

Summary of Contents

Below is a brief summary of the articles in this issue:

The article by Dr. Amram Tropper, opening the issue, analyzes the expressions “You set them aside with a reed” and “It is impossible to turn you away empty”, both of which appear in the words of the sages in polemical contexts. Tropper suggests that both expressions are derived from the sphere of writing – blank paper, on the one hand, and a reed for writing, on the other. They carry a metaphorical reference to cultural polemics that relate mainly to written culture.

The article by Dr. Avraham Lifshitz discusses the various traditions regarding the date of the giving of the Torah. The author analyzes the different traditions in *Seder Olam Rabba*, the *Mekhilta* and the Babylonian Talmud that determine the date of this pivotal event, which is not given explicitly in the Torah. Among other things, he considers the textual variants for each source, tracing the exegetical basis of each one.

Yosef Marcus attempts to shed new light on the famous story about Moses in the study hall of Rabbi Akiva (Menahot 29v). Marcus asserts that the context of the story in a passage dealing with how letters should be written the Torah is not accidental. Moreover he tries to deduce from it the gap between Moses himself and the Giver of the Torah, and this gap is presented in terms of matters that Moses did not comprehend: both the crowns on the letters and Rabbi Akiva’s exegesis.

The article by Ben-Zion Ovadia analyzes a collection of *Aggadot*, in tractate Ta’anit 5-6. He finds links of style and content between the seven segments of *Aggada*, seeing them as an edited and cohesive compilation, presenting a central idea, the parts of which edify one another.

Rabbi Dr. Dror Fixler discusses the attitude of Maimonides towards the Jerusalem Talmud as a source for Halakha. He surveys Maimonides’ Commentary on tractate Peah of the Mishnah, concluding that Maimonides used the Jerusalem Talmud frequently also as a source for legal rulings. Moreover, he finds that there was no change in Maimonides’ approach regarding this issue in the course of his career.

Rabbi Elyakim Krumbein's article concerns the central role of Maimonides in *Sefer Hahinukh*. The author demonstrates that Maimonides attained this position despite reservations in Spain at the time the *Sefer Hahinukh* was written regarding some of his fundamental views. Against this background Krumbein offers several explanations for Maimonides' unique place in *Sefer Hahinukh*.

The article by Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein traces the central features and developments of the period of later authorities (*aharonim*). He discusses the definition of the period and its meaning, differences between Ashkenazi and Sefardi centers of Torah study, and devotes particular attention to the transition during this period from books of legal rulings to intensive exegesis of the Talmud.

The article by Yosi Ziv deals with various traditions regarding the correct date for circumcision among the Jews of Ethiopia, "Beta Israel". Ziv shows that there are traditions within the community prescribing circumcision on the seventh day after birth. He presumes that this custom originated due to a combination of the desire not to delay circumcision beyond the eighth day, on the one hand, and nevertheless to refrain from circumcision on Shabbat, on the other.

Dr. Mordechai Meir analyzes in his article the commentary on the Mishnah by the poet Haim Nahman Bialik. He notes the motives for writing the commentary and discusses various aspects of it, from issues of language and textual variants to Bialik's exegetical methods.

The editors