

Thesis of the PhD Dissertation

„A CONCISE CHRONOLOGY OF BIBLICAL HISTORY”

It is well known that the Torah is not a book of history, a book aimed at presenting the history of mankind or, more concretely, the history of the Jewish people. Although the Torah contains basically the exposition of the *mitzvos* as of the Eternal's will, nevertheless one can find there many „historical” informations also. Part of these give „raw-material” for ethical teachings, while an other part describes the circumstances of the giving of the commandments. The background of the „historical” informations of the Torah, being by times only short allusions, has been preserved by the *aggadic* tradition. The dissertation – constituting the first part of a larger and more comprehensive work on the subject – presents an overview of Biblical history through a chronological elaboration of the Torah (the *Written Law*) and the *aggadic* tradition (the *Oral Law*) from the Creation of the Universe to the *Exode*.

What this paper proposes, is the elaboration of a *religious* topic by means of *scientific* methods. That is to say, to present the knowledge an average learned Jew (by learned I mean here naturally *not* being well versed in European culture but in *rabbinic* lore) could dispose – before the appearance of modern historiography, let's say up to the end of the 18th century - about the history of mankind and of the Jewish people.

Before the actual chronologically organized compilation of the *aggadic* material, in the introduction of the dissertation, I present a larger compilation of the basic terms of time reckoning, followed by a description of the calendar

systems and world-eras of the ancient Near- and Middle-East, the Greco-Roman world, Judaism, Christianity and the Islam.

At the end of this introductory part, in a chapter named „*Comparative Jewish Chronology*” – the title borrowed from an 1962 article by Rabbi Simon SCHWAB – I present some of the problems in connection with the possibilities of harmonizing the Jewish and „scientific” chronological systems. I would like to draw attention to two basic issues.

1./ *Dating the Exode*. It seems, the scientific world has arrived at some kind of a consensus in this case. Generally, the event is dated for the turning of the 14-13th centuries. The simple conversion of the traditional Jewish (rabbinical) chronology also results in the year 1312 BCE. This seems to be supported by the occurrence of the name *Ramsses* in the Torah (*Shemos* 1:11), as the name of one of the towns built by the Jews during the years of their slavery there. Referring to this, many historians propose RAMSSES II (1290-1223 BCE, 19th Dynasty),¹ the great builder (*cf.* his constructions at Abydos, the sanctuaries carved into the rock at Abu-Simbel and the Thebean *Ramesseum*), as the Pharaoh of the *Exode*.² Naturally, several other names have also been proposed: YAHMES I (Ahmose, *Amosis*; 1552-1527 BCE; 18th Thebean Dynasty) who expelled the *Hyksos* and, through this, established the New Kingdom;³ or AMENMESSE MENMIRE (after 1213 - before 1186 BCE; 19th Dynasty) who defeated the Lybians. Recently, in an article published this April,⁴ Rabbi Leibel REZNICK identifies the Pharaoh of the *Exode* with the Amarna-Pharaoh, AKHENATEN/EHNATON (AMENHOTEP IV, 1346-1347 BCE, 18th Dynasty) referring himself to Talmudic and *midrashic* sources. There, R. Reznick pretends that Ehnaton, who introduced the exclusive

¹ Chronological data concerning the years of the reign of the Pharaohs are taken from Laszló KÁKOSY, *Re fiai*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1979.

² DUBNOV, BRIGHT.

³ MAHLER, *Jüdische Chronologie*..., p. 120.

⁴ Rabbi Leibel REZNICK, The Search for Pharaoh. In *Mishpacha, Jewish Family Weekly*. No. 254, April 6, 2009. pp. 52-55.

cult of the Sun-deity - considered by many as a certain form of monotheism – did so as the only survivor of the catastrophe by the Sea of Reeds, who made repentance (*teshuvah*), and from then on only believed in the Eternal. And what is mentioned by the *Midrash*, that after the tragedy, Pharaoh escaped and became the king of Niniveh is – according to R. Reznick – an allusion in the rabbinical tradition to the construction of the new Egyptian capital, Amarna.

However, the real problem is not the identification of the Pharaoh of the *Exode*. The real difficulty is rather constituted by the fact that the Egyptian sources at our disposal are silent about the *Exode*, as well as about the Ten Plagues and even about the Jewish people's sojourn in Egypt. On the other hand, according to the monumental „*Cambridge Ancient History*”, „It is quite inconceivable that a people could have obstinately preserved traditions about a dishonourable bondage of its ancestors in a foreign land, and passed them on from generation to generation, unless it had actually passed through such an experience”¹. Generally, this „lack of evidence” instead of being considered as evidence for fictitiousness, is explained by the fact, that the Egyptians only recorded events favorable for them. Consequently, catastrophes like the Ten Plagues were banned and omitted from national memory. But this argumentation is far from being convincing. About the century-and-half-long reign of the *Hyksos*, we only know from Egyptian sources. Against this, one can still argue that the *Hyksos* were finally defeated, and thus the whole story became recorded. However, an other even more important „negative” event, the collapse of the Old Kingdom refutes the latter, already not very convincing, argument also. The events described by the so called *Ipuwer*-papyrus are in reality very similar to the Biblical description of the Ten Plagues. In the *midrashic* tradition (in the „*Sefer haYoshor*”) one can find the name of the Pharaoh of the *Exode* and that of his father, and the years of their respective reigns: 4 and 94 respectively. Now,

¹ Otto EISSFELDT, Palestine During the Nineteenth Dynasty. In: *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. II, Part 2, History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C. I. E. S. EDWARDS, C. J. GADD, N. G. L. HAMMOND, E. SOLLBERGER eds.

according to the Turin-papyrus, the last to Pharaohs of the Old Kingdom (6th Dynasty) ruled exactly for 94 and 4 years, respectively! It seems, time has come to ponder over the possibility to connect the Jew's Coming out of Egypt to the collapse of the Old Kingdom. Obviously, it becomes necessary for this to reconsider the entire chronology of ancient Egypt and, consequently, of our entire chronological system of the Antiquity. Seemingly, it is time to establish new chronological structures, instead of forcing the multitude of scientific informations accumulated during the last two centuries into structures redacted in the hellenistic period. It is well known, that the history of ancient Egypt was redacted by *Manetho*, that of Mesopotamia by *Berosos*, that of Phenicia by *Sankhuniaton*, all three in the third century BCE, and their scientific exactitude according to our actual standard can the least be considered problematic. More than that, the original works are no more extant, we only know them by excerpts, mainly from the Eusebius' „*Historia ecclesiastica*”. The ancient Greek time-reckoning according to the *Olympiads*, has also been established in the 3rd century BCE by Eratosthenes. And small wonder then, that the beginning of this system (776 BCE) is almost contemporaneous to the beginning of the traditional Roman time reckoning system (*abUrbe condita*), the traditional date of the foundation of Rome being (753 BCE), and the generally accepted date of the foundation of Carthago precedes with only some decades (814 BCE).

2./ *The dating of the Persian Empire.* As is well known, king Nevuchadnetzar of Babylonia overthrows the autonomous Jewish kingdom, destroys the first *Bais hamikdosh* in Jerusalem, and exiles the inhabitants of the Country. Almost three quarter of the seventy years of the Babylonian exile, prophesized by Jirmeyah, are already over when the Persians allied to the Medes (or inversely) defeat the New-Babylonian Empire. Established on its ruins, the Persian Empire, on its turn, will be overthrown by Alexander the Great.

This is well known. What is however problematic, is the chronology of the Persian period. What happens actually is that - following the „father of historiography”, the good old Herodote and his continuator, Thukyde – this periode, that of the Greco-Persian wars, is generally enlarged for some 220 years. Opposed to this, the traditional Jewish (rabbinic) chronology as presented by the „*Seder Olam Rabbah*” of *Rabbi YOSSE* bar Chalafta (2nd century CE), reserves for the 13-14 Persian kings altogether 52 years. This means that while the first *Bais hamikdosh* was destroyed -according to modern historiography- in 587/86 BCE, according to rabbinical tradition this happened in 422 BCE (converting the years of the Jewish Wold-Era into Gregorian years). In his abovementioned article, appeared in 1962, almost half a century before, Rabbi Schwab proposes ingenuously that in reality the data of modern scientific historiography are correct, and the *Sages* had so to say intentionally let out, hidden 165 years from the chronology. And they did so in order to prevent or at least make impossible all kind of calculations concerning the (exact) date of the coming of *Moshiach* what on the other hand is expressedly forbidden by the Talmud (*bSanhedrin* 97b): „Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end”. (This naturally does not mean that from generation to generation such calculations did not appear regularly.) As these calculations are all referring to the prophecies contained in the Book of Daniel, R. Schwab even finds a surprising *gematriah* to illustrate his argument: the numerical value of the letters of the expression „*Sod Daniel*” [סוד דניאל 'Daniel's secret'] is 165, exactly as the discrepancy between the two chronologies. Let me insist upon the tradition of our *Sages*, in opposition to Herodote, who was considered already in ancient times as far from being reliable (maybe the same as Marco Polo who, according to recent researches, is today supposed as if never had been in China, only heard many things somewhere in Central Asia from travellers, later selling these „informations” as his own travel reports). This, naturally, does not diminish at all the literary value of his work. I think, in this case also, a new generation of historiographers has to establish new

structures for the informations accumulated during the last two centuries, instead of forcing them into old structures inherited from the hellenistic period (while this forcing produces always less result - naturally).

In the letter column of the Summer 1991 issue of *Jewish Action*, Brad Aaronson answers a rather critical letter by Rabbi Alan Yuter from Springfield, NJ. There he writes among others: „*Why assume that the rest of the world is right and that we need to adapt our traditions to the theories currently in fashion? Why not instead do as our father Abraham did and take a stand for what we know to be the truth? Emunat chachamim demands that we give Chazal this benefit of the doubt.*”

* * *

In the followings, I would like to draw the attention to two important questions from my dissertation. The first one is related to the genealogies contained in Chapter 10 of *Beraishis*, while the second one concerns the traditional Jewish structures of amalgamating universal and Jewish history.

1./ „*These are the generations of Noach*” (*Beraishis* 10:1)

According to the historical tradition of the Torah, after the Flood, the devastated and unpeopled Earth had been repopled by the descendants *Noach*. In chapter ten of *Sefer Beraishis*, the Torah enumerates the genealogies of the peoples descending from *Shem*, *Cham* and *Yaphet*, alltogether 70 peoples: the tribes living in the then known world, the Mediterranean, North Africa and Near- and Middle-Asia (the Far-East does not figure on the Torah’s „map”). Naturally, the number 70 is also not incidental. According to the Torah (*Devorim* 32:8), following the destruction of the Tower of Babel, when the Eternal „*divided to the nations their inheritance, when he set apart the sons of men, He set the*

bounds of the people according to the number of the people of Israel". This is interpreted by the *midrash* (*Sifri Hazinu* 311) saying that it was exactly according to the number of *Yaakov*'s family who were later to descend to Egypt – 70 persons (*Shemos* 1:5, *Devorim* 10:22) – that the Eternal divided mankind into 70 peoples and 70 languages.

However, several questions arise in relation to the seventy peoples recorded by rabbinic tradition. First of all, which were these peoples, and which among them (or their descendants) continue to exist as one of the actual peoples. Speaking about the punishment to be inflicted upon the „arrogant hearted” Assyria, the prophet Yeshayah gives the following words into the Assyrian king’s mouth who greatly overseded the role designed for him by the Eternal – acting so because „... *it is in his heart to destroy*” -, and who has even „...*the glory of his high look*” because of this: „*I have removed the bounds of the people,*” (*Yeshayah* 10:7, 12-13). With reference to this, the Talmud remarks (*mYodayim* 4:4; *bBrachos* 28a) that Sancherib, king of Assyria intermixed the peoples and, consequently, the contemporaneous peoples are no more or at least not necessarily identical to the seventy peoples enumerated by the Torah, and also many of these latter have already disappeared. Nevertheless, or maybe exactly because of this, we find many examples in rabbinic literature - the *Targums*, the two Talmuds, the *midrashim*, and the *Sefer Josippon* – for the „actualizing” of the genealogies of the Torah, for the identification of the original seventy peoples recorded by the Torah with the peoples and countries of the Talmudic period.¹

A second question arises concerning those peoples which appear on the scene of history later, after the deportations by Sancherib and even the sealing of the Biblical canon or the Talmud.

What can be said about the different Turkish peoples? These were emerging from Central-Asia/Western China from the 3rd-4th centuries onward, advancing

¹. See *Targum Yonassan ben Uzziel to Beraishis* 10, *Targum Rav Yossef to IDivrai haYomim* 1:5-17; *bYoma* 10a; *bYevamos* 16b-17a; *jMegilah* 9:1; *Beraishis Rabbah* 37; etc. And also the *Sefer haYoshor* being in many places parallel to the *Sefer Yosippon*, even if generally more detailed than the latter.

westwards, whirling before themselves their forerunners, destroying the nomadic empires of the latter, and establishing on their turn new empires on the territory of the Southern Russian steppe, yielding finally the place to those coming after them?

Given the number 70, the new peoples had necessarily to be inserted among the old ones, or to be considered as the descendants of the latter. *Tarde venientibus...* That's how rabbinic tradition considers the Turkish peoples as being descendants of *Yafet's* son *Gomer's* son *Togarmoh* (*Beraishis* 10:2-3). JOSEPHUS (*Antt.* I:6:1) identifies *Togarmoh* still with the Phrygians of Asia-Minor, ONKELOS renders it as *Togarmoh*, and for ABRABANEL the latter signifies already the Turkish peoples, as the Ottoman Empire was called in Hebrew *Malchut Togar*.¹ However, the identification of the Turkish peoples dwelling North of the Caucasus with *Togarmoh* is far from being without problems. According to rabbinic sources (*Targumim*, *bYoma* 10a, *Beraishis Rabba* 37:1), *Gomer's* descendants live in *Germamia*! Seemingly, for the European Jewish Sages of the Middle-Ages this meant simply Germania/Germany, viz. *Eretz Ashkenaz*, as the name of *Gomer's* firstborn in the Torah (*Beraishis* 10:3) is *Ashkenaz*. Actually, the Vilna *Gaon* in his exemplar of the Talmud even emended the text for *Germania*. In Hittite source we find a town named Tagarama or Takarama situated between Charran and Karkemish. Modern scientific opinions identify *Togarmoh* with South-Western Armenia (Fr. DELITZSCH, Akk. *Til-garimmu*) or North-Western Asia-Minor (P. LAGARDE, Gr. *Teuthrania* in Mysia), while *Germamia* mentioned by the Talmud and the *Targumim* is identified with *Cimmeria* North of the Caucasus.

The „*Sefer Jossippon*” even enumerates the ten sons of *Togarmoh*: Kuzar, Pitznak, Alan, Bulgar, Katzbina, Turk, Kuz, Zakuk, Ungar és Tolmatz.² Most of

¹. Ld. YOSSEF HAKOHN, *Divrai haYomim leMalchait Tzarfat uleMalchait Bet Ottoman haTogar* (Sabionetta 1554, Amsterdam 1733).

². In: Shlomoh J. SPITZER – KOMORÓCZY Géza, *Héber Kútforrások Magyarország és a magyarországi zsidóság történetéhez a kezdetektől 1686-ig*. [Hebrew Sources Relating to the History of Hungary and Hungarian Jewry in the Middle Ages. From the Beginnings until 1686] Budapest: MTA Judaisztika

the names are well known from Hungarian prehistory: they are the personification of the „ancestors” of the Khazars, Petsenegs, Alans, Bulgarians, Turks, Hungarians and the Petseneg tribe called Tolmats. By the way, the mention by name of Turkish tribes in the „*Sefer Josippon*” is one of the serious arguments of modern historians against the antiquity of the book, and also against the identification of its author Yossef ben Gurion *hakohen*, considered as being „fictitious” and therefore renamed *pseudo-Yossef*, with Yossef ben Mattitjahu *i.e.* with JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS (although the fact of ulterior interpolations does not prove the late origin of the entire book). We find a partly different list in the so-called „Khazar correspondence”. In the letters exchanged by CHASDAI ibn Shaprut (c. 915-970), court physician and diplomat of kaliph ABD AL RAHMÁN III (912-961) of Cordova, with Yossef, the kagan of the Khazars who converted to Judaism: the most important difference is the appearance of the ethnic names *Avar* and *Savir*.¹ And in the list given by the „*Sefer Seder haDoros*” [The Order of the Generations. Karlsruhe 1769] redacted by Jechiel HEILPRINN, we find even the ethnic name *Hunor*, always as one of *Togarmoh*’s son.

And what about Rome, which influenced in such a tragic way the history of the Jewish people? Where, into which family of the genealogy given by chapter 10 of *Sefer Beraishis* does rabbinic tradition insert the people which annihilated the fragile Hasmonean kingdom, converted *Eretz Yisroel* into a Roman province, destroyed the second *Bais hamikdosh*, and dispersed the inhabitants of the Country to the four winds?

The *Midrash (Beraishis Rabbah 37:1)* identifies *Yavan*’s son *Kittim* mentioned by the Torah (*Beraishis 10:4*) with Italy; ONKELOS renders him as Rome, the *Targum Yonassan (to Bamidbor 24:24)* again as Italy. The supercommentary

Kutatócsoport – Osiris, 2003, p. 66. Part of the names are given in different form by KOHN Sámuel (*Héber kútforrások és adatok Magyarország történetéhez*. [Hebrew Sources and Data Relating to the History of Hungary] Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990², p. 4), and in the „*Sefer haYoshor*” (*Op. cit.* p. 18). Seemingly, however, we are only confronted with copist’s/printer’s error in the different manuscripts and printed editions.

¹ In: SPITZER – KOMORÓCZY, *Héber Kútforrások...*, pp. 95-96.

named „*Perush Yonassan*” adds to this, that this means *Italia shel Yavan*, i.e. the Greek colonies established from the 8th century BCE onward, South of the rivers Silarus and Frento, called following POLYBIUS with a common name in Latin *Magna Graecia* (STRABON calls the Hellens of Italy and Sicily Great-Hellas). In the „*Sefer haYoshor*” we even find how the children of *Yavan*’s son, *Elisha*, conquered Italy, and established themselves there. *Elisha* in the *Targum Yonassan* (to *Beraishis* 10:4) is *Elisha-Alas*, according to JOSEPHUS they are the *Aiols* who lived on the islands (Lesbos); ABRABANEL renders them as Sicily. *Elisha* can well be the Province of Elysium situated on the North-Western part of the Peloponnessos-peninsula; with Olympia, the scene of the cultic games held there every fourth year in honour of *Zeus*; while *Alas* can be Hellas itself, or the river Halys in Asia Minor, or even Carthago = Elyssa. Following cuneiform sources, modern scientific opinions identify it with Cyprus, called *Alasia* in Antiquity, or at least with a part of the island.¹ The conquest of Italy by *Yavan*’s son, *Elisha*, can presumably be related to the Greek colonization of Southern Italy. The *Targum Yerushalmi* speaks about Livorno (Leghorn), an important seaport of Tuscany. Also the *Targum Rav Jossef* (to *1Divrai haYomim* 1:7) renders *Kittim* as Italy. According to the „*Sefer haYoshor*”, they are the Romans, who live in the Campania-valley (a great region of Central Italy), alongside the Tiberaiu-sea (the *Tiberis*, flowing through Rome; today Tevere).² Contrary to this, JOSEPHUS and – presumably not independently of him – R. SAADYA *gaon* and also ABRABANEL identify *Kittim* with Cyprus, supposingly because of the similiar sounding of the name of the island’s most important city, *Citium* (today Karnaka). Modern scientific opinions also try to connect *Kittim* with Cyprus. However, the Talmud Yerushalmi and a variant *ms* of the *Targum Yonassan* renders it as *Achazyoh*, being presumably an alusion to the Greek tribes of the

¹ Eliezer KIL ed., *Daat Mikra*. Jerusalem: Mosad Rav Kook, 1993³. I. p. 246.

² According to one of the mythological traditions connectud to *Ianus*, he and his wife came to Italy from Thessalia. They had children in their new homeland. One of the latters, by the name Tiberius, was drowned into the river named henceforward after him.

Achaean.

On the other hand, the Talmud (*bYoma* 10a) identifies *Yavan* with Macedonia *i.e.* Greece. In the *Targum* (to *1Divrai haYomim* 1:5) and in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*jMegilah* 1:11) *Ovissus/Evessos*, which can be identified with Ephesos in Asia Minor, the Lydian town founded by the Ionians. Also according to „*Jubilees*” (9:10), they live on the Lydian sea-shore. For JOSEPHUS (I:6:1), they are the Ionians and the Greeks. This we can understand taking into consideration that it were the Ionians who founded the most important city-states on the Western coast of Asia Minor. Consequently, are we obliged to say that, according to rabbinic tradition, Rome is a descendent of the Greeks!?

From among the *Rishonim*, Rav SAADYA *gaon* (to *Daniel* 11:30) renders *Kittim* as Romania, what means the Byzantine Empire (which considered itself heir to the Roman Empire). *RASHI* (to *Bamidbor* 24:24 and *Yeshayah* 23:1) – following ONKELOS – identifies *Kittim* with Rome. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA (to *Bamidbor* 24:24) adds to this that the kingdoms of *Yavan* and *Kittim* are one.

2./ Rome

Nonetheless, in rabbinic literature, one can find a second tradition also about Rome. This appears in the actualization of the prophecies in the „*Book of Daniel*” about the four vast Empires. In the actualization of the two dreams – that of Nevuchadnetzar about the statue of gold, silver, copper and iron and clay (*Daniel* 2:32-45), and that of Daniel about the four wild beasts emerging from the sea (*Ibid.* 7:3-8) -, the new vast Empire, Rome, is called *Edom*. However, in the Torah (*Beraishis* 25:30; 36:1), *Edom* is the second name of Esau/Aisov.

Professor JERUSALMI has stated that this prophecy became always actualized, when apocalyptic ideas became accentuated in Judaism. The elasticity of the idea about the four Empires preceding the Messianic era made it possible that the new Empire should occupy the fourth place or through pushing back the precedent, or

through drawing together two older ones.¹

In a brilliant essay, David FLUSSER analyses the evolution and actualization of this tradition, and its Persian parallelisms.² There, he presents how Media and Persia, which earlier occupied the second and third places respectively between Babylonia and Macedonia, will see themselves obliged to „share” the second place when Rome occupies the fourth one, pushing back Macedonia to the third. Let us also remember that this „actualization” did not come to an end there. Considering the Torah-commentaries of the Middle-Ages, we find that for *RASHI* (11th century), who lived on *Ashkenazic* territory, the fourth Empire means evidently Rome, while for R. SAADYA *Gaon* (10th cent.) who lived in the Kaliphate of Bagdad, the fourth place is shared by *Edom* and *Yishmael*. And R. ABRAHAM Ibn Ezra (12th cent.), on his turn, a native of Arab Spain, writes that the fourth place is occupied by *Yishmael i.e.* the Arabs.

The birth of Rome which ulteriorly destroyed the second *Bais hamikdosh*, became attached by rabbinic tradition (*bSanhedrin* 21b, *bShabbos* 56b) to the marriage of *Shlomoh hamelech* with Pharaoh’s daughter (*1Melochim* 3:1); while that of *Italia shel Yavan (Magna Graecia)* to the erection of the Golden calves in Dan and Bethel by King Yeroboam of Israel (*1Melochim* 12:28-29). According to the two parallel stories, on the day of the first event, the Archangel Gavriel „...descended and stuck a reed in the sea, which gathered a sand-bank around it, on which was built the great city of Rome”; and on the day of the second one „a hut was built, and this developed into Greek Italy”.³

However, we can consider it being more than natural, that rabbinic tradition identifies Rome with the „archienemy” Esau-*Edom*: according to the *midrash (Sifrai Bamidbor* 69, *cf. Beraishis)* „it is a well known *halochoh* that *Aisov* hates

¹ Yosef Hayim YERUSHALMI, *Záchor. Zsidó történelem és zsidó emlékezet*. [Zakhor. Jewish History and Jewish Memory] Budapest: Osiris-ORZSE, 2000. p. 51. [In Hungarian]

² David FLUSSER, A négy birodalom a IV. Szibüllában és Dániel könyvében. [The Four Empires in the Sybilline IV and in the Book of Daniel] In D. FLUSSER, *A judaizmus és a kereszténység eredete*. [Judaism and the Origins of Christianity] Budapest: Osiris, 1999, pp. 254-275. [In Hungarian]

³ According to the footnote no. 26 of the Soncino Talmud, *Greek Italy* here means simply Rome.

Yaakov”. In a beautiful essay, György GÁBOR collects multitudes of examples from rabbinic literature, first of all from the different *midrashim*, for the identification of *Edom* with Rome, representing at the same time the evolution and also the apocalyptic connections of this identification.¹

However, according to the genealogies of chapter ten of *Sefer Beraishis*, *Yavan*’s son *Kittim* was a descendant of *Yaphet*, while *Aisov-Edom* of *Shem*!

Naturally, rabbinic tradition elaborates thoroughly upon the „historical” context of the identification *Edom*-Rome also. The extremely interesting composition can be found in the „*Sefer Yosippon*” and (in a larger version) in the „*Sefer haYoshor*”. The *RAMBAN*, in his commentary to the Torah (to *Beraishis* 49:31) sums up briefly the „story” following the „*Sefer Yosippon*’s” version.

The whole story starts with the dispersion after the destruction of the Tower of Babel. At first, we get informed about a war between the children of *Kittim* and of *Tuval*² - after their settlement in Italy. A Jewish historiographical book of the late 16th century, the „*Sefer Tzemach Dovid*” names this war explicitly „the war for the women” (*milchemes hanoshim*). It is rather easy to recognize here the well known story of the rape of the Sabines of the Roman historical tradition.³ Our texts call even the town of *Tuval*’s sons by the name *Sabino*, after *Tuval*’s homonymous son (who, naturally, is not mentioned in the Torah by this name).

In the followings, we find that *Aisov*’s grandson, *Tzepo ben Elifaz* attacks with a huge army Egypt of *Yossef*. Defeated, he is taken prisoner to Egypt, but after *Yossef*’s death, he succeeds in escaping together with his comrades. They go to *Aeneas*, king of Carthago, who receives them with great honour,

¹GÁBOR, György. „A negyedik vadállat” [The Fourth Wild Beast]. In József ZSELLENGÉR ed. *Széfer József. A tanítványok tanulmánykötete a tanítómester (Rabbi), Prof. Dr. Schweitzer József tiszteletére, 80. születésnapja alkalmából*. [Studies by the Pupils in Honour of the Teacher (Rabbi), Prof. Dr. Joseph Schweitzer, on Occasion of his 80th Birthday] Budapest: Open Art, 2002, pp. 95-120.

² According to the Talmud (*bYoma* 10a), *Tuval* (*Beraishis* 10:3) is *Bais Unyaki*, which is identified by modern scientific opinions as Bithynie East of the Bosphorus. According to JOSEPHUS, the Iberians; according to ABRABANEL, the Iberians of Spain (Iberians were also living East of the Black Sea). Earlier scientific opinions (Delitzsch) identified them with Eastern Asia-Minor, eventually Cappadocia (Ass. *Tabalu*, Hettite *Tafalash*).

³ Titus LIVIUS, *A History of the Roman People...*, 1:9.

appointing *Tzepo* for his general. The next episode speaks about a war between *Aeneas* and the king of Bevinto [Beneventum], for a beautiful *Kittim* woman, where *Aeneas* kills *Turnus*, king of Bevinto. Again, it is easy to recognize the king of the Rutuli, *Turnus*, who tried unsuccessfully to prevent the settling in Italy of the Troyans. Thereafter, *Tzepo* changes sides: he leaves Africa, and goes to the land of the *Kittim*, *ie.* to Italy.

As the Africans attack repeatedly the land of the *Kittim*, the latter elect *Tzepo* for a king, and call him *Janus-Tzepo*. Led by him, the *Kittim* not only defeat the Africans, they also conquer the land of *Tuval*'s descendants. This seems to be a reminiscence of the Roman wars for the hegemony over the entire Italian territory (the so-called *Latin-* and *Samnis wars*). The *Kittim* give one more name to *Tzepo*: they also call him *Saturn*, after the name of the star *Shabtai* which was then commonly worshiped. After 50 years on the throne, *Tzepo* dies and so does *Aeneas* also. Under their followers – *Latianus* and *Hazdrubal* – the enmities between the Africans and the *Kittim* continue, the latter even dies in one of the battles. He is followed as king of the Africans by his brother, *Hannibal* who succeeds in subduing the land of the *Kittim*. Naturally, this is already an allusion to the Punic wars, the three wars between Rome and Carthago for the hegemony over the Western Mediterranean (even if these took place about 1300 years later than the date given by the „*Sefer haYoshor*“).

At the end of our story, we can read about the kings who reigned after *Tzepo* over the land of the *Kittim* (in Rome) and, simultaneously, also over *Edom*. The last of them, *Romulus*, was a contemporary of *Dovid hamelech*, with whom he even concluded an alliance. On the other hand, as he feared *Dovid hamelech*, he surrounded his town – named Rome after his name - with a strong wall. From *Tzepo* to *Romulus* there were altogether 17 kings ruling over 625 years.

We have seen how the redactors of the „*Sefer Yossippon*“ and the parallel „*Sefer haYoshor*“ amalgamate the Biblical story of *Yossef ben Yaakov* and the story of the Roman wars for Italy and the Punic Wars, waged by *Aineias* /

Aeneas, escapee of Troy who arrives to the new homeland, Italy, through Carthago, and his descendants, the people of Rome, for the hegemony over Italy and, later, the Western Mediterranean. And the entire cycle of events serves our redactors to „forward” *Aisov*’s grandson, *Tzepo* ben Elifaz to Italy, making him for a king there and his followers for common kings of Italy and *Edom*. Actually, through this, they create the „historical background” for the identification of Rome with *Edom*.

As we have seen, rabbinic tradition does not separate Jewish and universal history. For those who hand down historical informations there is only one history: the history of the continuous manifestation of Divine providence (*hashgochah*) the Eternal direct intervention into human history. It will be only at the end of the 16th century, that the first „historiographical work” written by a Jewish author will appear (the *Sefer Tzemach David* by David GANZ) which in a second volume (following German World-chronicles) deals with universal history separately. Nevertheless, the first volume of this work speaks about the Biblical history and, subsequently, about the „chain of tradition”, the „*shalshelas hakabbalah*”, the handing down from generation to generation of the Sinaitic oral tradition.