

Summary of Contents

The article by Dr. Brachi Elitzur examines the varying attitudes in Biblical verses, Second-Temple literature and rabbinic literature towards Pinhas' act of zeal. As she demonstrates, some praise his action and others criticize it severely. In her opinion their attitudes derive from conflicting ideological points of view. Those who admire Pinhas subscribe to separatism, do not hesitate to call for acts of disobedience to the ruling powers and regard his act as a model for emulation. Those who negate the act adhere to a more tolerant approach and prefer stability; they minimize Pinhas' act and criticize it, and clearly do not regard it as a model for later generations.

The article by Rabbi Dr. Yoel Bin-Nun deals with a tradition known as the 'Tale of Bruria', preserved in Rashi's commentary on tractate Avoda Zara. In his opinion this is not a late medieval tradition, but an earlier Talmudic one, related to the historical reality of Roman decrees. Analyzing a manuscript of Rashi's commentary, he finds the attempt to seduce Bruria as performed not at the instruction of Rabbi Meir, but of one of his disciples, in the service of the Roman authorities.

Nahem Ilan's article deals with commentaries on tractate Avot. The many commentaries and their characteristics are the result of the "double canonization" of the tractate. Beyond its status as an integral part of the Mishna it was also introduced into the prayer book. Consequently it came to be recited like a liturgical text, and used for homiletic purposes like the weekly Torah portion. The homilies on Avot, like those on the weekly portion, dealt not only with the text itself but also with timely topics.

The article by Dr. Avraham (Rami) Reiner deals with the halakhic method of one of the most important decisors (*poskim*) of our generation, Rabbi Y.S. Elyashiv, and suggests some guiding principles for understanding it. In the course of an extensive discussion of several characteristic responsa the writer discerns a distinction between earlier responsa, in which Rabbi Elyashiv addressed himself to the context in which the answer was given, and later responsa, in which it seems that "Halakha is an independent apparatus... that cannot be affected by time and its influences". The increasing stringency of Rabbi Elyashiv's

responsa is also discussed and an attempt is made to examine his attitude in the light of formalistic halakhic concepts as well as the kabbalistic world in which he developed.

The article by Rabbi Ilai Ofran compares the halakhic approaches of Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, author of the responsa *Ziv Eliezer*, and of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. The article examines three issues in which these scholars differed, and the writer finds the reason for the differences of opinion in their evaluation of contemporary reality. While Rabbi Yosef is willing to be lenient and accept an imperfect reality, Rabbi Waldenberg fears that even partial recognition would lead to additional deterioration of halakhic observance.

The last part of the issue presents articles that deal with the book by the late Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (Shagar), *Betorato Yehege*. In this work, which concerns the teaching of Talmud in modern times, Rabbi Shagar proposed new study methods. The work is examined from different viewpoints by various writers.

The editors