

PREFACE

As in my previous books (*The Book on the heqdēsh* [Jewish pious foundations], Leiden 1976; *The Tustaris*, Tel Aviv 1981; *Palestine during the First Muslim Period* [Tel Aviv 1983] and its vol. I: *A History of Palestine (634-1099)* [Cambridge 1992]), this book is also primarily based on documents from the Geniza. 846 such documents are included in extenso in three volumes of this book's Hebrew version. These documents are mentioned here by their numbers, in bold type.

In my Preface to *A History of Palestine*, the reader will find information about the Geniza and its importance, as well as references to more detailed descriptions of this vast and endless historical treasure. There I also raise the contribution made by earlier scholars to the deciphering of these documents and their value in the clarification of the various issues with regard to the history of the Jewish people in the Islamic countries in the early Middle Ages. The extensive notes which accompany the discussions appearing below include mentions (alas, perennially insufficient) of studies written in recent generations; they set forth *variae lectiones*, reservations, and disputes on matters of content—which, however, are not in the least intended to detract from the work of the earlier scholars, without whom we would be hopelessly groping in the dark today. Indeed, I must assume that, at times, the versions cited by others are preferable to my own. Further, I sincerely hope that scholars in subsequent generations will make a more profound investigation of the documents published by me and will continue to improve and facilitate their reading. After all, the writing in most of these documents is extremely cursive, with many faded places, and even the translations may be justly subjected to criticism. “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Ps. 19:12). To a great degree, clarification of the issues set forth in this book has resulted from the constant debate and confrontation which I have maintained with rather large groups of students. Their questions, their comments, the papers they have written and submitted—all of these have helped me to refine my understanding and my outlook, and have confirmed the saying of the Sages: “And from my students [I have learned] more than from anyone”.

Appearing at the beginning of this book are two discussions with regard to the Jews of the Arabian Peninsula; my readers, of course, will be able to obtain a clear and continuous general overview of the history of the Jews of that area (most of whom settled in the North—that is, in Ḥijāz) from various books dealing with the history of early Islam,

to which I refer quite often in this book. The first discussion deals with the origin of the Jews of Yathrib, or al-Madīna. The discussion is based on Arab traditions, but also on some talmudic sources. In fact, there is an unusual and rather rare degree of compatibility between these two types of sources, leading to the conclusion that the Jewish population of Ḥijāz at the time of inception of Islam comprised two components: the descendants of the refugees from the revolts in Palestine, and Arab tribes or clans who drifted toward Judaism and eventually became converted in the course of the generations which preceded Islam. The second discussion deals with the document known as *kitāb al-umma*, or “the Constitution of al-Madīna”. In that discussion, I seek to prove that the document, as copied by an anonymous hand from among the original Arab compilers is undeniably authentic, except for the title which was given to it by those compilers, which indicates that the document constitutes a sort of contract between the Prophet of Islam and the Jews. I present a detailed analysis of the sections of this document, which has already been subjected to several contemporary investigations by renowned scholars; as has already been observed before my time, there is no compliance whatsoever between that title and the contents of the document itself. Nonetheless, that title has constituted a basis for the various traditions about the existence of a treaty between Muḥammad and the Jews—a treaty which the Jews breached, thereby incurring punishment. Admittedly, the covenant between Muḥammad and the clans which joined the Muslim community (the *umma*) includes sections which concern the Jews; the purpose of these sections, however, is only to accustom those adherents to the covenant to the idea that the Jews are wrongdoers (*ẓālimūn*) and that they must be forced to participate in the expenses of the war which was about to break out between the Muslims and the people of Makka, the Qurashites.

As has already been noted by Jacob Mann, the period of the Babylonian geonim—centuries of weighty importance to the history of the Jewish people—runs parallel to the establishment of a new religion, Islam, and to the astounding rise of the Arabs to the center of human history. The mere mention of the names of major Jewish communities, such as Baghdad, Baṣra, Ramla, Fustāṭ, Qayrawān, Fās—all of them cities founded by Arabs—suffices to illuminate the close relationship between the history of Islam and the history of the Jews in that period. Moreover, there can be no doubt that, throughout the generations described below, only a minority of the Jewish Diaspora dwelt in Christian lands, whereas the great majority thereof was concentrated in the Islamic countries, where the Jews maintained their principal centers of learning, from where learning was spread to Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora (sections 101-135 below).

A source of great value to the history of the Jews in those times is the geonic literature. From the standpoint of historic research, this literature is divided into two categories. One category consists of literary works written by, or under the close influence of, the geonim; this includes the responsa literature, which has been preserved in the various Jewish communities. Only a few of these responsa survived long enough to be printed, starting in the sixteenth century; by that time, they had passed through the hands of numerous copiers. Because it was halachic issues which most interested Jews of those generations, not many of the details of interest to historians—dates, names of persons, places, and the like—have survived; moreover, in many cases, the copiers totally omitted the queries, leaving only the responsa. The second category is the responsa literature preserved in the Cairo Geniza, whose wording is generally more reliable and closer to the questions which the geonim were actually asked and the answers which they provided, and which, ipso facto, have a greater historic value. Naturally, the historic value of the letters written by geonim—by contrast to their responsa in halachic matters—is even greater. The reference here is to the letters written by the geonim to the Jewish communities in the Diaspora and their figures. Still, among the letters preserved in the Geniza, some are truly authentic—that is, written in the actual hand of the gaon or the contemporary scribe of the yeshiva—while others are copies made in later generations, but still within the geonic period. An excellent example of the latter category is provided by the letters, documents and treatises copied by a Babylonian, Joseph b. Jacob, who was the son of Jacob *rōsh bē rabbānān*, mentioned later in this book. The son, Joseph, also known as Joseph *rōsh ha-seder*, settled in Fustat, composed halachic treatises and copied writings of the geonim in the first half of the thirteenth century.¹

Among the geonic writings which provide historic information, three are worthy of mention here: *sefer ha-galui* by Saadia Gaon; *akhbār baghdād* by Nathan ha-Kohen b. Isaac the Babylonian; and the *Letter* of Sherira Gaon. The *sefer ha-galui* belongs to the polemic writings of Saadia Gaon, written during the period of his disputes, such as his letters which constituted part of the dispute over the calendar. It is obvious to us that the number of polemic letters and treatises (and the copies thereof) increased drastically during these periods of

¹ See Mann, *JQR*, NS 7 (1916/7), 457f.; on Joseph *rōsh ha-seder*, see *idem*, *Jews*, II, 310f.; Abramson, *Sinai*, 48 (1983/4), 204f.; *idem*, *Kiryat sefer*, 26 (1949/50), 72; Goitein, *Sidre ḥinnūkh*, 148; and the articles of A. Scheiber: *Lōw Mem. Vol.*, Hebrew part, 158ff.; *Tarbiz*, 33 (1963/4), 369ff.; *Kiryat sefer*, 44 (1968/9), 546ff.; *AO* (Hung.), 23 (1970), 115ff.; *Kiryat sefer*, 48 (1972/3), 152ff. See a part of Hayy Gaon's responsum: TS G 2.67, ed. Friedman, *Ribbūy n.*, 169ff., which is in the handwriting of Joseph *rōsh ha-seder*; in TS 12.826 we find several times his signature, *yōsēf rōsh ha-seder b. ya'aqōv rōsh kallā b. 'alī rōsh ha-qāhāl*, of blessed memory; in Mosseri, V, 291 there are fragments of his commentary to the Talmud; and see also below, sec. 275.

dispute, as did the probability that some of them would survive and be preserved to this day. The fragments from the *sefer ha-galui*, along with what remains of the replies written by Saadia Gaon's opponents—that is, the exilarch, David b. Zakkai, and the gaon Aaron ha-Kohen—constitute an extremely significant historic source for the history of the Jews of Babylonia in the tenth century.

Akhhār baghdād is the name assumed to have been given to a compendium of details on Babylonia, its yeshivot and the exilarchs who lived and worked there, as well as other Babylonian personages, recorded from the tales of a Baghdadi Jew, Nathan ha-Kohen b. Isaac, one of the Babylonian scholars, who came—as we may assume—to Qayrawān. In this day and age, this source is principally known according to the version printed by Neubauer. In the first part of the story, which Neubauer entitled *sefer ʿolām zūtā* (a brief history of the world) under paragraph C, we find information on the Babylonian yeshivot, with emphasis on the superiority of Sura over Pumbedita; it is obvious that the author himself was a Suran. Isaac Halevy believed that this section, which is located before the words “and what was stated by Nathan ha-Kohen b. Isaac, the Babylonian”, was not actually written by Nathan the Babylonian, but is taken from the introduction to the Talmud written by Samuel, the Spanish nagid; on the other hand, both Weiss and Grätz believed that Nathan the Babylonian was the author of this section as well, and Ginzberg proved that it was Samuel the nagid who copied from Nathan the Babylonian. The mysterious personality of Nathan the Babylonian has given rise to various hypotheses; Grätz believed that he was one of the captives mentioned by Abraham Ibn Daʿūd in his Book of Tradition (the one whose name was not mentioned by Ibn Daʿūd), and that he came from Narbonne in the South of France. However, according to the details contained in his story, he obviously lived before the time of the four captives, and he was a Babylonian, rather than a Spaniard. It is correct to consider the story, as we have it in its Hebrew version, as a homogeneous work, which has not been completely preserved; the writer, who recorded the story as told by Nathan the Babylonian, repeatedly noted the identity of the narrator, and it appears that such a mention also came before the said introductory fragment, although it has not been preserved (as the beginning of that fragment has not been preserved).ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ The dispute over the calendar: see the discussion and references in Gil, *Hist.*, 562-569, and see below, secs. 142-143, on the Babylonian aspects of the dispute, and the letters 5-8. *Sefer ha-galui*: Geiger, *JZWL*, 9 (1871), 173ff. Neubauer, *JQR*, 4 (1891/2), 492ff. In 1892 Harkavy edited a large fragment from the *Sefer ha-galui* and pertinent documents, with an introduction and commentaries, see *Zikkārōn la-r.*, V, 133ff. See more discussions and editions of texts: Poznanski, *JQR*, 8 (1895), 686f.; Harkavy, *JQR*, 12:532, 1899/1900; Lambert, *REJ*, 40:84, 260, 1900; Margoliouth, *JQR*, 2 (1899/1900), 502; Bacher, *Exposit. Times*, 11:454, 1899/1900; Stern, *Melilah*, 5:331, 1956. The story of Nathan the Babylonian, see: Neubauer, *Med. J. Chr.*, II, 77ff. The fragment under dispute: *ibid.*, continued on p. 78, to 10th line from bottom. See Halevy, *Dōrōt ha-r.*, III (2), 75f.; Weiss, *Dōr d. we-d.*, IV, 13 n. 3; Grätz, *Gesch.*,

This story recounted by Nathan the Babylonian, as printed by Neubauer within the framework of *sefer ʿōlām zūtā*, is taken from the version given in a manuscript which had been in the possession of A. Epstein and was lost in the Holocaust. The copying of that manuscript was completed on 19 Shevat AM 5269, 10 January 1509, in Salonika, and the scribe was Isaac Apomado. Samuel Shulam included the story of Nathan the Babylonian in his edition of the *sefer ha-yūhasin* of Abraham Zacuto, Constantinople 1566, according to another manuscript, whose details are not known to us; this printing as well was used by Neubauer. In 1904, Friedländer published a large section (originating from the Geniza) of the Arabic original of the story, preceding it with a detailed introduction in which he proved, inter alia, that the compilation was, in fact, originally written in Arabic. Friedländer also mentioned the fact that the story of Neṭīrā, which had been published by Harkavy in the *Berliner Jub. Vol.*, was part of that same compilation, which the Arabic original refers to as *akhbār baghdād*. We cannot determine the exact nature of the relationship between the story told by Nathan the Babylonian of the yeshivot of Babylonia and the introduction to the Talmud. It should be noted that there are two important innovations in this era. One of them is the identification of the copier of the passage located in the Geniza; Goitein found, based on the shape of the handwriting, that the copier was Nathan b. Samuel he-Ḥavēr, ‘ha-Nezer’, who was the scribe of the yeshiva in Fustat in the first half of the twelfth century. The second innovation lies in the reasonable argument advanced by M. Margalioṭ to the effect that the introduction to the Talmud was not written by Samuel, the Spanish nagid, but by Samuel b. Ḥananiah, the leader of the Jews of Fustat and contemporary of the Nezer; in fact, Samuel b. Ḥananiah also bore the title of nagid. This being the case, we may assume that the manuscripts brought with them to Egypt by immigrants from the Maghrib included the original of the compilation *akhbār baghdād*, which had been recorded in the mid-tenth century as told by Nathan ha-Kohen b. Isaac the Babylonian, and which was copied about 200 years thereafter by the ‘Nezer’, Nathan b. Samuel, and inspired the nagid Samuel b. Ḥananiah in his writing of the introduction to the Talmud. We have no definitive answer with regard to the question of the time at which *akhbār baghdād* was written. It says that Isaac b. Neṭīrā was 27 years old at the time of its writing; his father, Neṭīrā, died in 916, meaning that the compilation must have been written at some time prior to 943. On the other hand, the story

V, 541f.; Epstein, *Harkavy Jub. Vol.*, 169-172; Ginzberg, *Geon.*, I, 45. See the introduction to the Talmud by Samuel *ha-nāgid*, in the tractate *Berākhot* (Vilna edition) in the additions, 3bff. Friedländer, *JQR*, 17 (1904/5), 762, thought as Halevy did, that the opening fragment is a distinct source, not from Nathan the Babylonian, but translated into Hebrew by the same translator, who collected the fragments and gave them a common framework; and that the Hebrew of the fragment is similar to that of the rest of the text.

recounted by Nathan the Babylonian extends up to the appointment of Khalaf b. Sarjāda, who was Aaron ha-Kohen b. Joseph, as gaon of Pumbedita, which took place in 943. Nathan also cites details on Sahl b. Neṭīrā, who was murdered in 938 (section 366 below), and speaks of him as though he were still living. It is possible to excuse this by assuming that the news of the death of Sahl had not yet reached Nathan in Qayrawān. In any event, it appears that *akhbār baghdād* should be dated during the early 940s.ⁱⁱⁱ

The third source, the *Letter* of Sherira Gaon, has already been extensively discussed; the document and its various versions are described in detail in B.M. Lewin's introduction to the edition of the *Letter*. Lewin's view with regard to the sorting of the various versions of the *Letter* by countries—a 'French' text and a 'Spanish' text—has been discussed by Elbogen, who, while he admitted that it was possible to distinguish between two groups of versions, rejected Lewin's view entirely. The group referred to by Lewin as 'Spanish' consists of versions which included marginal notes and interpretations, with a relatively high degree of freedom even with regard to the original text. On the other hand, it is a rather well-known fact that the versions belonging to the 'French' group are generally similar to what we find in those fragments of the *Letter* which have been preserved among the Geniza manuscripts, and that those fragments are certainly the closest to the original, from the standpoint of the respective dates of their copying as well. It is also worthwhile to note the possibility—first mentioned by Mann—that Sherira Gaon himself wrote about his historic *Letter* in one of his letters to Jacob b. Joseph b. 'Awkal, which has been preserved in the Geniza: "... And here we have written answers to the wonderful and precious questions asked by our Lord and Master Jacob he-Ḥavēr, may God preserve him".

Large portions of my work are based on my collection of letters from the Geniza; these include the Babylonian letters, 101 in number (among them the letters by the *nesī'im*, members of the families of the later exilarchs), and 745 letters and documents belonging to merchants up to the end of the eleventh century. Noteworthy in this context is a statement by Goitein, who stressed the importance of "comparative study of the entire exchange of letters between Tunisia and the East... which still requires a great deal of preparatory work"—and who, if not

ⁱⁱⁱ See Neubauer, *Med. J. Chr.*, II, in the introduction, p. X; Marx, *Zfhw*, 5 (1905), 54f.; *idem*, *Seder 'Olām*, xiii, Steinschneider, *Geschichtslit.*, 21f., 174; no. 16; Schwarz, *Hebr. Handschr.*, 16f., no. 31. Cohen, in his Hebrew introduction to Ibn Da'ud's *Book of Trad.*, 17; M. Ben-Sasson, in the *H.H. Ben-Sasson Mem. Vol.*, 162. See also: Coronel, in the introduction to *Hamishshā qunṭr.*; Poznanski, *JQR*, NS 3 (1912/30, 400; the Arabic original: see 11, 12, and the references in their preambles. The identification of the copyist of the Arabic fragment: Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, II, 513, where he noted that the same copyist also copied another fragment, see the preamble to 12; see on the author of the introduction to the Talmud: Margoliot, *Hilehkōt ha-nāgīd*, 68ff.; Isaac b. Neṭīrā's age: 11, b, ll. 23-24.

Goitein, did such a vast amount of preparatory work! It was he, in his detailed articles and his monumental work on the Mediterranean society, who prepared the foundation on which I base my edition of the merchants' letters and their documents and the discussion resulting therefrom. Some of them—especially the earlier ones—also include information on the Babylonian yeshivot and their contacts with the Diaspora. Most of the information contained therein, however, obviously relates to economic life; they also shed light on the general framework within which the merchants lived and worked, their places of residence and the events which characterized their lifetimes. Many of the topics related to these merchants have already been exhaustively discussed in Goitein's works; the discussions below will focus on the merchants themselves, their personalities, their families and the relationships between them. A series of articles, which are presently being prepared by me for publication, will discuss additional families of merchants, clarifying in greater detail the types of goods in which they dealt, and providing information on their community activities, as part of the general discussion of community life, in light of the letters in this collection and additional sources. They will also include clarification of various terms to be found in those letters, the outlook expressed therein with regard to contemporary events, especially in Egypt and the Maghrib, additional comments on the ways and means of trade in those times, and additional details on Jewish localities in the Maghrib and in Egypt.^{iv}

The Geniza manuscripts also enable us to obtain a detailed view of the Jews of Sicily under Arab rule; this is the topic of the third part of this volume. The profusion of information has come down to us by virtue of the fact that Sicily was an important leg of the triangle of the marine transport, and the economy in general, of the Mediterranean: Egypt–Sicily–the Maghrib. The letters preserved in the Geniza, which were written by Jewish merchants throughout the eleventh century, especially in the last half thereof, add important information with regard to the history of the island and its economic life; naturally, most of that information concerns the history of its Jewish population, including quite a number of major Jewish personages. I precede that discussion with a survey of the political and military history of Sicily—a survey principally based on Arab sources, as well as on the descriptions and commentaries of the outstanding Italian historian Michele Amari (1806-1889), although I disagree with him on some details and add to the survey information drawn from the Geniza letters.

The discussion about the Jews in the economic life of the Muslim world is focused on the period which ends in the late eleventh century;

^{iv} See the article of Elbogen, *Festschr. d. jüd. theolog. Sem. Breslau*, 61. See the letter to Ibn 'Awkal: 33, a, ll. 12-13, and cf. Mann, *Texts*, I, 93f. See Goitein, *Zion*, 27 (1962), 156.

it provides some basic details of earlier chapters of Jewish economic history, such as that on the Rādhānites, on the Jewish moneychangers of Baghdad, and so forth. However, with regard to the Jews' role in international trade in the eleventh century, I was forced to contend with the profusion of information contained in the merchants' letters themselves. As stated above, I hope to be able to publish additional works, also based on those letters; at the same time, I cannot possibly finish myself all of the work on this topic. I truly hope, for example, that scholars whose field of research is economic history will find an interest in these letters and be able to compare the data contained therein with those of other sources and to retrieve inspiring details which will facilitate the understanding of important aspects of medieval economic life.

Worthy of note among the non-Jewish sources is Dionysius of Tel Maḥrē, from whom we learn of the great crisis involving the exilarchate in the first half of the ninth century (section 80 below); his writings may be deemed authentic, as he lived and worked at the time of those events. A passage from the (lost) chronicle of Dionysius was first quoted, early in the eighteenth century, by Assemani; this is, in fact, a passage copied by Dionysius from the works of Petrus the Younger, who was the Patriarch of Antioch starting in 578. Assemani also cites additional passages, which he ascribes to Dionysius, although they are not truly his. In 1895, Chabot published what he believed to be an abstract of the chronicle of Dionysius; a year later, Nau proved that the chronicle in question was not written by Dionysius, but by an anonymous author, who was a monk in Zūqnīn, near Āmid. Chabot himself admitted his error, stating that what he had ascribed to Dionysius had, in fact, been written by the monk of Zūqnīn in 775; he also showed that a considerable portion of the chronicle of Dionysius is preserved in the chronicle of Michael the Syrian—as Michael himself states in his chronicle. A number of scholars have since repeated and confirmed these findings.

Of Dionysius himself, we know that he was the Ya^cqubite Patriarch of Antioch starting in 818, and that he died on 22 August 845; he was a *tel-maḥrayyā*, i.e. his place of origin was Tel Maḥrē, now known as Tall al-Manāḥīr, near Raqqa, and was a monk in Qinnasrīn; he enjoyed a good relationship with Caliph al-Ma'mūn and even accompanied him on his journey to Egypt. His chronicle contained information on the period between 583 and 843, in two volumes. Michael the Syrian, as stated above, copied a large portion of this chronicle; Bar Hebraeus, in his ecclesiastical chronicle, copied it from Michael the Syrian.^v

^v See Assemani, *Bibl. Or.*, II, 72-77, who cites MS Vatican (Syri) 164: *ecclesiastica historia Dionysii Patriarchae*; see Chabot, *Chron.*, xxix. That 'abstract' was MS Vatican (Syri) 162, which he re-edited in 1927, in *CSCO* (Syri), vol. XLIII, under the title: *Chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, continued in 1933 in vol. LIII, and then published a Latin translation with an introduction, in vol. LXVI. See Nau, *JA*, 9^e sér., t. 8 (1896), 346, and see *ibid.*, 347 n. 1, a list of fragments

Almost self-understood is the role of the medieval Arabic sources in providing both direct information about many topics discussed in this volume and the general framework of every detail and event it describes. Also, without this background almost no understanding and deciphering of the Geniza letters would have been possible.

Like anyone writing in this day and age (and anyone who may write in the future) on the Jews of Egypt and the Maghrib, and the Mediterranean basin in general, I owe a great debt to my teacher, the late Prof. S.D. Goitein, especially in the part dealing with economics and the discussion of the merchants' letters. Goitein himself relied, to a great degree, on scholars who preceded him, and expressed his gratitude to them; although the limited scope of this Preface precludes individual mention of all those scholars, many of them are mentioned—as is Goitein himself—in the references below. Goitein frequently expressed his hope that his studies would be of interest and use to his followers, and that they would expand and develop the investigation of sources and passages which he had not had time to discuss in full.

wrongly considered by Assemani (al-Samʿānī) to be by Dionysius. See also what he wrote in the *Bulletin critique* 1895:321. Also see Chabot in his introduction to the chronicle of Michael the Syrian, xxxii: from chapter 21 in book 10 of Michael, to the end of book 12, we have before us a text mainly copied from Dionysius; see the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, 378 (text); II, 357 (translation) = ch. 14 in book 12. Baron, *SRHJ*, V, 9, 295 n. 6 was apparently aware of only what Chabot wrote in his second edition of the chronicle of the anonymous writer of Zūqnīn (ascribed to Dionysius) and while discussing the dispute between David and Daniel, did not make use of the original versions by Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus. As he puts it, both Bar Hebraeus and Dionysius (in that order!) are describing the very same events; while there is no doubt that the only source before Bar Hebraeus was Dionysius. See the entry 'Denys de Tellmahré' in *DHGE*, XIV, 310f.; Nöldeke, *WZKM*, 10 (1986), 160; Duval, *Litt. syr.*, 203ff.; Haase, *OC*, NS 6:240, 1916; Abramowski, *Dionysius*, 22f.; also see Cahen, *Arabica*, 1 (1954), 136, who was not aware of the problem of the identity concerning the author of the chronicle, and ascribed the chronicle of Zūqnīn to Dionysius of Tel Mahrē; also see Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrol syr.*, 197, 208; Pigulevskaja, *JhB d. österr. byz. Ges.*, 16:55, 1967; Witakowski, *Syr. Chron.*, 30ff. More on Dionysius and on Tel Mahrē see: Zakī ʿIwād, *Majallat majmaʿ al-lughā al-suryāniyya*, 3 (1977), 46 f.; Vööbus, *OC*, 48:286, 1964, writes about a manuscript in the Syrian Patriarchy in Damascus, *qanōnā de-qadīshā dionūsīus*, which tells about a gathering of the Yaʿqūbite Church after he was elected as patriarch, in October, 818; a schism took place at that time in the Church, and the opposition elected a rival patriarch, Aviram. See also *idem*, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, CSCO Subs., 35ff.; on the order of the chronicle's copies: Bar Hebraeus from Michael the Syrian and Michael the Syrian from Dionysius, see Nau, *Bull. crit.* (1896), 325; Brooks, *BZ*, 15 (1906), 583; Baumstark, *Gesch.*, 318. In research, the text of Bar Hebraeus is the one which is commonly cited, ascribing it to him; this is an accepted usage; similar, for instance, in the way texts written by earlier chroniclers are cited from and ascribed to Ṭabarī, since he collected, copied and included them in his own chronicles; but one should be aware of the fact that it is Michael the Syrian who was the first to ad libitum cite Dionysius. Michael the Syrian, who lived in the second half of the twelfth century, preceded Bar Hebraeus by ca. 100 years. Thus, the matter of Dionysius' chronicle has been well-known for some 800 years, and is not 'a discovery' of recent generations, as some appear to have thought.

With regard to the reference books, in matters of language, bibliography, and the calculation of the calendar, I have already mentioned them in the introduction to my book on Palestine. Meanwhile, however, three important and praiseworthy reference works have been published: (1) a bibliography of the publications of the Geniza manuscripts in Cambridge: S.C. Reif (ed.), *Published Material from the Cambridge Geniza Collections, a Bibliography 1896-1980*, Cambridge 1988; (2) the (Hebrew) catalog of the Mosseri Collection, published by the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National and University Library, Jerusalem 1990. (3) *The Cambridge Genizah Collections, Their Contents and Significance*, edited by Stefan C. Reif, with the Assistance of Shulamit Reif, Cambridge 2002.

Interested readers will be able to use these three reference books to complete the list of references to the Geniza documents housed in both those collections (which constitute a great majority in my collection); these lists, appearing in the preambles to the Geniza documents printed in my collection, are at times only partial.

In the calculation of the dates, it should be noted that, where mention is made of a number of days *baqīn* (remaining) of the month, the number which should, at times, be subtracted from the number of days of the month is, in fact, the number of days said to remain less one, because very often they also counted the day on which the letter was written as belonging to the remaining days. Thus for example, we find, in a letter written by °Ayyāsh b. Ṣedāqā, no. 483, b, lines 2-3: "Tuesday, with four (days) remaining in Tammuz"; if we subtract 4 from 29, we find that the date is 25 Tammuz, but in fact, 25 Tammuz never falls on Tuesday. This indicates that he took into account the date on which the letter was written, so that actually there were only three days remaining in the month. A similar case is that of a letter written by Abraham b. Farrāḥ. 544, a, line 3, who writes that there were 'two nights' remaining in Iyar, and that the day was Friday; this would seem to indicate 27 Iyar, but 27 Iyar never falls on Friday. Therefore we should not subtract 2 from 29, but only 1, resulting in the date of 28 Iyar.

The transcription of the Arabic names and words in this book is in conformity with accepted scholarly usage. Hebrew titles and names are transcribed in a less 'orthodox' manner; both Biblical and later names and terms are transcribed according to the usage in current research, as for example in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Naturally there is a certain lack of uniformity in this, which I hope will be accepted by most readers with a degree of tolerance.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the institutions which assisted me in writing this book, and especially to the libraries where the Geniza manuscripts included in my collection are kept. I thank the directors and employees of those libraries for their courteous service

and for the permission to publish the documents: Cambridge University Library (the old collection and the Taylor-Shechter Collection); the New York Jewish Theological Seminary Library (the Adler Collection and the Shechter Collection); the Bodleian Library in Oxford; the British Library in London (manuscripts which have formerly belonged to the British Museum and mentioned in references under BM, now replaced by BL); the Annenberg Institute Library (the Dropsie Collection) in Philadelphia; the Freer Gallery in Washington; the Alliance israélite universelle Library in Paris; the Westminster College Library in Cambridge; the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest (the David Kaufmann Collection); the Austrian National Library (the Archduke Rainer Collection); the State Library in Berlin; the University Library in Heidelberg; the John Rylands Library in Manchester; the University Library in St. Petersburg. The Department of Manuscripts and the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the National and University Library in Jerusalem made their collections available to me, particularly the photographs and microfilms of the Mosseri Collection. I was given important assistance by the staff of the Central Library of Tel Aviv University, where I did most of my work, and I am grateful to them. As regards the present English version, I am particularly grateful to Professor Paul B. Fenton, the editor of the "Études sur le judaïsme médiéval", who graciously accepted the book for this series; and to Doctor David Strassler for the translation from the Hebrew. I am also grateful to Professor Nili Cohen, Rector of Tel Aviv University, and to Professor Itamar Rabinovich, its President, for the financial aid, which made the English translation possible. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Carmela Shemesh, who prepared the index; and to Mrs. Perlina Varon, who typed the manuscript and prepared the book for press; to Mrs. Golda Swed, who typed whatever was in Arabic script; to Professor Jeremy Cohen, Head of the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, and to its staff, Mses. Ora Azta, Aviva Mizrahi, Aviva Rosenthal, Sirette Daniel, for their help; and, last not least, to Dr. Marcella Mulder, Assistant Editor at the Brill Publishing House in Leiden, who guided us throughout the publication process.