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## ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

### JOSHUA SON OF NUN IN THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL TRADITION

By Alexander Rofé

Applying the methodology of the history of tradition, this paper attempts to unravel the personality of Joshua, to clarify the various ways in which he was conceived over time and to identify the earliest image of him that can be retrieved. Our focus is on the Conquest stories, on the assumption that the image of Joshua in the preceding stories (Exodus–Deuteronomy) was affected by the dependence on the preeminent figure of Moses.

The Deuteronomistic writings preserve four distinct conceptions of Joshua. The main one, dominant in the Conquest account, depicts him as an autocratic leader who receives the Lord's direct instructions before every action and military undertaking. A secondary, later conception describes him as following the commands he had received from Moses (Josh 1:7 LXX; 11:15). A still later notion has Joshua abiding by and fulfilling the written Torah (8:30–35). Finally, Joshua is transformed into a faithful student of the Law who recites it day and night (1:8). The latter representation was transmitted to Pseudo-Philo and to the Talmudic sages.

The Priestly School, too, preserved distinct conceptions. According to Joshua 20, Joshua was addressed directly by the Lord; the terminology equates him to Moses. In Josh 18:1–10, a Priestly reworking of an earlier source, Joshua employs a mantic instrument in order to discern the Lord's intent. Other passages place Joshua at the side of the priest Eleazar; here, the leader is subject to the (high) priest, as in Num 27:12–23 (especially v. 21). Two additional Priestly pericopes are silent about Joshua's role: the Gibeonite episode (Josh 9:15b, 17–21) and the story of the altar beyond the Jordan (22:9–34).

Josh 24:1–28, 31 does not belong to the Deuteronomistic History, but to a preceding work, the Ephraimite (RE<sup>2</sup>) History, composed about the time of the fall of Samaria in the latter part of the eighth century BCE. According to this story, Joshua is not a leader, but a prophet who reviews the *Heilsgeschichte* and calls on the people to put away foreign gods and to cleave to the Lord. At the foundation of this chapter lies a very peculiar Shechem tradition, according to which Joshua initiated the first covenant in which the people of Israel committed themselves to serve the Lord; Joshua gave Israel law and judgement and 'wrote (in) the Torah of God'. Joshua here is an alternative to Moses, rather than his successor. Indeed, in the primary wording of the historical epitome, Moses and Aaron were not mentioned at all (cf. Josh 24:5 LXX).

The conception of Joshua as an alternative to Moses also pervades the tradition of his burial at Timnath-heres. In the cave, the flint knives with which Joshua circumcised the Israelites in Gilgal 'when he brought them out of Egypt' (24:31a LXX) were displayed. The notion of Joshua as a leader of the Exodus also underlies the circumcision story (5:2–3, 8–9) that concludes with the declaration: 'Today I have rolled away from you the insult of the Egyptians' (v. 9). Joshua's role in the ancient traditions of Shechem and Gilgal was that of an inspired person who founded the religion of Israel.

An alternative, unrealistic report of the Conquest depicts it as executed by the individual tribes according to a national plan. This account, sometimes attributed to the Yahwist (J), has been preserved in Judges 1 and in sparse notices in Joshua. Josh 17:14–18 belongs to this version. Here Joshua is not a military leader, but an arbiter between the tribes. His authority

derives from his administration of the lots, as indeed he undertook: 'I will cast lots for you here, before the Lord our God' (18:6).

At the very foundation of the Conquest narratives lies the oldest layer one can detect. Here Joshua appears as a man of magical power. The potency of his word is manifest in the curse on the Gibeonites (9:23), the adjuration of sun and moon (10:12–13), the imprecation against the rebuilding of Jericho (6:25) and the curse upon Achan (7:25). The magic gesture against Ai (8:18, 26) corresponds with Moses' action with the staff in the battle against Amalek (Exod 17:8–16). In that tale, exceptionally in the Wandering narratives, Joshua played a decisive role. This ancient notion of Joshua was the very opposite of his image according to the Deuteronomistic theology.

The oldest depiction of Joshua is that of an ancient Hebrew seer. In this quality he differed from the 'saviors' of the age of the Judges. Such magical traits were also attributed to Moses. No doubt, however, the personality of Moses, so central in the history of Israel, was repeatedly reworked in the course of tradition. The closest parallel to Joshua in the biblical stories is Balaam. Among non-Jewish sources, we find a similar figure in pre-Islamic Arab tribes: the *sha'ir*, a tribal poet who uses his powerful word to curse enemies before battle. He attained an authoritative position, at times becoming the leader of his tribe. Such may have been the position of Joshua in Israel. It is possible that a line of such ancient Hebrew seers caused the first revolution in Israel's faith: the making of a covenant in which the people committed itself to the worship of a single God.

#### SACRIFICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: VISITING THE TEMPLE AND BRINGING SACRIFICES AS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES IN PSALMS

By Eyal Regev

The many references to Temple and sacrifices in the Book of Psalms are examined from a phenomenological and ideological perspectives in order to trace the human feelings expressed by the Psalmist: acknowledging God's supremacy; bringing a *neder* sacrifice as an act of thanksgiving; the anticipation of visiting the Temple, to experience the sacred and offer sacrifices; the Temple as a place of righteousness; sacrifices of righteousness as an expression of morality and confidence in God; sacrifice as a mode of adherence of God's commandments; directing one's prayer to the Temple; prayer as analogous to sacrifice. It is suggested that if we approach these as interrelated ideas, it may be possible to achieve a more complete understanding of the meaning of sacrifice and the cultic experience of 'the Psalmist'.

Building on this analysis of the *words* that the Psalmist associates with the act of sacrifice, the meaning of the actual *act* of sacrifice is discussed in light of previous theories of sacrifice in biblical studies (mainly studies of the Priestly Code) and cultural anthropology. It is suggested that sacrifice can be considered as analogous to prayer (and not inferior to it from a theological point of view); that sacrifice was understood metaphorically, in a more complicated fashion than scholars sometimes tend to assume; and that the metaphorical conception of sacrifice in Psalms was something like a gift to God, that is, an act of symbolic exchange that aimed to express human closeness to God and an effort to communicate with the divine.

## THINGS THAT HAVE REQUIRED QUANTITIES

By Aharon Shemesh

The well-known mishnah at the beginning of tractate *Pe'ah* lists five items 'which do not have a fixed quantity'. The plain meaning of this statement is that no fixed and no minimum quantities are required for the fulfillment of these commandments. This understanding apparently contradicts the next mishnah which states as follows: 'One should not set aside for "*pe'ah*" less than one sixtieth'. Modern commentators argue that the two mishnayot exhibit historical development in the halakhah. The first mishnah represents an earlier stage, while the later developed halakhah represented in the second mishnah sets a formal minimum for *pe'ah*. This accords with the accepted scholarly hypothesis that the halakhah became increasingly detailed over time.

It is therefore surprising that four of the five items listed in mishnah *Pe'ah* have specific quantities according to Qumranic halakhah. This suggests the possibility of a new explanation for the seeming contradiction between the first two mishnayot of tractate *Pe'ah*. This paper surveys the relevant passages from the scrolls concerning the laws of *pe'ah*, first fruits, charity and the study of Torah, with special attention paid to the quantity required for each of them, and compares them to Rabbinic traditions. It then proceeds to examine the tension between the perceived need for exact instructions to enable the believer to fulfill God's commandments (a need that led the Rabbis to set a minimum standard for *pe'ah*), and the Rabbis' concern that the minimum requirements could come to be perceived as the unique standard. This tension, it is suggested, underlies the apparent contradiction between the two mishnayot at the beginning of tractate *Pe'ah*.

THE *SOTAH* WHO WAS GIVEN *DECHMA* TO DRINK:  
A LEXICAL SOLUTION

By Yair Furstenberg

Mishnah *Eduyyot* 5.6 describes the excommunication of Akavia ben Mehallalel. The background and the reasons for this extreme action are obscure. Akavia and the Rabbis disputed whether women who were not born Jewish, such as proselytes or converted slaves, may drink the *sotah* water. The Rabbis contended that such a woman can drink the water, relying on the precedent of Shma'aya and Avtalion, who presented a potion to a female proselyte suspected of infidelity. Akavia dismissed their testimony, saying that in that case, 'they gave her *dechma* to drink'. As a consequence he was excommunicated, and the question arises: What did he say that infuriated the Rabbis? An explanation of the word *dechma* or *degma* is required in order to enable us to understand the extreme nature of Akavia's position which resulted in his excommunication.

After rejecting previous interpretations of the word, which were not well grounded linguistically and philologically, it is suggested that the word *dechma* originated in a Greek medical context. The Greek verb *dakno* ('to bite') is used in medical texts to describe a gnawing pain in the stomach. We also find some texts in which drinking poison is said to have caused such pains and Plutarch even uses the word *degmos* ('bite') as the name of a group of medicines which produce this sort of sharp pain.

Akavia suggests that instead of carrying out a genuine *soṭah* procedure, Shma'aya and Avtalion gave the woman in question poison which affected her as though she were being punished by God. Not only was she deceived as to the true nature of the potion she drank but so were the Rabbis, who concluded from this case that proselytes could take part in this Temple ordeal.

IMAGINATION AND LOGIC, TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD: THE APPROACHES  
OF MOSES IBN EZRA AND MAIMONIDES TO BIBLICAL METAPHOR  
IN LIGHT OF ARABIC POETICS AND PHILOSOPHY

By Mordechai Cohen

The celebrated Hebrew poet Moses Ibn Ezra (1055–1138) and the great philosopher Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) stand out in medieval Jewish tradition for defining metaphor (Arabic *isti'āra*; Hebrew *hash'alah*; lit. 'borrowing') precisely on the basis of Arabic learning, and devising a system for its analysis in Scripture. The notion of figurative biblical language was widely discussed in the Judeo-Arabic tradition represented by authors such as Sa'adia Gaon, Jonah Ibn Janaḥ and Judah Ibn Bal'am; but they generally did not differentiate between metaphor proper and other types of non-literal language, all of which fell under the broader rubric designated by the Arabic term *majāz* (Heb. *ha'avarah*).

The concept of metaphor plays a critical role in Maimonides' endeavor to reconcile Scripture with reason in his *Guide of the Perplexed*, which follows a path paved by Sa'adia and his successors, who drew upon Qur'anic hermeneutics to devise exegetical methods for arriving at the 'truth' (*ḥaqīqa*) behind Scripture's poetic non-literal language (*majāz*). But Maimonides refines their methods using the logic of Alfarabi, which equipped him with more precise terminology and linguistic concepts. The *Guide* features a biblical 'dictionary' which lists metaphorical usages that enable the reader to avoid the philosophically problematic implications of a literal reading of Scripture, especially its graphically anthropomorphic depictions of God. For example, by showing that biblical Hebrew כנף (lit. wing) is used in the sense of *protection* in Ruth 2:12, Maimonides can claim that references to God's כנפים (lit. wings) do not imply that He has wings, but rather that people seek His protection. This presentation in the *Guide* reflects the Farabian definition formulated in his *Treatise on Logic*, according to which metaphor is a word 'borrowed' from its original referent (in this case, a wing) and 'lent' to a new one (protection). But in the *Guide* the great philosopher also draws tacitly upon another Farabian concept from the *Treatise on Logic*, namely *manqūl* (Heb. *ha'ataqah*; lit. transference), which corresponds to the modern notion of 'dead metaphor', i.e., a metaphorical usage that no longer produces any special poetic effect because it has become a regular part of the lexicon, as the dictionary format in the *Guide* suggests. Accordingly, Maimonides' analysis implies, e.g., that 'protection' has become a normal and accepted meaning of the biblical word כנף; thus it does not even conjure up a poetic image of a God with wings. In line with an approach that goes back to Plato, Maimonides viewed poetic imagination with suspicion; he therefore drew upon Arabic logic to devise an analytic method that circumvents the imagery-producing capacity of biblical metaphor by guiding the reader to substitute the appropriate abstract meaning for the original graphic language of Scripture.

Though well aware of Sa'adia's hermeneutics and Alfarabi's logic, Moses Ibn Ezra aligned

himself with the Arabic poetic tradition that celebrated fanciful imagery for its literary merit without regard for its underlying ‘truth’, an outlook that led him to present a very different model of metaphor in his poetics, *The Book of Discussion and Conversation*. Following the literary critic Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, the great Hebrew poet defined *isti‘āra* not as the borrowing of a name, but as imaginary ascription, i.e., borrowing *things* from one realm of reality and imaginatively ascribing (‘lending’) them to another. For example, the poet Dhû r-Rumma spoke of ‘the dawn in its white gown’, on which Ibn Ezra – echoing earlier Arab experts on poetry – comments: ‘He lent a gown to the dawn, though it has no gown’. Whereas the Farabian model focuses on a single metaphorical term that can be decoded simply by reversing the linguistic borrowing process, imaginary ascription is a more complex poetic technique that integrates things and ideas from different realms of reality. Accordingly, all of the forty biblical metaphors cited in *The Book of Discussion and Conversation* are in the construct state (A of B, where B has no A), e.g., ‘dew of your youth’ (Ps 110:3), ‘wine of violence’ (Prov 4:17), ‘helmet of salvation’ (Isa 59:17), ‘sun of righteousness’ (Mal 3:20). As these examples reveal, imaginary ascription is often not subject to the straightforward Maimonidean mode of analysis. (What precisely is the ‘dew of youth’, ‘helmet of salvation’, etc.?) Instead of translating an isolated metaphorical term into its ostensible ‘true meaning’, Arab experts on poetry would explore the imaginative scene that the metaphorical expression as a whole creates by fusing distinct realms of reality. For example, by attributing dew to youth, the Psalmist imagines youth as a pleasant spring morning; in lending a helmet to salvation, Isaiah personifies salvation as a battle-ready warrior. Shattering the restraints of the logician’s ‘truth’, the technique of imaginary ascription opened the floodgates of creativity and inspired the great medieval Arabic and Hebrew poets in the spirit of the motto ‘the best of poetry is its most false’, i.e., its most imaginative and fantastic components. In applying this perspective to Scripture, Moses Ibn Ezra diverged from Sa‘adia’s strictly rational exegetical outlook and harnessed the Arabic poetic model of metaphor to highlight the imaginative potential of biblical literature and thereby demonstrate its aesthetic merit.

#### ON NAHMANIDES’ ATTITUDE TOWARD NON-JEWS

By Micah Goodman

A common approach in the Kabbalah, which has received much attention from scholars of Jewish mysticism, ascribes to the Jewish people a higher metaphysical level than that of the Gentiles. This study aims to reconstruct Nahmanides’ position on the subject, which differs from the views that have been analyzed and examined in the scholarly literature.

According to Nahmanides, the goal of Creation is for all of humankind to come to recognize the one God. From Nahmanides’ historiography we learn that at one time all of humanity did indeed recognize God; the descent into idolatry occurred at a later stage of history. This departure from the intended course of human life was not absolute, however; the Jewish people was not swept along by the currents of paganism. The people of Israel is actually a remnant from an era in which all individuals worshipped God, and this is Israel’s uniqueness and its strength. We might say that Israel was not chosen; rather, it is the only people to remain in the primordial state of all humankind.

The most profound expression of Israel's chosenness, in Nahmanides' view, is that the Land of Israel was given solely to the Jewish people. Actually, he believed that the Holy Land was originally intended for the children of Ham, and was given to the Israelites only as a result of Ham's misdeeds, which occurred after the Flood.

God, in other words, did not set Israel apart from all other nations; the other nations distanced themselves from God. The chosenness of Israel is the result not of a divine decision but rather of a human failure. Some additional expressions of this idea are outlined here. Qualities that many thinkers claim are unique to the Jews are in fact shared by Jews and Gentiles, according to Nahmanides' kabbalistic teachings. First and foremost among these are prophecy and possession of esoteric knowledge. The spiritually and religiously elevated person is not necessarily a Jew. The sole quality that remains the exclusive property of the Jewish people in Nahmanides' view is their theurgic ability. This one advantage, though, is also a result of the decline of the other nations, and at the end of days the Jews will lose their monopoly over theurgy as well.