

vicious, and with them the anti-Jewish note. The Pope was dubbed "the Spanish Rabbi" who sells France to the Jews. These arguments, used as propaganda, were lapped up by the public, in whom hatred of Jewry was deeply rooted. The Catholics, on the defensive, repeat for their part the wellworn Church formulae concerning the existence of the Jews in serfdom.

The true attitude of French public opinion towards the Jews is revealed less in tendentious polemics than in casual remarks. It becomes clear that in traditional Jew-hatred there was little to choose between the intellectual elite and the vulgar masses. Jean Bodin stands out as a solitary exception to the rule, showing sympathy to the Jewish religion and stressing its importance even compared with Christianity. Although he does not support multiplication of religions in a State, Bodin demands that they be tolerated where they exist. Judaism as the oldest religion is treated by him with particular appreciation, beyond the ordinary bounds of his subject.

TALES ABOUT R' ADAM BAAL SHEM IN THE VERSIONS OF SHIBKHEI HA'BESHT

by *Ch. Shmeruk* (pp. 86-105)

In the foreword to the publication of the text of a small 17th century Yiddish book on R' Adam Baal Shem the author makes the following points clear:

- 1) Although the historical reality of R' Adam Baal Shem cannot be proved, the legends about him (one of which is also told of the great Rabbi Loeb of Prague) seem to have their origin in historical memories of the contact between the Jews of Prague and the emperors Maximilian II and his son Rudolf II and members of their court, who showed interest in Jewish mystical doctrines.
- 2) Two of the tales from the little book on R' Adam Baal Shem were included — with certain changes — in the main hagiographical work of the Hassidic movement, "Shibkhei Ha'Besht" (Praises of Besht), which was first printed in 1815. The purpose of the tales about R' Adam in "Praises of Besht" is to establish an unbroken tradition between the Besht and R' Adam Baal Shem.
- 3) The tales of R' Adam in "Praises of Besht" in Hebrew and in Yiddish (both printed in Ostrog, 1815) differ in many details, although their interconnection is beyond doubt. An examination of the variations establishes the possibility that the Ostrog version in Yiddish — one of the three Yiddish versions of the book — is not a translation of the printed work but a direct translation from one of the manuscript copies that circulated before the Hebrew book was printed. It follows that the Yiddish Ostrog version is older than the Hebrew version. The changes in the latter originate in the tradition of the Habad Hassidim, on which the printer of the Hebrew version relied. The changes are intended to blur the magical activities of the Besht and by this to emphasize his spiritual powers.
- 4) The connection between the tales in "Praises of Besht" and the earlier tales about R' Adam Baal Shem, which can be accepted as proved, cast doubt on G. Scholem's suggestion that R' Adam in "Praises of Besht" is to be identified with one of the Sabbatian Cabbalists, R' Heshel Zoref, whose writings were current among the Hassidic leaders.
- 5) One of the tales included in this little book on R' Adam appears in a slightly different form in Yiddish in a book entitled "Maase Nissim" (A Miracle, Amsterdam 1696). It contains local legends of the Jews of Worms — among the earliest in German

IV

Jewish hagiography. This fact indicates the wide distribution of these Jewish hagiographic motifs, from Worms in the West through Prague to Eastern Europe. It also attests the continuity of this peculiar literary tradition among Ashkenazi Jews.

THE LIBEL OF JEWISH ASS-WORSHIP

by R. Neher-Bernheim (pp. 106-115)

The author attempts to explain the source of the widespread libel in Greek literature from the 3rd century B.C. onwards that the Jews worship the ass. The libel gained wide publicity through the writings of Apion, Tacitus and Plutarch. The author examines the various theories that have been advanced to explain this, and tends to agree with the view that the rise of the libel is connected with the popular Egyptian belief that the God of the Jews is identical with the god Seth. From an analysis of Plutarch's works the author suggests two additional reasons which could contribute to the identification of the God of the Jews with Seth, namely the custom of blowing the *Shofar* and the ritual of the Red Cow (*parah adumah*), both of which served to arouse associations between Jewish religious customs and the god Seth.

The author also notices the importance of the ass in a number of Biblical stories: the return of Moses to Egypt (Exodus 4, 20); Balaam and the ass (Numbers 22, 21 ff.); the meeting between Samuel and Saul, when the latter, setting forth to search for his father's asses, found himself anointed king (I Samuel 9, 10). These stories were famous, and helped to consolidate the connection in popular mind between the Jewish religious customs and the ass.

IN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ISRAEL

Council

The Council of the Society met on 8.1.63 at the offices of the Society on the Hebrew University campus.

The Council heard a report from the Chairman on the activities of the Committee and approved it, dwelling especially on the urgent need to find additional financial resources to cover the Society's deficit and to ensure the continuance of its activities. The Council also decided to put before the General Assembly some suggested changes in the regulations, in keeping with changed conditions.

General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Historical Society was held on 24.3.63 in the Sprinzak Building of the Hebrew University. Professor B. Z. Dinur, who opened the proceedings with greetings, observed that the Historical Society was approaching its 40th year of existence; he reviewed its main activities during the past two years. On Prof. Dinur's proposal, Prof. N. Feinberg was elected Chairman of the Assembly. The Assembly heard and unanimously carried a general and financial report. Prof. E. E. Urbach, in the name of the Council of the Society, put forward new regulations, which the Assembly discussed one by one. With minor changes the new regulations were carried (see below, p. IV for full text).

In the name of the outgoing Committee, Prof. A. Fuks proposed 23 candidates for the new Executive Committee of the Society. With one abstention these names were un-