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חדשות האיגוד

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נועם מזרחי

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### חלק אנגלי

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תקצירים

**THE INTERPRETIVE TRANSMISSION OF ISAIAH AS  
WITNESSED BY 4QISA<sup>G</sup> (4Q61)**

Noam Mizrahi

4QIsa<sup>G</sup> (4Q61) designates a group of 8–9 fragments that stem from a single column of a scroll, covering Isa 42:14–43:8, 16–24. Material considerations indicate that the scroll was very sizable, probably containing the entire book of Isaiah. Upon first glance, its text seems to be very close to the MT. Closer inspection, however, reveals that one recurring variant, so far interpreted merely as a case of orthographic fluctuation, is better understood as encoding a different lexeme, which affects the entire syntax of the passage. This difference, in turn, is revealed to be a textual response to an exegetical difficulty inherent in the prophetic text. Furthermore, the interpretive tradition witnessed by the scroll may have left additional traces in later rabbinic sources. Thus, this case study has implications for the broader understanding of the interrelationship between the material analysis of scroll fragments, the textual and linguistic scrutiny of their content, and the identification of scriptural exegesis (or “biblical interpretation”) embedded therein.

**THE LIBERATION OF JEWISH SLAVES IN THE  
LETTER OF ARISTEAS AS AN EXPRESSION OF FEAR  
OF ASSIMILATION: A STUDY OF THE ASSIMILATION  
PROCESS AFFECTING JEWISH SLAVES IN THE  
HELLENISTIC DIASPORA**

Yael Escojido and Emmanuel Friedheim

In this article, we examine the approach of the Letter of Aristeas to the liberation of the Jews who had been enslaved by Ptolemy I (367–283 BCE) after his conquest of Syria and Phoenicia, as a condition for the translation of the Torah into Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II (285–246 BCE). We

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believe that the extensive discussion of the enslavement of the Jews and their liberation reveals an ideology formed in the Jewish community: Jews are not to be abandoned in the hands of foreign powers lest they leave their traditions and adopt foreign practices.

The philological study of the Greek terminology dealing with the liberation of slaves in the Letter of Aristeas (3.12-27) with which we begin our research, leads to the conclusion that for the author of the Letter, manumission was unconditional and indicates the end of the Jewish slaves' obligation to stay close to their pagan former masters. This claim points to a central idea, which is clarified in other passages of the Letter, which identifies the proximity of Jews and pagan neighbors, and inevitable contacts between them, as a primary reason for losing Jewish distinctiveness and identity.

This article discusses the social and religious reality of Jewish slaves, from ideological and practical angles. Philo of Alexandria assumed that Jews who were enslaved among pagans could easily lose their ethnic and religious identity, and epigraphic evidence of the manumissions of these slaves showed that they converted their ancestors' practices into a pagan way of life. Changing their practices and estrangement from ancestral doctrines were considered apostasy by Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Philo, who opposed it vehemently.

Thus, our study proposes to interpret the preoccupation of the writer of the Letter of Aristeas with Jewish slaves as an expression of Jewish concern about non-Jewish influences.

## **BECAUSE OF WHOM DO THE RAINS FALL? ALTERNATING CREDITS IN RAIN STORIES OF THE AGGADAH LITERATURE**

Hananel Mack

In this paper I discuss ten rain stories which derive from the Aggadah and from the writings of Josephus Flavius, in which major and minor credit for achieving rains alternate between the characters. Generally speaking, credit for rain varies between the people, the chassid (including the compassionate

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mother and children); the sage/leader; and the holy place. The benevolent individual and the king also may receive minor credit. Yuval Fraenkel, in an article discussing the holy man and the Temple, invoked a group of stories which center around images of chassidim, concluding that the achievements of the latter were unrelated to the Temple. However, while this may be generally true, it is certainly not the case with rain stories, in which the Temple or the beit midrash are always involved. The exception is when outstanding circumstances such as severe draughts occur these require the faith of simple, kind people, chassidim as well as children, and even animals, all of which are unrelated to the holy establishments.

### **“IN THE SANCTUARY, O LORD, WHICH THY HANDS HAVE ESTABLISHED”: THE HOMILY OF MEKHILTA OF R. ISHMAEL AND ITS PARALLELS IN AVOT DE- RABBI NATAN AND IN BAVLI KETUBBOT**

Gilad Sasson

In Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, Shirata 10 (Horovitz-Rabin edition, p. 150) introduces a two-part homily on Exod 15:17. This homily sets the Temple against the Creation and emphasizes its advantage compared to the entire Creation. Each part of the homily is divided into an introduction and an expansion. A careful study indicates that the two introductions belong to an early layer while the expansions were added later. In addition, whereas the early layer deals with a heavenly Temple, the expansions deal with the earthly one that was destroyed and the future one that will be re-established after avenging its destroyers.

The introduction of the second part emphasizes the advantage of a Temple that was created with two hands over the Creation that was created singlehandedly. This introduction has two parallels which are based on it, yet with variations. In the parallel homily in Avot De-Rabbi Natan (version A, Ch. A, Schechter edition, p. 8) the comparison is between the Temple and the

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creation of Adam. The second parallel is the homily by Bar Kappara in Bavli Ketubbot 5a (according to Ms. Vat. ebr. 130). Bar Kappara identifies the Temple with the pious and sets them against Creation and above it. While the Mekhilta and Avot De-Rabbi Natan emphasize the importance of the sacred place, Bar Kappara emphasizes the importance of sacred human beings. These variations in the parallels can be explained as a response to the Christian reading of the verse from Exodus 15 which identifies the Temple of the “Song of the Sea” with Jesus.