

## English abstracts

### Chaim Rabin: Hebrew and Aramaic in the first century

In the first century C.E., Palestine was a country of many languages, as were most countries of the Middle East. Owing to its chequered history, and being a centre of transit trade, it was perhaps more so than in neighbouring countries. In the literature produced and read in the first century C.E., the Hebrew language appears in several distinct forms, which are representatives of different stages in the historical development of the language.

Late biblical Hebrew persisted in use for a period as long as that of its predecessor, from *ca.* 500 until the latter part of the first century B.C.E., when we find it used in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Late biblical Hebrew must have been widely understood and read in circles close to nascent Christianity, as well as by the early Christians themselves. As is well known, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were preserved by the Church alone, having been rejected by official pharisaic and rabbinic Judaism.

Our earliest datable written documents in mishnaic Hebrew are some letters of Bar Cochba written in the years 132-5 C.E. Probably a good deal earlier, but not datable with any confidence, is the *Copper Scroll* from Qumran. If mishnaic Hebrew was a spoken language in the first century C.E., we are entitled to assume that it must have been spoken, in some form or other, for some centuries previously, and can thus make it, and not Aramaic, the factor responsible for some of the non-biblical- Hebrew features of the late biblical Hebrew and the basic component of the mixed language. Needless to say, the

recognition that mishnaic Hebrew was a living language does not imply that there was no Aramaic spoken in Palestine in the Second Temple period. The oldest of the Jewish transitional dialects is biblical Aramaic, the language of the Aramaic passages in Ezra and Daniel (as well as one verse in Jeremiah and two words in Genesis 31,47).

Questions of spoken language are discussed in the article only in so far as they throw light on the origins and character of a written form of language. It is of course natural for anyone interested in the period to wish to know in which language the personages mentioned in the literature of this period spoke and taught, even without considering the importance the identification of that language may have for the understanding of their thought in general and of certain statements reported of them in particula. 'The language of Jesus' has proved to be a problem which has generated much discussion and can be considered as being unsolved. Historical sources rarely mention what language is spoken in a certain place or milieu. However, if they do so, the information given may be difficult to interpret. Moreover, a spoken language at a given time and place may often be something quite different from the norm with which we associate it.

Regarding the relation between Hebrew and Aramaic at the time we are discussing, we may assume that mishnaic Hebrew was a fully living spoken language in Judaea at the time of the Maccabean revolt, and that it ceased to be spoken sometime in the third century C.E. The first century C.E. is somewhere upon that line. Mishnaic Hebrew was still spoken, but was already both displaced to some extent by Aramaic as home language and Aramaicized to some extent.

It may be assumed that immediately after the beginning of the Maccabean revolt, Hebrew was in a very healthy state. Being an important symbol in the struggle against Greek influence, it may possibly have made good some previous losses. While we may assume that in Jerusalem and Judaea mishnaic Hebrew was still the ruling language, and Aramaic took the second place, the situation must have been reversed in areas such as the coastal plain and Galilee. There Aramaic, and possibly Greek, were the dominant languages spoken by people from all classes, while Hebrew mainly functioned as a literary language. Those who, like Jesus, took part in the discussions in the synagogues (Mark 1,21) and in the Temple of Jerusalem (Mark 11,17) and disputed on Halakah (Matthew 19,2) no doubt did so in mishnaic Hebrew. In other words, while in Jerusalem mishnaic Hebrew was a home language and probably already also a literary language, and Aramaic a *lingua franca*, in Galilee Aramaic was a home language and mishnaic Hebrew the upper language of a diglossia.

It emerges that, while the events described in the New Testament took place in a time when Hebrew was still strong and dominant, the descriptions of those events were finally formulated in circumstances where Aramaic had gained the ascendancy, and speaking Hebrew outside halakic discussions or midrashic lectures had become an anomaly. It is therefore quite likely that the authors and redactors of the Gospels unwittingly described, in the few references to language in their account, conditions of the post-70 period rather than those of the time of the events.

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**Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala: Three notes on Semitic lexicology: Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek**

The linguistic make-up of the Syro-Palestinian Church comprised two clearly differentiated sectors: the Greek-speaking coastal regions and Hellenised cities, on the one hand, and the inland regions, on the other, where a variety of dialects were spoken. This geographical division was only a partial factor, however. Although the tendency of individuals to group together in Greek and Aramaic-speaking areas was initially determined by social inertia strongly influenced by reasons of language, the subsequent Arabo-Islamic occupation brought with it a new linguistic factor – Arabic. Contrary to the opinion of some scholars, Aramaic was also spoken in the major cities and towns.

It is known that Palestine was a highly active centre of Greek culture at the time of the Arabo-Islamic occupation; it also known that for a brief period of time Greek continued to be the language of the new Islamic Arab state. However, the Greek language of the Islamic Arab state was used not by Greek officials, the latter having fled with Heraclius, but by the Syrians.

The presence of the 'language of the Syrians' (an expression frequently found in Greek texts from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards) appears to have been much greater than believed until very recently. The Aramaic speakers of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia not only kept alive the various Aramaic dialects used in everyday life, but they also knew Greek.

The constant contact between Greek and the various Aramaic dialects, therefore, contributed to the exchange of cultural elements both in the

Christian and the Jewish world. It is in this context that the present article proposes the following three etymologies: (1) An Aramaic-Arabic *hapax*: the Arabic *siq* is a form deriving from the Palestinian Christian-Aramaic *siq*, with a total consonantal shift from the Aramaic and a vocalic interference as a result of the transition from Greek to Aramaic. The sequence would be as follows: *siq* (Arabic) < *siq* (Aramaic) < σηκόζ, 'enclosure', 'monastery'. (2) An Aramaic loan-word: *šābūn* < *šapūnā*: in verse 1 of the sixth stanza of *zejel* no. 137 by the Cordoban writer Ibn Quzmán (12<sup>th</sup> century), we find a term which had previously been supposed to be Romance in origin: *šābūn*, 'soap', with the article, which in Hispano Arabic must have been realized as *šābūn*. The loan-word *šābūn* entered Arabic directly from Aramaic. The word has been documented in Hebrew, rabbinical Aramaic and Syriac. (3) A possible Semitic word that failed to prosper: the author is inclined to think that the word *endib/via*, 'endive', was formed from ἐντύβια

#### Josep M. Llobet i Portella: **The freeing of a Jewish slave (1450)**

Despite the numerous references to slaves that we have found in the notarial documents of 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Cervera, only one slave is identified as a Jew. This information is contained in two documents dating from 1450. The first is the signed acknowledgement of a debt, dated 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1450, according to which Gentou Camiç states that he owes Guillem Marc, of Valmoll, one hundred florins, the sum agreed for the freeing of a Jewish slave by the name of Abraham Abenalbac, property of the said Guillem Marc. Payment of the 100 florins was to be made in September of that year, subject to the following conditions: if the slave died before payment was made, Gentou Camiç would only pay the slave's owner the sum resulting from donations made by the *aljamas*, or Jewish communities. In the event of Gentou Camiç's death, his heirs would likewise pay only that sum collected by the deceased in the form of donations. We therefore deduce that Gentou Camiç had taken responsibility for the Jewish slave so that he or the slave himself might request financial assistance from those Jewish communities that thought fit, in order to raise the sum that had been fixed on the slave's freedom.

The same document includes an amendment dated 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1450, to the effect that Guillem Marc had cancelled the debt as a result of a new document. In fact, on that very day a text had been drawn up granting Abraham Abenalbac his freedom in exchange for seventy florins. Abraham Abenalbac came from the North African town of Fez, which had a sizeable and ancient

Jewish community, and had been bought from Dionís Aimeric, a resident of Cervera. We also know that it was Abenalbac who had obtained the seventy florins from the Jewish communities of Catalonia and Aragon. In this case, the evident solidarity among the Jews of the kingdom of Catalonia-Aragon enabled one of their brethren, notwithstanding his North-African origins, to gather together the considerable sum of seventy florins necessary to buy his freedom. The article contains a transcript of the two Latin documents in question.

**Josep-Xavier Muntané i Santiveri: The practice of hiring out animals among the Jews of Tàrrega at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century**

Allowing for obvious changes with regard to form, although perhaps less significant changes with regard to content, one of the usual items of expenditure in medieval towns and villages which has survived to our own day was the hiring of beasts of burden that either the local officials or private individuals appointed by them used in order to travel on business outside the municipal boundaries. In the medieval town of Tàrrega, regular comings and goings between the town itself and various parts of Catalonia on the authority of the municipal council was common practice. Among the delivery notes from the period that have survived to this day, under the heading “lloguer de besties” (animal hire) several entries contain specific details of the sums of money paid by the council to the owners of animals thus used. In some documents dating from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, members of the Jewish community are listed alongside Christians suppliers of animals.

In the country, on those occasions when more than one animal was needed for work in the fields, it was customary for the poorer peasant farmers to lend each other their animals. Ownership of several animals was restricted to the financially better off. So, who were the Tàrrega Jews who, in the years immediately before their expulsion, were able to earn enough money to be in a position to hire out their animals to the local council as a means of transport? One of the columns in the table contained in the Appendix lists the names of Jewish animal owners from whom the town council hired animals. Although it is almost impossible on the basis of the data available today to restore the missing name and identify with absolute certainty the six individuals in question, the author attempts to provide the maximum biographical detail concerning each of the animal owners.

The sums of money paid varied from year to year and even, occasionally, within a given year, the minimum amount being one solidus and three denarii

per day and the maximum being two solidi per day, as shown in the table corresponding to the years 1480-1489. A comparison of these figures with the amounts paid to Christians in Tàrrega for the same service reveals that there was no appreciable difference between payments to Christian and Jewish for the hire of animals, as demonstrated by the above-mentioned documents. With one or two exceptions, there was no difference in the sum paid, irrespective of the type of animal hired, whether mule, ass or nag.

Most of the documents also give the name of the person to whom the town council had entrusted the out-of-town business. On two occasions, it is stated that the emissary is a Tàrrega Jew. One of these official errands on behalf of the town council was in connection with an affair involving a local Jew: at the beginning of November, 1484, one Bellsom was assaulted and robbed as he was going along the road; soon afterwards, it came to the attention of the Tàrrega town council that the thief responsible was being held prisoner in Sant Cugat. Since the Tàrrega authorities wished to try the thief in the municipality, it took steps to ensure that the prisoner be transferred «swiftly and without delay» to Tàrrega.

**Eduard Feliu: The accounts book of Jucef Zabara, tax collector of the *Call* (Jewish community) of Gerona (1443)**

Although the years from 1420 to 1445 saw a wave of relative prosperity and calm, the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was also a period of major decline for the Jewish community of Gerona. The slight general increase in prosperity must have brought about a degree of revival in the Jewish community, because in 1445 the perimeters of the Jewish quarter had to be extended, as “the said Jewish quarter is plainly no longer big enough to accommodate the Jewish community.” In 1449, there were around two-hundred Jews living in the *Call*.

The ordinances issued by the members of Gerons’s city council in the year 1445 reveal what everyday life must have been like in the years immediately preceding that time. At the request of the Church, the city council stated in the ordinances of 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1445, that excessive familiarity and contact had come about between Christians and Jews, a state of affairs that must be prevented, since many Jewish practices were considered to pose a threat to the souls of Christians. The city council issued various measures and prohibitions with a view to separating Jews and Christians in their daily lives. Needless to say, the ban prohibited things which, until that time, had been perfectly normal, particularly with regard to the contact between Jews and Christians, as can be seen from some of the entries in Jucef Zabara’s accounts book.

Various regests of documents relating to this Gerona family have been published, including two dating from 1438 and 1440, which make direct and explicit reference to Jucef Zabara, a tax collector and treasurer of the Jewish community of Gerona, who converted to Christianity on 22nd January, 1453, receiving the baptismal name of Joan-Narcis Sarriera. Despite the Romance form it takes in some transcriptions (Sa-Barra, Çabarra, etc.), Zabara is Semitic in origin. It is most likely related to the Arabic, even more probable when we take into account that the name Zabara has existed in the Arab world from ancient times, where it has been associated with major cultural, political and religious figures, particularly in the Yemen (the reader will recall that there were Jews in the Yemen as early as the early Middle Ages).

The article includes the transcription, translation and facsimile edition of the *Llibre de comptes de Jucef Zabara* (AHG, Notarial Gi 2,212), which recently came to light among a number of notarial protocols dating from 1445.

Appendix 1, written by Joan Ferrer i Costa, includes a number of philological observations as well as various morphological and semantic considerations regarding Catalan words used in the document.

Appendix II contains palaeographical notes on the origin of the Hebrew script used by Jucef ben Zabara, as well as on certain specific features.

#### Margalida Bernat i Roca: **The Jewish quarter of the City of Majorca around 1350: Some social and economic aspects**

This is the continuation of an article published on the same topic in *Tamid* 4 (2002-2004), pp. 111-136. The author addresses a number of social and economic aspects of the *aljama* of Majorca, observing that, within their closed and relatively small groups, Jewish communities reflected many of the general traits of the Christian society around them. In the case of the City of Majorca, some distinctive features are observed, despite a very similar structure in which the differences are to a great extent attributable to outside pressure rather than to deliberate choice from within.

*Professional activities.* Certain sectors, such as the textiles and tanning industries, were of major importance, and Jews were highly active as traders. The areas where Jews were allowed to live were determined by royal decree. In the case of the City of Majorca, the decision was made by Jaume I on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1300. The first locations designated by Jaume I concentrated on three areas of the city: the *Call Menor*, around the street that is now known as Sant Bartomeu, an area in the vicinity of the port, near the shipyards, and another

which came to be known as the *Call Major*. As for the workshops, the regulations were less restrictive: workshops and shops owned by Jews in the City of Majorca were not required to be adjoining their homes and could be located outside the Jewish quarter.

In 1350 there were 735 heads of household in the *Call Major*. The occupation of a large number of them, some 59.86%, is not known. This does not mean that they had no occupation, but simply that there is no record of those individuals' profession in the source consulted. The remaining 40.14%, however, are recorded as having an interesting range of occupations. They were involved in 55 different professions which may be grouped into twelve distinct areas of activity, as reflected in Table 1. There is no record of anybody being engaged in fishing or farming.

A third of the active population was in one way or another involved in textiles manufacturing. However, within this activity, there is no indication of the individuals involved in handling the raw materials; curiously enough, the most widely represented trade is not weaving (not included) or wool treating (similarly, not mentioned), but silk spinning, with 13 representatives.

In the field of clothes manufacturing, the most significant occupation is that of tailor, with 57 individuals, representing 9.39% of the total textiles sector, which was concentrated in the *Call Major*. The source mentions the significant number of 7 dyers.

With 84 documented individuals, trade and transport constitute the second most important activity in terms of the number of people recorded, showing that the Jewish community of Majorca was well integrated in the trading network of the period, both at the local level and over greater distances.

The most popular trade related to leather and hides was that of shoemaker, with the considerable number of 21 individuals engaged in this activity. There is no record of any tanners or bleachers - the workers whose job it was to prepare the raw materials. The tanneries in those days were located in the district still known as *Sa Calatrava*, just to the south-west of the *Call Major*.

Seventeen individuals are described as being engaged in artistic or cultural activities of some kind. Most were schoolteachers or bookbinders, seven belonging to each of these two professions.

As for administrative posts, the Jewish community had four secretaries, or *neemanim*, who formed the governing council, as well as a treasurer and a procurator.

Those who were engaged in occupations relating to wood and metalwork accounted for 1.49% of the working population. The trade with the highest number of individuals in this sector was that of silversmith, with six representatives.

The personal services sector included seven individuals: four doctors, two hairdressers and a 'folla fembra', i. e. a prostitute.

Regarding the doctors, they are known to have played an important part in the intellectual life of the Call in the City of Majorca; some served as physicians in the royal household.

There were also two butchers recorded in the documents. There is no evidence of any baker catering exclusively for the Jewish community. Several individuals were involved in the manufacture of soap.

The role of women in medieval Jewish society was very limited. They were regarded as part of a family's property, but some women are recorded as having been involved in professional activities, as well as in the management of assets.

In principle, Jews paid taxes in proportion to their wealth; taxes were levied on their properties. In the case of the poll tax known as *monedatge*, however, exactly the same sum was paid by all, irrespective of their personal assets.

#### Eduard Feliu: **Concerning the letter sent by Hasday Cresques to the Jewish community in Avignon in respect of the 1391 massacres**

Jewish chronicles of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries contain curiously little information about the massacres which so ravaged the Jewish communities of the various Hispanic kingdoms in 1391. In some cases, we find mere allusions, while in others the briefest of accounts marred by anachronisms and confusion. None of them has a historical value comparable to that of the letter written by Hasday Cresques, reported by Gedalyahu ibn Yahya. Indeed, it is the latter document that modern historians have drawn on in their discussion of the 1391 massacres, because the information it gives coincides with that of the accounts provided in the Christian chronicles of the events.

In fact, the archives, chronicles and journals of the cities which experienced the upheavals are full of the most detailed accounts of what happened, allowing the reader to gauge the huge social and political impact of the events. There is no doubt that the massacres rocked the foundations of the bourgeoisie, who realized that the intentions of the populace went far beyond the naïve aim of forcing Jews to convert to Christianity, because the riots involved attacks not only against Jews, but also against the property of rich citizens and the municipal authorities.

The spark which lit the blaze of persecutions of 1391 (which had its roots in the prevailing political and social conditions) was the fierce, anti-Jewish preaching of Archdeacon Ferrand Martínez of Écija. The rumours and news

reaching Catalonia and Aragon incited the common people of Valencia, Barcelona and Majorca, among other cities, to storm their respective Jewish quarters. These same chronicles explain how the people's rage against both patricians and government was redirected against the Jews. The people had many reasons to revolt, but they could hardly be attributed to the peace-loving Jewish communities in their midst.

During the reign of Alfons *el Benigne*, the wheat crop failure of 1333- 1334 had led to widespread famine and suffering. Some friars even went so far as to incite the people to revolt against the rich and powerful, and against the honourable citizens for their bad government. From 1348 to 1351, the Black Death spread throughout Catalonia, in some areas resulting in the death of three quarters of a population already weakened by poverty and hunger. As elsewhere in Europe, the people blamed the Jews for the epidemic. In May 1348, they stormed the Jewish quarter, destroying houses, stealing property and killing a number of the Jewish residents. In 1363 there was a new outbreak of the epidemic, which principally affected children, and in 1371 yet another whose chief victims were adults. Both were deadly. The onslaught against the Jews was just one aspect of popular grievances against the ruling classes. The underlying causes of the revolt were undeniably rooted in social discontent.

The article includes a transcription of the Hebrew text and a Catalan translation of the letter written by Hasday Cresques to the Jewish community in Avignon, together with the three introductions which precede it in each of the existing editions. It also reproduces several texts in Latin and Catalan containing direct information about the massacres in the Catalano-Aragonese cities mentioned in Cresques's letter - Barcelona, Gerona, Lleida, Majorca, Morvedre and Valencia - as well as reports of riots in other towns and cities to which Cresques does not refer, such as Castelló d'Empuries, Cervera, Menorca, Perpignan, Puigcerdà, Santa Coloma de Queralt, Tarragona, Tortosa and Valls.

*The report of the death of Hasday Cresques's son in Barcelona:* There are several documents dating from the period following the assault on the Jewish communities which appear to contradict the information concerning the death of Hasday Cresques's son reported in the text published by Carmoly in 1855. One such document is the letter, dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 1391, which was written by the queen and addressed to the bishop of Barcelona and other Church dignitaries; another, written in Saragossa by the king and dated 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1391, is addressed to Jaume Devesa; another letter from the queen, dated 18<sup>th</sup> August and also written in Saragossa, is addressed to P. de Queralt; in the letter, the queen writes, " In recognition of the many valuable services rendered unto us by Azday Cresques, a Jew of our household, we wish to procure him graces and

favours, particularly now that he is in such pressing need of them. Therefore, as and when the said Azday Cresques writes to you concerning the safe return of his son and his servants, who are detained in Barcelona, as you will read in detail in his letter, we earnestly request you, for the sake of our honour, to do all that is within all your power to protect the said son and his servants, as well as their property". It is difficult to understand how, given the protection of so many illustrious supporters, and having taken refuge in the houses of ecclesiastical dignitaries, the son of Hasday Cresques could have been killed in the castle, along with common run of Jews. The author points out that the role of Elyakim Carmoly (1802-1875)- a well-known falsifier of Hebrew literary works - in editing Hasday Cresques's letter, which was sincluded at the end of Solomon ibn Verga's *Sevet Yehuda*, published by M. Wiener in 1855, is highly detrimental to the authenticity of the text, particularly as far as the variants of the text edited by Gedalyahu ibn Yahya are concerned. The author is of the opinion that there is no justification in the historical documents for the reported death of the son of Hasday Cresques, which was presumably added by Carmoly to Gedalyahu ibn Yahya's text, together with other minor modifications.

#### **Yom Tov Assis: The activities of Hasday Cresques on behalf of the rebuilding of Jewish communities following the massacres of 1391**

The riots which broke out in Seville on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1391 as a result of the vitriolic anti-Jewish propaganda spread by Ferrand Martínez, the archdeacon of Ecija, ripped through the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, wreaking havoc among the Jewish communities there. Many Jews were killed and numerous others were forced to be baptised, yet others fled to places of safety, including North Africa.

In July, 1391 the rioters attacked the Jews of Valencia, leaving no community standing save that of Morvedre. The Jews of Majorca suffered a similar fate. The month of August brought the end of the Jewish community of Barcelona, one which was to disappear for ever. Those Jews who survived but failed to find refuge were forced to begin a new life as Christians, that is, as converted Jews or *conversos*.

Although numerous details concerning these events are known to us from many sources and various archives, the most reliable overall picture is gained from the letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1391 that was sent by Hasday Cresques, at that time a rabbi living in Saragossa, to the Jewish community in Avignon. The massacres of 1391 were the first tragic sign of a growing tendency towards the

eradication of the Jews in western Europe, a mood which, having begun in England in 1290 and spread to France in 1306, was soon to flare up in the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula. Many Jews realized that it was the beginning of the end. It was both logical and inevitable that, despairing of a future in Spanish territory but spurred on by their Messianic dreams, they should depart for the land of Israel, the longed-for homeland of all Jews throughout the ages.

We have some fascinating accounts of how the emigration of the Jews of Castile led them through Aragon to the coastal ports of Catalonia and Valencia. The Aragonese and Castilian Jews set out with letters of recommendation from the community in Saragossa, where Cresques was a rabbi.

We know from various documents that the emigration from Castile was a popular movement, led by ordinary country people who were driven by a powerful Messianic zeal; the route by which they arrived at the ports of Barcelona or Valencia passed through Saragossa. The tireless activity of the Jewish community of Saragossa on behalf of those who wished to immigrate to Israel continued for some five years. After carefully weighing up their prospects of becoming established in the land of Israel, Hasday Cresques embarked on the search for safer political solutions that would enable the Jews to cope with adversities such as the persecutions of 1391. The letter that Cresques sent to the community in Avignon describes the sequence of events in minute detail. Recent research has proved the accuracy of his account. A man of shrewd political judgement, Hasday Cresques was able to grasp the significance of the events which had taken their toll on the Jews of western Europe, while in the territory governed by the head of the Church, Jews continued to live in safety, albeit in a position of inferiority. Cresques's letter might well have been part of a daring groundplan to find a safe territory where the Aragonese Jews could take refuge in advance of the trouble that was brewing. However, when Cardinal Pedro de Luna ascended to the papacy in 1394 under the name of Benedict XIII, Cresques was foiled in his attempt to carry out his plan.

As already observed, Jews living in the small kingdom of Navarre went virtually unharmed at the time of the persecutions. Charles II and particularly Charles III (1387-1425) had striven to attract Jewish emigrants from Castile and encourage them to settle in Navarre, although their endeavours bore little fruit until the massacres of 1391. After the massacres, conditions were ripe for a renewed effort to welcome Jews into the kingdom, and it is logical to suppose that it was at that time that Jews from neighbouring territories were encouraged to move to Navarre.

In 1401 Hasday Cresques visited Navarre. Charles III and Cresques had a great interest in common. The king was willing to pay all the expenses incurred

by Cresques on his journey, while for his part, Cresques was manifestly enthusiastic regarding the project.

The most likely plan, which must have been the reason for Cresques's journey, was the orderly emigration of the Jews of Aragon to Navarre, a seemingly safe territory at the time. Ten years after Hasday Cresques visited Navarre, shortly before the rabbi's death, Jewish emigrants from Aragon paid the king the considerable sum of 900 florins in exchange for permission to settle in Tudela. They fled Aragon as a result of the unrest and outbreaks of violence following the death of the king. In all probability, therefore, Hasday Cresques's visit was an eminently political mission whose purpose was to take stock of the situation and pave the way for the Aragonese Jews' resettlement in Navarre.

#### Eduard Feliu: **Rahel Chalfi or the convoluted duration of time**

Rahel Chalfi was born in Tel Aviv around 1945 and spent some of her teenage years in Mexico. She went on to study English and Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and subsequently drama and film studies at Berkeley. She has taught film at the University of Tel Aviv and has worked for Israeli radio and television as a producer of documentaries. Leading Israeli critics have described her poetry as visionary and dramatic, independent and daring. Her seven books of poetry published to date are the weft and warp of an extraordinary fabric within contemporary Jewish literature. In 1989, and once again in 1998, Rachel Chalfi won the coveted Prime Minister's Prize for Literature, and in 2001 she was awarded the Ashman Prize for literary creation.

It has been said that the only distinctive group to have emerged in contemporary Hebrew literature is that of the first generation of poets and prose-writers of the State of Israel, known as the Palmah Generation, during the 1950s and 60s. Despite the differences due to individual circumstances and literary conventions, the group constituted, as Glenda Abramson puts it, a 'psychological unit'. They all took part in the struggle – and not only with the weapons of poetry – to build the social and political reality of the new State of Israel. Distancing themselves from the traditional poetics of Shlonsky and Alterman, they all showed a pugnacious spirit and a strong sense of collective identity.

Hebrew poetry, however, has long since lost many of the convictions which drove those poets to voice the deepest experiences of their collective life. Nowadays, with collective life all but abandoned, experience rarely transcends the confines of individuality, and poets tend to express the darkest and most inti-

mate reaches of personal experience in an apparently more prosaic and obscure language, the fruit of sweeping metrical, stylistic and even typographical innovations. All living still in the grip of war and the rumours of war, they have never lost the urge to express their dream of a life of peace and justice. Poetry continues to be a vitally important part of Jewish culture today.

The literary generation of the last few decades often reflects a disillusionment born out of the failure to build the Utopia of a polity governed by new values of justice and solidarity. The dream of being 'a people like any other people' has taken on a cruel reality: like other European nations, Israel bears the marks of the post-war period and its materialistic society, shaped by few objectives other than the purely economic, trampling ideals and ideologies underfoot.

The stance implicit in many of the poets of the last thirty years takes the form of a clear identification with the liberal, urbane values of Euro- American western society, even though that often means sharing the values of those with whom they are at odds. Although the themes of national identity which characterised poets of an earlier generation have receded, the themes of political, social and spiritual identity (including the manifestations of sexual diversity) have never ceased to occupy an important role, since they are the fundamental elements of the life of all individuals, irrespective of their circumstances. The purpose of poetry, which still enjoys popularity among the reading public in Israel, is to remind us all that there is a reason for living, that there are alternatives to the ideas of those who believe they are in possession of cast-iron truths and see themselves as the heirs to great cultures of the past. The weariness of things that we sometimes find in Rahel Chalfi's work is not to be confused with despair, because she knows, even if it is for just a fraction of a second, that «there is hope».

Rahel Chalfi belongs to a generation for whom the creation of the State of Israel is no longer the fulfilment of a Zionist dream, but rather an unquestionable historical fact which has become the bedrock of their identity as Israeli Jews. Through the means of poetry, Rahel Chalfi endeavours to understand and render understandable the phenomena, both great and small, of the world in which she lives, reflecting on them with imaginative restraint coupled with unflinching insight and passion, while rejecting the dictates of any given poetry or poetic form.

The real world of Rahel Chalfi is peopled by individuals who, as victims of contradiction, «dig tunnels of hope» to illuminate «the darkness between chaos and chaos». Fear, insecurity and uncertainty are rampant, life is fragile and at every turn disenchantment threatens to close in. Relativity and a sense of the

provisional are expressed through irony. Time is a ruthless, angry wild horse. The difficulties inherent in facing the world force the poet to seek refuge in the wakefulness of an inner life and to express nostalgia for the infinite for which we all long. For Rahel Chalfi, the act of writing is a rough chase in pursuit of the dream of freedom.

### **Bibliography of bibliographies about Maimonides**

We present an extensive list of places where the scholar can find specific bibliographic references about the various aspects of Maimonides' work, divided into the following headings: General, Exegesis and religious doctrines, Commentary on the Mishnah, Mishneh Torah, Guide of the perplexed, Treatise on the resurrection of the dead, Letters and short treatises, Medical writings, and Maimonides in relation to other mediaeval thinkers. A supplement has been added containing important individual books about Maimonides, whose publication date is later than that of the preceding bibliographies.