al Aksa

Circa 750 Anan ben David creates a breakaway sect

9<sup>th</sup> century Daniel al Kumisi comes to Jerusalem

882-942 Rabbi Saadia Gaon

Circa 900 Aleppo Codex written

921 Calendar controversy between Babylonia and the Land of Israel

1099 Crusader conquest of Jerusalem, Karaite community there is destroyed

1194 – 1270 Nachmanides

1210 Tosafists arrive in Akko, establish yeshiva

1260 Mamelukes control Jerusalem

1263 Nachmanides takes part in a religious disputation with Pablo Christiani

1267 Nachmanides arrives in Jerusalem

1268 Nachmanides arrives in Akko

1291 Mamelukes conquer and destroy Akko

Post 1948 Parts of Aleppo Codex brought to Jerusalem

1972 Nachmanides' seal discovered in Tel Kisan

#### How Old is the Masorah?

דָּאָמַר רַב אִיקָא בְּרַ אֲבִין אָמַר רַב חֲנַנְיָא אָמַר רַב: מָאִי דְכָתִיב "וַיִּקְרָאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים  
מִפָּרֶשׁ וְשׁוֹם שָׁקֶל וַיְבִינוּ בַמִּקְרָא". "וַיִּקְרָאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים" — זֶה מִקְרָא, "מִפָּרֶשׁ" — זֶה  
תַּרְגוּם, "וְשׁוֹם שָׁקֶל" — אֵלּוּ הַפְּסוּקִים, "וַיְבִינוּ בַמִּקְרָא" — זֶה פִּיטוּק טַעֲמִים. וְאָמַר לֵה: אֵלּוּ  
הַמְּסוּרוֹת. אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: מִקְרָא סוּפְרִים, וְעִיטוּר סוּפְרִים, וְקִרְיָן וְלֹא כְּתִיב, וְכְתִיב וְלֹא קִרְיָן —  
הִלָּכָה לַמֶּשֶׁה מִסִּינִי.

as Rav Ika bar Avin said that Rav Ḥananel said that Rav said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “And they read in the book, in the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8)? “They read in the book, in the Torah of God”; that is the Bible. “Distinctly”; that is the Aramaic translation. “And they gave the sense”; these are the verses. “And caused them to understand the reading”; this is punctuation of the text with cantillation notes,. And some say: These are the traditions. [Rabbi Yitzhak](#) said: The vocalization of the scribes, and the ornamentation of the scribes, and the verses with words that are read but not written, and those that are written but not read are all *halakha* transmitted to [Moses](#) from Sinai. (Nedarim 37b)

“Therefore, the first Sages were called: Those who count [*soferim*], because they would count all the letters in the Torah,” (Kiddushin 30a)

### **The Karaite Connection**

Anan and Saul his son – may the name of the wicked rot - lived in the days of Yehudai Gaon (Sura 760-764) This Anan was a descendant of the house of David and a scholar originally, but people discovered something wrong in him and for this reason he was not appointed Gaon and the fates decreed that he should not become Exilarch either. Because of the envy and chagrin in his heart he . . . enticed the Jews away from the traditions of the Sages . . . He composed books and raised disciples and of his own accord devised statutes that are no good. . . (Abraham ibn Daud, 1161)

Anan of blessed memory lived in Bagdad and belonged to the party of the Zaddikim. Because of his great wisdom. . .the whole house of Israel chose him to be president of the court and exilarch. . .Anan desired to restore the crown of the Law to its pristine glory and began to preach in public and to argue against the Oral Law, the Mishnah, to deny it and repudiate it completely. . .Then Anan rose and took with him his sons and disciples and they all went to Jerusalem the Holy City and settled there, There he built a synagogue . . .(Simhah Isaac Lutzki, a Karaite scholar, 1757)

### **The Journey of the Codex**

The copy on which I relied is the well-known Egyptian codex which contains the twenty-four books of the Scriptures and which had been in Jerusalem for several years—used as the standard text for the examination of scrolls. Everyone relied upon it because it had been examined by Ben Asher who closely studied it for many years and examined it again whenever it was being copied. This codex was the text on which I relied in the scroll of the Law that I wrote according to the rules. (Maimonides, Laws of Writing a Torah Scroll 8:4)

## Impact

זה המחזור מקרא שלם נכתב ונגמר בנקודות ובמוסרות ומוגה יפה במדינת מצרים  
ונשלם בחדש סיון שלשנת ארבעת אלפים ושבע מאות ושבעים שנה לבריאת עולם  
היא שנת אלף וארבע מאות וארבעים וארבעה לגלות המלך יהויכין  
והיא שנת אלף ושלוש מאות ותשע עשרה למלכות יונים שהיא למנין שטרות ולפסיקת הנבואה  
והיא שנת תשע מאות וארבעים לחרבן בית שני  
והיא שנת שלוש מאות ותשעים ותשע למלכות קרן זעירה

## Scarcity of Books

I have collected a large library for thy sake so that thou needest never borrow a book of any one. As thou thyself seest, most students run hither and thither searching for books without being able to find them. . . . Look over thy Hebrew books every month, thy Arabic ones every two months, thy bound books every three months. Keep thy library in order, so that thou wilt not need to search for a book. Prepare a list of the books on each shelf, and place each book on its proper shelf. Take care also of the loose, separate leaves in thy books, because they contain exceedingly important things which I myself have collected and written down. Lose no writing and no letter which I leave thee. . . . Cover thy book-shelves with beautiful curtains, protect them from water from the roof, from mice, and from all harm, because they are thy best treasure. (Judah ibn Tibbon 1120-1190)

## Aleppo/Aram Zova/Chaleb

וַיִּהְיֶה דָּוִד אֶת־הַדָּדָעֶזֶר בֶּן־רְחוֹב מֶלֶךְ צוֹבָה בִּלְכֻתוֹ לְהָשִׁיב יָדוֹ (בְּנֵה־רֶפְתָּ):

David defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, who was then on his way to restore his monument at the Euphrates River. (Samuel I 8:3)

בְּהַצֻּלְתוֹ | אֶת־אֲרָם נְהָרַיִם וְאֶת־אֲרָם צוֹבָה וַיָּשֶׁב יוֹאָב וַיִּגְיֵא־מִלַּח שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אֲלָף:

when he fought with Aram-Naharaim and Aram-Zobah, and Joab returned and defeated Edom—[an army] of twelve thousand men—in the Valley of Salt. (Tehillim 60:2)

The lands which [King] David conquered outside of the Land of Canaan, e.g., Aram Naharaim, Aram Tzovah, Achlab, and the like, even though he was a King of Israel and he was acting with the consent of the High Court, is not considered as the Land of Israel with regard to all matters, nor is it like the Diaspora, i.e., Babylonia and Egypt with regard to all matters. Instead, it was removed from the category of the Diaspora, but did

not enter the category of Eretz Yisrael (Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Terumot 1:3)

## Object #2: What Does it Say?

משה

ב"ר נחמן

נ"נ גירונדי

חזק

ב"ר = בן רבי

נ"נ = נח נפש

אָמַר רַב כְּהָנָא, אִישְׁתַּעֵי לִי רַב חָמָא בַר בְּרַתִּיה דְּחָסָא: רַבָּה בַר נַחְמָנִי אָגַב שְׁמַדָּא נַח נַפְשִׁיהּ.

Rav Kahana said: Rav Ḥama, son of the daughter of Ḥasa, told me that Rabba bar Nahmani died due to the fear of a decree of religious persecution. (Bava Metzia 86a)

הָהוּא יוֹמָא דְּנַח נַפְשִׁיהּ דְּרַבִּי, גָּזְרוּ רַבְּנֵי תַעֲנִיתָא, וּבָעוּ רַחֲמִי, וְאָמְרִי: כֹּל מֶאֵן דְּאָמַר "נַח נַפְשִׁיהּ דְּרַבִּי" — יִדְקַר בְּחָרְבַּי.

on the day that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died, the Sages decreed a fast, and begged for divine mercy so that he would not die. And they said: Anyone who says that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi has died will be stabbed with a sword. (Ketubot 104a)

נַחוּת נַפְשָׁא וּמְנוּחָה בַּמָּקוֹם קְדוּשָׁה תְּהֵא לְרוּחַ רַבִּי אַבְרָהָם בַּר יִצְחָק

## Seals for Purity and Kashrut

one who sends a barrel of wine in the hands of a Samaritan, or a barrel of fish brine or a barrel of fish stew in the hands of a gentile, if he recognizes his seal and his manner of closing the barrel, it is permitted; if he does not recognize them, it is prohibited. (Avodah Zarah 31b)

## Images on Seals

וַיִּתֵּן עוֹד כִּי הָיָה לַיהוּדָה חוֹתָם כְּצוּרֵת אֶרֶץ אוֹ צוּרָה אַחֶרֶת יְדוּעָה כְּמוֹשָׁלִים

It is further possible that Judah possessed a seal impressed with the form of a lion or some other known figure, as rulers do (Ramban on Bereshit 38:18)

## Living in Christendom, Dreaming of the Land of Israel

The Land of Israel is like no other land, it is unable to contain sinners. . . it is on the basis of this matter that the rabbis have said in the Sifre: "and you perish quickly from off the good land, and you shall lay up these My words in your heart and in your soul." Although I banish you from the land, make yourselves distinctive by the commandments so that when you return they shall not be novelties to you. This can be compared to a master who was angry with his wife and sent her back to her father's house and told her, adorn yourself with precious things so that when you come back they will not be novelties to you. And so did the prophet Jeremiah say "set yourself signposts," these are the commandments by which Israel is made distinctive.. . **For the main fulfillment of the commandments is to be kept when dwelling in the land of God.** (Ramban commentary to VaYikra 18:25)

שנצטוינו לרשת הארץ אשר נתן האל יתעלה לאבותינו לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ולא נעזבה ביד זולתנו מן האומות או לשממה והוא אמרו להם והורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה כי לכם נתתי את הארץ לרשת אותה והתנחלתם את הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאבותיכם. . , ואמרו ישיבת ארץ ישראל (שקולה כנגד כל המצות: (שכחת העשין ד'

### **The Disputation of Barcelona (1263): the Hebrew Report of Moshe Ben Nachman**

Our Lord the King commanded me to dispute with Friar Paul in his palace before him and his advisors in Barcelona. I replied: "I will do as the king commands, if you permit me to speak freely. I hereby request the permission of the king and the permission of Friar Raymond of Penaforte and his associates who are here." Friar Raymond of Penaforte replied: "So long as you do not utter blasphemies." I said to them: "I wish to observe your law in this regard. But I also wish to speak freely in debate, as you speak freely. I have the wisdom to speak properly in debate as you indicate, but it must be according to my will." They all gave me permission to speak freely

Friar Paul inquired: Do you believe that he (the Messiah) has already come?

I answered: No, I believe and know rather that he has not come. . It is impossible for me to accept that he is the Messiah, for the prophet has said "he will have dominion from sea to sea. . 'and the Nazarene had no dominion. During his life he was persecuted by his enemies and was in hiding from them. . . Similarly, the prophet states that in the time of the Messiah. . ."they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hoods, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Form the days of the Nazarene until now, the entire world has been full of violence and robbery, indeed the Christians spill more blood than the rest of the nations. . .How difficult it would be for you, my lord king, and these your knights if they would "neither lead war any more!"

### **Arrival in the Land**

May Hashem bless you, my son Nachman, and may you see the goodness of Jerusalem. May you live to see your grandchildren. And may your table be like that of the Patriarch Abraham. I am writing you this letter from Jerusalem, the Holy City. With praise and thanksgiving to the Creator I managed to arrive there in peace on the ninth of Elul, [1267 (5067)], and remained there until the day after Yom Kippur. Then I went to Hebron for the Holiday [of Sukkot]. I went to the city of the graves of our forefathers to prostrate myself before them and to dig [purchase] a grave for me there.

זה כתבתי תחילה ועכשיו שזכיתי ובאתי אני לירושלם שבח לאל הטוב והמטיב ראיתי בעיני שאין  
מן קבורת רחל לבית לחם אפילו מיל

## **In Jerusalem**

What shall I tell you about the land? The sum of it is that the holier the place, the worse the destruction. Jerusalem is more desolate than the rest of the land, Judah more than the Galilee. Yet for all its destruction, it is wonderful. It has nearly two thousand inhabitants. . . there are no Israelites among them.. There are only two dyers who purchase dye from the government unto whom a minyan gathers for prayers in their house on the Sabbath. I encouraged them and we found an abandoned building with marble pillars and a lovely arch which we converted into a synagogue, for the city is wide open and anyone who wishes to take possession of an abandoned building can do so. People have contributed to the refurbishing of the building and we have already sent to the city of Shechem for Torah scrolls that had been sent there for safekeeping. . . Who ever is privileged to see [the Temple] in its destruction will be privileged to see it rebuilt and repaired when the Divine Presence returns to it. (Letter from the Ramban to his son, Elul 1267)

## **Lasting Advice**

Listen, my son, to the thought of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8)

Accustom yourself to always speak all of your words calmly, to every man and at every time. In doing so you will prevent your anger from flaring, which is a bad attribute in a man which may cause him to sin. . .

Therefore, I will now explain to you how to always behave humbly. Speak gently at all times, with your head bowed, your eyes looking down to the ground and your heart focusing on God. Don't look at the face of the person to whom you are speaking. Consider everyone as greater than yourself. If he is wise or wealthy, you should give him respect. If he is poor and you are wealthier or wiser than he, consider yourself to be more guilty than he, and that he is more worthy than you, since when he sins it is inadvertent, while you act knowingly!

In all your actions, words and thoughts, always regard yourself as standing before God, with His Shechinah (Divine Presence) above you, for His glory fills the whole world. Speak with fear and awe, as a servant in the presence of his master. . .

Read this letter at least once a week and not less. Fulfill it, and in so doing, walk with it forever in the ways of the Lord, may He be blessed, so that you will succeed in all your ways. This is how you will succeed and merit the World to Come which is reserved for the righteous. Every day that you shall read this letter, heaven shall answer whatever arises in your heart to request, forever. Amen, Sela

### **Akko and the Jews**

and on the 1st day of the week, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Sivan, I safely left the sea. I came to Akko and was saved from apostasy and arrived in the land of Israel. And I vowed that this day would be one of happiness and joy, feasting and giving gifts to the poor, for myself and my household forever. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the week, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of MarHeshvan, in the year 4726, we left Akko to go up to Jerusalem, in dangerous circumstances. And I entered the great and holy house and prayed there on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the week, the 6<sup>th</sup> of MarHeshvan. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of the week, the 9<sup>th</sup> of the month, I left Jerusalem to and traveled to Hebron to kiss the graves of my fathers in the cave [of Machpelah]. And that day I stood and prayed, thank God for everything. And these two days, the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> of MarHeshvan, I vowed that they would be holidays for me . . . and as I was privileged to pray in it [the Temple] in its destruction, so should I and all Israel see it rebuilt speedily, amen! (Maimonides 1165)

### **Jews in a Non-Jewish World**

This consideration of the importance of dwelling in Eretz Yisrael has taken me out of my native Land and has moved me from my place. "I have forsaken My house, I have cast off My heritage" (Jeremiah 12:7). I have become like the raven to my children, cruel to my daughters. Because of my desire to be moved, I have placed myself onto the lap of my mother. (Ramban Derasha leRosh HaShanah, Akko)

Ulla was an emigrant. He was dying there and started to cry. They said to him, why are you crying? We shall bring you to the Land of Israel. He said to them, how does this help me? I am losing my pearl in an impure land. One cannot compare one who expires in the bosom of his mother to one who expires in the bosom of a strange woman (Yerushalmi Kilayim 9:3)