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**A Rumour about the Ten Tribes in Pope Martin V.'s Time.**

THE legend of the Ten Tribes formed the Jews' romance and national epic. Though the ideas and hopes it inspired in different centuries have been but sparingly recorded, a sufficient number of literary documents,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, exists to enable us to note the vigour and persistency with which it has maintained itself down to our day. The Hebrew's imagination, degraded and borne to the ground in Europe, flew swiftly and unhesitatingly to Asia, where it refreshed itself by the establishment of ideal kingdoms and the contemplation of fancied Jewish power. The misery in sight it regarded as transient, the deliverance in prospect as inevitable. Far away, in distant India, lived the Ten Tribes, with their hero-kings and overwhelming armies, impatiently awaiting the last of the ten signs which would give them the signal for marching to the relief of their suffering brethren pining in captivity. The billows of the Sambation still heaved,<sup>2</sup> an indication that the hour of deliverance had not yet struck, for through the dry bed of this river would the tribes have to pass to commence their victorious expedition.

Signs and wonders were sent to preserve the faith in this salvation from death or decay. Sometimes the crescent above the Omar Mosque in Jerusalem was reported to have shifted, or a pillar broke, or a gate sank in the ground. Sometimes a blessed message was brought by a dove on its wings, or was found in Hebrew characters among the branches of a tree by a well. It was also reported that the rescuers beyond the mysterious stream, whenever they heard of the oppressions of their brethren in the West, were roused to a pitch of wild excitement, and seized their weapons to begin their march. Occasionally came a living confirmation of the faith that was slumbering in the popular consciousness. An ambassador of the great deliverer, a descendant of the Ten Tribes, a Reubenite or a Danite would appear, at one time in the Holy Land, at another in Egypt, till at last David Reubeni proceeded to Europe and delivered himself in the capital of Christendom of his message from the king of the Ten Tribes. They were still engaged in a fierce contest with the Asiatic Christians who were under the sway of Prester John. But the issue was already decided, and the joyful news was on the road that the Sambation had begun to dry up, and the signal had been given for the grand expedition to Europe.

Hitherto, attention has been concentrated only upon the dissemina-

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<sup>1</sup> Neubauer, the *JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, I. 14, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives*, xx., 285.

tion of these marvellous tales among *the Jews*. But the fact has been altogether lost sight of that outside the Ghetto too, they met with acceptance, as the credulous character of mediæval times would indeed have led us to expect. The intercourse of Pope Clement VII. and João III., the King of Portugal, with David Reubeni would be absolutely inexplicable, unless we assumed that the belief in the reality of the Ten Tribes had been long fostered in the Church by traditions already become venerable.

The existence of Prester John and his Christian realm was credited, and faith in the Jewish kings of the Ten Tribes and their formidable power was a correlative of this belief. Prester John's letter to the Pope, which explicitly mentions a Jewish state, and speaks of its vastness, was therefore welcomed as a message of good omen disseminated in a Hebrew translation.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance by the Church of the belief in the existence of the Ten Tribes, however confidently it may be inferred from David Reubeni's and Solomon Molcho's careers, has been hitherto unsupported by documentary evidence. The remarkable letter, which is now published for the first time, changes the conjecture into a certainty, and the fables concerning the Ten Tribes become a historical factor.

We are indebted to the Jewish grammarian, Joseph b. Jehuda Sarko,<sup>2</sup> teacher and secretary in the first half of the fifteenth century to various Italian congregations, for having preserved this letter for us in his collection of Epistles, which, on account of its specimens of style, he entitled "Fruit of the Lips." Not a single word of explanation accompanies this letter, nor is any reference given which would enable us to determine its purpose and occasion. But its literary art proves that the writer must have been a distinguished Hebraist and stylist; perhaps Sarko himself, if, as is possible, the collection only contained his own compositions. It was the custom in Jewish communities at that time—in imitation of the courts and State chancelleries who appointed the most distinguished humanists as secretaries—to entrust their secretaryships to Jewish poets and writers. Hence, the letters of that period are valuable products of the new Hebrew literature, and official documents even are illuminated by a splendid style. A pearl of this kind is the letter which I wish to incorporate in the literature of the Ten Tribes.

A complete series of fresh discoveries will have to be made before we can place this document in the right historical light, or vividly

<sup>1</sup> Neubauer in *יד קובץ על יד* iv., 19.

<sup>2</sup> M. Lattes, *Catalogo dei codici ebraici della biblioteca Marciana*, p. 8 No. 13; Halberstam, *קהלת שלמה*, No. 231.

realise the persons it mentions, who at present pass before our view as mere phantoms. Our ignorance, however, does not impair the reality of the narrative. That a new discovery should suggest new problems is a phenomenon with which we are quite familiar in Jewish history.

The report had again penetrated into Europe of the rising of the Ten Tribes to free their brothers from the yoke of their oppressors. The year 1419 was computed to be the date when Obadiah's prophecy against Edom [Rome] was to be fulfilled. In the month of Nissan—the month of deliverance—the embassy arrived at Rome. And the prophet's prediction had been realised. Terror reigned in the Capitoline Hill, the mountain of Esau. Two Popes then ruled contemporaneously. The letter speaks, therefore of the Pope in our territory, viz., the Pontiff at Rome, Martin V. We would have been glad to have had more details about the terror into which the report of a distant Jewish kingdom threw the Papal Court. But the fear of discovery closed the writer's mouth. What if the letter were intercepted and fell into the hands of the Christian authorities. At all events, the rumour was so strong, the excitement it aroused so intense and persistent, that two distinguished members of the Jewish community, possibly of Rome, resolved to travel to the East, where, being nearer the scene of the events, they could hope to obtain reliable information. R. Elias, a scholar of wide-reaching fame, which attracted pupils from remote lands, offered to set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and bring back whatever authentic information he could there obtain. He was accompanied by a younger man, Benjamin b. Elchanan, descended from a notable family, and personally already celebrated for his scholarly attainments. The intrepid envoys, it was anticipated, would receive encouragement and assistance in their mission from the Nagid of Egypt, R. Amram. Messengers and pilgrims returned from Palestine had disseminated the report that in Egypt the Jews still enjoyed a remnant of power, and that their Nagid realised in a measure the patriarch's blessing: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah." To R. Amram, then, the community sent a letter commending the pilgrims to his kind notice. Whatever the letter omitted would be explained by R. Elias, whose lips the letter would unseal. The dangers to which the Jews, pining in the Kingdom of Edom, were exposed would account to the Nagid, who lived under the shadow of Islam, for the brevity of the written communication, and the necessity of verbal declarations on all essential points.

Like a flash of lightning in the night, that leaves a thicker darkness behind, is this epistle. By a tantalising chance it has not even come down in a perfect state. Its rhymes, which follow the word קים

suddenly break off three lines before the apparent end. This clearly proves that something is missing before the last page in Halberstam's MS., No. 231. The last portion, from **ובעיניכם** onward, beginning on a fresh page, belongs to another document. The conclusion to ours is wanting.

But the embassies from the Ten Tribes were not yet to come to an end. Throughout the fifteenth century Italian Jews sent home from the Holy Land letters teeming with references to the numerous signs that indicated the march of the Ten Tribes. These were sedulously copied and widely disseminated among the communities of Italy.<sup>1</sup> And thus David Reubeni's appearance forms the close of a series of antecedent events, without which it would be as erratic and inexplicable as a solitary rock jutting out from the wide and level plain. The letters which announced the existence of a kingdom of the Ten Tribes and their imminent enterprise were like seeds scattered over Italy. And when David Reubeni came, he found the faith in his mission fully ripe. But the Christian world, too, had made itself acquainted with these tales, and had begun to reckon seriously with a phenomenon, the truth of which was inferred from the confidence and positiveness with which it was recounted, and which, from repeated reports, had at last come to be believed. This would make Abraham Jagel's statement<sup>2</sup> intelligible that Clement VIII. not only entered into personal communication with David Reubeni, but equipped an expedition for the discovery of the Ten Tribes.

Cod. Halberstam, 231, f. 167a.

עיר וקדיש אך בצלם יתהלך איש נשיא אלים המאור הגדול לממשלת  
נניד ומצוה מאור ישראל ותוחלת העומד לנו לנס בהלו נר לכבוד ולתפארת  
לבית יעקב שמך אלים אלינו כי פארך אשר הונף ואשר הורם כבוד מרנא  
ורבנה עמוד גולת אריאל נר ישראל ההר עמרם לעלמין חיי וכל אשר  
תשאלך נפשך לטובה ולברכה אשר בו חסיה נפשך לך יקים . לקול המולה  
גדולה באזנינו שמענו כי פקד יי את עמו למען שמו ועשרת שבטים שבטי  
יה מארץ מכורתם ננע אלים בלבותם מתניהם לשנם ונדחי ישראל לכנם  
ועברו מעברה ושות שתו [חשערה] ברב המונם ושאונם ויעשו בשנאיהם  
כרצונם והשמועה הגיעה בחצר מלך הגוים האפיוור העומד במחוזו זה  
וישמעו עמים ירנזו והתמהו תמהו נבהלו נחפזו והדברים עתיקים . והקול  
נשמע הולך וחזק מכמו חדש ניסן שנת למען יברת איש מהר עשו מִקְטָל  
אחר האלף החמישי לנטוע שמים וליסוד ארץ אראלים ומצוקים יי ויהי איש  
אחר מן הרמתיים מיחדי סנלחנו ואור ישראל לכל גליותינו ועמו עז ותושיה

<sup>1</sup> קובץ על יד iv., l 24, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, l. 1.

ובאים מארץ מרחק תורה יבקשו מפיהו ושמו כְּמֹהָרְ אֱלִיָּהּ כִּי יֵחֵם לִבּוֹ רוּחַ נְדִיבָה סִמְכָתָהּוּ לִמְעַן בֵּית ה' אֱלִינוּ כִּי נִכְסֹף נִכְסֹף אֶת עִפְרָה לְחֹנֵן וְעַל חֲרֻבּוֹתֶיהָ לְקוֹנֵן לְחַזוֹת בְּנַעַם יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְצִיּוֹן מִכְּלָל יִפִּי שֵׁשׁ עָלוּ כַהֲנֵי זִקְנֵי וּלְבָקֵר בְּהִיכַל יי' וְהָיוּ עֵינֵי וּלְבִי שֵׁם נֶאֱנָחִים וְנֶאֱנָקִים • וְלֹהֲקִיבִיל פְּנֵי פֶתַח יִקְרַת צִפְרִית תִּפְאָרֶת גְּדֻלַּת מַעְלַתְךָ כִּי רַבָּה הִיא וְכִירַח עוֹלָם יִכּוֹן כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ יִהְיֶה נִכּוֹן עַר בְּלֹתֵי שָׁמַיִם וּשְׁחָקִים • וְעַמּוֹ הַבְּחֹר הַלְּזֶה כָּלוּ מַחֲמָדִים וְלִתְּוֹרָה וְלִתְּעוּדָה יְדוּ הִדָּה מִטּוֹבֵי הָאָרֶץ וְגִדּוּלֶיהָ וּמִשְׁרִידֵי קִהְלַתְנוּ וּמֵאֲצִילֶיהָ וּשְׁמוֹ בְּנִימִין בְּכֹר אֲלַחֲנֵן וּשְׁנֵיהֶם נִדְרוּ וְנֶאֱמָנָה אֵל אֵל רוּחַם לְשִׁפּוֹךְ לִפְנֵינוּ שִׁיחָם וְרַגְבֵי הָאָרֶץ הִיִּתָּה כֵּן עֵדָן לָהֶם מִתּוֹקִים • וְכִי יִדְעֵנוּ וְנִתְּבָרֵר לָנוּ הַתְּנַדְּבוֹת לָבֶם וּמִמּוֹנֵם לִפְאָר אֶת בֵּית אֱלִינוּ וּמִקּוֹם רַגְלֶיךָ לְכַבֵּד כִּי בְּאִמּוֹנָה הֵם עוֹשִׂים וְלַעֲמוּד עַל בִּירוֹר הַשְּׁמוּעָה הַזֹּאת תִּשְׁקָה נִמְרָצֵת מִתְּאֹוִים וּמִשְׁחֻקִּים וּשְׁלֹחֵי מִצְוָה אֵינָם נִזְקָוִים • לַעֲמַת מַגְמַת עֲצַמַת חֲכַמַת וְדַעַת עֲנוֹתְנוֹתְךָ הַמוֹפְלֵא נִשְׁפּוֹךְ שִׁיחָנוּ אִף רוּחָנוּ בִּקְרַבְנוּ לְשַׁחַר פְּנֵי גְדֻלַּת מַעְלַת כְּמוֹךָ יַעֲלֶה וְיִבֵּא כְבוֹד מוֹרְנוּ הֵרָ אֱלִיָּהּ עַל רִצּוֹן בֵּית קֹדֶשְׁךָ וְתִפְאָרְתְּךָ וְיִמִּין עֲצַתְךָ הַנִּכְוֹנָה תִּסְעֲדֵנוּ וְנִהְרִי נַחֲלֵי נִהְרֵנוּ כַּחֲכַמַת אֱלֹהִין אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ דְּלָה יִדְלָה וְשִׁאֹב יִשָּׂאֵב מִמַּעֲיֵי רוּחַ עֲצָה הַיְעוּצָה הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּךָ בְּמִיָּם עִמּוֹקִים • לְחֻקּוֹר וּלְדְרוּשׁ דְּרִישָׁה וְחֻקִּירָה הֵיטֵב עַל הַשְּׁמוּעָה הַרְמוּזָה בְּכָל אֹפֶן אִי זֶה יִכְשֵׁר וּבְכָל מָה שֶׁאֲפָשֵׁר וְלִישֵׁר אֲרַחֲוִיתִי וְלֹהֲכִין צִעְרֵנוּ וְפַעֲמֵינוּ בַּחֲבֵרָה טוֹבָה וּבִטּוּחָה לְפִי כְבוֹדוֹ וּבְאֹור פַּחֲדְךָ וּמוֹרָאֵךְ הַהָאִיר לָנוּ בְּלִפְיֵדֵי אִשׁ וּבְרַקִּים • בְּלַכְתּוֹ מִמְּדִינָה לְמְדִינָה וּמַעֲרִיר לַעִיר אֲשֶׁר יִהְיוּ פְּנֵינוּ מוֹעֲדוֹת עַד שׁוֹבוּ לְמַחֲזוֹן חֲפִצּוֹ מִקּוֹמְנוּ זֶה וְאֵל אֲרָצוֹ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבִטּוֹב לָבֵב בְּשִׁמּוּעָה טוֹבָה תַּחֲלִימְנוּ וְתַחֲיִינוּ וּשְׁפַתּוֹתֵינוּ שִׁבַּח וְתַהֲלָה תִּבְעַנָּה וְעֲצַמּוֹתֵינוּ הַיִּבְשׁוֹת כְּדִשָּׂא תִּפְרַחְנָה נַעֲרִינוּ וְזִקְנֵינוּ בַּחֲרוּדִים וְגַם בְּתוֹלוֹת עוֹלָלִים וְיוֹנָקִים • וְכִי יִרְאֵנוּ וְנִפְלָה אֵימַת מַלְכוּת אֲדוֹם עֲלֵינוּ עַל רֹאֵ דְנָא בַּחֲרָנוּ הַקְּצוֹר בְּסִפּוֹר הַנִּשְׁמַע בְּאַרְצֵנוּ וְגַלְיָנוּ טַפַּח וְכַסִּינוּ טַפַּחִים כִּי בִטְחָנוּ וְנִשְׁעַנְנוּ בְּאֵילָן הַגְּדוֹל הֵן הוּא רוּחַ אֲפִינוּ כִּכֵּב נִשְׁפָּנוּ מֹרְ אֱלִיָּהּ זֶה הַנּוֹ הוּא יִהְיֶה לְכְבוֹד מַעְלַתְךָ לְפָה דֶּרֶךְ כָּל וְדֶרֶךְ חֶלֶק וְאַחֲרֵי יוֹכָה לְחַזוֹת בְּקִלְסָתֵךְ פְּנֵי פְּנִינֵי אֹור יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא תַּהֲלַתְךָ וְיַדְעֵ וְיִשְׁכִּיל אֶת הַקּוֹל הַנִּשְׁמַע בְּאַרְצֵנוּ עַל בּוֹרֵיו בֵּא יִבֵּא בְּרַנָּה וְיִהְיֶה דְּבָרוֹ לָנוּ וְאִמְרָתוֹ תִּזְלַ כְּטַל אֹורוֹת הַלְּחִיּוֹת רוּחַ שְׁפָלִים הַיְהוּדִים הָאֲמֻלָּלִים אֲשֶׁר רַבּוּ כְּמוֹ רַבּוּ מִפְּנֵי חֲמַת הַמִּצִּיּוֹקִים • לָבֶבְךָ יִתְחַמֵּץ וּבְרַכִּים כַּרְעוֹת יֵאֱמָץ עַד יִשְׁקִיף וְיִרְאֵ אֱלֹוִהּ מִמַּעַל הַשְּׁקֵפָה לְטוֹבָה יְחוּם עַל עֵינֵי עַמּוֹ וְלֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לְדָאבָה וְיִהְיֶה סִכּוֹ בְּשֵׁלֶם וּלְמִשְׁנֵאֵינוּ יִשְׁלָם וְנֹדַעַה יֵד יי' לְכָל בֶּשֶׁר וְיִאֲהַזְמוּ רַעַד וְשַׁעַר מִשְׁעַר לְשַׁעַר בְּרַחֲבוֹת וּבִשְׁוֹקִים • וְעֵינֵינוּ וְעֵינֵיכֶם עִם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרִים אַחֲינוּ וְאַחִיכֶם בְּבֵא לְצִיּוֹן נוֹאֵל תִּרְאִינָה וְעֵינֵי רַשְׁעִים תַּכְלִינָה יִמְהַר יְחִישָׁה יְחַדֵּשׁ יִמִּינוּ כְּקֵדֶם בְּצִיּוֹן קְרִית מוֹעֲדֵנוּ יִרְאֵנוּ נִפְלְאוֹת וְעֵינֵינוּ רוֹאוֹת בִּשְׁוֹב יי' שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ לְקָרֵא לְשִׁבּוּיִם דְּרוֹר וְאִם אֲסוּרִים בְּזִיּוֹקִים • וְעֵינֵיכֶם לֹא יִקְטֹן וְהַחֲלִצוּ מֵאֲתַכְּם אֲנִשִּׁים חוֹשִׁים וְעֵינֵינוּ וְעֵינֵיכֶם לַעֲדֵנָא כְּדָנָא אֵל תְּחוּם עַל מַמּוֹנְנוּ וְעַל מַמּוֹנְכֶם פִּי הַמְּדַבְּרִים עֵינֵינוּ תְּלוּיוֹת לֹאֵל

עליון יחום על דל ואביון ותחו עיננו ועינכם בזיון אגחנו אלה פה חתוכ,  
: מטה :

DAVID KAUFMANN.

### THE MANDAIC VERSION OF PSALM CXIV.

FOLLOWING in the footsteps of W. Brandt (*The Mandaic Religion*, p. 134), Lagarde has shown that a passage from the *Sidra Rabba*, the holy book of the Mandians, is borrowed from the 114th Psalm (*Mittheilungen*, Vol. IV., p. 44). He even ventures so far as to allege "that what the Mandians have borrowed is a more original, and more complete, though more ornate form of the Psalm." In reality, the verses, in which the Mandaic version is richer than the 114th Psalm, are in no way so constituted as to incline one to regard them as forming an original part of the Psalm. Moreover, the two most important of these Mandaic verses probably come from another Psalm, an idea which has escaped Lagarde. They are contained in lines 6 and 9, according to Lagarde's arrangement and translation. Line 6, *ואילאתא בדבאר משאחטא עולאואיהן*, "and the hinds of the forest destroyed their young," line 9, *וארויזא בלילבאן*, "and the cedars of Lebanon are broken." Both these lines are undoubtedly taken from the 29th Psalm. In line 9 one can see at a glance the resemblance to the Targum of Psalm xxix. 9, *קלא ד"י מתבר ית ארזי לבנן*, and l. 6 is merely a paraphrase to the words in Psalm xxix. 5, *יחולל אילות*. For the "destroying their young" in the Mandaic is certainly nothing else than a reference to untimely births brought about by a shock, which meaning some apply to *יחולל* (see the commentary of Ibn Ezra i. 1). *משאחטא* is either a Mandaic idiom, with which *שחת* of Genesis xxxviii. 9 may be compared, or an incorrect rendering, as Lagarde believes, of *היבל*, which denotes, "to bring forth in pain" and "to destroy." In the latter case we must assume that the Mandaic translator read *יחבל* in place of *יחולל*. At any rate it is clear that this translator enriched the glowing description of the effect of the appearance of God upon nature, which he derived from the 114th Psalm by two incidents which he took from the 29th Psalm that depicts a similar scene. The "voice of God," which in the latter Psalm is the cause of this wondrous effect, is simply omitted by the writer altogether.

W. BACHER.