

Jewish Religious Observance by the Jews of Kaifeng China

by
Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons

Kiryat Arba, Israel

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address of author
P.O. Box 1775
Kiryat Arba, Israel

telephone no. 972 2 9961252

e-mail: chaimsimons@gmail.com

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Section 1

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

TRANSLITERATIONS

This book is primarily intended for the reader who is proficient in the English language, and it has therefore been written in English. However, it has been necessary to include numerous words in non-English languages, especially Hebrew. Since there may be readers who cannot read Hebrew, there are very few words written in Hebrew letters (or other non-Latin characters) and a transliteration into English letters, and often a translation, will always follow. (The transliterations are arbitrary and not necessarily uniform.)

GLOSSARY OF HEBREW AND YIDDISH WORDS

Should the explanation of Hebrew word(s) used in this glossary include another Hebrew word, it will be written in *italics* and will be found elsewhere in this Glossary.

Acharonim אחרונים – World recognised Rabbis from about the 16th century onwards.

Adar אדר -- Month in the Jewish calendar when *Purim* occurs.

Afikoman אפיקומן -- The name given to a *matzah* which the last item eaten at the *seder* on *Pesach*.

Al Hanisim על הנסים -- Prayer recited on *Chanukah* and *Purim* in the *amidah* and in *bircat hamazon*.

Aleinu עלינו -- Prayer recited at the end of almost every service.

Amidah עמידה (plural: *Amidot* עמידות) -- Silent prayer recited at every service.

Apocrypha אפוקריפא (Greek) -- A number of books which were not included in the Jewish Bible.

Aravot ערבות -- Twigs of willows – one of the “Four Species” taken on the Festival of *Sukkot*.

Arba Kanfot ארבע כנפות -- see *tallit katan*.

Arbaat Haminim ארבעת המינים -- The “Four Species” taken on the Festival of *Sukkot*.

Asarah b'Tevet עשרה בטבת -- Fast of 10th Tevet.

Ashkenaz אשכנז (plural: *Ashkenazim*) -- Jew from European country. Also used to denote the prayer rite of *Ashkenazim*.

Ashrei אשרי -- Psalm 145 together with a few other verses from Psalms, which is recited daily, twice during *shacharit* and once at the start of *minchah*.

Atzei Chaim עצי חיים -- Wooden poles which are attached to the beginning and the end of a *Sefer Torah*.

Av אב -- Month in the Jewish calendar – two months before *Rosh Hashanah*.

Av Bet Din אב בית דין -- President of a *Bet Din*.

Avodah עבודה -- Term used for the service of the High Priest in the Temple on *Yom Kippur*.

Az yashir אז ישיר -- Song of Moses which is recited daily at *shacharit*.

Baal Keri בעל קרי -- A person who has had a seminal emission.

Baal Koreh בעל קורא (plural: *Baalei Koreh*) -- Man who reads from the *Torah* during the Synagogue service.

- Baruch Sheamar* ברוך שאמר -- Prayer at beginning of *pesukei dezimrah* in the *shacharit* service.
- Batim* בתים -- Square shaped black boxes which contain the *parshiot* of the *tefillin*.
- Berachah* ברכה (plural: *Berachot* ברכות) -- A blessing which is recited on various occasions.
- Berachah acharonah* ברכה אחרונה -- Blessing recited after eating of food.
- Bet Din* בית דין -- A Rabbinical Court.
- Bimah* בימה -- Elevated area in centre of a Synagogue from where the *Torah* is read.
- Bircat Hamazon* ברכת המזון -- Grace after Meals after eating bread.
- Borachu* ברכו -- Very short prayer said mainly during *maariv* and *shacharit*.
- Brit Milah* ברית מילה -- Ritual circumcision.
- Capel* (Yiddish) -- Skull cap worn by a Jew. Other names for it are *kipah* (Hebrew) or *yarmulke* (Yiddish).
- Chag* חג -- An expression used for some of the Festivals occurring during the year.
- Chag Hamatzot* חג המצות -- One of the names for *Pesach*.
- Chailev* חלב -- Forbidden fats of animals.
- Chalitzah* חליצה -- The alternative to *yibum*.
- Chametz* חמץ -- Leaven food which may not be eaten on Passover.
- Chanukah* חנוכה -- Eight day Festival when an increasing number of candles are lit on each successive night – hence the expression “Festival of Lights”.
- Chanukah Gelt* (Yiddish) -- Money given to children on *Chanukah*.
- Chatan Bereshit* חתן בראשית -- The man called up on *Simchat Torah* to begin the new cycle of Reading of the *Torah*.
- Chol Hamoed* חול המועד -- Intermediate days of the Festivals of *Pesach* and *Sukkot*.
- Chumash* חומש (plural: *Chumashim* חומשים) -- Usually used to denote printed volumes of the *Torah*, for use by the Synagogue worshippers.
- Daven, Davening* (Yiddish) – Praying.
- Dayan* דיין -- A judge in a *Bet Din*.
- Dechiyot* דחיית -- (One meaning is:) Various postponements of the day *Rosh Hashanah* will fall when making Jewish calendar calculations.
- Dinim* דינים -- Jewish religious laws.
- Duchan, Duchaning* (Yiddish) -- Blessing of the congregation by *Kohanim* during the Synagogue service, popularly known as the “Priestly Benediction”.
- Eliyahu Hanavi* אליהו הנביא -- Elijah the Prophet.
- Elul* אלול -- Month in the Jewish calendar occurring before *Rosh Hashanah*.
- Eretz Yisrael* ארץ ישראל -- Land of Israel.
- Erev Yom Kippur* ערב יום כיפור -- Day before *Yom Kippur*.
- Etrog* אתרוג (plural: *Etrogim* אתרוגים) -- Citron (similar to a lemon) which is taken as one of the “Four Species” on the Festival of *Sukkot*.

Gabbai גבאי -- Synagogue official (or monitor) who is in charge of deciding who is to be called up to the *Torah*, and who corrects mistakes made by the *Baal Koreh*.

Gemara גמרא -- The major part of the *Talmud*.

Gematria גימטריה -- A system of assigning numerical value to a Hebrew word or phrase.

Gemilut Chasadim גמילות חסדים -- Helping one's fellow man financially and spiritually.

Genizah גניזה -- Store room for worn-out religious texts prior to their burial.

Geonim גאונים -- World recognized Rabbinical leaders between the years 600 – 1000.

Geshem גשם -- Rain.

Gid Hanasheh גיד הנשה -- The sciatic nerve of an animal - it may not be eaten.

Gidim גידים -- Threads prepared to certain specifications which are used to sew up the sections of parchment of the *Sefer Torah*.

Hadassim הדסים -- Twigs of myrtle which are taken as one of the “Four Species” on the Festival of *Sukkot* and by some, for spices at *havdalah*.

Haftarah הפטרה (plural: *Haftarot* הפטרות) -- Reading from the *Neviim* following the Reading of the *Torah* on the mornings of Sabbaths and Festivals.

Hagadah הגדה -- Book from which the *seder* on *Pesach* is read.

Hakafot הקפות -- Circuits made with the *Sifrei Torah* on *Simchat Torah*.

Halachah הלכה -- Jewish law.

Hallel הלל -- Psalms 113-118 which are recited on certain Festivals during *shacharit*. On some occasions “half-hallel” is recited which is the full *hallel* minus two of its paragraphs.

Hallel Hagadol הלל הגדול -- Psalm 136 which is recited, amongst other occasions, at the *seder* on *Pesach*.

Hamavdil המבדיל -- Main blessing of the *havdalah* ceremony.

Havdalah הבדלה -- Ceremony made using wine, spices and a light at the termination of Sabbaths. At the termination of Festivals only wine is used.

Kaddish קדיש -- Prayer taking various formats recited during the course of all Synagogue Services.

Kaddish shalem קדיש שלם -- The “full *kaddish*” recited at every service after the *amidah*, (although not always immediately after the *amidah*).

Karpas כרפס -- Vegetable which is dipped in salt water towards the beginning of the *seder* on *Pesach*.

Kasher כשר -- A generic term used to describe things which conform with the *halachah*.

Kashrut כשרות -- The Jewish dietary laws.

Kedushah קדושה -- Addition made during the Reader's repetition of the third *berachah* of the *amidah*.

Ketoret קטורת -- Incense.

Ketuvah כתובה -- Contract handed over by groom to his bride at the marriage ceremony.

- Ketuvim* כתובים -- "Writings" or hagiographa books of the *Tanach* e.g. Psalms, Job, Esther, Daniel, Chronicles.
- Kezayit* כזית -- The size of an olive – taken as about the volume of today's matchbox.
- Kiddush* קידוש -- Prayer made over wine before most meals on Sabbaths and Festivals.
- Kislev* כסלו -- Month in Jewish calendar in which *Chanukah* occurs.
- Kohen* כהן (plural: *Kohanim* כהנים) -- Jew who is descended in the direct male line from the Biblical Aaron.
- Kol Nidrei* כל נדרי -- The opening prayer on the evening of *Yom Kippur*.
- Korech* כורך -- Eating of *matzah* and *maror* together at the *seder* on *Pesach* – "Hillel's sandwich".
- Lein, Leining* (Yiddish) -- Reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue.
- Levi* לוי -- Jew descended in the male line from the tribe of Levi (and who is not a *Kohen*).
- Lulav* לולב -- A palm branch which is taken as one of the "Four Species" on the Festival of *Sukkot*.
- Maariv* מעריב -- Evening service.
- Machzor* מחזור (plural: *Machzorim* מחזורים) -- Festival Prayer Book.
- Maftir* מפטיר -- Last Reading from the *Torah* on Sabbath and Festival mornings. It is always followed by a *haftarah*.
- Magid* מגיד -- The part of the *seder* on *Pesach* where the story of the Exodus from Egypt is related.
- Marcheshvan* מרחשון -- Month in the Jewish calendar which follows *Tishri*.
- Maror* מרור -- Bitter herbs eaten at the *seder* on *Pesach*.
- Masechet* מסכת -- Tractate (volume) of *Talmud*.
- Masechtot Ketanot* מסכתות קטנות -- Minor tractates which are printed together with the tractates of the *Talmud*.
- Mashiv Haruach Umorid Hagashem* and *Morid Hatal* משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם, מוריד הטל -- Additions in the *amidah* praising the Almighty for the appropriate seasonal weather.
- Matzah* מצה (plural: *Matzot* מצות) -- Unleavened bread eaten during *Pesach*.
- Matzah ashirah* מצה עשירה -- *Matzah* made from flour and a liquid such as wine or oil.
- Mayim Acharonim* מים אחרונים -- Washing of the fingers before *bircat hamazon*.
- Meain Shalosh* מעין שלוש -- *Berachah* recited after eating flour products, wine and certain fruits.
- Megillah* מגילה (plural: *Megillot* מגילות) -- Usually refers to the Book of Esther which is read on *Purim*, (although there are also four other *megillot* in the *Ketuvim*).
- Mezuzah* מזוזה (plural: *Mezuzot* מזוזות) -- Scroll containing two portions from the *Torah* which is attached to door posts.
- Midat Chasidut* מידת חסידות -- An act of special piety.
- Midrash* מדרש (Plural: *Midrashim* מדרשים) -- Commentaries and interpretations on the *Tanach*.

Midrash Rabba מדרש רבא -- A collection of interpretations on the books of the *Torah* and the five *megillot*.

Mikvah מקוה (Plural: *Mikvaot* מקואות) -- Ritual bath.

Minchah מנחה -- Afternoon service.

Minyan מנין -- Ten adult males who have to be present in a Synagogue in order to say certain prayers.

Mishkan משכן -- The portable "Temple" built following the Exodus from Egypt.

Mishloach Manot משלוח מנות -- Two food items that must be sent to a friend on *Purim*.

Mishnah משנה -- Compilation of the Jewish Oral Law by Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi in about the year 200 C.E.

Mitzvah מצוה (plural: *Mitzvot* מצוות) -- A commandment, either from the *Torah* or from the Rabbis.

Molad מולד -- Mean astronomical lunar conjunction.

Moshe משה or *Moshe Rabbeinu* משה רבינו -- Biblical Moses.

Motzaei Shabbat מוצאי שבת -- Termination of the Sabbath.

Muktzah מוקצה -- Objects which may not be moved on Sabbaths and Festivals.

Mussaf מוסף -- Additional service recited mainly on Sabbaths and Festivals.

Nach נ"ך -- Second and third sections of the *Tanach*, namely *Neviim* and *Ketuvim*.

Navi נביא -- Prophet.

Neilah נעילה -- Concluding service on *Yom Kippur*.

Ner Tamid נר תמיד -- the "perpetual light" hanging over the Ark in most Synagogues.

Neviim נביאים -- Books of the Prophets in the *Tanach* e.g. Joshua, Judges, Isaiah, Ezekiel.

Niddah נידה -- The status of a woman during her monthly menstrual period - (the word literally means separation).

Nishmat נשמת -- Additional prayer recited on Sabbaths and Festivals towards the end of the *pesukei dezimrah*.

Nissan ניסן -- Month in the Jewish calendar when *Pesach* occurs.

Omer עומר -- see *Sefirat haOmer*.

Parashah פרשה (plural: *Parshiot* פרשיות) -- Portion of the *Torah* read during the Synagogue service on Sabbath morning.

Parashat.... פרשת.... -- Every *Parashah* has a name taken from one of its first words (e.g. *Parashat Yitro*, *Nitzavim*, *Vayeilech*, *Haazinu*).

Parochet פרוכת -- The curtain hanging in front of the Ark in the Synagogue.

Passul פסול -- Expression used when an object is disqualified for ritual use.

Pesach פסח -- Festival of Passover.

Pesikta פסיקתא -- *Pesikta l'Rav Kahana* -- a collection of Midrashim written about 1,500 years ago.

Pesukei dezimrah פסוקי דזימרה -- Psalms and verses of Praise to the Almighty recited towards the beginning of *shacharit*.

Pishtan פשתן -- Flax.

Piyut פיוט (plural: *Piyutim* פיוטים) -- Liturgical poem.

Purim פורים – Festival of Lots which commemorates the Jews' victory over Haman.

As recounted in the Book of Esther, Haman drew lots to decide on which day to kill the Jews and hence the name "Festival of Lots".

Rebbe (Yiddish) -- Often used as title for leaders of Chasidic groups.

Retzai רצה -- Addition to *bircat hamazon* on Sabbaths.

Rishonim ראשונים -- Rabbis from about the 11th to the 15th centuries.

Rosh Chodesh ראש חודש -- Beginning of a new month in Jewish calendar.

Rosh Hashanah ראש השנה -- Jewish New Year.

Rosh Yeshivah ראש ישיבה -- The Principal of a Rabbinical Academy.

Ruach רוח – Wind.

Schach סכך -- Roof of the *sukkah* which is made of flora.

Seder סדר -- Service in the home on the first night(s) of *Pesach*.

Sefer Torah ספר תורה (plural: *Sifrei Torah* ספרי תורה) -- Handwritten *Torah* scroll.

Sefirat haOmer ספירת העומר -- Daily counting of the 49 days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*.

Selichot סליחות -- Penitential Prayers recited mainly during the days before *Rosh Hashanah* and thereafter until *Yom Kippur*.

Shaatnez שעטנז -- Garment containing both wool and linen.

Shabbat שבת (plural: *Shabbatot* שבתות) -- Jewish Sabbath.

Shabbat Chanukah שבת חנוכה -- *Shabbat* occurring during *Chanukah*.

Shabbat Chol Hamoed שבת חול המועד -- Intermediate *Shabbat* during the Festivals of *Pesach* and *Sukkot*.

Shabbat Hagadol שבת הגדול -- *Shabbat* before *Pesach*.

Shabbat Mevorachin שבת מברכין -- The last *Shabbat* of a month at which the following month is announced and blessed.

Shabbat Rosh Chodesh שבת ראש חודש -- *Rosh Chodesh* which occurs on *Shabbat*.

Shacharit שחרית -- Morning service.

Shadchan שדכן -- A person who arranges Jewish marriages.

Shaliach Tzibur שליח ציבור -- Reader at a Synagogue service.

Shalosh Regalim שלוש רגלים -- "The Three Foot Festivals" in the Jewish calendar – *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkot*.

Shamash שמש -- Sexton in a Synagogue. Another meaning: the candle used to light all the *Chanukah* candles.

Shavuot שבועות -- Festival of Pentecost.

Shechitah שחיטה -- The killing of animals and birds in accordance with Jewish law

Shehecheyanu שהחיינו -- *Berachah* of praise recited at start of Festival or on eating a new fruit or wearing a new garment.

Shema שמע -- Prayer containing three passages from the *Torah* recited during *maariv* and *shacharit*.

Shemini Atzeret שמיני עצרת -- Festival occurring immediately after *Sukkot*. [It is popularly called the 8th day of *Sukkot*, but strictly this is incorrect.]

Shir Hamaalot שיר המעלות -- Series of 15 sequential Psalms which all begin with the words *Shir Hamaalot*.

Shir Hashirim שיר השירים -- Biblical book "Song of Solomon".

- Shivah Asar b'Tammuz* שבעה עשר בתמוז -- Fast of 17th Tammuz.
- Shofar* שופר -- Ram's horn blown mainly on *Rosh Hashanah*.
- Shul* (Yiddish) -- Synagogue.
- Siddur* סידור (plural: *Siddurim* סידורים) -- Prayer book.
- Simchah* שמחה -- Rejoicing, usually on a Festival.
- Simchat Torah* שמחת תורה -- "Rejoicing of the Law" - the popular name for the last day of the Festival of *Sukkot*.
- Simchat Yom Tov* שמחת יום טוב -- The *mitzvah* from the *Torah* to rejoice on a Festival.
- Sofer* סופר -- The scribe who writes a *Sefer Torah*, *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot*.
- Sukkah* סוכה -- Temporary hut lived in during the Festival of *Sukkot*.
- Sukkot* סוכות -- Festival of Tabernacles.
- Tagin* תגין -- Little "crowns" which are written above certain letters in a *Sefer Torah*.
- Taharah* טהרה -- Ritual washing of a dead body prior to burial.
- Taharat hamishpachah* טהרת המשפחה -- The laws of family purity.
- Tal* טל -- Dew.
- Tallit* טלית -- Garment with *tzitzit* worn by men during *shacharit*.
- Talmud* תלמוד -- A multi-volume book containing Rabbinic discussions on all aspects of Jewish law, custom and ethics.
- Tammuz* תמוז -- Month in Jewish calendar before Av.
- Tanach* תנ"ך -- Entire Jewish Bible.
- Techelet* תכלת -- The blue dye for the *tzitzit*.
- Tefillah* תפילה (plural: *Tefillot* תפילות) -- Daily prayers.
- Tefillin* תפילין -- Phylacteries -- Black boxes containing 4 portions from the *Torah* worn by men during the weekday *shacharit*.
- Terefot* טרפות -- An animal or bird which cannot be eaten due to some organic defect.
- Tevet* טבת -- Month in the Jewish calendar after *Kislev*.
- Tichlal* תכלאל -- *Siddur* of the Yemenite Jews who follow the baladi rite.
- Tikun Chatzot* תיקון חצות -- Voluntary prayer recited at midnight in memory of destruction of both Temples.
- Tisha b'Av* תשעה באב -- Fast of 9th Av commemorating the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem.
- Tishri* תשרי -- Month in the Jewish calendar when *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* occur.
- Torah* תורה -- Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses. A *Torah* scroll used in the Synagogue service is a handwritten copy of the entire Pentateuch.
- Tosefta* תוספתא -- A secondary compilation of the Jewish Oral Law from the period of the *Mishnah*.
- Tzitzit* ציצת -- Special fringes attached to each corner of a four cornered garment.
- Tzom Gedaliah* צום גדליה -- Fast of Gedaliah which is observed on 3rd Tishri.
- Vidui* וידוי -- Confession of sins which is recited at the end of every *amidah* on *Yom Kippur*.

Yaaleh vyavo יעלה ויבוא -- Addition to *amidah* and *bircat hamazon* recited on *Rosh Chodesh* and Festivals.

Yachatz יחץ -- Breaking the middle *matzah* in half at the *seder* on *Pesach*.

Yibum יבום -- Levirate marriage.

Yishtabach ישתבח -- Final blessing of the *pesukei dezimrah*.

Yisrael ישראל (plural: *Yisraelim* ישראלים) -- A Jew descended in the male line from tribes other than that of Levi.

Yom Kippur יום כיפור -- Day of Atonement.

Yom Tov יום טוב (plural: *Yomim Tovim* ימים טובים) -- Generic name for a Jewish Festival.

Yonatan ben Uziel יונתן בן עוזיאל - Author of an Aramaic translation of part of *Tanach*, who lived in about the 1st century BCE.

Zemirot זמירות -- Songs sung during the meals on *Shabbat*, Festivals and *Motzaei Shabbat*.

Zimun זימון -- Introduction to *bircat hamazon* when at least three people have eaten together.

Zohar זוהר -- A mystical work attributed to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who lived in about the first century.

ABBREVIATIONS APPEARING IN FOOTNOTES

General abbreviations used in book references

dh = initials of Hebrew words “dibur hamatchil” - the opening words of a quote

p = page number (single page)

pp = page number (more than one page)

General abbreviations used in manuscript references

MS = manuscript

MSS = manuscripts

JNL = Jewish National Library, Jerusalem

HUC = Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati

f = folio number (single folio – the term “folio” is often used to denote the page number in a manuscript)

ff = folio number (more than one folio)

- In the footnotes, the MS number in the JNL is the one which is quoted.
- When in the footnotes, a folio number does not follow the MS number, it means that the reference will be found throughout almost the entire MS.

GUIDE TO BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS APPEARING IN FOOTNOTES

- In order to give the reader a historical perspective, the dates of birth and death of the author of the work, when known, are given.
- In many cases a *few words* about the author are given. In some cases *just one* of the principal offices held by the author is included. It should be noted

however, that the author may have held this office at a different period of his life from that during which he wrote the quoted book.

- The place of publication, name of the publisher and the date of publication may be found in the *Bibliography* towards the end of this book.

BOOKS

Jewish Religious Books

Abudarham: commentary on the siddur written by Rabbi David ben Yosef

Abudarham of Seville Spain (early 1300s - late 1300s).

Aruch Hashulchan: a halachic compendium which follows the order of the Shulchan

Aruch, written by Rabbi Yechiel Michel Halevi Epstein (1829 – 1908), Rabbi of Navahrudak, Belarus.

Bach: commentary on the Tur written by Rabbi Yoel ben Shmuel Sirkes

(1561 – 1640), Av Bet Din of Cracow, Poland.

Baruch Sheamar: an explanation of the all the prayers recited throughout the year,

written by Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein (1860 - 1942), Rabbi in Pinsk, Belarus.

Be'er Heteiv: commentary on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim and Even Haezer,

written by Rabbi Yehudah ben Shimon Ashkenazi (1730 - 1770), Rabbi of Frankfurt.

Ben Ish Chai: a work based on lectures which link the weekly Torah Parashah with

topics in halachah, written by Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (1832 - 1909).

Bet Ridbaz: responsa written by Rabbi Yaakov David Wilovsky (1845 -1913), Chief

Rabbi of Slutsk, Belarus.

Bet Yosef: commentary on the Tur written by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488 - 1575),

author of the Shulchan Aruch.

Betzel Hachochmah: responsa on the four sections of the Shulchan Aruch written by

Rabbi Betzalel Stern (1911 -1989), Av Bet Din in Melbourne.

Bikkurei Yaakov: the laws of Sukkot written by Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger

(1788 – 1862), Rabbi in Altona, Germany.

Birkei Yosef: glosses on the Shulchan Aruch written by Rabbi Chaim Yosef David

Azulai (also known as the “Chida”) (1724 – 1806), a noted bibliophile.

Brit Kehunah: customs of the Jewish community of Djerba, an island off Tunisia,

written by Rabbi Moshe Kalfon (1874 -1950), a leader of the community.

BT = Babylonian Talmud – Talmud Bavli: A multi-volume book containing Rabbinic

discussions on all aspects of Jewish law, customs and ethics, written in the Jewish Academies in Babylon and completed in the 5th century.

Chatam Sofer: responsa on the four sections of the Shulchan Aruch written by Rabbi

Moshe Sofer Schreiber (1762 – 1839), a Rabbi in Pressburg, Hungary.

- Chayei Adam*: halachic work on the laws found in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim written by Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748 - 1820), a Dayan in Vilna.
- Chikrei Lev*: glosses and research on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim written by Rabbi Rafael Yosef Hazzan (1741 -1820) of Izmir, Turkey.
- Chochmat Adam*: halachic work on the laws found in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah written by Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748 - 1820), a Dayan in Vilna.
- Darkei Moshe*: glosses on the Tur written by Rabbi Moshe ben Yisrael Isserles (1525 -1572), Rabbi of Cracow, Poland.
- Divrei Chamudot*: commentary on the Rosh written by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Halevi Heller (1579 - 1654), Rabbi of Vienna, Prague and Cracow.
- Drishah* and *Prishah*: twin commentaries on the Tur, written by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Alexander Hakohen Falk (1555 - 1614), a Rosh Yeshiva in Lemberg.
- Elef Hamagen*: commentary on Matteh Efraim Hashalem written by Rabbi Meshulam Finkelstein (early 1900s), a Rabbi in Warsaw, Poland.
- Elef Ktav*: various activities of great Rabbis, written by Rabbi Yitshak Vais (1873 –1942) head of Bet Din of Vrbovce (Verbau), Slovakia.
- Emet l'Yaakov*: laws concerning Reading the Torah written by Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov ben Yom Tov Elgazi (1680 -1756), a Rosh Yeshivah in Jerusalem.
- Encyclopedia Talmudit*: Talmudic Encyclopedia – a digest of Halachic Literature and Jewish Law from the Tannaitic period to the present time alphabetically arranged
- Gesher Hachaim*: laws of mourning, written by Rabbi Yechiel Tucatzinsky (1871 -1955), a Rosh Yeshivah in Jerusalem.
- Gra*: commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rabbi Eliahu ben Shlomo Zalman of Vilna (also known as the “Vilna Gaon”) (1720 – 1797).
- Hagahot Ashri*: glosses on the commentary of the Rosh on the Babylonian Talmud, written by Rabbi Yisrael of Krems (middle 1300s – 1420).
- Hagahot Maimoni*: commentary on the Rambam’s Mishnah Torah, written by Rabbi Meir ben Yekutiel Hakohen (? – 1298).
- Halichot Taiman*: halachot concerning the Jews of Yemen, written by Rabbi Yosef Kapach (Qafih) (1917 - 2000), a leader of the Yemenite Jewish community.
- Igrot Moshe*: responsa on the four sections of Shulchan Aruch, written by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895 – 1986), a Rosh Yeshiva in New York.
- JT* = Jerusalem Talmud - Talmud Yerushalmi: A multi-volume book containing Rabbinic discussions on all aspects of Jewish law, custom and ethics, written in the Jewish Academies in Eretz Yisrael and completed at about the end of the 4th century.
- Kaf Hachaim*: multi-volume commentary on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim and the beginning of Yoreh Deah, written by Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer (1870 – 1939).

- Kaf Hachaim (Rabbi Palaggi)*: halachic treatise on subjects in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim written by Rabbi Chaim Palaggi (1788 – 1868) of Izmir, Turkey.
- Kaftor Vaferach*: halachot of Eretz Yisrael and the Temple, written by Rabbi Ishtori haParchi (Yitzchak ben Moshe) (1280 – 1366), physician, topographer and traveler.
- Kesef Mishnah*: commentary on the Rambam's Mishnah Torah written by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488 -1575).
- Keset Hasofer*: halachot concerning the writing of a Sefer Torah etc., written by Rabbi Shlomo ben Yosef Ganzfried (1804 – 1886), Dayan in Ungvar (Uzhhorod), Ukraine.
- Keter Shem Tov Hashalem*: collection of the sayings of Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (known as the “Baal Shem Tov”) (1700 - 1760), founder of the Chasidic movement.
- Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*: an abridged Shulchan Aruch, mainly on the Orach Chaim section, written by Rabbi Shlomo ben Yosef Ganzfried (1804 – 1886), Dayan in Ungvar (Uzhhorod), Ukraine.
- Kol Bo*: an abridged version of the Orchot Chaim. The author is unknown and it was possibly written in the 1300s.
- Kol Bo al Aveilut*: halachot of mourning, written by Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Greenwald (1889 -1955), Av Bet Din of Ohio in USA.
- Kovetz Teshuvot haRambam v'Igrotov*: responsa and letters written by Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (known both as the Rambam and Maimonides) (1135 – 1204). The responsa were written in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic using Hebrew letters) and were later translated into Hebrew.
- Levush*: codification of Jewish Law which follows the framework of the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rabbi Mordechai ben Avraham Yaffe (1530 – 1612), a Rabbinic leader in Europe.
- Likutei Levi Yitzchak*: letters written by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1878 – 1944), Lubavitch Chasidic Rabbi in Yekatrinoslav, Ukraine.
- Lishkat Hasofer*: additions to Keset Hasofer written by Rabbi Shlomo ben Yosef Ganzfried (1804 – 1886), Dayan in Ungvar (Uzhhorod), Ukraine.
- Machatzit Hashekel*: comprehensive commentary on the Magen Avraham, written by Rabbi Shmuel ben Natan Halevi Kelin (1724 – 1806).
- Machzor Vitri*: compilation of halachot appertaining to prayers throughout the year, written by Rabbi Simcha ben Shmuel of Vitri (middle 1000s – 1105).
- Magen Avraham*: commentary to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim written by Rabbi Avraham Abeli Gombiner Halevi (1637 – 1683).
- Maharam Mintz*: responsa written by Rabbi Moshe ben Yitzchak Halevi Mintz (1415 – 1480), Rabbi at Mainz, Landau and Bamberg in Germany, and Posen in Poland.

- Maharil*: customs of the German Jews, written by Rabbi Yaakov ben Moshe Halevi Molin (c.1365 -1427).
- Maharit*: responsa written by Rabbi Yosef ben Moshe Tirani (1568 - 1639).
- Mahariz*: responsa written by Rabbi Yekutiel Asher Zalman Tzuzmir (1800s).
- Matteh Efraim Hashalem*: halachot of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, written by Rabbi Efraim Zalman Margoliot (1760 – 1828), Rabbi in Brody.
- MB = Mishnah Berurah*: multi-volume commentary on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim written by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Hakohen Kagan (also known as the Chafetz Chaim) (1838 – 1933) of Radun, Belarus.
- Meiri*: commentaries on various tractates of the Talmud written by Rabbi Menachem ben Shlomo Hameiri (c.1249 - c.1315).
- Mekor Chaim*: five volume compendium of halachah and minhag, written by Rabbi Chaim David Halevi (1924 – 1998), a Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv.
- Minchat Elazar*: responsa written by Rabbi Chaim Elazar Shapira (1871 – 1937), Av Bet Din of Munkacs, Ukraine.
- Minhag Yisrael Torah*: the source of many Jewish religious customs written by Rabbi Yosef Lewy (late 1900s) of Brooklyn, New York.
- Minhagei Hakehilot*: The Communities and their Customs - the customs of Mattesdorf and other communities of the Burgerland – Austrian province, written by Rabbi Bunim Yoel Tausig (1927 – 2007) and Rabbi Yechiel Goldhaber.
- Minhagim*: customs of some Ashkenazi Jewish communities written by Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Tirna (1380 - ?) of Austria.
- Mishnat Hasofer*: commentary on Keset Hasofer, a book on the halachot concerning the writing of a Sefer Torah etc., written by Rabbi Yaakov Meir Stern (late 1900s), Av Bet Din in Bnei Brak.
- Moed Lechol Chai*: halachot on the Cycle of the Jewish Year, written by Rabbi Chaim Palaggi (1788 – 1868) of Izmir, Turkey.
- Mordechai*: commentary on the Talmud written by Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel Hakohen Ashkenazi (c.1240 – 1298), a German Rabbi.
- Noda b'Yehudah*: responsa written by Rabbi Yechezkel ben Yehudah Halevi Landau (1713 – 1793), the Chief Rabbi of Prague.
- Orchot Chaim*: halachot on a variety of subjects written by Rabbi Aharon ben Yaakov Hakohen of Lunil (1280 - 1330).
- Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim*: encyclopedia of dinim and minhagim written by Rabbi Yehudah David Eisenstein (1854 – 1956).
- Peirush Sefer Yetzirah*: commentary on the mystical work Sefer Yetzirah, written by Rabbi Yehudah ben Barzilai ha-Barzeloni (c.1120 – 1193) of Barcelona, Spain.

Pekudat Elazar: Talmudic topics and responsa written by Rabbi Elazar Löw (Lev) (1839 – 1918), Rabbi in Sátoraljaúhely, Hungary.

Penei Baruch: halachot of mourning, written by Rabbi Chaim Binyamin Goldberg (late 1900s).

Pri Megadim: commentary to two commentators on the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rabbi Yosef ben Meir Teomim (c.1727 – 1792), Rabbi in Frankfort-on-the-Oder.

Rambam: Mishnah Torah (also known as Yad Hachazakah) - the entire code of Jewish law in 14 parts, written by Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (known both as the Rambam and Maimonides) (1135 – 1204).

Rashash: commentary on the Talmud written by Rabbi Shmuel ben Yosef Strashun of Vilna (1794 - 1872) and entitled Hagahot Vechidushei haRashash.

Rashba: responsa written by Rabbi Shlomo ben Avraham ibn Aderet (c.1235 - c.1310), a leader of Spanish Jewry.

Rashi: commentary on the Tanach and most of the Talmud, written by Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak Yitzchaki (1040 – 1105) of Troyes, France.

Raviah: general halachic work written by Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel Halevi (c.1140 – c.1225) of Germany.

Reishit Chochmah: mystical text written by Rabbi Eliyahu ben Moshe de Vidash (? – 1587) of Eretz Yisrael.

Rema: glosses on the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rabbi Moshe ben Yisrael Isserles (1525 -1572), Rabbi of Cracow (Krakow), Poland.

Rif: first codification of portions of the Talmud, written by Rabbi Yitzchak ben Yaakov Hakohen Alfasi (1013 – 1103) of North Africa and Spain.

Ritva: commentary on parts of the Talmud written by Rabbi Yom Tov ben Avraham Ashbili (1250 -1330) of Spain.

Rosh: commentary on parts of the Talmud written by Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (c.1250 – 1327), Rabbi and Av Bet Din of Toledo, Spain.

SA = Shulchan Aruch: code of Jewish law written by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488 – 1575). The Shulchan Aruch and also many other codes and responsa are divided into four sections, namely:

OC = Orach Chaim - includes the laws of tefillah, berachot, Shabbat and Festivals

YD = Yoreh Deah - includes the laws of kashrut, family purity, vows, interest and mourning

EH = Even Haezer – the laws of marriage and divorce

CM = Choshen Mishpat – civil law

Sdei Chemed: multi-volume encyclopedia of a whole range of halachic subjects written by Rabbi Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini (c.1832 – 1904), Rabbi of the Crimean town of Karasubazar, and Hebron, Eretz Yisrael.

- Seder Hayom*: mystical work written by Rabbi Moshe ben Machir (middle 1500s – early 1600s), a Rabbi in Safed.
- Sefer Chasidim*: book on ethics and moral teachings written by Rabbi Yehudah ben Shmuel Hachasid (c.1150 – 1217), Rosh Yeshivah in Regensburg Germany.
- Sefer Haitim*: halachic codification on Shabbat and Festivals written by Rabbi Yehudah ben Barzilai Al-Barzeloni (c.1120 – 1193) of Barcelona, Spain.
- Sefer Yereim*: general halachic work written by Rabbi Eliezer ben Shmuel of Metz (c.1115 -1198).
- Shaarei Efraim*: halachot of Reading the Torah, written by Rabbi Efraim Zalman ben Menachem Marguliot (Margulies) (1760 – 1828), Rabbi in Brody.
- Shach*: commentary on two sections of Shulchan Aruch written by Rabbi Shabbetai ben Meir Hakohen (1621-1663).
- Shevet Halevi*: responsa written by Rabbi Shmuel Halevi Vosner (1913 -), Av Bet Din of Zichron Meir, Bnei Brak.
- Shoneh Halachot*: compendium of halachot found in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim and later commentators, compiled by Rabbi Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim Kanievsky (1928 -) and Rabbi Elazar Turtzin, of Bnei Brak.
- Shulchan Aruch Harav*: code of Jewish law based on parts of the Shulchan Aruch, especially Orach Chaim, written by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745 – 1813), founder of the Lubavitch Chasidim.
- Shulchan Hatahor - Zer Zahav*: halachic treatise following the framework of Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, written by Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Yehudah Yechiel Safrin from Kumrana (1806 - 1874).
- Siach Tefillah*: research on tefillah and the Synagogue, written by Rabbi Avraham Yisrael Hakohen Kon (1891/2 – 1968), Rabbi of the Rutzon Tov Synagogue in East London, England.
- Taamei Haminhagim Umekorei Hadinim*: large collection of sources and explanations of dinim and minhagim, compiled by Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Sperling (1851 – 1921) of Lvov (Lemberg), Ukraine.
- Taharat Mayim*: book on the laws of mikvaot written by Rabbi Nissen Telushkin (1881 – 1970), Rabbi in Brooklyn, New York.
- Temim Deim*: responsa written by Rabbi Avraham ben David of Posquieres (also known as Ra'avad III) (c.1120 - 1198), the Rabbinic authority in Provence, France.
- Terumat Hadeshen*: responsa written by Rabbi Yisrael ben Petachiah Isserlin (1390 – 1460), Chief Rabbi and Av Bet Din of Neustadt, Germany.
- Tikun Yissachar – Ibur Shanim*: dinim and minhagim in connection with the cycle of the Jewish year, written by Rabbi Yissachar ben Mordechai Susan (1510 – 1580), a Rabbi in Safed, Eretz Yisrael.

Tosafot: Medieval commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud.

Tosafot Yomtov: commentary on the Mishnah written by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Halevi Heller (1579 - 1654), Rabbi of Vienna, Prague and Cracow.

Tosefet Yerushalayim: halachic treatise in framework of Shulchan Aruch whose sources are from Tosefta and Jerusalem Talmud, written by Rabbi Yisrael Isser ben Mordechai Isserlin (1827 - 1889), Rabbi in Vilna.

Tur: Code of Jewish Law written by Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher (c.1275 - c.1349), Dayan on the Bet Din of Toledo, Spain.

Tuv Taam V'daat: responsa written by Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1783 – 1869), Rabbi of Brody, Galicia (Ukraine).

Tzafnat Paneach: responsa written by Rabbi Yosef Rosen (also known as the Rogatchover Gaon) (1858 – 1936), a Chasidic Rabbi in Dvinsk, Latvia.

Tziun L'nefesh Chaya (Tzelach): commentary on several tractates of the Talmud, written by Rabbi Yechezkel ben Yehudah Halevi Landau (1713 – 1793), the Rabbi of Prague.

Yalkut Yosef Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: halachic rulings by Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef (1920 -), Sefardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, published by his son Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef.

Zayit Raanan: responsa written by Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Leib Zilberberg (1794 – 1865), Av Bet Din of Kutna, Czech Republic.

Siddurim and Hagadot

Persian siddur: “Nusach Hatefillah shel Yehudai Paras” (The Persian Jewish Prayer Book), a facsimile edition of MS Adler ENA 23 in the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, with introduction and notes by Shlomoh Tal (1909 – 1998).

Rabbi Saadia Gaon siddur: “Siddur Rav Saadia Gaon: kitāb ḡāmi ʾas-salawāt wat-tasābih” Rabbi Saadia Gaon was born in 882/892 in Egypt and died in 942 in Baghdad. His siddur was brought out in 1941 from the extant manuscripts by Yisrael Davidson (1870 – 1939), Simchah Asaf (1889 – 1953) and Issachar Joel (1900 – 1977).

Tichlal: siddur according to the baladi rite of the Yemenite Jews. There is a commentary on the Tichlal entitled “Etz Chaim” written by Rabbi Yichye ben Yosef Tzalach (Maharitz) (1713 - 1805).

Shire Ranenut: a collection of piyutim from the Jews of Cochin in India, edited by Shalom Yosef Pinkar.

Davidson: Otzar Hashirah v'Hapiyut – Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry. This multi-volume thesaurus was compiled by Dr. Israel Davidson (1870 – 1939), a professor of Mediaeval Hebrew Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York.

Chinese hagadah: “Haggadah of the Chinese Jews”, ed. Cecil Roth (1899 – 1970), a facsimile edition of MS HUC 927.

Hagadah Sheleimah: “Hagadah Sheleimah” brought out by Rabbi Menachem Kasher (1895 – 1983). In addition to the text of the hagadah, it includes extracts of commentaries, notes, sources and variant readings.

Books on the Jews of China

Adler, Lecture: Marcus N Adler (1837 - 1911) delivered a lecture in London on 17 June 1900 entitled “Chinese Jews”, which was later published in a booklet (and also in “The Jewish Quarterly Review”). Adler, a historian, was the son of Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler and the brother of Rabbi Hermann Adler, both of whom were British Chief Rabbis between the years 1845-1890 and 1891-1911 respectively.

Benjamin: Israel Joseph (J.J.) Benjamin II (1818 - 1864), traveler and explorer, author of “Eight Years in Asia and Africa from 1846 to 1855”.

Secondary accounts of the Jews of Kaifeng written by the Jesuit, Abbé Gabriel Brotier (1723-1789) may be found in:

Brotier, Lettres 24: The original French of “The Memoir of Gabriel Brotier” which appears in the book “Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses”, vol. 24, (Paris, 1781).

Brotier, White: Translation into English of “The Memoir of Gabriel Brotier” which appears in the book “Chinese Jews” by William White.

Brown: David A. Brown (1894 – 1958), series of articles on Chinese Jews, published in the journal “American Hebrew”, ([New York](#)), January – March 1933.

Chen Changqi, Shapiro: Chen Changqi (1954 -), Chinese scholar, author of paper “Buddhist Monk or Jewish Rabbi?” which appears in Shapiro’s book “Jews in Old China”.

Chen Yuan, Shapiro: Professor Chen Yuan (1880 - 1971), author of paper “A Study of the Israelite Religion in Kaifeng”, which appears in Shapiro’s book “Jews in Old China”.

Chiat, East Gate: Marilyn J. Chiat, adjunct Professor at University of Minnesota, author of paper “The synagogue at Kaifeng, Henan Province”, which appears in the book “East gate of Kaifeng”.

de Gouvea, Juifs: English translation of a Report written in 1644 by a Portuguese priest, António de Gouvea (1592 – 1677), (Le rapport d’António de Gouvea en 1644) which appears in the book “Juifs de Chine”.

Domenge, Juifs: English translation of letters written by the Jesuit missionary Jean Domenge (1666 - 1735) which appear in the book “Juifs de Chine”.

East Gate: “East gate of Kaifeng: a Jewish world inside China”, ed. M. Patricia Needle (1940 -), a collection of papers on the Jewish community of Kaifeng.

Ezra: Edward Isaac Ezra (1883-1921), a Shanghai Jewish businessman, author of “Chinese Jews”.

The writings of the British Consul James Finn (1806 - 1872), appear in:

Finn, Jews of China: James Finn, “The Jews of China”.

Finn, Orphan Colony: James Finn, “The Orphan Colony of Jews in China”.

Papers by Gao Wangzhi (b.1927 in Shanghai), Professor of Religious Studies in Beijing appear as:

Gao Wangzhi, East Gate: “The assimilation of the Chinese Jews”, in the book “East gate of Kaifeng”.

Gao Wangzhi, Shapiro: “Concerning Chinese Jews”, in Shapiro’s book “Jews in Old China”.

Gaubil: Letters of the Jesuit missionary Antoine Gaubil (1689 - 1759) which appear in the original French in the book “Correspondance de Pékin 1722 - 1759”.

Writings by the Italian Jesuit missionary Jean-Paul Gozani, (1647 - 1732) may be found in:

Gozani, Lettres 18: French translation of a letter by Gozani which appears in the book “Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses”, vol. 18, (Paris, 1781).

Gozani, Travels: English translation of a letter by Gozani which appears in the book by Mr. Lockman “Travels of the Jesuits”.

Irwin, East Gate: Sara Irwin, staff member of Royal Ontario Museum Toronto, author of paper “Jewish cultural relics from the Royal Ontario Museum”, which appears in the book “East gate of Kaifeng”.

Jewish Intelligence: “Hebrew Prayers used by the Jews in China”, which appears in the journal “Jewish Intelligence and Monthly account of the proceedings of the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews”, (London), vol.19, January 1853.

K’hew, Smith: “Journal of K’hew T’heen-sang to K’hae-fung-foo”, which appears in the book “The Jews at K’hae-fung-foo” by George Smith. K’hew was a Chinese Protestant.

Laufer: Berthold Laufer (1874 – 1934), American sinologist, author of paper “A Chinese-Hebrew Manuscript ...”, which appears in “Folklore Studies” 4 (Peking, 1945). Laufer lived in China at the turn of the 20th century and whilst there investigated the Jewish community of Kaifeng.

There are several books and papers on the Jews of Kaifeng by Donald Daniel Leslie (1922 -), an Australian sinologist, and these include:

Leslie: Donald Daniel Leslie, “The Survival of the Chinese Jews – The Jewish Community of Kaifeng”.

Leslie, Bowman: Daniel Leslie author of paper “The Judaeo-Persian Colophons to the Pentateuch of the K’aifeng Jews”, which appears in the journal “Abr Nahrain” vol.8 (1968-1969), edited by John Bowman (1916 – 2006) Foundation Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Leslie, JAOS: D. Leslie, author of paper “Some Notes on the Jewish Inscriptions of K’aifeng” which appears in “Journal of the American Oriental Society”, vol.82, 1962.

Leslie, Juifs: Joseph Dehergne and Donald Daniel Leslie, “Juifs de Chine”. This book mainly contains the French text and an English translation of the letters (and other writings) of the 17th century Jesuit Missionaries Gozani and Domenge, and also contains brief extracts from the writings of de Gouvea.

Leslie, Kublin: Donald Daniel Leslie, author of paper “The Kaifeng Jewish Community: A Summary”, which appears in “Studies of the Chinese Jews – Selections from Journals East and West” edited by Hyman Kublin.

Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle: J. L. Liebermann, “Notes on the Jews in China”, which appears in “Jewish Chronicle”, (London), 11 July 1879.

Liebermann, Report: J. L. Liebermann, “Notes on the Jews in China”, which appears in Eighth Annual Report, Anglo Jewish Association, (London), 1878-1879, Appendix E.

Löwenthal: Rudolf Löwenthal, (1909 - 1996) author of “The Early Jews in China: A Supplementary Bibliography”, which appears in “Folklore Studies” (Peking) vol. 5, 1946. This bibliography includes very brief extracts from the diary and letters of the Jesuit missionary Matteo (Matthew) Ricci and brief extracts from the writings of Alvarez Semedo.

There are several writings by the American Presbyterian missionary, Rev. William Alexander Parsons Martin, (1827 - 1916) on the Jews of Kaifeng, and these include:

Martin, journal: Rev. W. A. P. Martin, “Account of an Overland Journey from Peking to Shanghai, made in February and March 1866”, which appears in “Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society”, (Shanghai), new series, no.3, December 1866.

Martin, Cathay: William Alexander Parsons Martin, author of “A Cycle of Cathay; or, China, South and North”.

Milne: Rev. William Charles Milne (1815 – 1863), Church of England missionary, author of “Life in China”.

Muller: James Arthur Muller (1884 – 1945), Professor at the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge Massachusetts in U.S.A., author of “Apostle of China – Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky”. Schereschewsky (1831 - 1906). was a Jewish apostate, who was elected Bishop of Shanghai.

Neubauer, Kublin: Adolph Neubauer (1831 - 1907), author of paper “Jews in China”, which appears in “Studies of the Chinese Jews”, edited by Hyman Kublin.

Pan Guandan, Shapiro: Pan Guandan (1899 – 1967), Professor at the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing, author of paper “Jews in Ancient China – A Historical Survey”, which appears in Shapiro’s book “Jews in Old China”.

Perlmann: S. M. Perlmann, a Shanghai scholar-merchant, author of “The Jews in China”.

Plaks, East Gate: Andrew Plaks, Professor at Princeton University, author of paper “The Confucianization of the Chinese Jews: interpretations of the Kaifeng stela inscriptions”, which appears in the book “East gate of Kaifeng”.

The writings by Michael Pollak (1918 – 2008), vice-president of the Sino-Judaic Institute, on the Jews of Kaifeng, appear as:

Pollak, Mandarin: “Mandarin, Jews, and Missionaries – The Jewish Experience in the Chinese Empire”.

Pollak, Torah scrolls: “The Torah Scrolls of the Chinese Jews”, which includes the history and present whereabouts of the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah. There is also an Internet copy which is similar, but not identical, to the hard-copy (Internet: smu.edu/bridwell/publications/chinesetorahscroll - accessed 3 September 2008).

Writings of the missionary, Father Matteo (Matthew) Ricci (1552 - 1610) appear as:

Ricci diary, Löwenthal: extracts from Ricci’s diary in Löwenthal’s bibliography.

Ricci, journal: “China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610”, a work by Father Nicolas Trigault (1577 - 1628). translated by Louis J. Gallagher.

Ricci journal, Latin text: Regni Chinensis descriptio: ex variis authoribus, a work by Father Nicolas Trigault

Ricci letter, Löwenthal: a letter written by Ricci in 1605, which appears in Löwenthal’s bibliography.

Sassoon: David S. D. Sassoon (1880 – 1942) of London, author of paper “Inscriptions in the Synagogue in Kai-Fung-Foo”, which appears in “The Jewish Quarterly Review” edited by Cyrus Adler (1863 – 1940), a U.S. educator, (Philadelphia) new series, vol.11, 1920-1921.

Semedo, Löwenthal: extracts from the writings of the Portuguese Procurado General for China, Alvarez Semedo (1585 - 1658) which appear in Löwenthal’s bibliography.

Shapiro: A collection of “Studies by Chinese Scholars” which appear in the book “Jews in Old China”, translated, compiled and edited by Sidney Shapiro (1915 -), a translator of works of Chinese literature.

Smith: Revd. George Smith, (1815 - 1871), Anglican Bishop of Victoria, Hong Kong, author of “The Jews at K’ae-fung-foo, being a Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jewish Synagogue at K’ae-fung-foo”. This “Mission of Inquiry” includes journal accounts from the year 1850 of K’hew T’heen-sang and Tseang Yung-che.

Tobar: Jérôme Tobar (? - 1917), a Jesuit Father, author of “Inscriptions Juives de K’ai-fong-fou”.

Tseang, Smith: “Journal of Tseang Yung-che from Shanghae to Ts’hing-keang-p’hoo; with Notices of Antiquities” and “Tseang Yung-che’s Account of the T’heaou-kin-keaou”, which appear in the book “The Jews at K’hae-fung-foo” by George Smith. Tseang was a Chinese Protestant.

Wang Yisha, Shapiro: Wang Yisha (? - 1996), curator of the Kaifeng Municipal Museum, author of paper “The Descendants of the Kaifeng Jews”, which appears in Shapiro’s book “Jews in Old China”.

Werblowsky, Paamim: Raphael Jehudah Zwi Werblowsky (1924 -), Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, author of paper “The Jews of Kaifeng, their Country of Origin and the Text of their Prayers”, which appears in “Paamim” (studies of Jewish heritage in the East) no.78, winter 5759–1999.

Weisz: Tiberiu Weisz, author of “The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions”. This book contains a new translation of these steles.

White: Bishop William Charles White (1873 – 1960) author of “Chinese Jews”, first published in 1942. This book, which is in three parts, includes translations into English of all the steles from the Kaifeng Synagogue and of Brotier’s memoirs. White was a missionary in China for 38 years and in 1910 was made Bishop of Henan, centered at Kaifeng.

Xin: Xu Xin (1949 -), president of School of Religious Studies at Nanjing University, author of “The Jews of Kaifeng, China – history, culture, and religion”.

Yating: “Kaifeng Jewish Community: Exotic Elements in Liturgical Music – A Process of Cultural Involution”, paper delivered by Professor Tang Yating, of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, at a symposium of the International Musicological Society, held in Melbourne in 2004. This paper may be found on the Internet: hebrewsongs.com/kaifeng.htm - accessed 17 August 2008.

Miscellaneous Books on China

Chiu, Buxbaum: Dr. Vermier Yanatak Chiu (1890 – 1964), of the University of Hong Kong, author of a paper entitled “Some Notes on Chinese Customary Marriage”, which appears in the book “Family Law and Customary Law in Asia: A Contemporary Legal Perspective”, edited by David C. Buxbaum.

T’ung-tsu Ch’u: T’ung-tsu Ch’u, author of “Law and Society in Traditional China”.

MANUSCRIPTS

Siddur manuscripts

MS number in JNL	MS number in HUC	MS number in London as at 1853
19215	923	1
19216	924	2
19217	925	3
19218	926	4
19219	927	5

19220	928	6
19221	929	7
19222	930	8
19223	931	12
19224	932	13
19225	933	14
19226	934	15
19227	935	16
19228	936	17
19229	937	18
19230	938	19
19231	939	20
19232	940	21
19233	941	22
19234	942	10
19235	943	23
19236	944	24
19237	945	25
19238	946	26
19239	947	27
19240	948	28
19241	949	29
19242	950	not mentioned

MS number 9 is missing from HUC – probably “lost” during London exhibition.

MS number 11 was later correctly recatalogued with the “Chumashim” MSS.

MS number *16160* in JNL is in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, where it is numbered 24.

There is also a MS in Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and it is reproduced in White 2:170. This MS is quoted as *MS Toronto*.

The two MSS 19219 and 19223, whose contents are the Pesach Seder service are virtually identical. Unless the context demands it, in the footnotes, only the older MS (19219) will be quoted. For the purpose of these footnotes, the folios in MS 19219, as they appear in the facsimile in Cecil Roth’s “Haggadah of the Chinese Jews” have been numbered from 1 to 96.

Chumashim Manuscripts

JNL: MSS 19244 – 19274

HUC: MSS 951 – 981

Sifrei Torah Manuscripts

There are microfilms of some of the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah at the Jewish National Library: JNL MSS 1476, 5888, 15843, 25890, 33062.

Catalogues of Manuscripts

Margoliouth: “Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum”, compiled by George Margoliouth (1853 – 1924), assistant in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts of the British Museum in London.

Schiller-Szinessy: “Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts preserved in the University Library, Cambridge”, compiled by Dr. Solomon Marcus Schiller-Szinessy (1820 – 1890), Reader in Talmudic and Rabbinic Literature in the University of Cambridge.

Numbers following the name of a work

In many cases two numbers (or occasionally just one number) separated by a colon appear e.g. 4:36. This means: 4 = the chapter *or* part *or* volume, *or* etc. 36 = the verse *or* halachah *or* responsum *or* etc.

For the sake of clarity, some examples will now be given:

Deuteronomy 10:17 = Deuteronomy, chapter 10, verse 17

Esther 9 = Esther, entire chapter 9

Mishnah Makkot 3:16 = Mishnah, tractate Makkot, chapter 3, mishnah 16

Mishnah Shabbat 2 = Mishnah, tractate Shabbat, entire chapter 2

BT Sukkah 51b = Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sukkah, page 51, side 2 (a= side 1, b= side 2)

JT Beitzah 5:2 = Jerusalem Talmud, tractate Beitzah, chapter 5, halachah 2

Rambam Hilchot Berachot 2:6 = Rambam, Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Berachot, chapter 2, halachah 6

SA OC 274:4 = Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim section, chapter 274 paragraph 4

SA OC 669:1 Rema = Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim section, chapter 669 paragraph 1, gloss of Rema

MB 46:17 = Mishnah Berurah, chapter 46, paragraph 17

Shaarei Efraim 8:2 = Shaarei Efraim, section (“shaar”) 8, paragraph 2

Moed Lechol Chai, 27:73, 77 = Moed Lechol Chai, chapter 27 paragraphs 73 and 77

Igrot Moshe 1:44 = Igrot Moshe, volume 1 responsum no. 44

Persian Siddur f.28b = Manuscript of the Persian siddur, folio 28, side 2

MS 19217 f.12 = Siddur Manuscript from Kaifeng, manuscript no. 19217 in Jewish National Library, folio 12

White 2:62 = Bishop William White. “Chinese Jews” part 2, page 62

Lettres 18:40 = Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses, volume 18, page 40

Travels 15 = Travels by the Jesuits, page 15

Section 2

INTRODUCTION

What this Book includes

There are numerous elements in the life of the Jews of Kaifeng that would bear research. This book deals *with just one aspect* - namely their Jewish religious observance.

The methodology used in this study is to first state the halachah on religious practices which are mentioned in the extant material on the Jews of Kaifeng. (e.g. Tefillah, Reading the Torah, the Synagogue, Shabbat, Pesach, Kashrut), then to examine and discuss the actual observance of these halachot by the Jews of Kaifeng. This may sometimes involve the quoting of further Rabbinical sources.

The material used concerning the Jews of Kaifeng, is, as far as possible, material which is to be found in *primary sources*. (For the purpose of this book, the translation of a primary source, or of a book which quotes *verbatim* from a diary or letter, is regarded as a primary source.) Only when this primary material is unavailable are secondary sources used. The interpretations or discussions by these secondary sources, or by historians, are where necessary, carefully and critically analysed.

This research will show that there is a source in the Rabbinical literature for almost all the activities which the Jews of Kaifeng considered to be Jewish practice.

It is true that in some cases, material is brought from Rabbinical codes and responsa which were written *after* the complete isolation of the Kaifeng Jewish community from world Jewry. It might thus be asked how the Kaifeng Jews could follow Jewish practices about which they had not learned. However it must be remembered that Rabbinical codes and responsa are not novella but are based on earlier principles, since it is rare to find anything in the Codes of Jewish Law and in the various Responsa which does not have its origin in the Talmud, the various Midrashim, the Zohar or the Geonic literature. It is thus very likely that the material found in these later codes and responsa, was indeed material which was known in bygone days but had not been put into writing, or if it had, was no longer extant. It is estimated that about half the earlier Rabbinical literature is no longer extant.¹

On several occasions, due to natural and other disasters, almost all the religious books and materials of the Kaifeng Jewish community were destroyed, yet they made great efforts to reconstruct all these books and materials, and this was despite being isolated for several hundred years from world Jewry. Furthermore, the Jews of Kaifeng did not have access to printing presses and all their siddurim and other religious texts had to be copied by hand over the generations, which of course led to errors and omissions which needless to say, increased with each successive copying. As a result, their siddurim were incomplete and contained items which do not conform with the halachah.

What this Book does not include

This book will not give a history of the Jews of Kaifeng, although a brief synopsis is necessary in order to enable the reader to understand this work. No

¹ "Searching for the Lost Sheet", Books and People no.2, January 1992, (Jerusalem), p.9

attempt, however, will be made to discuss the various opinions as to the date of the Jews' first arrival in China or their country of origin.

There are historians who would argue that the religious practices of the Jews of Kaifeng had their origins in other religions in the area. A study of such theories is outside the scope of this book and will thus be only very briefly mentioned.

There are about 30 manuscripts whose contents are fragments of siddurim. Although numerous points from these manuscripts will be discussed in this work, an exhaustive word by word study of the texts of the prayers in these manuscripts is a study on its own, and will thus not form part of this book. Indeed there is a need for a study of the siddur manuscripts from Kaifeng on the lines of the study by Shlomo Tal² of a manuscript of the "Siddur of the Persian Jews".

It seems that to date a word by word study of the text has been made on only two of the Kaifeng manuscripts. One of them is the manuscript with the services for Purim,³ a study made in 1957 by Burton L. Padoll of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati Ohio.⁴ Padoll compared the text of the prayers in this Kaifeng manuscript with the siddurim of Rabbi Amram Gaon, Rabbi Saadia Gaon and the various prayer rites of Jewish communities throughout the world.⁵ The second manuscript to have been studied is that of the seder service for Pesach,⁶ a study made in 1975 by Mark G. Loeb, also of the Hebrew Union College.⁷ Loeb compared the text of this Kaifeng manuscript with six other rites of the Pesach hagadah.⁸

There are also several Sifrei Torah from Kaifeng in various Universities and Libraries in Europe and America. Only a few aspects of these Sifrei Torah will be discussed in this book. There is a need for a detailed letter by letter study of these Sifrei Torah.

A very brief synopsis of the history of the Jews of Kaifeng

There is much discussion among the historians as to when Jews first began to live in China. According to some opinions, their history extends back several thousand years.⁹ We do know however, that in the past there were Jewish communities in various Chinese cities which included Kaifeng, Beijing (Peking), Hangzhou, Ningpo, Ningxia, Luoyang, Dunhuang, Nanjing and Guangzhou (Canton), but apart from the Jewish community of Kaifeng, very little is known about these Chinese Jewish communities.¹⁰

² Persian siddur

³ MS 19236

⁴ Burton L. Padoll (1929 – 2004), A Study of a Liturgy of the Jews of Kai Feng Fu

⁵ Burton L. Padoll, A Study of a Liturgy of the Jews of Kai Feng Fu, p.10

⁶ MS 19219

⁷ Mark G. Loeb (1944 – 2009), A Study of the Passover Haggadah of the Chinese Jews

⁸ Mark G. Loeb, A Study of the Passover Haggadah of the Chinese Jews, p.17

⁹ Leslie, p.4

¹⁰ Xin, pp.151-166; Pollak, East Gate, p.4; Pan Guandan, Shapiro, pp.57-65

Around the year 1100 a group of Jews settled in the large city of Kaifeng in northern China,¹¹ with the agreement of the Emperor of that city,¹² although it is not known which emperor it was.¹³ However, there are historians who claim that the community was founded about 100 years earlier.¹⁴

Throughout the period of the existence of the Jewish community at Kaifeng, its members took measures to ensure that they had a Synagogue,¹⁵ and that daily services were held.¹⁶ It would seem that the Sabbaths and Festivals of the Jewish year were observed to the best of the community's knowledge and the existing conditions.¹⁷

It should be noted that the Jews in Kaifeng during their entire history "represented a miniscule minority of a city" whose total population was over one million inhabitants.¹⁸ For example, by the 16th century the Jewish population of Kaifeng numbered only about 4,000.¹⁹

From about the year 1500, or at the most a hundred or so years later, the Jewish community of Kaifeng was completely cut off from world Jewry and even from Jews in other parts of China.²⁰ In addition, the Jews of Kaifeng experienced a number of disasters such as a major fire, probably soon after 1600,²¹ and serious flooding by the Yellow River in 1642,²² which on both occasions resulted in the destruction of the Synagogue, together with almost all the Sifrei Torah and other religious material.²³ Following each disaster, the community immediately rallied to rebuild the Synagogue,²⁴ on an even grander scale.²⁵ In addition, they made fresh handwritten copies of their Sifrei Torah in place of the large number of Sifrei Torah which had been destroyed or lost.²⁶

The problems of the Jewish community were compounded by virtue of the fact that even in the 17th and 18th centuries their Jewish knowledge was very poor.²⁷ However, despite all these problems, the Jews of Kaifeng managed to maintain their

¹¹ Erik Zürcher (1928 – 2008), "Eight Centuries in the Chinese Diaspora: The Jews of Kaifeng", *Sino-Judaica*, vol.3, 2000, p.11

¹² Tiberiu Weisz, "Jewish Settlement in Han China", *Points East*, vol.18, no.2, July 2003, p.8; Gao Wangzhi, *East Gate*, p.17; Yating

¹³ Pan Guandan, Shapiro, p.55

¹⁴ Yating

¹⁵ Chen Yuan, Shapiro, pp.39-41

¹⁶ 1489 stele, White, 2:9; 1663a stele, White, 2:59

¹⁷ various siddur MSS and reports by the Jesuit missionaries

¹⁸ Weisz, p.xii

¹⁹ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.170

²⁰ Leslie, pp.50, 52; Pollak, *East Gate*, p.5

²¹ Leslie, p.36

²² Leslie, p.37

²³ Brotier, *Lettres*, 24:63; Brotier, White, 1:52; Leslie, pp.36-37; Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.107

²⁴ Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.274

²⁵ 1489 stele, White 2:13

²⁶ 1663b stele, White, 3:90; Domenge, *Juifs*, pp.196-97 & fn.4

²⁷ Ricci diary, Löwenthal, p.396; Domenge, pp.201-02; Gaubil, p.80; Brotier, *Lettres*, 24:80; Brotier, White, 1:62

Jewish identity and religious observances for several hundreds of years.²⁸ Furthermore, even though there were three centuries of sporadic Christian missionary activity in Kaifeng, very few Jews turned to Christianity.²⁹

The major collapse of the Jewish community of Kaifeng was heralded by the death of their Rabbi at the beginning of the 19th century, with no successor, thus leaving the community without a religious leader. Synagogue services and observances of the Festivals may have lasted a little longer but by about 1850, the Jews of Kaifeng had very largely assimilated amongst the Chinese.³⁰ In 1854 the Synagogue became a ruin.³¹ Intermarriage then took an upward spiral.³² In the summer of 1900, the Jews of Shanghai formed a “Society for the Rescue of the Native Jews in China”³³ but nothing came of it.³⁴

The more a Jew assimilates, the more he adopts the non-Jewish way of living prevalent in his surroundings. This was the case with the Jews of Kaifeng. Tiberiu Weisz wrote, “They [the Jews of Kaifeng] considered themselves Chinese first, Confucian second, and following a Jewish way of life third.”³⁵ This was apparently the situation from the 19th century, but would require further investigation as regards earlier periods.

There are those who suggest that some of the specific practices of the Jews in Kaifeng were in fact the practices of the Confucians and other religions of China.³⁶ However, prior to the 19th century, the Jews of Kaifeng carried out such practices because they had a tradition passed down from earlier generations *which was based on Rabbinical sources*, and it just happened that these practices corresponded with some of the practices of the other religions in China.³⁷

This point may be illustrated with regards to the Jewish festival of Chanukah and the Christian festival of Christmas. In Western countries these festivals usually occur at about the same period. It might be thought by a person not conversant with the facts that in the giving of Chanukah gelt (see below) and the lighting of Chanukah candles by the window,³⁸ Jews are copying the Christian practices of giving

²⁸ see various letters of the Jesuit missionaries quoted later

²⁹ Pollak, *Mandarins*, pp.36-37; Pollak, *East Gate*, p.7

³⁰ Xu Xin, “Jewish Identity of the Kaifeng Jews”, *From Kaifeng ... to Shanghai – Jews in China*, ed. Roman Malek, p.127; Leslie, pp.54, 56

³¹ Brown, p.237; Yating

³² Adler, lecture, p.22; Leslie, p.65

³³ “The Native Jews in China”, *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), 4 January 1901, p.15; “The Jews in China”, *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), 7 June 1901, p.11

³⁴ Leslie, pp.67-69

³⁵ Tiberiu Weisz, “Life of the Jews in China According to the 1512 Stone Inscription”, *Points East*, vol.18, no.3, November 2003, p.7

³⁶ See for example article by the Rev. Donald MacGillivray (1888-1931) (originally published the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 59, 1928) of which an extract is to be found in White, 1:171ff

³⁷ Similar suggestions are made by Weisz, p.xiii in connection with the inscriptions on the steles. For further discussion on this subject see e.g. Plaks, *East Gate*, pp.29-38

³⁸ SA OC 671:5

Christmas presents and lighting up the Christmas trees in front of the window. However both these Chanukah practices are in fact to be found in the Rabbinical sources, the lighting of Chanukah candles by the window being mentioned as far back as the Talmud.³⁹

Although the Jewish community of Kaifeng is now all but extinct, there is a serious interest in China, (and in other places throughout the world) in the study of the history of Chinese Jewry. In the University of Henan in Kaifeng there is an “Institute of Jewish Studies” which was established in 2002.⁴⁰ There is also in the University of Nanjing in the School of Religious Studies, a “China Judaic Studies Association” whose president is Professor Xu Xin.⁴¹ Many books and learned articles, including a number written in Chinese, are continually being published on the Jews of China.⁴²

A very brief historical synopsis of the sources for Jewish Law

“Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai”.⁴³ According to Jewish tradition, Moses did not receive only the Written Torah but also the Oral Torah. The latter was passed down *orally* from generation to generation.⁴⁴

Following the destruction of the Second Temple and the dispersion of the Jews, Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi wrote down the Mishnah, which was a part of the Oral Law, in about the year 200 C.E. During the following 300 years or so, both in Babylon and in Eretz Yisrael, there were detailed discussions on the Mishnah. These discussions were written down and became known as the Gemara of Babylon and the Gemara of Jerusalem. The Mishnah and the Gemara together are called respectively the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud. There are also “Masechtot Ketanot” (minor tractates), such as Masechet Sofrim and Masechet Derech Eretz, which were written either at the period of the Talmud or, at the latest, during the period of the Geonim.

On the pages of the printed editions of the Babylonian Talmud are to be found the commentaries of Rashi and of the Tosafists, and after the text of the various tractates of the Talmud there are the commentaries of the Rishonim (Rabbis from about the 11th to the 15th centuries) which include the Rif, Rosh and Mordechai.

Although each of the 63 tractates (volumes) of the Talmud deals *broadly speaking* with a particular subject such as the Shabbat, the various Festivals, Marriage, Civil Law and Sacrifices, many laws on one subject are to be found in a completely unrelated tractate. This is one of the main reasons why in the millennium

³⁹ BT Shabbat 21b

⁴⁰ Zhang Qianhong, “Report from the Institute of Jewish Studies, Kaifeng, China”, Points East, vol.18, no.2, July 2003, p.15

⁴¹ China Judaic Studies Association, (Internet: www.oakton.edu/user/~friend/chinajews.html - accessed 19 August 2008)

⁴² see for example bibliography in: Gao Wangzhi, East Gate, pp.105-113; Leslie, pp.225-237; Pan Guandan, Shapiro, pp.93-102; Shlomi Reiskin, “Bibliography – Jews of China”, Daat, (Internet: www.daat.ac.il/DAAT/bibliogr/shlomi/bibel4-2.htm - accessed 3 July 2008)

⁴³ Mishnah Avot 1:1

⁴⁴ Further details of books and authors quoted in this section can be found above in either the “Glossary” or “Jewish Religious Books”.

and beyond, following the completion of the Talmud, there were many Codes produced attempting to codify every law found in the Talmud, and in the writings of the Geonim which followed soon after, into a more logical order. One of the first to do this was the Rambam, who in the 12th century, in his Mishnah Torah, organised the entire compendium of Jewish law, (and this included subjects dealing with the Temple service and hence not operative since the destruction of the Temple), into 14 tomes. Following the Rambam, there were a number of other compendia, but they dealt only with the laws which are practical today. These compendia include the Tur, the Shulchan Aruch (together with the glosses of the Rema), the Levush, Shulchan Aruch Harav and the Aruch Hashulchan. In almost all of these compendia there are extensive commentaries written by the sides of the texts. The most used of these compendia is the Shulchan Aruch, written by Rabbi Yosef Karo in the 16th century. The great Rabbis of every generation from this period onwards are known as the Acharonim.

An extensively used commentary on the first section of the Shulchan Aruch is the Mishnah Berurah which was written at about the beginning of the 20th century. There are also shorter codes which include the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, the Ben Ish Chai, the Chayei Adam and the Chochmat Adam.

In addition to all these Codes, there are hundreds of thousands of responsa written by Rabbis throughout the ages up to this very day. Other material relating to Jewish Law can be learned from the various Midrashim (such as Midrash Rabba and the Pesikta l'Rav Kahana) and from the mystical work known as the Zohar.

Sources of Information on Mitzvah Observance by the Kaifeng Jews

Despite the fact that the Jews of Kaifeng were isolated from world Jewry for several hundreds of years, there is available today a considerable amount of information about them. This includes material, sometimes detailed, but often scanty, about their mitzvah observance. The main sources are the following:

Steles erected in the precincts of the Kaifeng Synagogue

In the courtyard of the Kaifeng Synagogue there were two steles (stone pillars) on both sides of which were incised in Chinese characters information on various subjects. These included moralistic teachings, general Jewish history including that of the Kaifeng community, and religious observances of the community.

Although there were some translations or partial translations or summaries made of the writings on some of these steles in the 18th and 19th centuries,⁴⁵ the first complete translation of all the steles was not made until 1900 when the Jesuit, Jérôme Tobar, translated the Chinese into French.⁴⁶ At a later date, Chen Yuan, Professor of the Catholic University of Beijing and later at the Beijing Teachers University, punctuated the Chinese text and this served as a basis for an English translation which

⁴⁵ Leslie, p.135

⁴⁶ Tobar, pp.36-87

was made by Bishop William White⁴⁷ which was then published together with copious footnotes in 1942.

At the beginning of the 21st century Tiberiu Weisz, who had had over 30 years of business and academic experience in China and in Chinese studies, examined the Chinese text of the steles and *his* “reading of the text revealed major discrepancies with White’s translation”.⁴⁸ Weisz therefore made a new translation into English and supplied footnotes.⁴⁹ Weisz was not the only person to have criticisms of White’s book; the Chinese scholar Wang Yisha claimed that he had found 123 errors or misleading statements in White’s book on China.⁵⁰

Of the two steles, the older one is about one and a half metres in height, three quarters of a metre wide and about 12 centimetres thick, and it is made of dark grey limestone. It was erected in the Synagogue courtyard in the year 1489 and incised on one of its sides.⁵¹ In the year 1512 the second side of this stele was incised. There are also ink rubbings of both sides of this stele which were made towards the beginning of the 18th century by either Gozani or Gaubil, both of whom were Jesuit missionaries. These ink rubbings are today preserved in the Vatican Library in Rome.⁵²

The older stele was, in 1912 transferred to the compound of Trinity Cathedral in Kaifeng and at a later date to the Municipal Museum at Kaifeng.⁵³ White wanted to take this stele with him to Toronto and it was broken in two, possibly by White, for convenience in shipping, but the people of Kaifeng objected to its being taken from that city.⁵⁴ Instead, a full size replica was made in Kaifeng, which is of the same size and quality of stone as the original, and this copy is to be found in the Chinese Library of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto Canada.⁵⁵ Leslie states that there is also a copy in Jerusalem,⁵⁶ but he does not say where in that city.

The second stele was erected in 1663, at which time one side of it was incised, and, almost certainly during the same year, the other side was also incised.⁵⁷ This stele is no longer extant. However an ink rubbing was made of the first side and a transcription (but not an ink rubbing) was made of the inscription on the second side.⁵⁸ White considers that the size of this stele was approximately equal to that of

⁴⁷ Weisz, p.xi

⁴⁸ Weisz, p.xii

⁴⁹ Weisz, pp.3-54

⁵⁰ Obituary of Wang Yisha, China Judaic Studies Association, (Internet: www.oakton.edu/user/~friend/art_wang.html - accessed 22 January 2009)

⁵¹ White, 2:7

⁵² Leslie, pp.131-32

⁵³ Irwin, East Gate, p.44

⁵⁴ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.184

⁵⁵ White, 2:40 together with photograph

⁵⁶ Leslie, p.131

⁵⁷ In the literature the first side of this stele is usually referred to as 1663a and the second side as 1663b,

⁵⁸ White, 2:57, 87

the 1489 stele and that it was set up on the south side of the Synagogue courtyard opposite the 1489 stele.⁵⁹

In addition to these two steles, one from the year 1679, was discovered in about 1904 embedded in the wall of a house on the southern boundary of the Synagogue enclosure. The text has been almost obliterated by children and only fragments have been deciphered.⁶⁰ There were also a number of horizontal and vertical inscriptions in the Synagogue.⁶¹ However from both the 1679 inscriptions and the horizontal and vertical inscriptions, there is very little relevant material regarding the mitzvah observance of the Kaifeng Jewish community.

Extant Manuscripts, Sifrei Torah and Synagogue Furniture from Kaifeng Siddurim

Thirty manuscripts of fragments of the prayers recited in Kaifeng on various occasions throughout the year are extant today.

Towards the end of 1850, two Chinese Protestants who were sent to Kaifeng by Bishop Smith, succeeded in purchasing 8 manuscripts. In the summer of 1851 they returned and obtained a further 57 manuscripts.⁶² (These manuscripts also included chumashim – see below.) These manuscripts were then sent to the “Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews” which was in London.⁶³ In 1853, a summary of the contents of the siddur manuscripts appeared in their journal “Jewish Intelligence”⁶⁴ and it was then reprinted by the London “Jewish Chronicle”.⁶⁵ Prior to this, in 1851, an account of these manuscripts, (according to White,⁶⁶ written by the Rev. Walter Henry Medhurst⁶⁷), had appeared in the Chinese Repository.⁶⁸

The manuscripts remained in London for a period of over 70 years, until 59 of them were obtained by the Librarian of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati “after an extended book-scouting expedition.” However, prior to this date, in 1907, a few of these manuscripts had got “lost” at an exhibition.⁶⁹ There is also one manuscript in the John Rylands Library in Manchester University and one in the

⁵⁹ White, 2:57

⁶⁰ White, 2:96; Leslie, p.132

⁶¹ White, 2:121-53; Leslie, pp.136-37

⁶² Leslie, p.154. According to Pollak’s hard-copy book, (Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 1 chap.2, p.30) the number of manuscripts was “more than fifty” and in his Internet copy (part 1 chap.2), Pollak quotes the number as 59.

⁶³ Leslie, p.154

⁶⁴ Jewish Intelligence, pp.1-7

⁶⁵ Hebrew Prayers used by the Jews....”, Jewish Chronicle, (London), 28 January 1853, pp.130-31, 11 February 1853, pp.145-46

⁶⁶ White, 2:156

⁶⁷ Rev. Walter Henry Medhurst (1796 – 1857), an English Congregationalist missionary to China

⁶⁸ “A Narrative of a Motion of Inquiry...”, The Chinese Repository (Canton), vol. 20, no.7, July 1851, pp.464-66. The “Chinese Repository” was a periodical published in Canton in China between 1832 and 1851, for the use of Protestant missionaries working in southeast Asia.

⁶⁹ Adolph S. Oko (1883 – 1944), librarian at the Hebrew Union College, A History of the Hebrew Union College Library and Museum, p.5

Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Microfilms of nearly all these siddur manuscripts are to be found in the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem.

One of these siddur manuscripts includes a long list of names of the departed, which was compiled in the 17th century and has names written in both Hebrew and Chinese letters. It has over 600 names of men and nearly 400 of women.⁷⁰

Chumashim

Amongst the manuscripts obtained from Kaifeng were 31 manuscripts containing the parshiot of the Torah read in the Synagogue each Shabbat. Each parashah is in a separate manuscript. Not all of the parshiot are extant and in a few cases there are two copies of the same parashah. They are all to be found at the Hebrew Union College with copies on microfilm at the Jewish National Library. There are also three (or five⁷¹) pages, (at least two of them on parashat Bereshit) in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.⁷² Four of these parshiot were reproduced in a book⁷³ by the London Missionary Society in 1851.

Sifrei Torah

There were 13 Sifrei Torah in Kaifeng. In mid-1851, six of these Sifrei Torah were sold (together with the 57 manuscripts mentioned above) to the two visiting Chinese Protestants. In subsequent years during the 19th century, a further five Sifrei Torah were purchased by westerners.⁷⁴ It is not known what happened to the remaining two Sifrei Torah. White, in 1913 stated that there were no Sifrei Torah remaining in Kaifeng.⁷⁵

Most of these Sifrei Torah made their way to various libraries in the west, including the British Library in London, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Cambridge University Library, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.⁷⁶ Some of these Sifrei Torah are complete, whilst others are just fragments. There are microfilms of some of these Sifrei Torah in the Jewish National Library.

In the 1990s, a section of an old Sefer Torah which had been bought at an auction in London, was brought to Rabbi Yitzchok Reisman of New York, a collector and restorer of Sifrei Torah, who is an expert on their place of origin and date of writing. From his examination of this Sefer Torah, he concluded that it had been written in China in the 1600s, and had come from the Kaifeng Synagogue. It was later purchased at auction by the Bible Society of America.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ White, 3:88ff; Leslie, p.139

⁷¹ according to Leslie, p.148 fn.1

⁷² Irwin, East Gate, p.50 and illustration no. 8; White, 2:160-61 for photographs

⁷³ "Fac-similes of the Hebrew Manuscripts obtained at the Jewish Synagogue in K'ae-Fung-Foo"

⁷⁴ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 1 chap.2 pp.34-35

⁷⁵ Leslie, p.143

⁷⁶ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 2 chap.1

⁷⁷ Michael Gros, "Searching for Hidden Treasure", Mishpacha, English edition, (New York), issue 286, 2 December 2009, p.52; Sofer Stam Scribe Y. Reisman (Internet: torahscroll.com/show.asp?PID=3 – accessed 5 December 2009)

Oriental Jewish communities place their Sifrei Torah in upright wood or metal cases and one of these cases from Kaifeng is to be found in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.⁷⁸ A further case is to be found in the Skirball Museum of the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.⁷⁹

Synagogue Furniture

Some of the furniture from the Synagogue in Kaifeng is also to be found in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. This includes two stone bowls which were used for the worshippers to wash their hands before prayers,⁸⁰ and a chime made of hard black stone about 30 centimetres in diameter used to summon the worshippers to the Synagogue.⁸¹

Reports by Missionaries and other visitors

During the 17th and especially during the early part of the 18th century, a number of Jesuit missionaries visited Kaifeng and wrote detailed accounts in the form of diaries, journals or letters to officials of their Churches in Europe on what they had observed in Kaifeng. Included in this material are details of the observance of mitzvot by the Jews of Kaifeng. These accounts have now been published, and almost all have been translated into English.

The first missionary to make contact with the Jews of Kaifeng, although he did not personally visit the place, was Father Matteo Ricci who went to Peking in 1600 and remained there until his death ten years later. There he was visited by a Jew called Ai T'ien from Kaifeng who gave him information about the Jewish practices observed by the Jews in Kaifeng. At a later date he received further information from three other Kaifeng Jews. All this information is to be found in a letter of his written in 1605; a few years later he included this information in his diary.⁸² The letter of 1605,⁸³ and the portions of his original diary which relate to the Jews of Kaifeng,⁸⁴ appear in English translation in a paper by Rudolf Löwenthal. Ricci's diary was published in 1615 by Father Nicolas Trigault, a French Jesuit and missionary to China, in the form of a journal, since the latter drew from sources other than this diary.⁸⁵ In one of the chapters of this journal, Ricci describes his contact with Jews from Kaifeng.⁸⁶

Secondary sources from that period included Alvarez Semedo,⁸⁷ who served as Portuguese Procurado General for China, and António de Gouvea,⁸⁸ a Portuguese

⁷⁸ White, 2:28-29 for photograph

⁷⁹ Irwin, East Gate, p.50

⁸⁰ Irwin, East Gate, pp.45-46, illustrations 2, 3; Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.184

⁸¹ Irwin, East Gate, p.49; Chiat, East Gate, p.62; East Gate, illustration 6; Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.184

⁸² Leslie, p.174

⁸³ Ricci letter, Löwenthal, pp.396-97

⁸⁴ Ricci diary, Löwenthal, pp.393-96

⁸⁵ Ricci journal, translator's preface p.xvii

⁸⁶ Ricci journal, Latin text, chap. 11, pp.266-287; Ricci journal, chap. 11, pp.106-14

⁸⁷ Leslie, p.176; Semedo, Löwenthal, pp.392-393

priest and a historian, who lived for some time in China. According to Leslie their writings follow Trigault “but with some independent information”.⁸⁹

About a hundred years later, in 1698, the Italian Jesuit missionary Jean-Paul Gozani, first came to Kaifeng and lived there periodically for 20 years.⁹⁰ Whilst there, he wrote several letters to Catholic clergy in Europe, the earliest one being dated 5 November 1704. It was written in Portuguese and translations into French and English were published soon after in “Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses”⁹¹ and in “Travels of the Jesuits”⁹² respectively. Other letters of his which were written at a later period, have been translated into English and can be found in the book “Juifs de Chine” by Dehergne and Leslie.⁹³

About twenty years later, in 1721, another Jesuit missionary, Jean Domenge went to live in Kaifeng for eight months, and went there again in 1722.⁹⁴ Whilst there and in the years following, he sent a number of letters to Europe in French which have been translated into English.⁹⁵ In addition he made detailed labeled sketches of the Synagogue at Kaifeng, its compound, and also a drawing showing the procedure during Reading of the Torah at the Kaifeng Synagogue. These drawings by Domenge are the only contemporary drawings which have survived of the Kaifeng Synagogue or what took place in it.⁹⁶

Another Jesuit missionary to visit Kaifeng at about the same period as Domenge was Antoine Gaubil. He sent letters from Peking in 1723 and in 1725 to the Jesuit J. B. du Halde. These are in French and as yet have not been translated into English. They are to be found in “Correspondance de Pékin”.⁹⁷

There is a secondary account from this period written by the Jesuit, Abbé Gabriel Brotier. In it he summarises the letters of Gozani, Domenge and Gaubil. This account was originally written in French in 1754 or 1757⁹⁸ and has now been translated into English.⁹⁹

In the mid 19th century, Bishop George Smith, the first Anglican Bishop of Victoria, Hong Kong, was asked by the “London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews” to send a mission of inquiry to Kaifeng. He contacted the Rev. Walter Henry Medhurst, an English Congregationalist missionary to China, and they sent two Chinese Protestants, K’hew T’heen-sang and Tseang Yung-che, both of whom wrote journals, K’hew in English and Tseang in Chinese which was then

⁸⁸ de Gouvea, Juifs, pp.210-211

⁸⁹ Leslie, p.175

⁹⁰ Leslie, p.177

⁹¹ Gozani, Lettres, 18:31-48

⁹² Gozani, Travels, pp.11-22

⁹³ Gozani, Juifs, pp.52-105

⁹⁴ Leslie, p.178

⁹⁵ Domenge, Juifs, pp.107-202

⁹⁶ Pollak, Mandarins, p.101

⁹⁷ Gaubil, pp.51-59, 74-81

⁹⁸ Brotier, Letters, 24: 56-100; Leslie, p.184

⁹⁹ Brotier, White, 1:49-68

translated into English; the latter also gave a separate detailed account of the Jewish religion as practiced in Kaifeng.¹⁰⁰

By this period the Jewish community in Kaifeng was well on its way to assimilation. However there were still a number of visitors, both Jewish and non-Jewish who went to Kaifeng and they recorded details of their voyages in their dairies, reports and letters. These visitors included the Reverend William Alexander Parsons Martin, an American Presbyterian missionary to China;¹⁰¹ the apostate Jew Samuel Schereschewsky, who was elected Bishop of Shanghai,¹⁰² (Schereschewsky's formal report of his visit to Kaifeng is no longer extant, and there is only a summary of his experiences there which was composed by his friend, the missionary the Rev. Dr. Henry Blodget¹⁰³) and J. L. Liebermann, a Viennese merchant, who in 1867 was the first European Jew to visit Kaifeng.¹⁰⁴

There are also secondary accounts from the second half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, which include those by James Finn, who was British Consul in the 1850s in Jerusalem;¹⁰⁵ Edward Isaac Ezra, a wealthy Shanghai Jewish businessman;¹⁰⁶ S.M. Perlmann, a Shanghai scholar-merchant;¹⁰⁷ and Marcus N. Adler, a Jewish historian.¹⁰⁸

One of the last visitors to obtain information about the Kaifeng Jewish Community was David Abraham Brown, who in 1932 went to Kaifeng and published in the journal the "American Hebrew"¹⁰⁹ a long account on the Jews of Kaifeng, which included some primary material from an aged resident who then lived there.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ Smith, Introduction and pp.1-82

¹⁰¹ Martin, journal, pp.26-39; Martin, Cathay, pp.265-79

¹⁰² Muller, pp.69-73

¹⁰³ Muller, pp.72-73; Pollak, Mandarins, p.187

¹⁰⁴ Liebermann, Report, pp.90-96; Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle, pp.12-13. There are some sources who give the date of Liebermann's visit as 1857 (Ezra, p.34; Brown, 3 March 1933, p.277).

¹⁰⁵ Finn, Jews of China; Finn, Orphan Colony

¹⁰⁶ Ezra

¹⁰⁷ Perlmann – this is also partially a primary source on pp.11-13

¹⁰⁸ Adler, lecture; Marcus N. Adler, "Chinese Jews", The Jewish Quarterly Review (London), vol.18, 1901, pp.18-41

¹⁰⁹ Brown, January - March 1933

¹¹⁰ Brown, 10 February 1933, p.242

Section 3

MITZVAH OBSERVANCE IN KAIFENG

Tzitzit

There is a mitzvah in the Torah to attach tzitzit to each corner of any four cornered garment.¹¹¹ Should a Jew not wear a four cornered garment, he would not be transgressing this commandment. However in an incident mentioned in the Talmud, a Rabbi Katina, who did not wear a four cornered garment came under criticism from other Rabbis.¹¹² It is however the norm for Jewish males to wear a four cornered garment in order to be able to fulfill this mitzvah. One such garment, known as a “tallit katan” (or arba kanfot) is worn throughout the day as an under garment, and on putting it on one says the berachah על מצות ציצית (al mitzvat tzitzit).¹¹³ Another garment is known as a “tallit gadol”, (or just tallit). It goes over one’s shoulders and its length is such that it covers one’s back until it reaches close to the ground. It is worn during the shacharit service in the synagogue, and on enwrapping in it one says the berachah להתעטף בציצית (l’hitatef batzitzit).¹¹⁴ Some people also cover their heads with the tallit during services.¹¹⁵

A four cornered garment, irrespective of whether it is made of (for example) wool, linen, cotton or silk is liable for the mitzvah of tzitzit. Some authorities hold that only wool and linen garments require tzitzit as a Torah law but that other materials have only a Rabbinical obligation. However there are other authorities who dispute this distinction.¹¹⁶ It is preferable that the garment for tzitzit be white.¹¹⁷

One of the questions which was asked of the Jesuit missionary Domenge towards the beginning of the 18th century was “During the prayers ... do they cover their head with a *Tallith* [prayer shawl]? Do they wear an under-garment embroidered [with threads with fringes, *tsitsit* or *Arba Kanfoth*]” (*words in brackets and italics in original, but it is possible that the words in brackets were added by Leslie*). To this Domenge answered “they have no kind of sacred clothing.”¹¹⁸ On this answer Leslie comments, “The *Arba Kanfoth* or *Tsitsit* (an everyday undergarment with fringe), even if worn, might have been missed by Domenge.” (*words in bracket and italics in original*).¹¹⁹

In his book “The Jews of China”, written nearly 150 years later, James Finn comments, “The congregation wear no *talith* or garment of fringes during the service.”¹²⁰ In fact Finn was never in Kaifeng and obtained his information at the most second hand. He very likely derived it from the above information of

¹¹¹ Numbers 15:38; Deuteronomy 22:12

¹¹² BT Menachot 41a; Rambam Hilchot Tzitzit 3:11 and Kesef Mishnah

¹¹³ SA OC 8:6 Rema; Chayei Adam 12:4; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 9:9

¹¹⁴ SA OC 8:5; Rambam Hilchot Tzitzit 3:8

¹¹⁵ SA OC 8:2; MB 8:4

¹¹⁶ SA OC 9:1 and Rema; Shoneh Halachot vol.1, after chap.24 “how to make a tallit katan ... according to the Chazon Ish”

¹¹⁷ MB 9:15; Shoneh Halachot vol.1, after chap.24 “how to make a tallit katan ... according to the Chazon Ish”

¹¹⁸ Domenge, Juifs, p.189

¹¹⁹ Domenge, Juifs, p.190 fn.32

¹²⁰ Finn, Jews of China, p.23

Domenge's. A statement similar to Finn's was at a later date made by both Perlmann¹²¹ and Ezra.¹²²

In contrast to the above, de Gouvea in his report of 1644 wrote about the dress of the Jews of Kaifeng, during the Synagogue services, "Their clothes are everyday ones, except that they wear over their shoulders a cloth of white cotton which reaches almost to the ground, and seems to be *asota* [sacramental?] (*italics, brackets and question mark in original*).¹²³ He does not mention the tzitzit hanging from the corners of this garment, but because the tzitzit are very small relative to the size of the garment, they may not have been noticeable. It is also possible that by this period the Jews of Kaifeng did not know how to make the tzitzit, hence they just wore the "tallit" without the tzitzit. (It might be mentioned that wearing such a four cornered garment without tzitzit is worse than not wearing such a garment at all.¹²⁴)

The observations of de Gouvea were confirmed in about 1850, by Jacques Aaron, a Jew living in Shanghai, who wrote a letter in French to his cousin, Aron Arnould, the Chief Rabbi of Strasburg in France. A copy of this letter certified by Rabbi Arnould appeared both in the French original and in an English translation, in a book by the traveler and explorer Israel Joseph Benjamin.¹²⁵ He writes that some Chinese Jews from Kaifeng had come to visit Jacques Aaron (in Canton or Shanghai) and conversed with him. Of the visitors' conversation, he wrote, "They also possess ... Zizith [Tzitzit], and Arba Kanfot."¹²⁶ The letter does not state whether these Jews were at the time of their visit actually wearing the arba kanfot, as is customary at all times.

Pollak discusses the authenticity of this letter of Jacques Aaron's. He immediately dismisses any possibility of Benjamin's inventing this letter, since Rabbi Arnould, who was well known, would "surely have become vociferously and publicly indignant if a letter falsely linked to him showed up in print." Pollak accepts as fact that in all probability Jacques Aaron did write a letter to his cousin Rabbi Arnould, but he suggests that this letter may not have been factual, but just "embellishing a wild tale" or that Jacques Aaron was "an out-and-out hoaxer."¹²⁷ However there is no evidence to support such a theory of Pollak's and thus there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Jacques Aaron's letter.

The usual place in a siddur to find the berachah for putting on the tallit - "l'hitatef batzitzit" - is before the start of the shacharit service. However, should one not have donned the tallit before the service, the Shulchan Aruch rules that one should don it and say the berachah over it after yishtabach, which is at the end of the pesukei

¹²¹ Perlmann, p.6

¹²² Ezra, p.13

¹²³ Domenge, Juifs, p.210

¹²⁴ SA OC 8:17; Rambam Hilchot Tzitzit 3:10

¹²⁵ Benjamin, pp.163-66. Benjamin wrote under the nom de plume Benjamin II, conveying the implication that he was treading in the footsteps of the famous 12th century traveler Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela (Pollak, Mandarins, p.171)

¹²⁶ Benjamin, p.164; Leslie, p.59 fn.1

¹²⁷ Pollak, Mandarins, p.173

dezimrah.¹²⁸ Although there are opinions that freely allow one to say this berachah over the tallit even during the pesukei dezimrah,¹²⁹ it is preferable to say it *after* yishtabach.¹³⁰

The berachah “l’hitatef batzitzit” appears in the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts for the Shabbat shacharit service,¹³¹ a further confirmation that they were aware of the mitzvah of tzitzit and that the tallit was indeed being worn in Kaifeng, at least at the Shabbat morning service. The berachah for putting on the tallit appears in the Kaifeng manuscript after “yishtabach”. Likewise, in the siddur for the Jews of Persia,¹³² this berachah over the tallit also appears after yishtabach, thus indicating that not only in Kaifeng was this the preferred place to don a tallit.

Although today it is customary for women not to wear a tallit, there have been many Rabbinical authorities who have permitted it,¹³³ others who permit but discourage it¹³⁴ whilst there are a few who forbid it.¹³⁵

It is possible that women, in addition to men, wore a tallit in Kaifeng during synagogue services. The source for this suggestion is a conversation in 1932 between the elderly widow called Shih of Kaifeng and the American David Brown. She related that her father-in-law, who had died over 40 years earlier, had told her that in the Synagogue “the men and women were dressed in long white gowns.”¹³⁶ The question which remains is whether such a “long white gown” was in fact a tallit or a special garment which, as will be seen later, was worn during services.

As part of the mitzvah of tzitzit, the Torah requires a thread made of the colour of techelet (a shade of blue),¹³⁷ although the absence of a techelet thread will not disqualify the observance of the mitzvah of tzitzit.¹³⁸ In fact the source of techelet which is a bluish dye from a marine creature was lost for thousands of years, and only about 120 years ago, was research begun in an attempt to identify it.¹³⁹

The Jews of Kaifeng covered their heads in the Synagogue with “blue turbans” and Perlmann put forward the suggestion that these “blue turbans” “were probably meant to signify a remembrance of ‘T’kheleth’ (techelet).”¹⁴⁰ It is true that the blue

¹²⁸ SA OC 53:3; the Kol Bo writes that a shaliach tzibur should don a tallit and say the beracha *before* yishtabach (Kol Bo, din yishtabach, chap.5)

¹²⁹ Kovetz Teshuvot haRambam v’Igrotov, responsum 144

¹³⁰ Birkei Yosef, OC 53:4

¹³¹ MS 19216 f.27

¹³² Persian siddur f.28b

¹³³ e.g. Rambam Hilchot Tzitzit 3:9; Tosaphot on BT Rosh Hashanah 33a dh “ha Rabbi Yehudah”; Igrot Moshe, OC 4:49

¹³⁴ e.g. SA OC 17:2 Rema

¹³⁵ e.g. Yonatan ben Uziel on Deuteronomy 22:5

¹³⁶ Brown, 10 February 1933, p.242

¹³⁷ Numbers 15:38

¹³⁸ BT Menachot 38a; Rambam Hilchot Tzitzit 1:4

¹³⁹ Wikipedia – Tekhelet, (Internet: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tekhelet -accessed 22 March 2009)

¹⁴⁰ Perlmann, p.6

(or often black) stripes today found on a tallit are a reminder of the techelet.¹⁴¹ but there seems to be no source for having blue on a *different* garment as a remembrance.

Tefillin

There is a commandment mentioned four times in the Torah¹⁴² to put on tefillin every weekday.¹⁴³ In practice they are worn just during the shacharit service.¹⁴⁴ Tefillin are worn on the arm and on the head¹⁴⁵ and contain the four parshiot from the Torah which mentions them.¹⁴⁶ These parshiot, which must be meticulously handwritten,¹⁴⁷ are placed in black boxes made to certain rigid specifications.¹⁴⁸ It is a skilled craft to make tefillin in accordance with all the many requirements, which, for example, include the technically difficult shaping of the box for the head tefillin,¹⁴⁹ and ensuring that the boxes are *perfectly* squared.¹⁵⁰

Domenge was asked, “During the prayers, do they wear bands [*tefillin*] which are wound round the forehead and left hand [arm] by Western Jews?” (*brackets and italics in original but possibly added by Leslie*). As with the question regarding tzitzit, Domenge answered. “They have no kind of sacred clothing.”¹⁵¹ Leslie, however comments on this answer of Domenge’s, “The Tefillin ... are used only during weekday prayers. Even if the Jews in K’ai-feng still preserved this ritual, Domenge, writing from his experience of Sabbath and Festival services, would have missed this.”¹⁵²

However, in the letter from Jacques Aaron, the Jew living in Shanghai, written about 1850 (see above), it states, “They also possess... Tephilim (*sic*) (for the ceremonies of daily service) ...” (*bracketed words in English translation*).¹⁵³ The original French states, “Ils sont aussi ... Thephilin ...”¹⁵⁴ (*without the added bracketed words*) There are no further details in this letter regarding the tefillin.

By the mid-19th century the Kaifeng Jewish community had been isolated from world Jewry for at least several hundred years. It is unlikely that with usage, a pair of tefillin would have survived for hundreds of years, especially in view of the various disasters which overtook the community and caused the destruction of their

¹⁴¹ Minhag Yisrael Torah, 1:69; “Why are there stripes on Jewish Prayer Shawls?” (Internet: Judaism.about.com/od/prayersworshiprituals/f/tallis_stripes.htm – accessed 22. March 2009)

¹⁴² Exodus 13:9, 16, Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18

¹⁴³ SA OC 30:1, 31:1; 37:2; MB 37:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 4:10, 26

¹⁴⁴ SA OC 25:4, 37:2; MB 25:14; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 4:26

¹⁴⁵ SA OC 25:5; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 1:1

¹⁴⁶ SA OC 32:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 1:1

¹⁴⁷ SA OC 32:1-36, 36 and Mishnat Sofrim of the MB

¹⁴⁸ SA OC 32:37-52

¹⁴⁹ MB 32:172; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 3:2

¹⁵⁰ SA OC 32:39

¹⁵¹ Domenge, Juifs, p.189

¹⁵² Leslie, p.190 fn.32

¹⁵³ Benjamin, p.164

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin, p.165

Sifrei Torah and other religious books. It thus seems probable that the Kaifeng Jewish community were producing their own tefillin. However it is open to further investigation whether they were able to reproduce them in accordance with all the intricate requirements of the halachah.

Before putting on tefillin, either one or two berachot are recited, the number depending on the custom followed by the community.¹⁵⁵ However, unlike the donning of the tallit, where a berachah is found in the Kaifeng manuscripts, there is no berachah found in these manuscripts for putting on tefillin. This does not necessarily mean that the Jews of Kaifeng were unaware of these berachot. The berachot could well have appeared in portions of the manuscripts which are no longer extant.

Tefillin must be placed on a specific area of the arm¹⁵⁶ and head¹⁵⁷ and a deviation from the proper place could cause a failure in the observance of the mitzvah.¹⁵⁸ We have no information on how the Jews of Kaifeng wore their tefillin. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the community had virtually assimilated by 1850, it is unlikely that many of the community were putting on Tefillin daily at that period, if at all.

Mezuzah

There is a commandment mentioned twice in the Torah¹⁵⁹ to place a mezuzah on every doorpost of the house.¹⁶⁰ The mezuzah contains the two parshiot from the Torah which mention it,¹⁶¹ and these parshiot must be meticulously handwritten on parchment.¹⁶² It is customary to write on the outside of the parchment the Hebrew letters “shin – daled – yud”,¹⁶³ which is one of the Divine names. Before attaching the mezuzah to the doorpost, it is placed in a case¹⁶⁴ and throughout the generations, all over the Jewish world, a whole variety of decorative cases have been designed.¹⁶⁵

On one of the “Vertical Tablets” (dating from the 17th century) which was hung on the door jambs of one of the lecture halls in the courtyard of the Kaifeng Synagogue, the mitzvah of mezuzah is possibly indicated. On this tablet is written, “The Sacred Script [Hebrew] has twenty-seven letters [22 letters of the alphabet plus the five letters written in a different form when appearing at the end of a word]: these we teach in our families, and display on our doors ...”¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁵ SA OC 25:5 and Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 4:4-5

¹⁵⁶ SA OC 27:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 4:2

¹⁵⁷ SA OC 27:9; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 4:1

¹⁵⁸ MB 27:33

¹⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 6:9, 11:20

¹⁶⁰ SA YD 286; Rambam Hilchot Mezuzah 6

¹⁶¹ SA YD 285:1; Rambam Hilchot Mezuzah 5:1

¹⁶² SA YD 288; Mishnat Sofrim of the MB 36

¹⁶³ SA YD 288:15; Rambam Hilchot Mezuzah 5:4

¹⁶⁴ SA YD 289:1; Rambam Hilchot Mezuzah 5:6

¹⁶⁵ Belle Rosenbaum, Upon Thy Doorposts; Aharon Granevich-Granot, “Guarding His People – Mezuzah Cases, Forgotten Communities”, Mispacha (English edition), (New York), 14 October 2009, pp.26-31

¹⁶⁶ White, 2:143

In two recent works there are mentions of the mezuzah in connection with the Kaifeng community.

One of them is a paper by Dr. Leslie Malkin from California in a paper entitled “The Jews of China”. There he writes, “Ai [presumably the Ai who met with Ricci at the beginning of the 17th century] mentioned Hebrew character (*sic*) on the door frames of the homes, perhaps confirming that the Jewish families had a representation of the mezuzah on the doorpost.”¹⁶⁷ Malkin however does not give the source of this information.

The second source is a book on mezuzot written by Dr. Belle Rosenbaum of Monsey New York.¹⁶⁸ Rosenbaum spent many years making a collection of about 5,000 mezuzah cases from all over the world, which are now on display at the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem.¹⁶⁹

One of these mezuzah cases comes from an old building in Kaifeng. This case was discovered by chance around 1955. It is made of ivory and is hand carved in the form of a fish. Near the top of the case seems to be something cut out in the shape of a diamond and there the letters “shin-daled” can be seen.¹⁷⁰ Possibly this is the parchment inside the mezuzah but Rosenbaum’s book does not state whether or not it has been examined.

The book also does not state the estimated age of this mezuzah case nor the age of the “old building” on whose doorpost it was found. The possibility cannot be excluded that this mezuzah was affixed to the doorpost at some time from the 19th century onwards by a Jew who visited Kaifeng after the Jewish community there became known to the Jewish world.

Tefillah

Daily services. On an ordinary weekday there are three daily services, namely שחרית (shacharit) – the morning service, מנחה (minchah) – the afternoon service, and מעריב (maariv) – the evening service. On Shabbat, Festivals and Rosh Chodesh there is in addition, מוסף (mussaf) – the additional service, and on Yom Kippur a fifth service called נעילה (neilah) – the concluding service.¹⁷¹

From the stele of 1489 it can be seen that the three daily services were recited in Kaifeng. The stele states, “In the midst of daily occupations men must not forget Heaven even for a single moment, but morning, noon and night, three times a day should pay due reverence and offer worship.”¹⁷² This directive is repeated in the 1663a stele.¹⁷³ The various manuscripts from Kaifeng contain at least fragments of the

¹⁶⁷ Dr. Leslie Malkin, The Jews of China, (Internet: jewishwebindex.com/chinese_jews.htm - accessed 3 July 2008)

¹⁶⁸ Belle Rosenbaum, Upon Thy Doorposts

¹⁶⁹ Aharon Granevich-Granot, “Guarding His People – Mezuzah Cases, Forgotten Communities”, Mispacha (English edition) (New York), 14 October 2009 pp.26-31

¹⁷⁰ Belle Rosenbaum, Upon Thy Doorposts, p.46

¹⁷¹ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:8

¹⁷² 1489 stele, White, 2:9

¹⁷³ 1663a stele, White, 2:59

texts of the three daily services. There are also fragments of the mussaf service for Shabbat, Festivals and Rosh Chodesh¹⁷⁴ and the Yom Kippur neilah service.¹⁷⁵

In a letter written in about 1850, a Chinese Jew named Chao says, “There is also a stream encircling the walls, near which are two large trees whose branches overhang the water. Daily at noon and midnight men climb the trees and cross the stream, in this way entering the temple for worship.”¹⁷⁶ One can easily understand “noon” which is the time for minchah which may be recited from half an hour after noon.¹⁷⁷ But what does the writer mean by “midnight”? There is a voluntary prayer known as “tikun chatzot” in which Jews rise at midnight and recite prayers in memory of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem,¹⁷⁸ but in practice very few Jews do this.¹⁷⁹ There is nothing in the manuscripts to indicate that the Jews of Kaifeng knew of such a prayer, and thus it is very unlikely that they recited it. It is possible that this letter is referring to the hours after nightfall but before midnight when the maariv service would be recited. However, it still leaves us with the question of how the men went there for shacharit? In any case, there were surely ways to reach the Synagogue other than by climbing trees, which leaves this report by this Chinese Jew open to serious question.

Summoning people to prayer: The making of some sort of noise or banging to wake people up and/or to summon them to the Temple in Jerusalem, and at a later period to the Synagogue, can be traced back in the Rabbinic literature to the Mishnah. There it states that there were such “waker-uppers” who would wake up those on duty in the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁸⁰ The noise they made was so loud that King Agrippas said it could be heard 32 kilometres away¹⁸¹ or, according to another version, 12 kilometres away.¹⁸² The Jerusalem Talmud states how an official of the Synagogue would go round and knock on doors to summon people to the Synagogue¹⁸³ and many of the Rishonim make reference to such a person who would wake the people up for the Synagogue services.¹⁸⁴

At a later period, in Eastern Europe the shamash would go round the houses and knock on the doors to awaken or call the people to Synagogue before the shacharit, minchah and selichot (penitential prayers) services.¹⁸⁵ It was also a custom

¹⁷⁴ MSS 19216 ff.49ff, 19217, 19220 ff.41ff, 19221 ff.8-15, 19233, 19234 ff.51-75, 19237, 19239, 16160, MS Toronto

¹⁷⁵ MS 19230

¹⁷⁶ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.43

¹⁷⁷ SA OC 233:1; MB 233:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 3:2

¹⁷⁸ SA OC 1:3; MB 1:9

¹⁷⁹ Minhag Yisrael Torah, 1:40

¹⁸⁰ Mishnah Shekalim 5:1

¹⁸¹ JT Shekalim 5:1

¹⁸² BT Yoma 20b

¹⁸³ JT Beitzah 5:2

¹⁸⁴ e.g. Sefer Raviah, Hilchot Yom Tov, 795; Mordechai on BT Beitzah 696; Hagahot Ashri on BT Beitzah 5:6

¹⁸⁵ Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:77, 2:10

in Europe¹⁸⁶ for the shamash of the Synagogue to bang three times with a “hammer”.¹⁸⁷ All this was not limited to Europe. Indeed in Yemen there was the “almadai” whose job was to summon people to selichot.¹⁸⁸ There were also mechanical devices to wake people up for religious services. For this purpose some people had a water-clock which was arranged to make a noise at midnight so they could arise for tikun chatzot.^{189 190}

Kaifeng also had its method of notifying its Jewish community that the time had arrived to go to the Synagogue. For this purpose they had a chime stone which was beaten.¹⁹¹ We know that such a chime stone certainly existed in Kaifeng since it was later transferred to Toronto. Although none of the various missionaries who spent time in Kaifeng even mentioned the use of this chime stone,¹⁹² White writes “This chime of hard black stone was received from Chao Yün-chung, whose father had told him that it was used in the K’ai-fêng synagogue to call the worshippers together.”¹⁹³

Preparations before praying. There was a decree by (the Biblical) Ezra that a baal kerî (a person who has had a seminal emission) may not occupy himself with Torah

¹⁸⁶ Geulat Yisrael, ed. Yitzchak Meir Rofeld, p.42; Elef Ktav, 2:12

¹⁸⁷ This word הָמַר (hammer) is also the initial letters of the words הָרַחֵק מִשְׁכַּן רָע - “distance yourself from a bad neighbor” (Mishnah Avot 1:7) – a person who absents himself from the Synagogue is called a bad neighbor Ta’amei Haminhagim Umekorei Hadinim, 1:166)

¹⁸⁸ Halichot Taiman, p.30

¹⁸⁹ Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim, pp.141-42

¹⁹⁰ Apart from various kinds of alarms to summon people to prayers, there are sources in Jewish tradition mentioning sounds made to inform Jews of various other things: At the time of the Gemara, six sounds of the shofar would be made prior to Shabbat to inform the population that Shabbat was approaching and that they should thus make the necessary preparations. (BT Shabbat 35b) In Djerba, a small island off the coast of Tunisia, until this day, a shofar is sounded to announce the approaching Shabbat. (Brit Kehunah, OC vol.1, maarechet shin par.1 (p.83b)). The Rema wrote (SA OC 256:1 Rema) in the 16th century that in place of these shofar blasts, the chazzan would publicly call out (in the streets) of the approaching Shabbat. In a similar vein, Shabbat music is played over the city loudspeakers and/or a siren is sounded in many cities in Israel a few minutes before the start of Shabbat. (“Welcoming the Shabbos Bride”, Mishpacha, (English edition), (New York), issue 237, 10 December 2008, pp.70-71; Miriam Goodman, “We’re Home”, (Internet: www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/588261/jewish/Were-Home.htm - accessed 24 March 2009). Another example of the use of sounds is brought by the Ben Ish Chai, who lived in Baghdad, which was a predominantly Moslem city. As a result, There was during the day the sound of the Muezzin to summon the Moslems to the Mosques for their daily prayers. The precise times for these prayers depended on the varying length of the day throughout the year, in the same way as the Jewish times for prayer and termination of Shabbat. The Ben Ish Chai writes that the Jews in Baghdad would utilize the sound of the Muezzin in order to know the times for prayers and for the termination of Shabbat. Ben Ish Chai, first year, Vayakhel 4, second year, Vayetze 1)

¹⁹¹ Chiat, East Gate, p.62 and illustration 6

¹⁹² Irwin, East Gate, p.49

¹⁹³ White, unnumbered page immediately before title page to part 2

before immersing in a mikvah (ritual bath).¹⁹⁴ This was extended by a later Beth Din to include even praying,¹⁹⁵ but this decree was later abolished since people were not able to observe it.¹⁹⁶ However the custom in Shinar (an area in Babylon)¹⁹⁷ and Spain was that a baal keri would not pray until he had washed his entire body.¹⁹⁸ Also, although this is not obligatory today, there are people, particularly Chasidim (followers of the Baal Shem Tov), who are particular to go to the mikvah every morning before prayers.¹⁹⁹

The Shulchan Aruch has an entire chapter devoted to suitable dress during prayers,²⁰⁰ and a later authority writes on this subject, “Reciting the amidah is like standing before a King and one must thus be suitably dressed.”²⁰¹

In his book “Reishit Chochmah”, written towards the end of the 16th century, Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidash, refers to the passage in the Torah where Jacob coming to Bet-El tells his household and all those who were with him “purify yourselves and change your garments”²⁰² Rabbi de Vidash considers that we can learn from the proximity of the expressions “purify” and “change garments” that garments worn during prayers should be both physically and spiritually clean.²⁰³

It is forbidden to pray bareheaded²⁰⁴ and some authorities say that one should wear a hat rather than just a capel (skull-cap) when praying.²⁰⁵

The Mishnah states that “one should not start praying until one is in a reverent state of mind. The ‘Chasidim Harishonim’ (pious people of past generations) would wait one hour before praying in order that they could concentrate their thoughts upon the Almighty.”²⁰⁶ Even though today people do not wait an hour, it is proper to wait at least a few seconds before starting to pray.²⁰⁷

One is forbidden to pray if one needs to attend the wants of nature. Should one do so, the prayers are regarded as an abomination and in the case of reciting the amidah, in a situation when one would be unable to wait 72 minutes before attending the wants of nature, the prayers would be invalid and one would have to repeat the amidah.²⁰⁸

¹⁹⁴ BT Bava Kama 82b

¹⁹⁵ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:4

¹⁹⁶ MB 88:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:5

¹⁹⁷ Genesis 10:10, 11:2, Joshua 7:21, Isaiah 11:11, Zechariah 5:11

¹⁹⁸ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:6

¹⁹⁹ MB 88:4; Rabbi Dr. Aaron Wertheim (d.1988), Law and Custom in Hasidism, trans. Shmuel Himelstein, pp.102-105; Keter Shem Tov Hashalem, pp.48-49

²⁰⁰ SA OC 91

²⁰¹ Aruch Hashulchan OC 91:1

²⁰² Genesis 35:2

²⁰³ Reishit Chochmah, shaar haahavah chap.11, (p.134b)

²⁰⁴ SA OC 91:3

²⁰⁵ Chayei Adam 22:8; Aruch Hashulchan 91:6

²⁰⁶ Mishnah Berachot 5:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:16

²⁰⁷ MB 93:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:16

²⁰⁸ SA OC 92:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:10

All these above mentioned points are to be found in the preparations made by the Jews of Kaifeng before praying. The 1489 stele states, “What was the common practice of the patriarchal worthies in their reverential ceremonies? First they washed their bodies and changed their garments; then they purified their mind and regulated their natural faculties; and so with great respect and veneration they then entered in before the Scriptures of the Way.”²⁰⁹ The 1663a stele also describes these preparations. For the phrase “entered in before the Scriptures of the Way”, it states “and after this, looking to Heaven, he performs the acts of worship.”²¹⁰ In place of “acts of worship” Weisz’ translation gives “the morning prayer [shacharit].”²¹¹

Does this phrase “washed their bodies” refer to immersion in a mikvah? The journal of 1850 by the Chinese Protestant K’hew states, “On the two sides of the temple [i.e. the Synagogue and surrounding courtyards] there are baths and wells, in which they wash; and after making themselves clean they enter the holy place.”²¹² Could this be a mikvah? For men, it is sufficient that there is a certain minimum quantity of water even if it has been drawn²¹³ (unlike water for a woman’s niddah (menstrual) immersion where the water may not be drawn.²¹⁴)

This 1850 journal also states on this subject, “Before entering the holy place, they all have to wash their bodies, both men *and women.*” (*emphasis added*)²¹⁵ However, apart from pre-marriage, after childbirth and at the end of the monthly niddah period, women do not usually go to a mikvah, and certainly not before going to a Synagogue.²¹⁶ One might give slight support for this 1850 journal statement (assuming that this statement is accurate) from the customs appertaining to erev Yom Kippur. There is a strong custom for men to immerse in the mikvah on erev Yom Kippur,²¹⁷ even for those who do not do so on any other occasion throughout the year. To this custom for men, the Maharil and the Magen Avraham add that women should also immerse on erev Yom Kippur²¹⁸ (although there are others who disagree²¹⁹). One could suggest (but with difficulty) that the women in Kaifeng immersing before they went to the Synagogue was an extension of this erev Yom Kippur custom.

An associated question is whether the community had a kasher mikvah for the women to immerse in. There is nothing in the extant material of Kaifeng which refers to the laws of “taharat hamishpachah” (family purity).

The laws of the construction of a mikvah are extremely complex. Among the various ways to build a kasher mikvah is one which involves joining up, in an

²⁰⁹ 1489 stele, White, 2:9

²¹⁰ 1663a stele, White, 2:59

²¹¹ Weisz, p.34

²¹² K’hew, Smith, p.29

²¹³ MB 88:4

²¹⁴ SA YD 201:3

²¹⁵ K’hew, Smith, p.29

²¹⁶ There is an opinion that a woman who is niddah should not to go to the Synagogue (SA OC 88:1 Rema)

²¹⁷ SA OC 606:4; MB 606:17; Matteh Efraim, 606:8

²¹⁸ Maharil, Hilchot Erev Yom Kippur, (p.59a); Magen Avraham on SA OC 606:8

²¹⁹ Elef Hamagen on Matteh Efraim Hashalem, 606:16

acceptable manner, a suitably made pit-like construction with a well²²⁰ or stream.²²¹ As we have already seen, around the Synagogue complex, in addition to the baths, there were wells and a stream. It is possible that these baths were in some way connected with these wells and/or stream to make a kasher mikvah.

The 1489 stele stated that the Jews changed their garments before praying. This in fact accords with what is written in the Shulchan Aruch, “It is proper that a person should have special nice clothes for prayers, just as the kohanim had [during their service in the Temple].”²²² From the steles²²³ we can see that the Jews of Kaifeng were very concerned with the spiritual aspects of life, and their special garments for praying could thus also well accord with the view of Rabbi de Vidash (stated above).

The Shulchan Aruch however then continues that “not everybody is able to afford this.”²²⁴ and indeed the *non-changing* of clothes accords with the 1663a stele which just talks about “adjusting” one’s clothes., namely making oneself look more respectable before praying.²²⁵

Special clothes for prayers were also found in other Jewish communities. For example, in Mattersdorf, a town in the former kingdom of Hungary, each of the worshippers had a long coat set aside especially for prayers. The coats were hung up in the entrance hall to the Synagogue and worshippers would put them on when entering and remove them when leaving.²²⁶ This practice was however later discontinued.²²⁷ No reason is stated for its discontinuance, but perhaps it was for financial reasons.

According to the letter of the halachah, a man must cover his head only when praying; covering the head all the time is a “midat chasidut” (an act of special piety.²²⁸ (However, in practice today, a religious Jewish male always keeps his head covered.) The Jews in Kaifeng covered their heads during prayer, as the historians have written, “The blue cap that they wear in their synagogue during prayer ...”²²⁹ and “with a covering over their head they read them [Sifrei Torah] in the synagogue.”²³⁰

The phrase “they purified their mind” in the 1489 stele,²³¹ is elaborated upon in the 1663a stele, “he dulls the ardour of sensual desire, he preserves poise of spirit

²²⁰ Taharat Mayim pp.209-14; the architect Yosef Sheinberger, (1912-1982), Mikvaot, p.60

²²¹ the architect Yosef Sheinberger, Mikvaot, p.60

²²² SA OC 98:4

²²³ 1489 stele; 1512 stele; 1663a stele, White, 2:fn.9

²²⁴ SA OC 98:4

²²⁵ translation by White, “he adjusts his robes and his turban.” (White, 2:59); translation by Weisz, “adjusted the clothes and cap” (Weisz, p.34)

²²⁶ Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:86

²²⁷ Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:86 fn.

²²⁸ Bet Yosef on Tur, OC 91 dh “mah shekatuv rabbeinu”; Gra on SA OC 8 dh “v’nachon”

²²⁹ Brotier, Lettres, 24:61; Brotier, White, 1:51-52

²³⁰ Gozani, Juifs, p.59

²³¹ 1489 stele, White, 2:9

... and adopts a dignified deportment.”²³² There is an entire chapter in the Shulchan Aruch showing how one must be in a proper frame of mind when praying.²³³

Apart from immersion in a mikvah, there is also a religious requirement to wash one's hands before praying any service.²³⁴ In Kaifeng this hand washing was done just inside the door of the Synagogue, where there was a drain mouth to dispose of the water. The water was poured from a pot or ewer over the hands which were held over this drain mouth.²³⁵

Shoes in Synagogue: Removal of the shoes on entering a holy place is already mentioned in the Torah, “take off your shoes from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”²³⁶ One is not allowed to go on to the Temple Mount with shoes.²³⁷ However, in contrast,²³⁸ according to the halachah it is *permitted* to enter a Synagogue wearing shoes.²³⁹

However based on a statement in the Jerusalem Talmud,²⁴⁰ the Kaftor Vaferach writes that we can see that the custom in the city of Tiberius “was as is the custom in our countries that they leave their shoes outside the door of the Synagogue.”²⁴¹ Indeed for well over a thousand years following the period of the Talmud, Jews in Oriental countries did not enter a synagogue whilst wearing shoes.²⁴²

An example of this can be seen from the Synagogues in Yemen where in their courtyards there were small cubicles to hold the shoes of the worshippers during prayers, since the Jews there “would not enter the Synagogue with their shoes on their feet, but everyone would remove their shoes in the courtyard and then enter.”²⁴³

What was the practice in the Kaifeng synagogue on the wearing of shoes? The various steles do not mention this subject. However, as we have seen, *immediately* before praying the Jews of Kaifeng “washed their bodies” in the baths *adjacent* to the Synagogue. They would thus be barefooted and even if the custom was to enter the Synagogue without shoes, it would be unnecessary to state in these steles that the worshippers should remove their shoes before prayer.

²³² 1663a stele, White, 2:59

²³³ SA OC 93

²³⁴ SA OC 92:4, 233:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:2

²³⁵ White 1:22; Irwin, East Gate, pp.45-46, 62; Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.42

²³⁶ Exodus 3:5

²³⁷ Rambam Hilchot Bet Habechirah 7:2

²³⁸ BT Berachot 62b-63a

²³⁹ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 11:10

²⁴⁰ JT Bava Metzia 2:8

²⁴¹ Kaftor Vaferach, chap.7, (p.31b)

²⁴² Minhagei Hakehilot, p.5. A further mention of this custom is to be found in a letter written in 1488 by the Italian Rabbi Ovadiah Bertinoro (c.1445 – c.1525) who had then arrived in Eretz Israel. Amongst the letters he wrote from there, was one to his father. In it he stated, “In all Muslim countries, no man enters a synagogue with his shoes on, but barefooted.” (Letters from the Land of Israel, collected by Avraham Yaari (1899 - 1966), p.116)

²⁴³ Halichot Taiman, p.98

The earliest mention of the Kaifeng Jews' removal of shoes, seems to be by de Gouvea who in 1644 wrote, "They enter the area where the Ark is after taking off their shoes."²⁴⁴ From this it would seem that elsewhere in the Synagogue it would be permitted to wear shoes. There is indeed a basis for this distinction. The Meiri writes, "It is permitted [to enter a Synagogue] wearing shoes, but on entering the area of the Ark, the custom is to remove one's shoes."²⁴⁵

However, in contradistinction to de Gouvea, Domenge in a letter written in December 1724, (when describing the Simchat Torah service in the Synagogue) writes of the Jews of Kaifeng that "all are barefooted."²⁴⁶ Furthermore in his drawing (referred to above) of the Jews Reading the Torah in the Synagogue, they are all barefooted.²⁴⁷ White, in his book, photographed a reenactment of this Torah reading. In this photograph, there is something on the feet of the people, but it is not clear what it is.²⁴⁸

At a much later date, in 1850, the question of footwear was again mentioned in the journal account of the Chinese Protestant, K'hew, "The priest [leader], when going to perform service [in the Synagogue], wears ... blue shoes; but the congregation are not allowed to go in with their shoes."²⁴⁹ However, a letter written in the same year by the Kaifeng Jew, Chao-nien-tsu, possibly gives slightly different information on this subject, "In the Synagogue are worn ... shoes with soft soles."²⁵⁰ This accords with Rabbinical opinion that one should have special shoes for wearing in the Synagogue.²⁵¹

Abstaining from Food: The Rambam writes, "It is forbidden to taste *anything* ... before praying shacharit." (*emphasis added*)²⁵² - namely one is in a state of complete fast before praying. However, the commentaries on the Rambam do not take this word "anything" so literally and allow water to be consumed.²⁵³ This is also the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch which states that "until one has prayed the amidah [of Shacharit] one may not eat or drink, with the exception of water."²⁵⁴

²⁴⁴ de Gouvea, Juifs, p.210

²⁴⁵ Meiri on BT Berachot 62b

²⁴⁶ Domenge, Juifs, p.189

²⁴⁷ Pollak, Mandarins, p.291 for reproduction of Domenge's sketch. At a later date, Father Joseph Brucker (a Roman Catholic researcher of the early 20th century), tried to "improve" on Domenge's drawings and he added shoes to all the people shown in the drawing (Pollak, Mandarins, pp.101, 291 for reproduction of Brucker's sketch). For some unexplained reason, the drawings reproduced by White 1:8, by Ezra (Ezra, p.7) and by Adler (Adler, lecture, p.12) are that of Brucker's and not Domenge's.

²⁴⁸ White, 1:15

²⁴⁹ K'hew, Smith, p.29

²⁵⁰ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.42

²⁵¹ Shulchan Hatahor - Zer Zahav, vol.1, 92:2, (p.121)

²⁵² Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 6:4

²⁵³ Kesef Mishnah on Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 6:4; Hagahot Maimoni on Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 6:4

²⁵⁴ SA OC 89:3

In the list of preparations to be made before praying, the 1663a stele adds a further item, “Before performing acts of worship, he fasts...”²⁵⁵ (according to Weisz’ translation, the stele is here referring to the shacharit service²⁵⁶). Whether or not the actions of the Jews of Kaifeng in this matter were in accordance with the *literal* words of the Rambam,²⁵⁷ or in accordance with the other authorities quoted above, is not known.

Musical Instruments: The use of musical instruments in the Synagogue has been extensively discussed by the Rabbinical authorities. As far as Sabbaths and Festivals are concerned, it is strictly forbidden, since this involves the prohibition of playing a musical instrument on these days.²⁵⁸ Even on weekdays when there are not these restrictions, many authorities still forbid it, as a remembrance of the destruction of the Temple and because playing musical instruments is a custom practiced by non-Jews in their places of worship.²⁵⁹ With regard to the practice in Kaifeng, Domenge wrote that during the prayers “they have ... no musical instruments,”²⁶⁰ namely they acted in accordance with the halachah.

Direction faced whilst praying. All over the world, when Jews pray, they physically turn their bodies in the direction of Eretz Yisrael.²⁶¹ For this reason, when, throughout the ages, Synagogues were built in the Diaspora, they were built in such a way that the front of the Synagogue pointed in the direction of Eretz Yisrael.

In the year 1163 when the first Synagogue was built in Kaifeng the front pointed towards the west (which is the direction of Eretz Yisrael vis-à-vis China). This can be clearly seen from a letter written by the Jesuit missionary Gozani, who visited the Synagogue in 1704, “Their Synagogue looks to the West and whenever they pray to G-d, they turn to that Quarter.”²⁶² But as can also be seen, there is no mention of Jerusalem. Thus it seems that Gozani did not appreciate the reason for praying towards the west.

However, the Jesuits obviously understood why the Jews of China prayed westwards and they even gave *what they thought* to be the source for this - namely from the book of Daniel.²⁶³ They wrote, “We are not to wonder that the Chinese Jews should turn towards the West in offering up their Prayers, because our Jews [i.e. the Jews of Europe] turn Eastward. The Reason of this Difference is, ‘tis a very ancient Custom among the Jews, to turn in Time of Prayer towards Jerusalem. An Example of

²⁵⁵ 1663a stele, White, 2:59

²⁵⁶ Weisz, p.34

²⁵⁷ The question of whether or not they knew of the Rambam or of his Mishnah Torah is not being entered into, here.

²⁵⁸ SA OC 338:1

²⁵⁹ Siach Tefillah, pp.149-51

²⁶⁰ Domenge, Juifs, p.189

²⁶¹ SA O.C.94:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 5:3

²⁶² Gozani, Lettres, 18:36; Gozani, Travels, p.13

²⁶³ Daniel 6:11 – (in a footnote to Gozani’s letter it is incorrectly given as 6:10 in the French text and as 4:10 in the English translation)

this is seen in the Book of Daniel. Now Jerusalem which stands Eastward with respect to Europe, is West with regard to China.”²⁶⁴

The verse in Daniel referred to by the Jesuits reads, “When Daniel learned that the writing had been inscribed, he went home; he had windows open towards Jerusalem in his upper chamber – and three times a day he fell to his knees, and prayed and gave thanks before his G-d, exactly as he had been doing before this.”²⁶⁵ Although the verse indeed mentions “towards Jerusalem” the Gemara does not learn that one prays facing Jerusalem from this verse but that there should be windows in a synagogue.²⁶⁶ The direction towards which one should turn during prayer, namely Jerusalem (and Eretz Yisrael and the Temple), the Gemara²⁶⁷ learns from verses in the books of Kings²⁶⁸ and Chronicles.²⁶⁹

Rather surprisingly, the Jesuits continued, “Further, ’tis certain that the Temple of Jerusalem was so built, that the Israelites, when they pray’d, turned to the West; and possibly the Chinese Jews may observe the like practice.”²⁷⁰ It is difficult to understand this comment, since it seems to imply, in contradistinction to their previous quoted comment, that all Jews in the world would face west when praying, irrespective of the direction of Jerusalem.

Gozani’s failure to mention Jerusalem as the direction for prayer is found again in a letter written in 1712, where he writes, “When adoring G-d they turn towards the west. The Synagogue itself ... is situated to the west and looks back upon the east.”²⁷¹

Gabriel Brotier, however, writing in about 1770 realised the reason for the Jews of Kaifeng praying westwards, “When they pray they turn to the west. The ... synagogue, faces also in the same direction. This is without doubt in remembrance of Jerusalem which lies, in relation to them, to the west.”²⁷²

In a similar vein, K’hew in his journal of his visit to Kaifeng in 1850 writes, “... the worshippers during service, have to turn their faces towards the west, which is also in the direction of Jerusalem.”²⁷³ This strongly implies that even as late as 1850,²⁷⁴ the Jews of Kaifeng knew the reason for facing west. However, the Rev. Smith, in his introduction to the journals of K’hew and Tseang, writes, “The worshippers within the synagogue faced towards the west; but whether in the direction of Jerusalem or towards the suspended tablets of the emperors, no clear

²⁶⁴ Remarks to Gozani’s letter: Lettres, 18:50; Gozani, Travels, p.24

²⁶⁵ Daniel 6:11

²⁶⁶ BT Berachot 34b; SA OC 90:4

²⁶⁷ BT Berachot 30a

²⁶⁸ Kings I 8:35, 44, 48

²⁶⁹ Chronicles II 6:32

²⁷⁰ Gozani, Lettres, 18:50; Gozani, Travels, p.24

²⁷¹ Gozani, Juifs, p.60

²⁷² Brotier, Lettres, 24:81-82; Brotier, White, 1:63

²⁷³ K’hew, Smith, p.29.

²⁷⁴ Although written in the present tense, K’hew is possibly referring to some decades earlier.

information was obtained.”²⁷⁵ Whether or not “no clear information was obtained” is a personal conclusion of Smith’s, or is from further clarifications from K’hew and/or Tseang, is not known.

Number of worshippers in the Synagogue. To recite certain prayers such as kaddish, borachu, kedushah and for the Reading the Torah, one requires a minyan – namely ten Jewish males above the age of 13.²⁷⁶

What was the number in attendance at the Synagogue in Kaifeng? The Jesuit missionary Domenge, who visited the Synagogue in the 1720s writes, “At their greatest festivals there are scarcely 40 to 50 adult men in the temple and on Saturday, in order that (the Law of) Moses is not abandoned they have given the title of Man-la or Doctor to ten persons, who go regularly to the service.”(*brackets in original*)²⁷⁷

Domenge wrote that he had visited the Synagogue on the Festival of Shemini Atzeret in the year 1722²⁷⁸ and he therefore presumably saw at first hand an attendance of “40 to 50 adult men”. However, with regards to Shabbat, there is no evidence that he attended a Shabbat service, and thus no figure is given for the attendance. The ten regular worshippers may have been a core congregation who committed themselves to attend every week and this number could well have been supplemented by other, less regular, worshippers.

After his visit to Kaifeng in 1857, Lieberman referred to “a room set aside for weekly prayer meetings”²⁷⁹ It would thus seem that even in 1857 there was at least a minyan of worshippers.

There is also a report written in 1899, (possibly also by Lieberman), but not regarded as very reliable, referring to an earlier period (the mid 19th century (?)) which states “The Jews keep the Sabbath, and hold weekly services in the Rabbi’s house.”²⁸⁰ This was possibly the same room referred to in 1857. The reason that the services were held in the Rabbi’s house and not in the Synagogue could well be because the Synagogue was no longer standing.²⁸¹ Why the expression “Rabbi’s house”? There had been no Rabbi in Kaifeng from soon after 1800. Perhaps there had been a specific house set aside for the Rabbi, which even in the 1850s was still known as the “Rabbi’s house”.

However, in contrast to Lieberman, the Rev. William Alexander Parsons Martin, writing on a visit he made to the Jews of Kaifeng in 1866, states, “Until recently they had a common centre in their venerable synagogue, though their liturgical services had long been discontinued.”²⁸² He did not however define the period he meant by the word “long” – is it 10, 20 or 50 years? Who was more

²⁷⁵ Smith, p.ix; “A Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry...”, *The Chinese Repository*, (Canton), vol.20, July 1851, p.437

²⁷⁶ SA OC 55:1 and MB 55:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 8:5-6

²⁷⁷ Domenge, *Juifs*, pp.197-98

²⁷⁸ Domenge, *Juifs*, p.166

²⁷⁹ Ezra, p.36

²⁸⁰ Leslie, p.64 fn.1

²⁸¹ Brown, p.237; Yating

²⁸² Martin, journal, p.32; Martin, *Cathay*, p.277

accurate in his statement – Lieberman or Martin? It may be that since Lieberman was a Jew, he was more conversant with Jewish “liturgical services” than Martin who was a Christian. Thus it is more likely that Lieberman’s version is the correct one.

Recitation of the Amidah: Whilst reciting the amidah, the worshipper performs certain bodily movements. When he says the word “baruch” (or “modim”) both at the beginning and the end of the first berachah and at the “modim” berachah, he bends his knees, at “ata” he bows his head and before he says the Divine name he straightens up.²⁸³ At the end of the amidah before saying “osei shalom”, he bows his head and walks back three steps, left foot first; when saying the words “osei shalom bimromov” he turns his head to the left, during the words “hu yaase shalom aleinu” he turns his head to the right, then raises his head, bows towards the front, as with a servant departing from his master, and says “veal kol yisrael...”²⁸⁴

The name of the prayer “עמידה” (amidah) means standing and one is forbidden to recite it seated (except in the case of illness). One is also forbidden to lean when reciting the amidah, since this would also be regarded as not standing.²⁸⁵

These bodily movements and postures were followed almost exactly as written in the Shulchan Aruch, by the Jews of Kaifeng. The 1489 stele states, “The outline of procedure in the ceremonial worship of venerating Heaven is simply set forth in the following: At first the worshipper bends his body.... Then he stands erect, without leaning ,... The worshipper recedes three paces He advances five steps Turning to the left he bends his body.... Turning to the right he bends his body.... He uplifts his head.... He lowers his head.”²⁸⁶

The only movement which does not seem to conform with Jewish practice is the advancing of *five* steps. Why specifically *five*? Although one does advance to one’s original position, one does not do so *immediately*, since this would be regarded as a disrespectful act.²⁸⁷ Maybe for this reason the Jews of Kaifeng used *five* steps to return, since in such a case it would take longer to return, (although they should have done this advancing only *after* “lowering his head”²⁸⁸). Although the Gemara specifically states three steps backwards,²⁸⁹ it does not state the number of steps to advance afterwards.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, Rabbis and leaders from the cities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz, which were located in Germany on the banks of the River Rhine, made a number of takanot (regulations) on a whole variety of subjects. One of these takanot was that it was forbidden to talk in the Synagogue, adding that instead

²⁸³ SA OC 113:1,7; MB 113:1,12; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 5:10

²⁸⁴ SA OC 123:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 5:10

²⁸⁵ SA OC 94:8; MB 94:22,23; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 5:2; Chayei Adam 22:5

²⁸⁶ 1489 stele, White, 2:10

²⁸⁷ BT Yoma 53b; SA OC 123:2 and Rema

²⁸⁸ Even in our communities today, despite all the halachic books available, many worshippers perform the various movements at “osei shalom” incorrectly!

²⁸⁹ BT Yoma 53b. There are a few authorities who interpret the three steps backwards as three steps with each foot - namely a total of six steps. (Divrei Chamudot on Rosh. Berachot, perek “ain omdim” par.67; Machatzit Hashekel on SA OC 123:10)

“they will sit in dread and awe and will serve their Father in Heaven.”²⁹⁰ Rabbis in later generations ruled likewise²⁹¹ and this prohibition included matters which are necessary to one’s livelihood.²⁹²

When reciting the amidah, one should either close one’s eyes or be looking downwards in the siddur.²⁹³ There are a number of chapters in the Shulchan Aruch stressing how one must concentrate whilst praying, especially the amidah.²⁹⁴ In Kaifeng they acted according to these directives. The 1663a stele states that when praying, “He does not converse with others, nor look about him, nor let his private business matters distract his mind.”²⁹⁵

However, de Gouvea, who was a secondary source, reporting in 1644, made most uncomplimentary comments about the conduct of the Synagogue service in Kaifeng, “They carry out this worship with scanty (*sic*) respect and even less elegance, for some are singing and others talking.”²⁹⁶ He gave no source for this information.

One must always move one’s lips when reciting any prayer – not to do this would be regarded as not praying.²⁹⁷ It is even preferable to hear one’s own voice when praying.²⁹⁸ However, the Zohar states “...they listen to all those who whisper their prayers in silence only such a prayer is accepted ... whereas a prayer that is listened to by the ears of man will not be accepted above...”²⁹⁹ From this statement in the Zohar, some learn that it is preferable not to hear one’s own voice during the amidah – namely it is an absolute silent prayer.³⁰⁰ Furthermore, some authorities³⁰¹ come to the same conclusion from the Jerusalem Talmud³⁰² and from the Tosefta.³⁰³ However, in all events, even the adjacent person should not hear his neighbour saying the amidah.³⁰⁴ In contrast, prayers, other than the amidah, especially in Oriental Jewish communities, are often chanted aloud.³⁰⁵

The 1663a stele also refers to the tone of voice which prayers are recited and this conforms with what is stated above. “During the acts of worship the Sacred Literature which is recited is sometimes chanted aloud ... Sometimes there is silent prayer.”³⁰⁶

²⁹⁰ Maharam Mintz, responsum 102, Takanot Rabbeinu Gershon Meor Hagolah

²⁹¹ SA OC 151:1

²⁹² MB 151:2

²⁹³ SA OC 95:2; MB 95:5; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 5:4

²⁹⁴ e.g. SA OC 93-102

²⁹⁵ 1663a stele, White, 2:60

²⁹⁶ de Gouvea, Juifs, p.210

²⁹⁷ SA OC 101:2

²⁹⁸ SA OC 101:2

²⁹⁹ Zohar Shemot 202a

³⁰⁰ MB 101:5; Kaf Hachaim OC 101:8

³⁰¹ Tur OC 101 and Bach dh “yesh omrim ho d’omar”

³⁰² JT Berachot 4:1

³⁰³ Tosefta Berachot 3:9

³⁰⁴ Chayei Adam 22:11; MB 101:6

³⁰⁵ Halichot Taiman, pp.23, 42, 101, 102; Mekor Chaim, part 1, 51:13, part 4, 218:6

³⁰⁶ 1663a stele, White, 2:59

Pronunciation of prayers: From ancient times there have been differences in the pronunciation of Hebrew by Jews in different parts of the world. The Gemara talks about people who do not distinguish an א (aleph) from an ע (ayin) or a ה (hey) from a ח (chet).³⁰⁷ Likewise, because very few Jews enunciate correctly a ד (daled) which does not have a dagesh, they are unable to stretch out the ד (daled) at the end of the word אֶחָד (echad) in the first line of the shema, as is required.³⁰⁸

There are many discussions regarding the origins of such differences. Rabbi Wilovsky wrote that because the Jews have been scattered to all parts of the world, sounds of their host country's language have crept into their pronunciation of Hebrew and this is especially so with the European Jews, whose repeated migrations have been more frequent than those of the Oriental Jews.³⁰⁹ A specific example of the influence of the language spoken by the non-Jewish population in a particular region on spoken Hebrew can be seen from the research of Irene Garbell. She studied "The Pronunciation of Hebrew in Medieval Spain" and concluded that the pronunciation of Hebrew by the Jews of Medieval Spain was affected by various factors including "the influence of Arabic in general, and its Moorish variety in particular", "the influence of the Spanish soundsystem (*sic*)", and "the sound-system of Catalan and the cognate dialects".³¹⁰

The Hebrew pronunciation of the Jews of Kaifeng was likewise influenced by the local dialect – namely, in this case, Chinese. Domenge comments on this fact in two of his letters. In one he writes "They have lost the true pronunciation [of Hebrew], in fact they pronounce (Hebrew) in a Chinese manner.... All that I have been able to understand of their way of reading is that, having lost the knowledge and pronunciation of accents, they have substituted in its place the four tones of Mandarin of the Chinese."³¹¹ In his other letter he states, "But just as much as their script and their Alphabet is similar to that of the European Jews, so is their pronunciation different. Since they ... have been born Chinese and the Chinese have no b, d, e, r, nor several other sounds of our alphabet, it follows that they pronounce p for b, t for d, ié for e, ou for u, etc."³¹² At about the same period Gaubil after meeting with the Jews of Kaifeng wrote about their Hebrew pronunciation, "If I had not had the Hebrew text in front of my eyes, I would never have recognised that it was Hebrew they were reading."³¹³ This is summed up by Berthold Laufer "They [the Jews of Kaifeng] applied Chinese phonetics to the pronunciation of Hebrew."³¹⁴

Siddurim: Jewish law requires that siddurim, as well as other holy books, be treated with respect. It is the norm for there to be a specific designated place in the

³⁰⁷ BT Megillah 24b

³⁰⁸ SA OC 61:6; Rambam Hilchot Kriyat Shema 2:9

³⁰⁹ Bet Ridbaz, chap.27 (end)

³¹⁰ Irene Garbell, "The Pronunciation of Hebrew in Medieval Spain", *Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa*, vol.1, (Barcelona, 1954), pp.647-48

³¹¹ Domenge, Juifs, p.148

³¹² Domenge, Juifs, p.127

³¹³ Gaubil, p.54

³¹⁴ Laufer, p.322

Synagogue for these holy books.³¹⁵ They may not be thrown³¹⁶ or placed face downwards.³¹⁷ Should they fall on the floor, they are kissed when picked up.³¹⁸ In any Synagogue, due to the constant use of the siddurim, some will be old and half torn, whilst those of the later stock will be like new. When siddurim are no longer usable they are not thrown away but placed in a genizah, and at a later date often buried in a cemetery.³¹⁹

As with all Synagogues throughout the world, the Synagogue in Kaifeng had a supply of siddurim, (*details of their contents will be described later*). Domenge speaks of having seen about 50 of them.³²⁰ There was often a title on the cover page in Hebrew letters such as ³²¹ סוכה תמיד “Sukkah Tabid” (*sic*) (service for the Festival of Sukkot).³²² As far as their size was concerned, they were “more long than wide”.³²³ Compared with the siddurim of today, they were very thin. In general each one contained the services for just one particular day or even just one particular service. They were all handwritten, sometimes with and sometimes without vowels. A number of these manuscripts were in a folded form in the shape of an accordion.³²⁴

Writing at about the same period as Domenge, Gozani stated regarding these siddurim, “They use these Books for Prayer, and shewed me several, which, as I imagined, were writ in Hebrew. Some of them were new, and the rest old and half torn. All these books are preserved with greater Care than if they had been of Gold and Silver.”³²⁵ We thus see that the great care “as if they had been of gold and silver” and respect given by the Jews of Kaifeng to these holy books is in conformity with Jewish practice.

In the Synagogue at Kaifeng, there were two “racks” (or in the language of Gozani “anciens coffres,”³²⁶ - “old chests.”³²⁷) on either side of the Ark. In the one on the right was stored the Chumashim and in the one on the left the siddurim and other holy books.³²⁸

Text of Prayers: Siddurim have throughout the generations been produced by various communities all over the world. Although the general structure of the prayers in the different siddurim is basically the same, there are some differences in the wording and

³¹⁵ MB 154:9; Halichot Taiman, p.97

³¹⁶ BT Eruvin 98a; SA YD 282:5

³¹⁷ Sefer (Ha)Chasidim, par.943; Maharil, likutim, p.118b; SA YD 282:5 Rema

³¹⁸ Aruch Hashulchan YD 282:11

³¹⁹ MB 154:24

³²⁰ Domenge, Juifs, p.149

³²¹ MS 19227

³²² Domenge, Juifs, p.149

³²³ Domenge, Juifs, p.149

³²⁴ MSS 19217, 19227, 19229, 19231, 19232, 19238, 19241

³²⁵ Gozani, Lettres, 18:35-36; Gozani, Travels, p.13

³²⁶ Gozani, Lettres, 18:35

³²⁷ Gozani, Travels, p.13; White uses also the words “rack” and “cage” to describe them. (White, 2:31 fn.35)

³²⁸ Pollak, Mandarins, p.284 - these racks are already mentioned in the 1489 stele (White, 2:14)

the order of the prayers, depending on the customs and traditions of the various communities.³²⁹

Kaifeng also had its own siddur, but unlike almost all other communities where printed versions were produced, in Kaifeng the siddurim were always handwritten.

As stated above there are extant 30 Kaifeng manuscripts of prayers recited on various occasions throughout the year. Although some researchers describe these manuscripts as an “almost complete set of prayers”,³³⁰ in a number of cases only fragments still exist.

Studies which have been made in the past of the text of the various prayers in these manuscripts show that the Kaifeng prayer texts are very similar to the text of the prayers brought down by the Rambam in his Mishnah Torah and are also similar to the prayers recited today by the Yemenite Jews who follow the baladi rite.³³¹

There are numerous piyutim (liturgical poems) in the Jewish liturgy.³³² These have been written throughout the ages and each community has its own selection of piyutim which are recited on different occasions throughout the year.

In the Kaifeng manuscripts are found six piyutim,³³³ some in only a fragmentary form. These piyutim were recited in Kaifeng on the following occasions: before baruch sheamar³³⁴ before nishmat,³³⁵ on motzai Shabbat,³³⁶ on Pesach,³³⁷ on Rosh Hashanah³³⁸ and on Yom Kippur.³³⁹ From the acrostics in these piyutim, we can see that three of them were written by a person called Elazar and one by a person called Aviatar. We do not know the name of the authors of the remaining two. Davidson in his Thesaurus gives as the *only* source for four of these piyutim³⁴⁰ a paper which was written by Neubauer³⁴¹ who took these piyutim from the Kaifeng manuscripts. Thus these four piyutim might well be unique to the Kaifeng Jewish community. For the fifth piyut,³⁴² in addition to the paper by Neubauer, Davidson gives a source from the piyutim of the Jews of Cochin in India,³⁴³ indicating that it was also recited there. He does not mention the sixth one – the one recited on Pesach – possibly because the beginning of it is missing in the manuscript.

³²⁹ e.g.: Ashkenaz, Sefarad, Eidot Hamizrach, Bnei Roma, Chabad, Taimani

³³⁰ Leslie, Kublin, p.196

³³¹ Adler, lecture, p.16; Leslie, Bowman, vol.8 (1968-1969) p.3

³³² e.g. Davidson

³³³ This is apart from two which appear in their hagadah and will be referred to later.

³³⁴ MSS 19216 ff.1-3, 19226 ff.1-3

³³⁵ MSS 19216 ff.16-18, 19226 ff.8-9

³³⁶ MS 19222 ff.2-12

³³⁷ MS 19221 ff.1-3, ff.36-40

³³⁸ MS 19217

³³⁹ MS 19228 f.1-3

³⁴⁰ Davidson 1:134 (piyut 2858), 206 (piyut 4510), 230 (piyut 4993), 3:310 (piyut 39)

³⁴¹ Adolph Neubauer, “Jews in China”, The Jewish Quarterly Review (London), vol. 8, 1896, pp.123-39

³⁴² Davidson, 3:215 (piyut 400)

³⁴³ Shire Ranenut, pp.42-43

Amongst these Kaifeng manuscripts are prayers for Sabbaths and Festivals and also for Purim, Tishah b'Av and motzaei Shabbat. Their content will be discussed later in this book under the headings for the Sabbaths and the various Festivals. Although the Jews of Kaifeng prayed three times daily, there are not amongst these manuscripts any with the day-to-day *weekday* prayers.

We shall begin by looking in these manuscripts at the common features of the three services recited on every day of the year, whether weekday, Shabbat or Festival, and from our study we shall see that the Jews of Kaifeng were indeed aware of almost all of the component parts of these three services.

Shacharit: The shacharit service on all days throughout the year consists in general of the following elements in this order:

Morning berachot. A whole series of about 20 berachot are recited at the beginning of every shacharit service.³⁴⁴ These are sometimes classed as ברכות שבה והודאה (bircot shevach v'hodaah)³⁴⁵ or alternatively as ברכות הנהנין (bircot hanehenin).³⁴⁶

Only three of these berachot are found in the manuscripts, but not in the conventional order. The berachot and the order in which they are written in the manuscript are: “shelo asani eved” – who has not made me a slave, “shelo asani isha” – who has not made me a woman, “shelo asani goy” – who has not made me a non-Jew.³⁴⁷ These are not recited as derogatory berachot, but are given as thanks to the Almighty for enabling Jewish males to observe a greater number of mitzvot than other members of the population. A non-Jew only has the seven Noachide commandments.³⁴⁸ For women³⁴⁹ and slaves (who have converted to Judaism for the purpose of servitude)³⁵⁰ there is an exemption (as a general rule) from the observance of positive commandments which have a fixed time. A woman, however, is regarded as being on a higher level than such a slave.³⁵¹ It follows from all this that there is an ascending order for these three berachot, namely first a non-Jew, then a slave and then a woman. There are many authorities (although not all) who hold that should one say, for example, first the berachah regarding a slave, one cannot afterwards say the berachah regarding a non-Jew.³⁵² The absence of the other berachot which are recited daily, together with these three, does not necessarily mean that the Jews of Kaifeng did not know them, since the *entire* prayer service is not extant.

Pesukei dezimrah: this part of the service is preceded by baruch sheamar and concludes with yishtabach³⁵³ and is then followed by half kaddish,³⁵⁴ In one of the

³⁴⁴ BT Berachot 11b, 60b; BT Menachot 43b; SA 46

³⁴⁵ Bet Yosef on Tur OC 46 dh “ulfi seder hagemara”

³⁴⁶ MB 46:1

³⁴⁷ MS 19235 ff.33-34

³⁴⁸ BT Sanhedrin 56a; Rambam Hilchot Melachim 9

³⁴⁹ BT Kidushin 29a; Rambam Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 12:3

³⁵⁰ BT Chagigah 4a; Rambam, Hilchot Chagigah 2:1; MB 640:1

³⁵¹ MB 46:17

³⁵² MB 46:16

³⁵³ Rif on BT Berachot perek “ain omdim”; SA OC 51:1

manuscripts³⁵⁵ a part of the pesukei dezimrah is found and this includes baruch sheamar and yishtabach.

In almost all communities, az yashir is recited *before* yishtabach. However in the siddur of the Rambam³⁵⁶ and in the siddur of the Persian Jews³⁵⁷ it occurs *after* yishtabach. This fact is also stated in Sefer Haitim.³⁵⁸ The Rambam³⁵⁹ and the Kol Bo³⁶⁰ specifically comment that there are places where it is the custom to read az yashir after yishtabach. The reason for this apparently unusual placement of az yashir could be learned from the Gemara in Rosh Hashanah.³⁶¹ There it discusses that in the verses from the Tanach inserted into the Rosh Hashanah mussaf amidah, one *begins* with verses from the Torah and *only after* does one recite verses from Nach, since the Torah is of greater holiness than Nach.³⁶² Thus in order that az yashir, which is composed of verses from the Torah, should not, *within the framework of the pesukei dezimrah*, be *after* the Psalms (which are from Nach), az yashir is recited *after* yishtabach, namely not as part of the pesukei dezimrah.

This indeed was the case in Kaifeng as we can see from one of the manuscripts.³⁶³ Unlike the custom in almost every community, where they do not read the verses from the Torah which follow after the end of az yashir, in Kaifeng they read these additional verses until they reached “ki ani rofecha”.³⁶⁴ Likewise, in the siddurim of the Persian Jews³⁶⁵ and the Tichlal of the Yemenite Jews these additional verses are found.³⁶⁶

The half kaddish recited after the pesukei dezimrah is found in many of the manuscripts,³⁶⁷ although in almost every case the manuscript *begins* with this kaddish. This is problematic, since the reason for the recital of this kaddish is to *conclude* the pesukei dezimrah³⁶⁸ and not to be a prelude to borachu which follows. Although in one of the manuscripts this kaddish³⁶⁹ was preceded by the pesukei dezimrah, it is possible that the Kaifeng community did not know that this had always to be the case. Another suggestion is that these manuscripts were specifically intended for the

³⁵⁴ any siddur; SA OC 55:1; MB 55:2

³⁵⁵ MS 19216 ff.6-22

³⁵⁶ Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah, seder tefillot kol hashanah

³⁵⁷ Persian siddur ff.26b-27b

³⁵⁸ Sefer Haitim, par.170 p.249

³⁵⁹ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah, 7:13

³⁶⁰ Kol Bo, din yishtabach, chap.5

³⁶¹ BT Rosh Hashanah 32a-b

³⁶² Aruch Hashulchan OC 52:1

³⁶³ MS 19216 ff.22-25

³⁶⁴ Exodus 15:26

³⁶⁵ Persian siddur ff.27b-28a

³⁶⁶ This point is not clear in the siddur of the Rambam - “one reads the shirah [az yashir] until its end according to the custom of the place.”

³⁶⁷ MSS 19215 f.1, 19216 f.27, 19220 ff.1-2, 19227 ff.1-2, 19228 f.4, 19231 ff.1-2, 19232 f.1, 19236 f.3

³⁶⁸ MB 55:2

³⁶⁹ MS 19216 f.27

shaliach tzibur, who *publicly* begins to conduct the service from this kaddish (or in practice at yishtabach which immediately precedes this kaddish).³⁷⁰

Burton Padoll discusses the absence of the pesukei dezimrah in the manuscripts and he puts forward the possibility that “these introductory portions [morning berachot and pesukei dezimrah] of the morning service were recited at home, before coming to the Synagogue.”³⁷¹ Later in his work, he again writes on this subject, “*None of the Chinese MSS contain either the Morning Benedictions or the Psalms (P’sukei d’zimroh), and, therefore, at least from the standpoint of the extant MSS, it must be assumed that these sections were not considered part of the congregational prayer.*” (*italics added but brackets in original*)³⁷² However, Padoll is not accurate. The pesukei dezimrah are found in one of the manuscripts at the beginning of the shacharit service,³⁷³ showing that they were part of the “congregational prayer”. Furthermore, three of the morning berachot are found in one of the manuscripts.³⁷⁴

Shema and amidah: this part of the service comprises borachu,³⁷⁵ two berachot before the shema,³⁷⁶ the shema,³⁷⁷ one berachah after the shema,³⁷⁸ the amidah and its repetition.³⁷⁹ These prayers appear in many of the manuscripts, either in their entirety or just as fragments, for Sabbaths,³⁸⁰ Festivals,³⁸¹ Tisha b’Av³⁸² and Purim,³⁸³ and in a fragment which is too short to determine for which occasion it is intended.³⁸⁴

Concluding prayers: There are a number of prayers from after the repetition of the amidah until the end of the service, some of which are found in these manuscripts. These *include* ashrei,³⁸⁵ uva letzion,³⁸⁶ full kaddish,³⁸⁷ ein kelokeinu,³⁸⁸ amar Rabbi Eliezar³⁸⁹ and aleinu.³⁹⁰

³⁷⁰ SA OC 53:1; MB 53:1

³⁷¹ Burton L. Padoll, A Study of a Liturgy of the Jews of Kai Feng Fu, p.15

³⁷² Burton L. Padoll, A Study of a Liturgy of the Jews of Kai Feng Fu, p.40

³⁷³ MS 19216 ff.2-26 (includes piyutim)

³⁷⁴ MS 19235 ff.33-34

³⁷⁵ any siddur; SA OC 57:1

³⁷⁶ any siddur; SA OC 59, 60

³⁷⁷ any siddur; SA OC 61ff

³⁷⁸ any siddur; SA OC 66:5; MB 60:5

³⁷⁹ any siddur; SA OC 89ff

³⁸⁰ MSS 19216 ff.28ff, 19220 ff.2ff, 19234 ff.1ff

³⁸¹ MSS 19224 ff.2ff, 19227 ff.2ff, 19228 ff.4ff, 19241

³⁸² MS 19215 ff.2ff

³⁸³ MS 19236 ff.3ff

³⁸⁴ MSS 19231 ff.2-8, 19232

³⁸⁵ any siddur; MB 132:2; MSS 19215 ff.37-39, 19232 ff.16-17, 19236 ff.38-40

³⁸⁶ any siddur; SA OC 132:1; MS 19232 ff.17-19

³⁸⁷ any siddur; SA OC 55:3 Rema; MSS 19215 ff.39-40, 19230 f.14, 19236 ff.41-42

³⁸⁸ SA OC 132:2 Rema; MSS 19215 f.42, 19224 f.20, 19233 ff.37-38, 19236 ff.43-44, 16160 f.14

³⁸⁹ Aruch Hashulchan OC 133:4; MSS 19215 ff.41-42, 19224 f.20, 19236 f.43

³⁹⁰ any siddur; SA OC 132:2 Rema

In Kaifeng they would say *amar Rabbi Eliezer before ein kelokeinu* and there is also no mention of their saying *pitum haketoret*. Both these things accord with the Rambam.³⁹¹ One might mention that in many other communities, the order is first *ein kelokeinu* followed by *amar Rabbi Eliezer*;³⁹² *pitum haketoret* is recited daily, or at least on Shabbat and Festivals.³⁹³ The *aleinu* prayer is not found at the end of any service in these manuscripts, but it was known to the Jews of Kaifeng, since it is found in the manuscripts in the Rosh Hashanah mussaf *amidah*.³⁹⁴

Minchah: The minchah service includes *ashrei*, half *kaddish*, the *amidah* and its repetition.³⁹⁵ On Shabbat and Festivals, *uva letzion* is said after *ashrei*,³⁹⁶ and on Shabbat³⁹⁷ and fast days³⁹⁸ there is *leining* before the *amidah*.

Amongst the manuscripts, there are a few fragments containing parts of the minchah service and from them we can see that the above mentioned prayers were recited. Three of these manuscripts include minchah for Shabbat together with the *leining*³⁹⁹, and there is also a very small fragment containing part of minchah for Tisha b'Av.⁴⁰⁰

Maariv: The maariv service includes *borachu*, two *berachot* before the *shema*, the *shema*, two *berachot* after the *shema*, half *kaddish*, the *amidah*, and full *kaddish*.⁴⁰¹ (In many communities in the Diaspora, a third *berachah* after the *shema* beginning "*baruch hashem leolam amen v'amen*" is recited.⁴⁰²) On motzaei Shabbat, *vihi noam* and *v'ata kadosh* are added after the *amidah*.⁴⁰³

There is only one extant manuscript with the maariv service and this is for motzaei Shabbat. It has all the elements of the motzaei Shabbat maariv service, (including the above mentioned additions for motzaei Shabbat).⁴⁰⁴ It also includes the third *berachah* recited in many Diaspora communities.⁴⁰⁵ However it begins the section *v'ata kadosh* with *uva letzion*,⁴⁰⁶ (as in the *shacharit* service) which does not accord with other Jewish communities.⁴⁰⁷

³⁹¹ Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah, nusach hakaddish

³⁹² Aruch Hashulchan OC 133:4

³⁹³ SA OC 132:2 Rema

³⁹⁴ MSS 19217 ff.12-15, 19239 ff.10-13, 16160 ff.gimmel-hei

³⁹⁵ any siddur; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 9:8; Aruch Hashulchan OC 234:1, 232:3

³⁹⁶ any siddur; SA OC 292:1 Rema

³⁹⁷ SA OC 292:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:21

³⁹⁸ SA OC 566:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:21

³⁹⁹ MSS 19216 ff.54ff, 19229, 19234 ff.76-77

⁴⁰⁰ MS 19215 f.43

⁴⁰¹ any siddur; SA OC 236 with MB; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 9:9

⁴⁰² MB 236:5

⁴⁰³ SA OC 295 prologue of Rema

⁴⁰⁴ MS 19240

⁴⁰⁵ MS 19240 ff.15-18

⁴⁰⁶ MS 19240 f.32

⁴⁰⁷ see later for a discussion on this point

According to the list published by the London Missionary Society in 1853, one of the manuscripts from Kaifeng (no. 9) was of the weekday maariv service.⁴⁰⁸ However this particular manuscript did not reach the Hebrew Union College, and it seems that it was one of the manuscripts which was “lost”.

Unusual features and errors found in these manuscripts: All over the world, siddurim are in regular daily use and as a result, fresh copies have continually to be produced. It would seem that the Jews of Kaifeng had no printing facilities and thus everything had to be handwritten. Obviously, every time a manuscript is copied additional new errors and omissions are incorporated. Once something is omitted, it cannot appear in later copies. It cannot therefore be stated that if something is omitted from the extant manuscripts, it was never originally present. Furthermore, the copies were made by non-knowledgeable people.

Some examples will now be given of unusual features and errors, some of them serious, which have entered the siddur manuscripts, obviously as a result of successive copyings:

Repetition of amidah: Because some Jews were unable to recite the amidah by themselves, the Rabbis of the Talmud⁴⁰⁹ instituted a repetition of the amidah in all services,⁴¹⁰ with the exception of maariv.⁴¹¹

During the repetition of the amidah, the shaliach tzibur adds the kedushah⁴¹² and (apart from minchah) the paragraph, “Elokeinu ... boracheinu babrachah...”, but without the *kohanim* themselves reciting the “priestly benediction”.⁴¹³ Since the repetition is thus virtually identical to the silent amidah recited by the congregation, siddurim do not print the entire amidah twice. The only time they do so is when there are piyutim added in the repetition of the amidah.⁴¹⁴

However, the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts have every amidah written *twice*, namely first the silent amidah, and then the repetition of the amidah *written in full*, the only difference with the silent amidah being that it includes the kedushah and “Elokeinu ... boracheinu babrachah...”⁴¹⁵

Supplication following the amidah: The Gemara⁴¹⁶ gives the texts of supplications recited by various Rabbis after the final berachah of the amidah. The supplication by Mar the son of Rabina begins with the words “Elokei netzor l’shoni...” and in a

⁴⁰⁸ Jewish Intelligence, p.4

⁴⁰⁹ BT Rosh Hashanah 33b

⁴¹⁰ SA OC 124:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 8:9

⁴¹¹ SA OC 237:1; The reason for not repeating the amidah in maariv is that there was less of an obligation to pray the maariv service than for the other services. (MB 237:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 9:9)

⁴¹² SA OC 125:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 9:4

⁴¹³ SA OC 127:2 and Rema; MB 127:12

⁴¹⁴ usually on Festivals

⁴¹⁵ MSS 19215, 19220 ff.16-30, 19227 ff.17-34, 19234 ff.51-69

⁴¹⁶ BT Berachot 17a

slightly adapted form, it is today recited by many communities immediately after the end of the amidah of every service.⁴¹⁷

However, in contrast, in the Kaifeng manuscripts, only one verse from this supplication appears, namely “yihyu l’ratzon ...”⁴¹⁸ The rest of this supplication is consistently absent. This is in accordance with the Rambam⁴¹⁹ and with the Persian siddur.⁴²⁰

Wording regarding the weather: When reciting the amidah in the winter, one says “mashiv haruach umorid hagashem” (praising the Almighty for causing the wind to blow and the rain to fall) and in the summer these words are replaced by “morid hatal” (praising the Almighty for causing the dew to fall).⁴²¹ The correct thing, as is found in siddurim, is to write both alternatives, one to be recited in the summer and the other in the winter.⁴²²

However in a large number of the Kaifeng manuscripts, *only* “morid hatal” appears in the silent amidah, but in the repetition of the *very same* amidah, only “mashiv haruach umorid hagashem” appears.⁴²³ It is likely that a shaliach tzibur in Kaifeng using these manuscripts, would follow the text as found there. In such a situation during the winter months, there would be no problem, since whether one has said “morid hatal” *or* “mashiv haruach umorid hagashem” one has fulfilled one’s obligation for reciting the amidah.⁴²⁴ The problem would be in the summer when one is not allowed to say “mashiv haruach umorid hagashem”, since rain is harmful during the summer, and as a result one would not have fulfilled one’s obligation.⁴²⁵

Festivals on Shabbat: When a Festival occurs on Shabbat, there are additional words added in the amidah for the Shabbat. According to all authorities, by omitting these words, the worshipper would not have fulfilled his obligation for the recitation of the amidah.⁴²⁶

However, in some of the Kaifeng manuscripts, these additional words do not appear either in the body of the berachah or in its conclusion.⁴²⁷ Thus if a member of the Kaifeng community had recited the amidah according to these manuscripts on a Festival which fell on Shabbat he would not have fulfilled his obligation for that amidah. However, there are other manuscripts where these words do appear.⁴²⁸

⁴¹⁷ Tur OC 122; MB 122:1

⁴¹⁸ MSS 19215 f.19, 19216 f.50, 19220 f.48, 19227 f.24, 19240 f.29

⁴¹⁹ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:9

⁴²⁰ Persian siddur f.10a

⁴²¹ SA OC 114; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:15

⁴²² SA OC 114; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:15

⁴²³ MSS 19220 ff.17, 24, 42, 49, 19227 ff.18, 25, 19229 ff.6, 10, 19234 ff.52, 59

⁴²⁴ SA OC 114:5

⁴²⁵ SA OC 114:4; MB 114:18

⁴²⁶ Aruch Hashulchan OC 487:4

⁴²⁷ e.g. MSS 19228 ff.19, 22, 34, 40, 19238 ff.2, 8, 11

⁴²⁸ e.g. MS 19227 ff.19, 21, 28, 29, 30

Reading the Torah

Number of Parshiot in the Torah. On numerous occasions during the year there is Reading of the Torah in the Synagogue. These occasions include every Shabbat, Festival, Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah, Purim, fast day, Monday and Thursday.⁴²⁹ Until about the 13th century, in the Diaspora, a complete cycle of Reading the entire Torah took one year and in Eretz Yisrael between three and three and a half years, but then Eretz Yisrael went over to the annual cycle.⁴³⁰

In this annual cycle, the Torah is divided into 54 parshiot. The norm is to read one parashah each week. However due to the fact that the number of Shabbatot need not be equal in different years, (in particular, due to the fact that a Jewish leap year has 13 months, as against an ordinary Jewish year which has 12 months) there are several occasions when two parshiot are read on a particular Shabbat.⁴³¹

However, as can be seen from the 1489 stele, in Kaifeng they divided the Torah into only 53 parshiot. There it states, “His [Moshe Rabbeinu’s] devotion touched the heart of Heaven, so that the fifty-three sections of the Book of the Correct Religion then had their origin.”⁴³² The number “fifty-three” is reiterated in the 1512 stele,⁴³³ the 1663a stele,⁴³⁴ on some of the vertical plaques hanging in the synagogue,⁴³⁵ and in the writings of Gozani⁴³⁶, Domenge⁴³⁷ and Gaubil.⁴³⁸

Since there was one parashah less in Kaifeng, two of the parshiot which were read separately elsewhere in the world, were joined together in Kaifeng. This raises the question of which two parshiot they were. From the writings of Gozani it can be seen that this joining of parshiot occurred in the book of Deuteronomy which, he states, was divided into 10 parshiot.⁴³⁹ Elsewhere in the world, Deuteronomy is divided into 11 parshiot.

According to Domenge, it was Parshiot Vayeilech and Haazinu which were joined together.⁴⁴⁰ However this claim can be immediately dismissed as incorrect for the following reason. Unlike other parshiot where the place of the division of the parashah for the seven people called up to the Torah can be altered, in Haazinu the readings for the first 6 people are absolutely fixed and cannot be changed.⁴⁴¹ Therefore Vayeilech cannot be joined with Haazinu. Furthermore when Rosh

⁴²⁹ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:2

⁴³⁰ Chaim Simons (1942 -), “Reading of the Torah on Shemini Atzeret (Simchat Torah) in Eretz Israel”, Sinai, (Jerusalem), vol.103, (5749 – 1989), pp.239-47; Chaim Simons, Divrei Chamishah, pp.99-109

⁴³¹ Chaim Simons, When do we read two Parshiot on one Shabbat?

⁴³² 1489 stele, White, 2:9

⁴³³ 1512 stele, White, 2:43

⁴³⁴ 1663a stele, White, 2:58

⁴³⁵ Pollak, Mandarins, p.289

⁴³⁶ Gozani, Lettres, 18:38; Gozani, Travels, p.15; Gozani, Juifs, p.60

⁴³⁷ Domenge, Juifs, pp.126,166,175

⁴³⁸ Gaubil, pp.57-58,74

⁴³⁹ Gozani, Lettres, 18:38; Gozani, Travels, p.15

⁴⁴⁰ Domenge, Juifs, p.166

⁴⁴¹ SA OC 428:5; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:5

Hashanah occurs on a Thursday or Shabbat, in Jewish communities throughout the world, Nitzavim is joined to Vayeilech.⁴⁴² Would then three parshiot be read on such a Shabbat in Kaifeng?

A proof from Kaifeng itself that it was Nitzavim and Vayeilech which made up one parashah (and not Vayeilech and Haazinu) comes from the extant Chumash booklets from Kaifeng. For *each* parashah there is one separate booklet. However, there is just *one* booklet for Nitzavim and Vayeilech and at the end it states the number of verses to be 70,⁴⁴³ which is their *total* number of verses, thus showing that in Kaifeng they were considered as just one parashah. On the other hand there was a booklet with parashat Haazinu *alone*,⁴⁴⁴ showing that it was considered a parashah on its own, thus refuting the words of Domenge.

In addition there are sources, not connected with Kaifeng which also show that Nitzavim and Vayeilech are classed as *one* parashah, and hence this would make just 53 parshiot in the Torah. These sources include the Rambam, who when giving the haftarot for each parashah during the year, omits Vayeilech,⁴⁴⁵ presumably because Nitzavim and Vayeilech are regarded as just one parashah; the book “Ibur Shanim – Tikun Yissachar”;⁴⁴⁶ and also some medieval manuscripts.⁴⁴⁷

One is left with the technical question of how in Kaifeng (and other places which followed this same division) they fit 53 parshiot into one year whilst other communities fit 54 parshiot into the same year. The most likely answer is that when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Monday or a Tuesday, those communities having 54 parshiot in the year read Nitzavim and Vayeilech separately, and when it occurs on a Thursday or a Shabbat, they join them together. For those having 53 parshiot, when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Monday or a Tuesday, the parashah Nitzavim is split in two – on the first week, the part commonly known as Nitzavim is read and on the second week the part commonly known as Vayeilech is read; when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Thursday or a Shabbat, the parashah *known in Kaifeng* as Nitzavim is read in its entirety.⁴⁴⁸ It would thus seem that there is no real difference in the readings – the apparent difference is purely semantic.

“*Chair of Moses*”: In the centre of every Synagogue there is a “bimah” and it is from this bimah that the Torah is read.⁴⁴⁹

Gozani wrote regarding Kaifeng, “Il y a au milieu de leur synagogue une chaire magnifique & fort élevée, avec un beau coussin brodé; c’est la chaire de Moïse, ... ils mettent le livre du Pentateuque, & en font la lecture.” (In the centre of the Synagogue [in Kaifeng] there was a magnificent and elevated chair with a beautiful embroidered cushion; it was the Chair of Moses.... They placed the Sefer Torah on it

⁴⁴² SA OC 428:4

⁴⁴³ MS 19272

⁴⁴⁴ MS 19273

⁴⁴⁵ Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah, hamaftir banavi

⁴⁴⁶ Tikun Yissachar - Ibur Shanim, p.79

⁴⁴⁷ Sassoon, p.132

⁴⁴⁸ This could be what Tikun Yissachar is saying on p.79

⁴⁴⁹ SA OC 150:5 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 11:3

whilst it was read.)⁴⁵⁰ As is the custom in other Oriental Synagogues, the Sefer Torah in Kaifeng was housed in a case⁴⁵¹ which was stood on this “Chair of Moses” during the Reading of the Torah.⁴⁵²

There have been many discussions by historians about the term “Chair of Moses”.⁴⁵³ Two possible sources have been quoted for the origin of the term. One of them is from the New Testament book of Matthew, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses.”⁴⁵⁴ The other possible source is from the Pesikta l’Rav Kahana, where Rav Acha uses the expression “Katedra d’Moshe”,⁴⁵⁵ the word “katedra” being in Greek “Καθεδρα” and in Latin “Cathedra”, the word for a kind of “chair”.⁴⁵⁶

The historians are also divided as to whether this expression “Chair of Moses” was to be taken literally as a “chair” or as a metaphoric expression. There is archaeological evidence of stone chairs being found in the excavations of ancient Synagogues in Eretz Israel, which include Chorazin, En Gedi and Hammat Tiberias.⁴⁵⁷ However two questions still remain regarding these stone chairs. Firstly, was their function to be a stand for Reading the Torah, or a seat of honour for the elder of the Synagogue, and, secondly, were they known as the “Chair of Moses”? No answer can be given for either of these two questions.

There is however some evidence that chairs have been used to hold a Sefer Torah, but *not* whilst reading from it. Such a situation could arise on an occasion during the year when there are readings from more than one Sefer Torah at the same service. Whilst reading from the first Sefer Torah, the second Sefer Torah has to be held by someone or placed somewhere. A chair dating from 1594 which had various holes drilled in it in order to hold a Sefer Torah, was found in the basement of a synagogue in Rome.⁴⁵⁸ However this chair was not used as a stand for the Sefer Torah during the Reading of the Torah. There is also no evidence to describe this chair found in Rome as the “Chair of Moses”.

We therefore return to the questions: firstly whether the Kaifeng “Chair of Moses” was an actual chair and not just a metaphoric expression, and secondly what

⁴⁵⁰ Gozani, Lettres, 18:36; Gozani, Travels, p.13; This “Chair of Moses” is also mentioned by Domenge, Juifs, p.189

⁴⁵¹ White, 2:28-29 for photographs

⁴⁵² White, 1:14 for reconstructed photograph

⁴⁵³ e.g. Wilhelm Bacher (1850 – 1913), “Le Siège de Moïse”, *Revue des Études Juives* (Paris), vol.34, no.67, January-March 1897, pp.299-301; Mayer Sulzberger (1843 – 1923), “Encore le Siège de Moïse”, *Revue des Études Juives* (Paris), vol.35, 1897, pp.110-11; Shaye J. D. Cohen (1948 -), “Were Pharisees and Rabbis the Leaders of Communal Prayer ...”, *Evolution of the Synagogue*, ed. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick, pp.93-96; Kenneth G. C. Newport, “A Note on the ‘Seat of Moses’”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Spring 1990, vol.28, no.1, pp.53-58

⁴⁵⁴ Matthew 23:2

⁴⁵⁵ Pesikta l’Rav Kahana, Salomon Buber edition, p.7b

⁴⁵⁶ Pesikta l’Rav Kahana, Salomon Buber edition, p.7b fn.135

⁴⁵⁷ Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Were Pharisees and Rabbis the Leaders of Communal Prayer ...”, *Evolution of the Synagogue*, ed. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick, p.95

⁴⁵⁸ G. C. Newport, “A Note on the ‘Seat of Moses’”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Spring 1990, vol.28, no.1, p.56

the source of this expression was. From the writings of Gozani, (see above) it can be seen, without any doubt that the “Chair of Moses” was an actual chair. It seems very unlikely that the Jews of Kaifeng took the name “Chair of Moses” from the book of Matthew, since they were totally unaware of anything connected with Christianity. This can be seen from the meeting in Peking in 1605 between the missionary Ricci and the Jew Ai from Kaifeng. At this meeting, Ricci showed Ai pictures of the Virgin Mary, Jesus and John the Precursor, which were hanging in a church; Ai thought that they were pictures of Rebecca and her two children Jacob and Esau.⁴⁵⁹ Furthermore the only Jesus they had heard of was Jesus the son of Sirach (also known as Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus).⁴⁶⁰ The suggestion that the source for the expression “Chair of Moses” in Kaifeng is the Pesikta l’Rav Kahana can also be disregarded, since there is no evidence that the Jews of Kaifeng were acquainted with this work.

It is of course possible that the expression “Chair of Moses” was a term given by Gozani, utilizing his knowledge of the New Testament, to describe this chair, and not by the Jews of Kaifeng. However, assuming it was in fact the term used by the Jews of Kaifeng, it may be that they adapted this expression “Chair of Moses” from the “Chair of Elijah” which is used in a circumcision. For a circumcision, the chair on which the baby is placed is known as the “Chair of Elijah” who is the “Messenger for the Circumcision.”⁴⁶¹ The Jews of Kaifeng may therefore have called the chair on which the Sefer Torah, (which is known as “Torat Moses”) was placed the “Chair of Moses.”

One might also mention the Zohar, where it is written that the bimah was made in the *form of a “chair”* (but does not use the term “Chair of Moses”) with six steps to ascend to it, and a seventh step on which the Sefer Torah was placed when being read.⁴⁶² The reason for “six steps” is that in connection with the throne of King Solomon it is written “and there were six steps to the throne, the Hebrew word “kisai” (chair) being used for “throne.”⁴⁶³ However there is no evidence that the Jews of Kaifeng knew anything about the Zohar.

Kohanim: Whenever the Torah is read, the first person called up is a kohen⁴⁶⁴ – a Jew descended from the male line of Aaron. A kohen has certain privileges, such as being called up to the Torah first, and also certain restrictions, such as not being in the same room as the dead body of a Jew.⁴⁶⁵ The second person called up to the Torah is a levi;⁴⁶⁶ – a Jew from the male line of the tribe of Levi (who is not a kohen). Only then

⁴⁵⁹ Ricci journal, Latin text, p.270; Ricci, journal, p.107

⁴⁶⁰ Gozani, Lettres, 18:46; Gozani, Travels, p.20; Even though Ecclesiasticus is a book from the Apocrypha, it is quoted from on several occasions in the Babylonian Talmud: Berachot 48a, Eruvin 65a and Tosafot dh “batzar”, Bava Kama 92b and Tosafot dh “meshulash”.

⁴⁶¹ Machzor Vitri, Shimon Halevi Ish Horovitz edition, p.626; SA YD 265:11

⁴⁶² Zohar Vayakhel 206a

⁴⁶³ Chronicles II 9:18

⁴⁶⁴ SA OC 135:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:18

⁴⁶⁵ SA YD 371:1

⁴⁶⁶ SA OC 135:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:18

are yisraelim – Jews from tribes other than Levi - called up to the Torah.⁴⁶⁷ Should there be no kohen present in the Synagogue, then a yisrael is called up first.⁴⁶⁸ Some opinions say that in such a case a levi may (but not must) be called up first, especially if he is greater (presumably in Torah knowledge) than the yisrael.⁴⁶⁹ In a case where a kohen is not present, a special formula is used for calling up the non-kohen in his place.⁴⁷⁰

The formula for calling up the first person to the Torah is found in four places in the Kaifeng manuscripts. In *all* of them is written "ישראל יעמוד במקום כהן" (Arise (to the Torah) a yisrael in place of a kohen),⁴⁷¹ namely, the formula used when there is no kohen present. The fact that it is written as such in the Kaifeng manuscripts, shows that they would *always* call up a yisrael first, and this strongly indicates that there were no kohanim (and quite likely also no leviim) amongst the Jews of Kaifeng.

A further strong indication of the absence of kohanim in Kaifeng can be deduced in connection with duchar (priestly benediction). In all communities throughout the world, at the mussaf service for Festivals⁴⁷² the kohanim go to the front of the Synagogue and duchar and this is preceded by a berachah also recited by the kohanim.⁴⁷³ Thus, in all the various Festival prayer books, this berachah is to be found. However, in contrast, in the Festival mussaf, in the Kaifeng manuscript this berachah does not appear.⁴⁷⁴

There is a register of those who died in Kaifeng, which consists of hundreds of names.⁴⁷⁵ None of the names in this list has "hakohen" or "halevi" after it, as is the correct format for a kohen or levi. There are a few cases in this list of the name being written as "ben Levi"⁴⁷⁶ or "Levi" as a first name.⁴⁷⁷ However this is no indication that they are leviim. Levi is often found as the first name of a person who is not from the leviim - for example Rabbi Levi Yitzchak from Berdichev and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson.

Unlike White,⁴⁷⁸ Leslie⁴⁷⁹ and the Chinese scholar Chen Changqi,⁴⁸⁰ Weisz translated the Chinese word "Lieh-wei" as "Levites"⁴⁸¹ and not as "Levi as a proper name".⁴⁸² Weisz also commented that "in the context of the inscription it [the word

⁴⁶⁷ SA OC 135:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:18

⁴⁶⁸ SA OC 135:6; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:19

⁴⁶⁹ SA OC 135:6 Rema; MB 135:24

⁴⁷⁰ SA OC 135:6 Rema

⁴⁷¹ MSS 19216 f.48, 19220 f.36, 19234 ff.48, 76

⁴⁷² SA OC 128:44 Rema

⁴⁷³ SA OC 128:11; Rambam Hilchot Nesiat Kapayim 14:12

⁴⁷⁴ MSS 19233 f.30, 19239 f.28, 16160 f.11

⁴⁷⁵ MS 19218 ff.25-101

⁴⁷⁶ MS 19218 ff.25, 31, 61

⁴⁷⁷ MS 19218 f.30

⁴⁷⁸ 1489 stele, White, 2:11

⁴⁷⁹ Leslie, p.93 – although he stated that he had some doubt

⁴⁸⁰ Chen Changqi, Shapiro, pp.139, 141

⁴⁸¹ Weisz, p.10

⁴⁸² Weisz, p.12 fn.44; Possibly Pan Guandan, also held like this (Pan Guandan, Shapiro, p.55)

Wusida which followed Lieh-wei] referred to the kohanim.”⁴⁸³ However in view of the formula used in Kaifeng in calling up the first person to the Torah, it is difficult to accept this translation and explanation of Weisz’, who further asserts that “the Israelites in China were descendants of the Levites and Cohanim.”⁴⁸⁴

It might also be noted that in his letter to his father, Liebermann writes, “Only Cohanim (descendants of Aaron) (*bracketed words in original*) officiated there [in the Synagogue] on sabbaths, festivals and new moons [Rosh Chodesh].”⁴⁸⁵ It is not clear who the “informants” who gave Liebermann this information were, but it is possible that the word “priests”, was used although the intention of the informants was to refer to the Rabbi or “master” or spiritual leader and not to actual “kohanim”.

This very probable absence of a particular segment of the Jewish people amongst the Jews of Kaifeng is not a unique phenomenon. Amongst the Jewish community of Djerba, an island off the coast of Tunisia, there were no leviim.⁴⁸⁶

Procedure during reading the Torah: The person called up to the Reading of the Torah recites in a loud voice⁴⁸⁷ a berachah before and after the reading of his portion of the Torah.⁴⁸⁸ These berachot appear in a Kaifeng manuscript with the instruction "למברך יקול"⁴⁸⁹ which could mean that the person called up to the Torah should recite the berachot with a loud voice. Unlike most of this particular manuscript, the berachot are written with vowel points, as is the practice in all Synagogues, in order to make it easier for less learned people called up to the Torah to read these berachot.

During the leining there should be at least three people on the bimah. One of them is the person called up, the second the person reading the Torah and the third a “gabbai” (monitor) who stands at the side.⁴⁹⁰ Having three such people is already mentioned in Masechet Sofrim,⁴⁹¹ a work compiled at the time of the Gemara, or at the latest, in the Geonic period which followed. There are different customs as to the relative placing of these three persons, in particular whether the person called up stands to the right or to the left of the person reading the Torah.⁴⁹²

In Kaifeng there were three people standing by the Torah – the reader, the gabbai and the person called up - whilst it was being read. Domenge drew a sketch of them.⁴⁹³ In Domenge’s drawing, the reader is standing to the right of the person who is called up to the Torah and the gabbai is standing on the left hand side of the bimah.

⁴⁸³ Weisz, p.12 fn.44

⁴⁸⁴ Weisz, p.59

⁴⁸⁵ Liebermann, Report, p.93; Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle, p.12

⁴⁸⁶ Brit Kehunah, OC vol.1 maarechet lamed par.1 (p.39b)

⁴⁸⁷ SA OC 139:6

⁴⁸⁸ SA OC 139:4; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:5

⁴⁸⁹ MS 19225 f.9

⁴⁹⁰ MB141:16; Emet l’Yaakov, pp.30a-30b

⁴⁹¹ Masechet Sofrim 14:14

⁴⁹² Minhag Yisrael Torah, 1:225-26

⁴⁹³ drawing reproduced in Pollak, Mandarins, p.291

There are no vowel points or musical notes written in the Torah, since writing them would make the Sefer Torah passul.⁴⁹⁴ The reader must remember the vowels and musical notes by heart and thus mistakes in reading can easily occur. Should he make such a mistake, and especially if it causes a change in meaning, then it must be corrected.⁴⁹⁵ Should there be a specific person present to correct the mistakes or may anyone in the congregation call out the correction? Rabbi Chaim David Halevi writes on this subject that it is bad when the whole congregation call out such corrections, but instead a knowledgeable person should stand by the side of the reader and only he should correct any mistakes made by the reader.⁴⁹⁶ Describing the procedure in Kaifeng, Finn wrote, “By his [the reader’s] side stands a monitor to correct his reading, if necessary.”⁴⁹⁷

It is written in the Torah, “and when Moses had finished speaking with them [the Children of Israel], he put a veil on his face.”⁴⁹⁸ Domenge writes regarding the person reading from the Sefer Torah in Kaifeng, “and when they read the Bible [Sefer Torah], the one who is at the Pulpit [Chair] of Moses covers his face with a very thin cloth made for this purpose, but he alone.”⁴⁹⁹ A similar expression was used by Gozani, who then explained that this is “in Memory of Moses, who came down from the Mountain with his Face cover’d.”⁵⁰⁰ This is a further example of things concerning the Sefer Torah and its reading in Kaifeng, which are directly connected with Moses.⁵⁰¹

There is a prescribed part of the Torah to be read on Sabbaths, Festivals etc. and for a number of these occasions the specific readings are to be found in these manuscripts. This will be elaborated upon when discussing these various Sabbaths, Festivals, etc.

Writing a Sefer Torah: The Rambam wrote in the introduction to his Mishnah Torah, that before he died, Moshe [Moses] Rabbeinu wrote 13 copies of the entire Sefer Torah, one for each of the 12 tribes and the 13th one, he placed in the Ark in the Mishkan.⁵⁰² An earlier source for writing these 13 Sifrei Torah may be found in Midrash Rabba.⁵⁰³

It can be learned from the steles that in the Synagogue in Kaifeng there were 13 Sifrei Torah.⁵⁰⁴ Both Gozani and Domenge realised that this number was not by chance but had a particular significance, namely - “twelve which represented the 12

⁴⁹⁴ SA YD 274:7

⁴⁹⁵ SA OC 142:1 and Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 12:6

⁴⁹⁶ Mekor Chaim, part 3, 125:9

⁴⁹⁷ Finn, Jews of China, p.23

⁴⁹⁸ Exodus 34:33

⁴⁹⁹ Domenge, Juifs, p.189

⁵⁰⁰ Gozani, Lettres, 18:45; Gozani, Travels, p.20

⁵⁰¹ Other such examples stated elsewhere in this book are having *precisely* 13 Sifrei Torah – 12 for the tribes and one for *Moses*, and placing the Sefer Torah on the “Chair of *Moses*”

⁵⁰² Rambam, Introduction to Mishnah Torah (towards beginning)

⁵⁰³ Midrash Rabba Devarim, parashah 9:4

⁵⁰⁴ 1663a stele, White, 2:65, 1663b stele, White, 2:89

Tribes of Israel and the thirteenth Moses.”⁵⁰⁵ The practice of having 13 Sifrei Torah, for this reason, is not found in other Jewish communities in the world. However in Kaifeng, as will be seen, they were most particular about this number.

During the flooding of the Yellow River in 1642, which was caused by an attacking army breaching the dikes, all the Sifrei Torah were very severely damaged almost beyond repair. According to one account, the Jews of Kaifeng managed to salvage from all these 13 Sifrei Torah enough material to reconstitute one Sefer Torah.⁵⁰⁶ According to another version, following an earlier fire, they succeeded in obtaining one Sefer Torah from a Mohammedan who had got it from a Jew who was dying in Canton, and it was this Sefer Torah which was saved from the flood.⁵⁰⁷ From the one Sefer Torah, which they had reconstituted following the flood (or alternatively saved from the flood) they made 12 copies locally,⁵⁰⁸ and this work was completed by 1653.⁵⁰⁹ These 13 Sifrei Torah served the community for about two hundred years.⁵¹⁰ As stated above, today most (but not all) of these Sifrei Torah are to be found in various libraries in the world. Some are just fragments, whilst others are complete and in a reasonable condition.

The laws regarding writing of a Sefer Torah can broadly speaking be divided into two groups: i) The materials used, and ii) the actual writing:

i) The materials used: A Sefer Torah can only be written on parchment which has come from a kosher species of animal and has been prepared in accordance with the halachah.⁵¹¹ The various pieces of parchment are sown together with gidim, which are made from the sinews of kosher animals.⁵¹² The ink must be black.⁵¹³ It is also customary to write using a quill pen or a pen made from bamboo.⁵¹⁴ It is *preferable* to erase any unnecessary letters, numbers or marks written on the reverse side of the parchment of a Sefer Torah.⁵¹⁵

In his diary Ricci wrote, towards the beginning of the 17th century, that the Sifrei Torah in Kaifeng were “written on sheepskin parchment.”⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, from the various catalogues of the Sifrei Torah brought from Kaifeng, it can be confirmed that they are all written on “skins”,⁵¹⁷ namely parchment. In some cases the particular

⁵⁰⁵ Gozani, Lettres, 18:34; Gozani, Travels, p.12; Domenge, Juifs, p.126

⁵⁰⁶ 1663a stele, White, 2:65; 1663b stele, White, p.90

⁵⁰⁷ Domenge, Juifs, p.187

⁵⁰⁸ 1663b stele, White, 2:90; Domenge, Juifs, pp.196-97 & fn.4

⁵⁰⁹ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 1 chap.2, p.26; According to the version of Pollak’s book which appears on the internet, it was 1663 (and not 1653).

⁵¹⁰ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 1 chap.2, p.26

⁵¹¹ SA YD 271:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 1:8-11, 14, Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 10:1 (1-3)

⁵¹² SA YD 278:1; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 9:13, 10:1 (20)

⁵¹³ SA YD 271:6; Shach on SA YD 271:11; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 1:5, Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 10:1 (8)

⁵¹⁴ SA YD 271:7 Rema; Keset Hasofer, 3:6

⁵¹⁵ Rabbi Yerachmiel Askotzky, Tefillin and Mezuzos, p.144

⁵¹⁶ Ricci diary, Löwenthal, p.394

⁵¹⁷ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 2 chap.1 passim

origin of the parchment is stated, namely “roe-skin”⁵¹⁸ or “sheep-skin”⁵¹⁹ The pieces of parchment are numbered at the back in Hebrew numbers,⁵²⁰ presumably so that they would be sewn together in the correct order.

In contrast to the above, Brotier stated that these Sifrei Torah were not written on parchment “but upon paper of which several sheets are pasted together”.⁵²¹ Brotier is however incorrect.⁵²² White, quoting Tobar,⁵²³ thinks that Brotier was referring to the *Chumashim* (see later) from Kaifeng and he brings confirmation from a correspondent in 1851 of the *North China Herald*.⁵²⁴ An additional proof that it was the *Chumashim* which were written on thick paper comes from Smith who writes “These eight [Chumashim] MSS are written on thick paper.”⁵²⁵ If in fact Brotier was referring to Sifrei Torah, then quite possibly he came to this conclusion from a comment by Domenge: “[The Sifrei Torah] are in great scrolls of parchment or very strong and tightly pasted paper.”⁵²⁶

As stated above, for a Sefer Torah, one cannot just use any parchment. It has to be prepared specifically for the purpose of being used for writing a Sefer Torah. There seems to be no source extant to say whether the parchment used in the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah was prepared according to the halachah.⁵²⁷ However, even if the parchment was not produced under these conditions, it could in difficult circumstances be used for a Sefer Torah.⁵²⁸

If the sections of parchment are sewn together with any thread other than gidim, the Sefer Torah will be passul.⁵²⁹ The material used for sewing the sections of parchment together in the Sefer Torah, which today is in the British Library in London, is mentioned in an article written by Marie Woolf who says, “The Torah scroll used by Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, a remote community which no longer exists, is made of strips of sheepskin sewn together with silk thread, rather than customary animal sinews.”⁵³⁰ Other Sifrei Torah from Kaifeng were similarly sewn.⁵³¹ It should

⁵¹⁸ Schiller-Szinessy, vol.1, p.8

⁵¹⁹ Margoliouth, part 1 p.3

⁵²⁰ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part1 chap.3 p.39

⁵²¹ Brotier, Lettres, 24:66; Brotier, White, 1:54

⁵²² editorial comment on Brotier, White, 1:54

⁵²³ Tobar, p.95 fn.3

⁵²⁴ White, 2:167

⁵²⁵ Smith, p.x

⁵²⁶ Domenge, Juifs, p.188

⁵²⁷ White, 2:168

⁵²⁸ Rosh, Hilchot Ketanot, Hilchot Sefer Torah, sefer haitim; Terumat Hadeshen, responsum 51

⁵²⁹ Keset Hasofer, 17:1, but see below for a minority opinion

⁵³⁰ Marie Woolf, “British Library to display rare sacred scrolls for first time”, The Independent (London), 18 February 2007 (Internet : www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/british-library-to-display-rare-sacred-scrolls-for-first-time-436870.html - accessed 13 August 2009)

⁵³¹ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 1 chap.3 p.37; White, 2:169; The section of the Sefer Torah from Kaifeng which was discovered in the 1990s was also sewn with silk thread rather than with gidim. (Michael Gros, “Searching for Hidden Treasure”, Mishpacha, English

be mentioned in passing that the first country to produce silk was ancient China.⁵³² A report from 1868 on a Sefer Torah which had reached the Hong Kong public library, stated that the parchments were sown together with “a double white thread”.⁵³³ Whether this thread was silk or some other material is not known.

There is a discussion in the Gemara on the type of thread which may be used to sew up the sheets of parchment of a Sefer Torah. One opinion is that gidim, must be used although there is another opinion allowing “pishtan” – flax.⁵³⁴ Whether this means *only* flax, or is just an example of a thread which may be used - thus allowing the silk thread used in Kaifeng - is not clear. In fact, this point according to most authorities is purely academic, since this opinion is rejected and *only* thread made from gidim may be used.⁵³⁵ However there is an opinion that in times of need, silk thread could be used.⁵³⁶ Thus, according to this opinion, the use of silk thread, were this the only problem with these Kaifeng Sifrei Torah, might not make them passul.

Domenge on several occasions refers to the making of black ink once a year,⁵³⁷ but it seems from the context that he is talking about the making of ink for writing Chumashim (see later). It is quite possible that the same black ink was used for writing Sifrei Torah. He also writes about the Kaifeng community making “brushes of bamboo ... which they sharpen into points like our pens.”⁵³⁸

Before writing a Sefer Torah, lines must be incised on the parchment,⁵³⁹ and these lines mark the tops or the bottoms of the letters,⁵⁴⁰ although the former is the norm.⁵⁴¹ White writes regarding the Sifrei Torah of Kaifeng, “In each column there are 49 horizontal lines separated from each other by about half-an-inch [just over one centimeter] drawn, it appears, with a steel or wood stylus, and serving as an upper limit for the letters.”⁵⁴²

ii) *The actual writing*: There are numerous laws regarding the writing of a Sefer Torah⁵⁴³ and in some cases even one letter not calligraphed as it should be, or one spelling mistake can make a Sefer Torah passul.⁵⁴⁴ In addition not even one word may be written by heart⁵⁴⁵ and the sofer (the person writing the Sefer Torah) must state

edition, (New York), issue 286, 2 December 2009, p.52; Sofer Stam Scribe Y. Reisman (Internet: torahscroll.com/show.asp?PID=3 – accessed 5 December 2009))

⁵³² e.g. Wikipedia, Silk, (Internet: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silk, - accessed 13 August 2009)

⁵³³ White, 2:164

⁵³⁴ BT Makkot 11a

⁵³⁵ Masechet Sefer Torah 1:1; SA YD 278:1

⁵³⁶ Terumat Hadeshen, responsum 51; Drishah and Prishah on Tur YD 278:1; Be'er Heteiv YD 278:3; Lishkat Hasofer on Keset Hasofer, 17:3

⁵³⁷ Domenge, Juifs, pp.132, 147, 190

⁵³⁸ Domenge, Juifs, p.190

⁵³⁹ SA YD 271:5; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 1:12

⁵⁴⁰ Minchat Sofer, biur hasofer on 3:5 dh “b’lo sirtut pesulin”

⁵⁴¹ Rabbi Yerachmiel Askotzky, Tefillin and Mezuzos, pp.136-37

⁵⁴² White, 2:164

⁵⁴³ SA YD 274:3-5

⁵⁴⁴ SA YD 275:6; SA OC 143:4; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 7:11, 10:1 (12-13, 15)

⁵⁴⁵ SA YD 274:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillin 1:12

before writing that he is writing it for the express purpose of writing a Sefer Torah.⁵⁴⁶ There is also a special declaration to be made every time before the sofer writes the Divine name.⁵⁴⁷

A meticulous study was made at Cambridge University of the above mentioned points in the Kaifeng Sefer Torah which is now at that University, and their catalogue concludes that the man writing it “must have written it from mere dictation; otherwise we could not account for the frequent and grievous blunders he commits in interchanging [various letters]”⁵⁴⁸ – (this statement has however been questioned.⁵⁴⁹). In a footnote in this catalogue a few examples are given and it is noted that “a complete list of these interchanges will be found in the manuscript notice of the present roll [Sefer Torah] preserved in the [Cambridge University] Library.”⁵⁵⁰ It can be seen from this catalogue that many procedural errors were made in the writing this Sefer Torah. Obviously the scribes in Kaifeng, due to their long period of isolation from world Jewry, were not aware of the numerous complex laws involved in writing a Sefer Torah. There is a minority opinion that if a Sefer Torah is written without copying from a text of the Torah (as in this Kaifeng case of writing from dictation), it will not be passul (provided there are no mistakes).⁵⁵¹

Unlike tefillin⁵⁵² and mezuzot,⁵⁵³ where corrections may not be made, they can (or indeed must) be made in a Sefer Torah.⁵⁵⁴ At some period, at least some of these Sifrei Torah must have been checked for accuracy, since it can be seen that many corrections had been made. In some cases they were made after removing the surface of the parchment, in other cases there had been attempts to wash away the original writing, whilst in still others the original writing had been covered over by a white substance; in the latter two cases the original letters could be seen through the corrections.⁵⁵⁵

However, the text of the Sifrei Torah found in Kaifeng, is essentially the same as that of Sifrei Torah all over the world. Although these Kaifeng Sifrei Torah do exhibit minor variations from the traditional text, this is certainly due to scribal errors during copying by scribes who were almost certainly unlearned in Hebrew.⁵⁵⁶

In a Sefer Torah, there are lines with “an open space” (petuchah) in which nothing else may be written on that line and “a closed space” (setumah) in which a space equal to at least nine letters is left in the middle of the line.⁵⁵⁷ Should the sofer interchange an “open space” with a “closed space”, or vice versa, the Sefer Torah will

⁵⁴⁶ SA YD 274:1

⁵⁴⁷ SA YD 276:2

⁵⁴⁸ Schiller-Szinessy, vol.1, p.8

⁵⁴⁹ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 3 chap.3 p.111

⁵⁵⁰ Schiller-Szinessy, vol.1, p.8 fn.1

⁵⁵¹ Keset Hasofer, 5:5

⁵⁵² SA OC 32:1 Rema; MB 32:3

⁵⁵³ SA YD 288:3

⁵⁵⁴ SA YD 279; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 7:12

⁵⁵⁵ White, 2:164

⁵⁵⁶ Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 3 chap.3 p.114

⁵⁵⁷ SA YD 275:2; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 8:1-2

be passul.⁵⁵⁸ Since the Rambam saw so many mistakes in spacing in Sifrei Torah that he personally examined, he gave a detailed list of all the open and closed spaces in a Sefer Torah.⁵⁵⁹ In the various Kaifeng Sifrei Torah there are *numerous* cases of such interchanges both making “open spaces” into “closed spaces”⁵⁶⁰ and the converse.⁵⁶¹

The Gemara⁵⁶² and the various Codes of Jewish Law⁵⁶³ state that a *mezuzah* is passul if the lines are of successively decreasing length.⁵⁶⁴ In all these sources, this halachah is only mentioned in connection with *mezuzah*, and it is not brought for either Sefer Torah or tefillin. Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Leib Zilberberg wrote a long responsum on this subject, and concluded that the same law applies for both tefillin, and Sefer Torah, *with the exception of the last column of the Sefer Torah*,⁵⁶⁵ the source for this exception being a Gemara in Menachot⁵⁶⁶ together with the Rashi⁵⁶⁷ on this Gemara. This phenomenon of “lines of successively decreasing length” is found in the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah, in the last eight or so lines in the last column of the Torah,⁵⁶⁸ but since this occurs in the last column, it will not make the Sefer Torah passul.

Certain letters have “tagin” (little crowns) on them and the Rabbinical authorities are divided on whether the absence of these tagin will make the Sefer Torah passul.⁵⁶⁹ The Rambam rules that it would not make the Sefer Torah passul.⁵⁷⁰ None of the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah has these tagin.

There is a custom to begin each column in a Sefer Torah with the Hebrew letter ‘vav’,⁵⁷¹ although some authorities are against it.⁵⁷² The scribes who wrote the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah were very particular about beginning every column with the letter vav. There are also various other points of interest in writing a Sefer Torah, but their absence will not make the Sefer Torah passul.⁵⁷³

The parchment of a Sefer Torah is attached at each end to wooden poles, called atzei chaim.⁵⁷⁴ Should they be missing, the Sefer Torah should not be used if

⁵⁵⁸ SA YD 275:1; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 8:3, 10:1 (17)

⁵⁵⁹ Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 8:4

⁵⁶⁰ e.g. MS 25890 before Genesis 10:1 and MS 33062 before Leviticus 13:29

⁵⁶¹ e.g. MS 1476 before Exodus 12:1 and MS 15843 before Numbers 26:19

⁵⁶² BT Menachot 31b

⁵⁶³ e.g. SA YD 288:9; Rambam Hilchot Mezuzah 5:1

⁵⁶⁴ The word “zanav” (tail) is used to describe these lines of successively decreasing length.

⁵⁶⁵ Zayit Raanan, 2:1 especially par.1(4) and par.6

⁵⁶⁶ BT Menachot 30a

⁵⁶⁷ Rashi on BT Menachot 30a dh “m’katzer” and accompanying illustration

⁵⁶⁸ MSS 1476, 15843, 33062

⁵⁶⁹ SA OC 36:3; MB 36:12, 15

⁵⁷⁰ Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 7:9

⁵⁷¹ Keset Hasofer, 16:5; Encyclopedia Talmudit, 11:395

⁵⁷² Keset Hasofer, 16:5

⁵⁷³ SA YD 275:6 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 7:8-9. For various features found in the Kaifeng Sifrei Torah see for example, Pollak, Torah scrolls, part 3 chap.2; Schiller-Szinessy, vol.1 pp.8-9; Margoliouth, part 1 p.4

⁵⁷⁴ SA OC 278:2; Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 9:2

there is another one available.⁵⁷⁵ From the writings of Gozani it can be seen that the Sifrei Torah in Kaifeng did have these atzei chaim. On this Gozani writes. “These books [the Sifrei Torah] were writ on long Pieces of Parchment, and rolled round Sticks.”⁵⁷⁶ This fact is confirmed in the letters of Domenge.⁵⁷⁷ It is quite possible that the parchment was sewn to the atzei chaim with *silk* thread (as were the various sections of the parchment) but here there are additional authorities who under straitened circumstances permit it.⁵⁷⁸ In accordance with the custom in Oriental communities, each Sefer Torah in Kaifeng was contained in a “gilded box”.⁵⁷⁹

Reading from passul Sefer Torah: There is a question as to whether it is permitted to read in a Synagogue service from a Sefer Torah which is passul, and furthermore say berachot over it. This question has been discussed by the Rishonim. The Rambam in one of his responsa permits it and even allows a berachah to be recited by the people who are called up to such a passul Sefer Torah; he also brings earlier authorities to support this.⁵⁸⁰ Although the Shulchan Aruch rules that it is not permitted to use such a Sefer Torah,⁵⁸¹ the Rema quoting the opinions of the Abudarham⁵⁸² and the Kol Bo,⁵⁸³ brings an opinion that when there is no other Sefer Torah available such a Sefer Torah may be used.⁵⁸⁴

There are a number of factors connected with these Kaifeng Sifrei Torah which might have made them passul, although the Kaifeng community almost certainly thought them to be kasher. We have also seen how they were continually used in the Kaifeng Synagogue services and those called up to the Torah made berachot over them. As has been stated above, the halachic view is that since they were the only Sifrei Torah available in Kaifeng, (even had it been known that they were passul), there would have been halachic opinions on which to rely in using these Sifrei Torah in Synagogue services.

It should also be noted that, (even according to those who forbid reading from a passul Sefer Torah), a case could arise where there is a difference in Rabbinical opinion as to whether a particular factor makes a Sefer Torah passul. Since there are Rabbinical opinions which permit reading from a passul Sefer Torah, one can combine these two *unrelated* differences of opinion and read from this Sefer Torah.⁵⁸⁵ This ruling, however, is probably not relevant to Kaifeng, since there are some things, (such as interchanging open and closed paragraphs) which would make their Sifrei Torah passul according to *all* opinions.

⁵⁷⁵ Aruch Hashulchan YD 278:7

⁵⁷⁶ Gozani, Lettres, 18:34; Gozani, Travels, p.12

⁵⁷⁷ Domenge, Juifs, pp.146, 188

⁵⁷⁸ SA YD 278:2 Rema

⁵⁷⁹ de Gouvea, Juifs, p.210 and White, 2:28-29 for photographs

⁵⁸⁰ Kovetz Teshuvot haRambam v'Igrotov, responsum 15

⁵⁸¹ SA OC 143:3-4; SA YD 279:2

⁵⁸² Abudarham, seder tefillot hachol

⁵⁸³ Kol Bo, Kriyat Hatorah, chap.20

⁵⁸⁴ SA OC 143:4 Rema

⁵⁸⁵ Pri Megadim, Mishbatzot Zahav SA OC 143:1

Chumashim. In addition to Sifrei Torah, Synagogues throughout the world have Chumashim, which are printed copies of the Torah. These Chumashim are mainly for the use of the worshippers to follow the Reading of the Torah. They have both vowel points and musical notes, things not found in the Sefer Torah.

In the Synagogue in Kaifeng, there were Chumashim, the difference from other communities being that they were all handwritten and each parashah was in a separate volume in book format.⁵⁸⁶ The parshiot Nitzavim and Vayeilech were written in the same volume,⁵⁸⁷ but as we have seen above, this was to be expected, as in Kaifeng they were regarded as one parashah.

From the 1663a stele we can get an idea of how many copies of each parashah there were in Kaifeng. On this stele it states that after the flood of 1461, there were “some tens of copies each of the square scripture sections [i.e. Chumashim]”.⁵⁸⁸ However, in a further flood of 1642, they (together with the Sifrei Torah and the siddurim) were “swept away, floating on the waves of the flood.” Some members of the community managed to rescue some of them, and after classifying, arranging, editing and restoring them they had “several volumes” of these Chumashim.⁵⁸⁹

The actual number of Chumashim they managed to restore is not stated. However from the comments of Gozani and Domenge who were in Kaifeng towards the beginning of the 18th century, it would seem that they had several of each (or at least, of many) of the parshiot. A report in the “Chinese Repository” of 1851, states that the missionaries purchased “thirty three of these lesser MSS [this number seems to refer to Chumashim which, had a copy of each parashah been available, would have numbered 53, and each manuscript] contain[ed] one each [i.e. parashah], and there are seven or eight duplicates.”⁵⁹⁰

About these Chumashim, Gozani wrote, they “have them written down in small volumes for the greater convenience of the individuals who know how to read.”⁵⁹¹ A similar comment was made by Domenge. They “distribute [these Chumashim] to individuals when they go to the synagogue on Saturday.”⁵⁹²

Domenge also commented on how these Chumashim were cared for and the state of preservation they were then in. He wrote that they were stored in cupboards by the Ark. Some of them were in “good condition, [whilst] others [were] antiquated and a bit damaged” and they “belong mostly to individuals dead or living”.⁵⁹³ (Since many of these Chumashim belonged to individuals, they could well have been in the

⁵⁸⁶ MSS 19244-19274; Domenge, Juifs, p.146, 187

⁵⁸⁷ MS 19272

⁵⁸⁸ 1663a stele, White, 2:62

⁵⁸⁹ 1663a stele, White, 2:63

⁵⁹⁰ “A Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry...” ,The Chinese Repository, (Canton), vol.20, July 1851, p.464

⁵⁹¹ Gozani, Juifs, p.59

⁵⁹² Domenge, Juifs, p.197

⁵⁹³ Domenge, Juifs, p.146

private houses, rather than in the Synagogue at the time of the flood and thus survived.⁵⁹⁴)

If at that period they were already a “bit damaged”, it is not hard to imagine what state they were in, or to wonder if they were still in existence, about 150 years later. Indeed we find that when they were purchased from the community of Kaifeng in the middle of the 19th century and brought to the West, there was *only one copy* of each extant parashah.⁵⁹⁵ This may well indicate that, in the latter years of the community of Kaifeng, there were only a sufficient number of Chumashim for use by the gabbai (who would correct any mistakes made by the person reading from the Torah) and that the members of the congregation did not have copies from which to follow the reading of the Torah.

As stated above, the originals of most of the Chumashim are still extant and they are to be found in the manuscript collection of the Hebrew Union College with microfilm copies in the Jewish National Library. The handwriting in almost every case is excellent and, as with Chumashim found elsewhere in the world, they all contain vowel points and musical notes. As is common with almost all printed Chumashim, the number of verses in each parashah is written at the end of that parashah. In almost every case the number in the Kaifeng manuscripts corresponds to the number found in other Chumashim in the world. It is of interest to note that printed Chumashim give the number of verses in parashat Tzav as 96,⁵⁹⁶ whereas it is in fact 97. The Kaifeng Chumash gives the number as 97.⁵⁹⁷

Publicising donations to a Synagogue: According to the halachah, if a person donates something to a Synagogue and wants to inscribe on it that he donated it, the community cannot prevent him from so doing.⁵⁹⁸ From the inscriptions on the two sides of the 1663 stele, we can see which members of the Kaifeng Jewish community paid for, or themselves restored, the Chumashim and the damaged Sifrei Torah and siddurim after the two floods.⁵⁹⁹ As stated above, inscribing their names on this stele in Kaifeng, was in accord with the halachah.

Books of Neviim and Ketuvim (Nach) The Jewish Bible – the Tanach – is divided into three sections, namely Torah, Neviim (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings). The “Prophets” are divided into early Prophets: namely Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings; later Prophets, namely Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 Minor Prophets. The “Writings” comprise Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Five Megillot, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

The question is, how many of these books of Nach they had in Kaifeng. From what they told Gozani, when he was in Kaifeng at the beginning of the 18th century, we can see that they were certainly aware of the contents of some of these books. He

⁵⁹⁴ Leslie, pp.148-49

⁵⁹⁵ with very few exceptions where there were two copies

⁵⁹⁶ this is the “gematria” of the word Tzav

⁵⁹⁷ MS 19258

⁵⁹⁸ Rashba, 1:581; MB 154:59 (towards the end)

⁵⁹⁹ 1663a stele, White, 2:62, 63, 1663b stele, White, 2:89-90

wrote, “They spoke to me concerning the Books of Judges, of David, of Solomon, of Ezekiel, who gave life to the wither’d Bones; of Jonah, who was Three Days in the Whale’s Belly etc. whence ’tis manifest that they have several Books of Scripture, besides the Pentateuch of Moses.”⁶⁰⁰

From two letters written by Domenge, we can get a rough idea of which books or fragments of books were to be found in Kaifeng at that period. According to these letters, the books of Samuel, Isaiah and Jeremiah were there in their entirety and there were fragments of Joshua, Judges, Kings, some of the Minor Prophets and Nehemiah. There was “almost nothing” of Daniel, Esther and Chronicles. Of Ezekiel, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs or Ecclesiastes there was nothing. Domenge did not check to see whether they had Ruth and Lamentations.⁶⁰¹ Brotier adds to this list “David,⁶⁰² or the Psalms, whose completeness has not been examined.”⁶⁰³ It is not clear from where Brotier, who is a secondary source, got this information.

Gozani also mentioned this subject but in far less detail, “They have, it seems, other sacred books, for example, Esther, the Prophets, Isaiah, etc.”⁶⁰⁴ Thus it would seem that he concurs with Domenge in regard to Isaiah, but from this letter of Gozani’s, Esther appears to be *more* than “almost nothing”. This is supported by the fact that the Jews of Kaifeng knew the story of Esther well. (see below)

Finn writes that “it is said [possibly by Domenge] that the books of ... Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ruth and Lamentations, are missing[They] would have been found, if sought for at the end of Esther.”⁶⁰⁵ However, his information is only secondary and it is therefore unclear on what basis he makes such a firm claim.

From a list of books in the Tanach written in Hebrew by the chief rabbi of Kaifeng at the beginning of the 18th century,⁶⁰⁶ it can be seen that they knew the names of all the 24 books⁶⁰⁷ in the Tanach. There are a number of points to note from this list: i) the division of books is according to Jewish tradition, namely: just *one* book of each of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles; the twelve “minor prophets” are classed as one book; the book of Nehemiah is part of the book of Ezra. ii) the book איכה (lamentations) is written in this list as קינות (kinot); this is the name as it is called in the Gemara.⁶⁰⁸ iii) the book of Psalms is called דוד (David); he was the major author.⁶⁰⁹ iv) in addition to Shir Hashirim which was composed by Solomon, there is an entry with the word שלמה (Solomon); this is possibly intended for Shir Hashirim and the duplication was probably an oversight. v) on the line following the book of Melachim (Kings) is written, it seems in brackets, Mamlachot (kingdoms) vi) the

⁶⁰⁰ Gozani, Lettres, 18:44; Gozani, Travels, p.19

⁶⁰¹ Domenge, Juifs, pp.128-29, 149-50

⁶⁰² The expression “David” for the book of Psalms appears in the Hebrew list of books of the Tanach which is given here and was also used by Domenge (Domenge, Juifs, p.128)

⁶⁰³ Brotier, Lettres, 24:78; Brotier, White, 1:61

⁶⁰⁴ Gozani, Juifs, p.59

⁶⁰⁵ Finn, Jews of China, p.30

⁶⁰⁶ Pollak, Mandarins, p.95; Leslie, plate 18

⁶⁰⁷ non-Jews have a different division of books in the Tanach and have a total of 39 books

⁶⁰⁸ BT Taanit 30a; BT Bava Batra 14b-15a

⁶⁰⁹ BT Bava Batra 14b

book of Numbers in the Torah section was originally omitted; however the first word of this book, “vayedaber”, was “squashed” in afterwards, possibly immediately.

By the side of each Hebrew name in this list is written the French translation, possibly by Gozani.⁶¹⁰ Gozani also added the names of *just three* of the books of the Apocrypha – Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Judith and Tobias. The question arises as to why *just* these three books. Did Gozani find them in Kaifeng? It is known that the Jews of Kaifeng were aware of the contents of at least two of these three books. Why is the book of Maccabees which the missionaries claim to have seen in Kaifeng not mentioned in this list?

A further question that could be well asked is, if indeed what the missionaries wrote concerning the books of Nach to be found in Kaifeng is accurate, why in the mid 19th century, when they succeeded in purchasing *all* the books in Jewish Kaifeng, were there *no books whatsoever* of Nach amongst them?

Apart from these books being used for study, they also form part of the Synagogue service, namely the haftarot on Shabbat, Yom Tov and fast days. There is a haftarah for each parashah in the Torah. There are thus 53 haftarot for the 53 parshiot in the Torah (not counting the parashah of Vezot Haberachah which is read on Simchat Torah). In addition, there are 16 haftarot for the various Yomim Tovim⁶¹¹ (including Shabbat Chol Hamoed⁶¹² and the afternoon of Yom Kippur⁶¹³) throughout the year. A further 10 haftarot are read on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh,⁶¹⁴ Shabbat Chanukah (two are possible in some years),⁶¹⁵ the four special parshiot before Pesach,⁶¹⁶ Shabbat Hagadol.⁶¹⁷ and the morning⁶¹⁸ and afternoon⁶¹⁹ of Tisha b'Av, (Oriental communities do not read a haftarah on the afternoon of other fast days.)⁶²⁰ This makes a total of 78 possible haftarot, although they are not all read in any one particular year.

From the siddur manuscripts (see below) and from Domenge, we can see that the Jews of Kaifeng knew about haftarot. On this Domenge writes, “They say that formerly [i.e. some time prior to 1722] they held more than 80 volumes of them [haftarot], and this is indeed suggested by the way they form their volumes.”⁶²¹ As we have seen with the weekly parshiot from the Torah, “the way they form their

⁶¹⁰ Pollak, Mandarins, p.95

⁶¹¹ SA OC 488:3, 490:1, 8, 494:1, 2, 584:2, 601:1, 621:1, 659:1, 662:3, 668:2, 669:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:8-12

⁶¹² SA OC 490:9, 663:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:16

⁶¹³ SA OC 622:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:11

⁶¹⁴ SA OC 425:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:4

⁶¹⁵ SA OC 684:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:17

⁶¹⁶ SA OC 685:1-4; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:20

⁶¹⁷ Aruch Hashulchan 430:5; Not every community reads a special haftarah on Shabbat Hagadol. (Encyclopedia Talmudit, 10:24)

⁶¹⁸ SA OC 559:4 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:18

⁶¹⁹ Kaf Hachaim OC 566:10 (but see below the opinion of the Rambam)

⁶²⁰ Kaf Hachaim OC 566:10

⁶²¹ Domenge, Juifs, p.150

volumes” was to put each parashah in a *separate* booklet. From Domenge we can see that the same thing was done with the haftarot.

The siddur manuscripts from Kaifeng, give specific details of the haftarot read on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh⁶²² and the morning of Tisha b’Av,⁶²³ and also refer to haftarot read on various festivals, but here the details of the haftarah are not recorded.⁶²⁴ We can thus reasonably conclude that the community knew that a haftarah was read on every Shabbat and Yom Tov. Whether or not they knew about the other occasions when a haftarah is recited, such as the four special parshiot, is not known. At all accounts, they knew about at least 70 of the haftarot. Just as with the booklets for the parshiot where in some instances they had second copies, this is also likely in the case of the haftarah booklets.

As stated above, Domenge reported that they only “formerly” had over 80 booklets. Thus by the year 1722, they had a smaller number. What did they do when the booklet of a particular haftarah was missing and in addition they did not have the book of the particular Navi from which the haftarah was taken? On that, nothing seems to be written.

A further point for investigation concerns the fact that there are various customs of different communities in the world as to the particular haftarah to be read on each occasion.⁶²⁵ It is not known which custom was followed in Kaifeng.

The various megillot are also read in some communities throughout the year,⁶²⁶ although only Esther has to be written on parchment. It seems from Domenge that they did not have the text of any of these megillot, other than Esther. Lamentations is recited in all communities on the night of Tisha b’Av.⁶²⁷ It can be seen from one of the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts⁶²⁸ whose content is the service for Tisha b’Av, that the recital of Lamentations is not mentioned, but it must be borne in mind that the manuscript does not include the service for the night of Tisha b’Av when the book of Lamentations is recited.⁶²⁹ The other three megillot are variously read on Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. However this is not a universal custom⁶³⁰ and therefore not having those texts would not present a problem.

Verses from Nach are an integral part of the Synagogue services especially in mussaf of Rosh Hashanah, and there are also many Psalms included in the daily services. However these verses are found in the siddurim of the various communities and this includes the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts⁶³¹ and thus even the absence of these

⁶²² MS 19234 f.49

⁶²³ MS 19215 f.35

⁶²⁴ MS 19224 ff.16, 37

⁶²⁵ Encyclopedia Talmudit, vol. 10, table of Haftarot, pp.701-28

⁶²⁶ SA OC 490:9 Rema, 559:2

⁶²⁷ SA OC 559:2

⁶²⁸ MS 19215

⁶²⁹ SA OC 559:2

⁶³⁰ Chaim Simons, Reading the Megillot Shir Hashirim, Rut, Eichah and Kohelet, Sinai, (Jerusalem), vol.118, (5756 -1996), pp.26-42; Chaim Simons, Divrei Chamishah, pp.49- 63

⁶³¹ e.g. MSS 19216 ff.6-15, 19217 ff.15-34 passim, 19235 ff.9-32, 19239

books of Nach in a particular community would be no problem *as far as prayers are concerned*.

Books of the Talmud:⁶³² Did the Jews in Kaifeng have any volumes of the Talmud? Just as with Nach where no volumes are extant from Kaifeng, so it is with the Talmud. Unlike the volumes of Nach where the missionaries make several references to having seen them, they make virtually no reference to seeing the Talmud there. However, it should be noted that whereas the missionaries were very conversant with the Bible, they were almost certainly not so with the Talmud and thus may not have recognised it even if it had been there.

One of the few *possible* sources of information about a copy of the Talmud, (or at least the Mishnah) being found in Kaifeng is a manuscript autographed by Gozani and dated 12 September 1713. On the first line it says in Hebrew letters, סדר תלמוד משנה גמרה (Seder Talmud Mishnah Gemara). On the following two lines it states, again in Hebrew letters, “Seder Zeraim, Seder Moed, Seder Nashim, Nezikin (*the word “Seder” is missing*), Seder Kodoshim, Seder Tahorot.”⁶³³ The question which the historians ask is whether Gozani copied this from a manuscript he saw in Kaifeng? Leslie suggests, but admits that he cannot be certain that “this list of chapter titles was not copied in Kaifeng, but that Gozani was sent it (from Rome?) to check if the Jews would recognise it.” (*bracketed words and ? in original*)⁶³⁴

However, Gaubil writes in his letter of 1725 that they had fragments of the Mishnah in Kaifeng, “Ils ont des fragments de la Mischna, qu’ils n’entendent pas, et ils ne surent que me dire le titre de quelque chapitre.” (They have fragments of the Mishnah, which they do not understand, and all they did was tell me the title of some chapter.)⁶³⁵

This letter is also quoted by Leslie.⁶³⁶ but he writes “I have used a copy held in Fonds Brotier, vol. 123. fol. 70-72.”⁶³⁷ There are some minor differences between these two versions, namely instead of “surent” there is “firent” and instead of “quelque chapitre” there is “quelques chapitres”. These changes mean that all the Jews of Kaifeng were able to tell Gaubil was the title of some *chapters (plural)*.

However, Brotier (who we must remember is only a secondary source) writes “they have four books of Mishnah”⁶³⁸ but he does not elaborate on this.

Domenge comments several times that the Jews of Kaifeng spoke to him about “minchah”, which is normally taken to be the afternoon service, but he was of the opinion that they were referring to “mishnah”.⁶³⁹ However from these comments of Domenge, one cannot come to a reasonable conclusion.

ff.13-24

⁶³² The nature and composition of the Talmud has been described above.

⁶³³ Leslie, plate 20

⁶³⁴ Leslie, p.153

⁶³⁵ Gaubil, p.79

⁶³⁶ Leslie, p.154

⁶³⁷ Leslie, p.181

⁶³⁸ Brotier, Lettres, 24:80; Brotier, White, 1:62

⁶³⁹ Domenge, Juifs, pp.134-35, 150, 168

In his article on the “Jews in China” which was published in 1895, Adolph Neubauer writes, “There is no quotation in their book [siddur] from the Gemara, but parts of the Mishnah are to be found in their Prayer-book. Of course, if they had emigrated to China in the eighth century, they could scarcely have had the Gemara with them.”⁶⁴⁰

This statement by Neubauer is incorrect. The portion of the *Gemara* “amar Rabbi Elazar amar Rabbi Chanina”⁶⁴¹ which is said at the end of a number of prayer services appears on *numerous* occasions in these manuscripts.⁶⁴² There are also further problems with this statement of Neubauer’s. Firstly, even if the Jews had come to China in the eighth century, since the *Gemara* was already completed before this date, they could have had a copy with them. In addition, (even if there had not been the *Gemara* portion, “amar Rabbi Elazar...” in the Kaifeng manuscripts), Neubauer’s implied statement that because “There is no quotation in their book [siddur] from the *Gemara*,” they did not know about the *Gemara*, is not tenable. With very few exceptions, portions of the *Gemara* do not form a part of the Synagogue service. Apart from “amar Rabbi Elazar...”, the *only* part of the *Gemara* brought in the siddurim of all other communities is the portion “pitum haketoret”.⁶⁴³

Some parts of the Mishnah which are found in the siddurim of other communities, are also to be found in the Kaifeng Siddur, namely “bame madlikin”⁶⁴⁴ which is usually said in the maariv service for Shabbat⁶⁴⁵ and “Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya omer”⁶⁴⁶ which is recited in various parts of a service.⁶⁴⁷

Even if the Jews of Kaifeng did not possess a copy of the Talmud, we can see from the writings of the missionaries that the Jews there had at least some smatterings of some of the midrashim found in the Talmud. It seems that the missionaries did not like the Talmud since they made very uncomplimentary comments in response to statements that they heard from the Jews of Kaifeng on items appearing in the Talmud. Gozani wrote in his letter from Kaifeng in 1704, “A Circumstance which surprised me still more is, that their ancient Rabbis have blended several ridiculous Tales with the genuine Facts related in Scripture, and even interspersed the Five Books of Moses in this Manner. They told me such extravagant Stories on this Occasion that I could not forbear laughing; whence I suspected that these Jews are Talmudists, who pervert and corrupt the Sense of the Bible. No one but a Person well skilled in the Scriptures, and in the Hebrew Tongue, can set this Affair in a proper Light.”⁶⁴⁸ He continued with this theme in the postscript of this letter of his, “I forgot

⁶⁴⁰ Neubauer, Kublin, p.147

⁶⁴¹ BT Berachot 64a

⁶⁴² e.g. MSS 19224 f.20, 19233 f.37, 19242 ff.3-4, 16160 f.yud-gimmel

⁶⁴³ BT Keritot 6a; Some siddurim also have some extracts from the *Gemara* which may be found amongst the morning preliminary prayers, an example being “Abaye hava...” (BT Yoma 33a)

⁶⁴⁴ Mishnah Shabbat 2

⁶⁴⁵ MS 19235 ff.1-7

⁶⁴⁶ Mishnah Makkot 3:16

⁶⁴⁷ MS 19235 f.7

⁶⁴⁸ Gozani, Lettres, 18:39; Gozani, Travels, p.15

to observe that these Chinese Jews, besides the Bible, are possessed of Hebrew Books, compos'd by the ancient Rabbis; and that these Books ... which are stuffed with the most extravagant Stories, comprehend their Rituals, and the Ceremonies they now use.”⁶⁴⁹ In a letter written in 1712, Gozani made similar comments again showing that the Jews of Kaifeng had some knowledge of the midrashim in the Talmud, but this time he did not make them in an uncomplimentary manner, “In their conversation, they intermingle with their sacred books of Moses, the Pentateuch, many fables, which doubtless are derived from the tradition of the rabbis of the Talmud.”⁶⁵⁰

The Synagogue

Building a Synagogue. Jews wherever they live are required to build Synagogues as places for communal prayer.⁶⁵¹ According to the halachah the members of a community can be forced to build a Synagogue,⁶⁵² even if only a minority of the community wants it.⁶⁵³ If the community has no building for a Synagogue, they are required to rent a place.⁶⁵⁴

Throughout their history, the Jewish community in Kaifeng were most particular to have a Synagogue. They even made sure that it was beautiful. This accords with the Zohar which states that “a Synagogue should be a handsome structure, beautifully decorated, for it is an earthly copy of a heavenly prototype.”⁶⁵⁵

The original building of the Kaifeng Synagogue dates from 1163, which was during the Sung Dynasty.⁶⁵⁶ However it has been suggested that the Jews rented a place of worship even before that date.⁶⁵⁷ Similarly, in the period from after the flood of 1642, which completely destroyed the Synagogue, until the time it was rebuilt, the 1663a stele states that “a large house was rented where the ... members of the religion were able to meet and worship together.”⁶⁵⁸

During the course of five hundred years the Synagogue was restored or refurbished on ten occasions.⁶⁵⁹ On at least three of these occasions, this occurred after its having been completely destroyed by fire or flood.⁶⁶⁰ An example of these restorations was in 1421, which was during the Ming dynasty, when the Jews received permission from the Emperor to rebuild.⁶⁶¹ Another case was in 1461 following flooding by the Yellow River, which left little more than the foundations of the

⁶⁴⁹ Gozani, Lettres, 18:45-46; Gozani, Travels, p.20

⁶⁵⁰ Gozani, Juifs, p.59

⁶⁵¹ Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 11:1

⁶⁵² SA OC 150:1, CM 163:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 11:1

⁶⁵³ SA CM 163:1 Rema; MB 150:1

⁶⁵⁴ MB 150:2

⁶⁵⁵ Zohar Beshalach 59b

⁶⁵⁶ 1489 stele, White, 2:11

⁶⁵⁷ Xin, p.78

⁶⁵⁸ 1663a stele, White, 2:64

⁶⁵⁹ Chen Yuan, Shapiro, pp.39-41

⁶⁶⁰ Pollak, Mandarins, p.274

⁶⁶¹ 1489 stele, White, 2:12

Synagogue intact. The community requested and received permission from the provincial authorities to rebuild the Synagogue which they did on a larger and grander scale;⁶⁶² during the following twenty years they added another three sections to the Synagogue.⁶⁶³ According to Chen Yuan, who was a well known educator and historian in China,⁶⁶⁴ the final rebuilding was in 1688, a fact attested to by many vertical plaques hung in the Synagogue.⁶⁶⁵ In summary, it can be said that a noticeable portion of the various steles speak about the repeated rebuilding of the Synagogue, its furnishings, and those who contributed to the cost and actual building.

The Bach writes that a Synagogue needs to have a courtyard in front of it.⁶⁶⁶ He derived from a statement in the Jerusalem Talmud⁶⁶⁷ that there must be two doors to enter a Synagogue, the first being the door to enter the *courtyard* and the second to enter the Synagogue itself. In Kaifeng there was not just one but four courtyards in front of the Synagogue, with several doors to go through.⁶⁶⁸

The members of a community are obligated to pay for the building of a Synagogue, and the size of the payments are calculated partly on the basis of the wealth of the individual members of the community.⁶⁶⁹ We can see from the various steles and from other sources that for the rebuilding of the Synagogue in 1489,⁶⁷⁰ after the flood of 1642,⁶⁷¹ and again in 1679,⁶⁷² individuals, clans or even the whole community paid, and members also donated the furnishings and fittings. As already stated, the publicising of their names on the steles accords with the halachah.

Synagogue design, furniture and fittings. Throughout the ages, Synagogues have been built in all parts of the world, generally with a distinctive design. Is there any halachic problem with the various designs? Towards the end of the 18th century, such a question was posed to Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, the Chief Rabbi of Prague. He replied that there were no architectural limitations on the design of a synagogue.⁶⁷³

The architectural design of the Synagogue at Kaifeng is completely unlike that of synagogues in other parts of the world. Its style of architecture is Chinese,⁶⁷⁴ which is not surprising. As we have just seen, there is no halachic problem with such a design.

The only extant primary source of the design of this Synagogue is two sketches made by Domenge in 1722 which are reproduced by Pollak.⁶⁷⁵ In 1827 an

⁶⁶² 1489 stele, White, 2:13

⁶⁶³ 1489 stele, White, 2:13

⁶⁶⁴ Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.15

⁶⁶⁵ Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.41

⁶⁶⁶ Bach on Tur OC 90 dh “uma shekatuv v’nire sheain”; MB 90:61

⁶⁶⁷ JT Berachot 5:1

⁶⁶⁸ Finn, *Jews of China*, pp.16-18; Pollak, *Mandarins*, pp.279, 280, 282

⁶⁶⁹ MB 150:2

⁶⁷⁰ 1489 stele, White, 2:14

⁶⁷¹ 1663a stele, White, 2:65, 1663b stele, White, 2:88-89

⁶⁷² Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.40

⁶⁷³ Noda b’Yehudah, 2:18

⁶⁷⁴ Leslie, p.82; Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.278

⁶⁷⁵ Pollak, *Mandarins*, pp.282-83

“anonymous and highly imaginative Italian artist” made a drawing of this synagogue.⁶⁷⁶ Pollak describes this drawing as “an amusingly naïve fake, prepared by an anonymous artist who knew little or nothing about Chinese architecture and dress, and was equally ignorant of Jewish customs.”⁶⁷⁷ Pollak also comments that the model of the exterior of the Kaifeng synagogue which is displayed at the Bet Hatefusot Museum in Tel Aviv, although based on Domenge’s sketches, is “still essentially imaginative.”⁶⁷⁸

In every Synagogue the bimah, the place where the Sefer Torah is read, should be in the centre of the synagogue.⁶⁷⁹ Furthermore, the custom in many synagogues is to have the bimah in a raised position.⁶⁸⁰ The Kaifeng Synagogue had such a bimah and on it was the “Chair of Moses” on which the Sefer Torah was placed during the Reading of the Torah. (see above for a detailed study of the “Chair of Moses”) De Gouvea wrote that the bimah was “elevated”,⁶⁸¹ its elevation being about thirty centimeters higher than the rest of the floor.⁶⁸²

There have been discussions amongst the Rabbinical authorities as to whether the hanging of a plaque with the Ten Commandments in a synagogue is in fact permissible. The source of the discussion is from the Gemara⁶⁸³ where the Rabbis then forbade reading the Ten Commandments as part of the synagogue service, since they were concerned that the heretics would say that there is no Torah apart from the Ten Commandments.⁶⁸⁴ However, the custom today, because there are now no such heretics, is to be lenient and permit such a plaque in the Synagogue.⁶⁸⁵ With regard to Kaifeng, Gozani writes that “they have the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) written down in Hebrew in golden letters, and hung up in the synagogue.”⁶⁸⁶

A question on the hanging of verses written on paper, such as “shema yisrael” above the Ark or by the entrance to the Synagogue was posed to the Maharit who lived in the 16th-17th century. He answered that it is permitted.⁶⁸⁷ At a later date the Magen Avraham⁶⁸⁸ concurred with the Maharit and so did the Machatzit Hashekel⁶⁸⁹ in his commentary on the Magen Avraham. In practice, for many hundreds of years, the writing of verses and even prayers on the walls of Synagogues in many parts of Europe has been widespread.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁷⁶ Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.279

⁶⁷⁷ Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.409

⁶⁷⁸ Pollak, *Mandarins*, p.379

⁶⁷⁹ SA OC 150:5 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 11:3

⁶⁸⁰ Siach Tefillah, p.132; cf. MB 150:12

⁶⁸¹ de Gouvea, *Juifs*, p.210

⁶⁸² Tseang Account, Smith, p.82

⁶⁸³ BT Berachot 12a

⁶⁸⁴ JT Berachot 1:5

⁶⁸⁵ Minhag Yisrael Torah, 1:42; Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:46-47

⁶⁸⁶ Gozani, *Juifs*, p.60

⁶⁸⁷ Maharit, 2:3

⁶⁸⁸ Magen Avraham SA OC 40:1

⁶⁸⁹ Machatzit Hashekel, SA OC 40:1

⁶⁹⁰ Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:16

In addition to the Ten Commandments, there were other verses which were hung up in the Kaifeng Synagogue. Domenge writes that “the Principal Inscription of the Temple of the Jews of K’ai-feng which is seen in large letters of gold” at the front of the Ark was a verse from the Torah⁶⁹¹ which he quoted, although not very accurately.⁶⁹² He also reported on another tablet with the verse “shema yisrael...”⁶⁹³ which was also in gold letters and was placed above the bimah.⁶⁹⁴

There were in fact numerous horizontal and vertical plaques hanging up in the Kaifeng Synagogue and elsewhere in the compound which were written in Chinese characters, and also had the names of the donors inscribed on them.⁶⁹⁵ Many of them are dated at about the middle of the 17th century. David Sassoon made a detailed study of these plaques and he found parallels with the text on these plaques in the Jewish religious literature.⁶⁹⁶

Synagogues usually have a memorial board to remember departed members.⁶⁹⁷ From the writings of Gozani, it would seem they had something similar in Kaifeng, “’Tis certain, as you yourself may perceive by their ancient Inscriptions which I now send you, and as they themselves have assur’d me unanimously, that they honour their Dead in the ... Hall of their Ancestors...”⁶⁹⁸

One of the prayers recited every Shabbat morning before mussaf is a prayer for the welfare of the monarch, the emperor, or the president.⁶⁹⁹ Praying for the welfare of the country in which a Jew is living goes back to Biblical times when the prophet Jeremiah told the Jews who had been exiled to Babylon to pray for the welfare of the government.⁷⁰⁰ This is reiterated in the Mishnah,⁷⁰¹ and in the 14th century the Abudarham writes how it is customary to bless the king and pray that he should be successful over his enemies.⁷⁰² A former Chief Rabbi of Britain, Rabbi Joseph Hertz, suggests that this was the prayer which the Spanish Jews brought with them when they came to Holland and which begins “Hanotein teshuah lamelachim” (He who gives salvation unto kings). This is the text which is recited today in various Ashkenazi communities all over the world,⁷⁰³ and also in some Oriental communities.⁷⁰⁴

The 1489 stele records how the Jews of Kaifeng prayed for the then emperor, “We invoke the blessing of Heaven on the Emperor ... May his intelligence and

⁶⁹¹ Deuteronomy 10:17

⁶⁹² Domenge, Juifs, p.158

⁶⁹³ Deuteronomy 6:4

⁶⁹⁴ Domenge, Juifs, p.136; Pollak, Mandarins, pp.281, 283

⁶⁹⁵ Pollak, Mandarins, pp.284, 287-88

⁶⁹⁶ Sassoon, p.137

⁶⁹⁷ Personal observation by author of this book

⁶⁹⁸ Gozani, Lettres, 18:47; Gozani. Travels, p.21

⁶⁹⁹ Aruch Hashulchan OC 284:15

⁷⁰⁰ Jeremiah 29:7

⁷⁰¹ Mishnah Avot 3:2

⁷⁰² Abudarham, seder tefillot hachol

⁷⁰³ Rabbi Dr. Joseph Hertz (1872 – 1945), Authorised Daily Prayer Book, p.505

⁷⁰⁴ Emet l’Yaakov, Berachah Lamelech, (p.83b)

intuitive wisdom radiate like the descending rays of the sun and the moon, and his merciful love and wide benevolence be merged in the universal power of Father Heaven and Mother earth ... we pray that the age of the Emperor may extend to ten thousand years ...”⁷⁰⁵

In many Synagogues there is a board with the text of the prayer for the head of state permanently affixed to the wall of the Synagogue.⁷⁰⁶ The existence of a similar board was indeed the case in Kaifeng where in front of the bimah of the synagogue there was “a Tablet of the Emperor”.⁷⁰⁷ Adler writes that a prayer (possibly he means the prayer quoted above, since he refers to it containing the words “might live ten thousand myriads of years”) was “emblazoned in golden letters” on this “Tablet of the Emperor.”⁷⁰⁸

Pictures may not be placed at eye level in a synagogue, since they may distract the worshippers during their prayers.⁷⁰⁹ There is also a general prohibition (not only in Synagogues) of making even two dimensional drawings of celestial bodies, which includes the signs of the zodiac, and of making a three dimensional statue of a human.⁷¹⁰ As a result, unlike in other religions, pictures and statues are not placed in Synagogues.

With regards to Kaifeng, this fact was commented upon by Ricci at the beginning of the 17th century. “It seemed strange to them [three Jews who had been “entirely estranged” from Judaism] that there were no pictures or statues in their own luxurious temple [in Kaifeng] or in the homes and private oratories of their people.”⁷¹¹ Likewise Gozani writes “there are no Statues or Images [in the Kaifeng Synagogue]”⁷¹²

In a number of synagogues in the world, two model lions have been placed above or in front of the Ark.⁷¹³ There are a number of halachic problems involved, which are connected with various aspects of idol worship, and moreover when one bows during the prayers, it might appear that one is bowing before them. The question has thus been extensively asked as to whether it was permissible or not to have such lions in the Synagogue. There have been numerous Rabbinical discussions on this question with answers which include some that permit and others that forbid putting models of lions and other creatures on the Ark.⁷¹⁴ There was one authority who ruled that model lions put on the doorpost of a synagogue should be removed.⁷¹⁵

⁷⁰⁵ 1489 stele, White, 2:15

⁷⁰⁶ Personal observation by author of this book

⁷⁰⁷ Domenge, Juifs, p.135

⁷⁰⁸ Adler, lecture, p.11

⁷⁰⁹ MB 90:70, 71

⁷¹⁰ SA YD 141:4; Taz SA YD 141:13; Rambam Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 3:10-11

⁷¹¹ Ricci journal, Latin text, pp.275-76; Ricci, Journal, pp.109-10

⁷¹² Gozani, Lettres, 18:36; Gozani, Travels, p.13

⁷¹³ An example is the Synagogue in Mattesdorf, a town in Burgenland Austria (Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:30)

⁷¹⁴ Sdei Chemed, parts 4 & 5, maarechet bet haknesset, par.11, p.160; Minhagei Hakehilot, 1:30-44

⁷¹⁵ Sdei Chemed, parts 4 & 5, maarechet bet haknesset, par.11, p.160

Flanking both sides of the entrance to one of the inner courtyards of the Kaifeng Synagogue were two marble lions.⁷¹⁶ They were donated after the rebuilding following the flood of 1642.⁷¹⁷ For some reason Domenge did not sketch or indicate them in his drawing of the synagogue made in 1722,⁷¹⁸ although K'hew reported that they were there in 1850.⁷¹⁹ As we have seen, there are Rabbinical opinions which would permit them even if they were inside the synagogue itself. Furthermore, since in Kaifeng they were outside the Synagogue building, the problem regarding “bowing” before them would not be applicable.

Women in the Synagogue: We learn from the Gemara⁷²⁰ that in the Temple in Jerusalem they would construct a gallery for the women during the festival of Sukkot in order to prevent intermingling of the sexes during the Sukkot festivities. From this we learn of the prohibition of having men and women seated together in a Synagogue. The ideal solution is, as in the case of the Temple, to have a gallery in every Synagogue for the women. Failing this, one must set up a partition of a certain height (over about a metre and a half) between the men and women.⁷²¹ Separate blocks of seating without a partition are preferable to mixed seating, although even such separate blocks are not in accordance with the halachah.⁷²²

What occurred in Kaifeng regarding the separation of the sexes in the synagogue? David Brown, who visited Kaifeng in 1932 had a conversation (via an interpreter) with a widow called Shih. She reported that her father-in-law, who had died in his eightieth year, over forty years previously, had been alive when the synagogue was still standing and he had told her “The Synagogue had no galleries, but men and women were separated.”⁷²³ No further details are given of whether there was an actual partition to separate the men from the women as is required. However, it is also possible that the men and women in Kaifeng prayed well out of sight of each other.

Incense: Incense in Jewish ritual goes back to the period of the Mishkan (the Tabernacle originally constructed at the time of Moses), where it is referred to in the Torah together with other ceremonial objects, “and the table and all its vessels, and the candlestick and its vessels, and the alter of incense.”⁷²⁴

On a number of occasions, both the steles⁷²⁵ and the Jesuit missionary Gozani⁷²⁶ refer to “incense pans” in the Synagogue compound. The earliest mention is

⁷¹⁶ K'hew, Smith, p.25; Brotier, Lettres, 24:64; Brotier, White, 1:53; Pollak, Mandarins, p.280

⁷¹⁷ 1663b stele, White, p.89

⁷¹⁸ Pollak, Mandarins, p.279

⁷¹⁹ K'hew, Smith, p.25

⁷²⁰ BT Sukkah 51b

⁷²¹ Igrot Moshe, OC 1:39

⁷²² Igrot Moshe, OC 1:44

⁷²³ Brown, 10 February 1933, p.242

⁷²⁴ Exodus 30:27

⁷²⁵ 1489 stele, White, 2:14; 1663b stele, White, 2:88-89

⁷²⁶ Gozani, Lettres, 18:27, 41, 43; Gozani, Travels, pp.14, 17, 18

in the 1489 stele where it states "...placed (in the Synagogue), the Table ... with its bronze censer [incense pan], and the pair each of flower-vases and candlesticks. (*words in round brackets are White's*)"⁷²⁷ In his notes to these steles, Tiberiu Weisz states that the incense pan is a reminder of the Mishkan.⁷²⁸

Having such a reminder of the Temple in Jerusalem in the Kaifeng Synagogue is not a unique phenomenon, since to this very day we have a number of similar reminders in our Synagogues. The "ner tamid", the light in front of the Ark, is a reminder of the light continually burning in the Temple,⁷²⁹ and the "parochet", the curtain in front of the Ark, is a reminder of the curtain hanging in front of the Holy of Holies in the Temple.⁷³⁰

"As a reminder" seems to have been the *only* purpose for these ceremonial objects, which include the incense pan on the table in the Kaifeng Synagogue. Domenge specifically writes that this incense pan was not used in the Kaifeng Synagogue service,⁷³¹ (and this corresponds with the practice in other Synagogues in the world). Negative confirmation can also be found in the Kaifeng manuscripts, where there is no mention at all of utilising incense during the synagogue services.

It is incorrect to think that the offering up of incense is exclusively a non-Jewish practice. קטורת (ketoret) – incense - has a strong basis in Jewish tradition, and indeed was an integral part of the Temple service in Jerusalem. It was offered up twice a day in the Temple, in the morning and afternoon, on a special alter which was overlaid with gold. In addition, when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, he would offer up incense.⁷³²

In Kaifeng, incense was burned in memory of departed ancestors⁷³³ and for this purpose a number of incense pans had been donated to the Memorial Hall which was situated in the Synagogue complex.⁷³⁴

Today, prayers referring to the offering up of incense in the Temple are recited in two places in the morning service.⁷³⁵ The first place⁷³⁶ is the portion in the Torah which gives the commandment regarding the incense⁷³⁷ and the second⁷³⁸ is a section from the Talmud which gives the ingredients for this incense.⁷³⁹ The Rabbinical authorities specifically state that one should recite this portion from the Talmud with

⁷²⁷ 1489 stele, White, 2:14; White in his book gives photographs of this incense pan (White, 2:26, 86) which was brought to Toronto, and it seems to correspond with the sketch by Domenge.

⁷²⁸ Weisz, p.13 fn.66

⁷²⁹ Siach Tefillah, pp.126-27

⁷³⁰ Siach Tefillah, p.124

⁷³¹ Domenge, Juifs, p.189

⁷³² Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim, pp.363-64

⁷³³ Gozani, Lettres, 18:37, 43; Gozani, Travels, pp.14, 18

⁷³⁴ 1663b stele, White, 2:88-89

⁷³⁵ any siddur. Some say these prayers also before the afternoon service.

⁷³⁶ MB 48:1

⁷³⁷ Exodus 30:34-38

⁷³⁸ SA OC 132:2 Rema

⁷³⁹ BT Keritut 6a; JT Yoma 4:5

particular care, and there are some Oriental communities where the worshippers read it from a handwritten parchment.⁷⁴⁰ Neither of these two recitations regarding the incense is to be found in the extant Kaifeng manuscripts.

Berachot

Bircat hamazon which is recited after eating a satisfying meal⁷⁴¹ and, according to many opinions, the berachah recited daily before learning Torah,⁷⁴² are the only berachot which are Torah commandments. All other berachot are Rabbinically ordained.⁷⁴³

Broadly speaking, berachot can be divided into three groups: (1) ברכות הנהנין (bircot hanehenin), which are berachot recited before eating, drinking, or smelling certain pleasant smells, (2) ברכות המצוות (bircot hamitzvot), berachot recited before performing certain positive mitzvot, (3) ברכות שבה והודאה (bircot shevach v'hodaah), berachot recited on, amongst other things, seeing or hearing various phenomena, such as seeing spectacular mountains, or a rainbow, or hearing thunder.⁷⁴⁴

We shall now see from the manuscripts that the Jews of Kaifeng were aware of many of these berachot.

Bircot hanehenin: The Rabbis have written that it is forbidden to benefit from anything in this world, without giving thanks to the Almighty, namely reciting a berachah. To do so is regarded as stealing from the Almighty.⁷⁴⁵ The Rabbis therefore formulated six berachot to be recited before eating or drinking any kind of food,⁷⁴⁶ and five before smelling certain pleasant smells.⁷⁴⁷

The six different berachot which are recited before eating various foods are: המוציא (hamotzi) over bread,⁷⁴⁸ מזונות (mezonot) over cooked or baked flour products,⁷⁴⁹ הגפן (hagefen) over wine,⁷⁵⁰ העץ (haetz) over fruit,⁷⁵¹ האדמה (haadamah) over vegetables,⁷⁵² and שהכל (shehakol) over meat, fish, milk products, etc.⁷⁵³

Three of these berachot are quoted in these manuscripts, namely hamotzi” which is found in a manuscript following kiddush on the evening of Shabbat,⁷⁵⁴ and hagefen and haadamah, both of which are found in the manuscripts containing the

⁷⁴⁰ Kaf Hachaim (Rabbi Palaggi), 17:18

⁷⁴¹ Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:1

⁷⁴² MB 47:1; Aruch Hashulchan 47:1

⁷⁴³ Encyclopedia Talmudit, 4:291

⁷⁴⁴ Encyclopedia Talmudit, 4:291

⁷⁴⁵ BT Berachot 35a; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:2

⁷⁴⁶ Encyclopedia Talmudit, 4:330

⁷⁴⁷ Encyclopedia Talmudit, 4:596

⁷⁴⁸ SA OC 167:2; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 3:2

⁷⁴⁹ SA OC 168:6, 13 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 3:3-4, 9

⁷⁵⁰ SA OC 174:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 8:2

⁷⁵¹ SA OC 202:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 8:1

⁷⁵² SA OC 205:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 8:1

⁷⁵³ SA OC 204:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 8:1

⁷⁵⁴ MS 19218 f.4

Pesach Seder service.⁷⁵⁵ The other three berachot over foodstuffs are not mentioned in these manuscripts but it is quite likely that since three of the berachot over food were known by them, so too were the other three.

There are five berachot for smelling things, one of them being over smelling pleasant tree products בורא עצי בשמים (borei atzei vesamim).⁷⁵⁶ It is this berachah over smelling things which is found in the Kaifeng manuscripts of the Pesach Seder service.⁷⁵⁷ These manuscripts begin with havdalah which is recited when the seder is held on motzaei Shabbat. In the siddurim of various other communities, there are in addition, alternative berachot over smelling things during the havdalah service, (see later). The fact that these alternative berachot do not appear in the Kaifeng manuscripts could possibly indicate that they did not know these other berachot over smelling things.

Bircot hamitzvot: Immediately before performing many positive commandments between man and G-d, a berachah is recited where it is stated that the Almighty has commanded the Jew to perform this precept.⁷⁵⁸ In some cases when this berachah is recited, the mitzvah is Rabbinical, but even so such a berachah is recited, since the Torah⁷⁵⁹ has given authority to the Rabbis to enact mitzvot.⁷⁶⁰

Several of these berachot are to be found in the Kaifeng manuscripts. These include על נטילת ידיים (al netillat yadayim),⁷⁶¹ which is recited on washing the hands before eating bread,⁷⁶² על אכילת מרור (al achilat maror)⁷⁶³ before eating the bitter herbs on the first two nights of Pesach,⁷⁶⁴ להתעטף בציצית (l'hitatef batzitzit)⁷⁶⁵ before putting on the tallit,⁷⁶⁶ לגמור את ההלל (ligmor et hallel)⁷⁶⁷ before reciting the entire hallel on certain Festivals,⁷⁶⁸ and (very possibly) להדליק נר של חנוכה (lhadlik ner shel Chanukah)⁷⁶⁹ before lighting the Chanukah candles.⁷⁷⁰

Bircat shevach v'hoda'ah: There are a large number of berachot which fall into this category and they range over numerous subjects.⁷⁷¹ One of them is the berachah

⁷⁵⁵ hagefen: MSS 19219 f.12, 19223 ff.1, 15; haadamah: MS 19219 f.77

⁷⁵⁶ SA OC 216:2; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 9:1

⁷⁵⁷ MS 19223 f.1

⁷⁵⁸ Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:3, 11:2

⁷⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 17:11

⁷⁶⁰ Rambam Hilchot Berachot 11:3

⁷⁶¹ MS 19219 ff.12-13

⁷⁶² SA OC 158:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 6:2

⁷⁶³ MSS 19219 MS 19219 f.77

⁷⁶⁴ SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:8

⁷⁶⁵ MS 19216 f.27

⁷⁶⁶ SA OC 8:5; Rambam Hilchot Tzitzit 3:8

⁷⁶⁷ MSS 19227 f.34, 19241 f.16

⁷⁶⁸ MB 488:3; SA OC 644:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:5

⁷⁶⁹ MS 19225 f.10

⁷⁷⁰ SA OC 676:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:4

⁷⁷¹ Rambam Hilchot Berachot 10

שהחיינו (shehecheyanu) which is recited on each Festival,⁷⁷² on the performance of an annual mitzvah,⁷⁷³ on purchasing a new garment⁷⁷⁴ and on eating a new fruit.⁷⁷⁵

In three of the Kaifeng manuscripts, this berachah is found, but only for the first of the above reasons.⁷⁷⁶ Another berachah which could come under this category⁷⁷⁷ is the berachah בורא מאורי האש (borei m'orei haesh) which is recited over seeing a flame on motzaei Shabbat,⁷⁷⁸ since by tradition this was the time in the week when fire was first created.⁷⁷⁹ This berachah is found in these manuscripts during the course of the seder service when it occurs on motzaei Shabbat.⁷⁸⁰ Before lighting the Chanukah candles⁷⁸¹ and reading the megillah on Purim⁷⁸² the berachah שעשה ניסים (sheasa nisim) is recited. For the first of these two occasions, this berachah is found in one of the manuscripts.⁷⁸³ It can thus be seen that very few of this category of berachot are found in the Kaifeng manuscripts, although we cannot discount the possibility that the Jews of Kaifeng also knew others.

Berachah acharonah. Following the eating or drinking of a certain minimum quantity of food or drink within a specific time frame, a berachah acharonah (an “after berachah”) is recited.⁷⁸⁴ These berachot acharonot are divided into three different groups depending on the type of food which has been consumed. The first is after eating bread.⁷⁸⁵ The text consists of three berachot which are Torah commanded,⁷⁸⁶ and a fourth one which is of Rabbinic origin,⁷⁸⁷ followed by some customary additions.⁷⁸⁸ This grace is known as ברכת המזון (bircat hamazon). The second group is after eating one or more of the “seven species” of which Eretz Yisrael is blessed and which are quoted in a verse of the Torah. These “seven species” comprise products baked or cooked from wheat and barley (including spelt, oats and rye), and olives, dates, grapes (including wine), figs and pomegranates.⁷⁸⁹ The text of the berachah acharonah after eating of these “seven species” comprises the berachot of “bircat hamazon” which have been amalgamated into one berachah, It is thus known as מעין

⁷⁷² e.g. SA OC 473:1, 619:1; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:23

⁷⁷³ e.g. SA OC 585:2, 651:5; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 11:9

⁷⁷⁴ SA OC 223:3 MB 223:13; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 10:1

⁷⁷⁵ SA OC 225:3; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 10:2 with Hagahot Maimoni 3

⁷⁷⁶ MSS 19219 ff.11-12, 19230 f.14

⁷⁷⁷ Ritva on BT Pesachim 54a; However it is not so clear cut and there are discussions as to which category of berachot it belongs to (Encyclopedia Talmudit, 4:541-42)

⁷⁷⁸ SA OC 298:1; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:24

⁷⁷⁹ BT Pesachim 53b-54a

⁷⁸⁰ MSS 19219 f.1

⁷⁸¹ SA OC 676:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:4

⁷⁸² SA OC 692:1; Rambam Hilchot Megillah 1:3

⁷⁸³ MS 19225 f.10

⁷⁸⁴ MB 210:1

⁷⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 8:9-10; Chayei Adam 47:1

⁷⁸⁶ SA OC 188:1

⁷⁸⁷ SA OC 189:1

⁷⁸⁸ MB 189:5

⁷⁸⁹ Deuteronomy 8:8

שלוש (meain shalosh),⁷⁹⁰ the term meaning an amalgamation of the three Torah berachot of bircat hamazon. The last group is said after eating any food not included in the first two groups. It is known as בורא נפשות (borei nefashot) and is so named after two of the words in this berachah.⁷⁹¹

As we shall now see, the texts of these three groups of berachot acharonot are found in the Kaifeng manuscripts.

The text of bircat hamazon in the manuscript⁷⁹² is basically the same as for other Jewish communities in the world, although there are some differences which could be attributed to writing errors and omissions. Some examples of these differences will now be given.

Although, with a few exceptions, one does not say “amen” after one’s own berachah,⁷⁹³ it is said after the third berachah of bircat hamazon, since this is the end of the Torah requirement for bircat hamazon.⁷⁹⁴ In the Kaifeng manuscripts this “amen” is missing.⁷⁹⁵

There are additions which are sometimes made in the third berachah of bircat hamazon, namely, the paragraph beginning with “retseh” on Shabbat, and “yaaleh vyavo” for Yom Tov.⁷⁹⁶ Omitting them for the first two meals of both Shabbat and Yom Tov would mean that one has not fulfilled the obligation of reciting bircat hamazon.⁷⁹⁷ These additions for Shabbat and Yom Tov are missing in this manuscript,⁷⁹⁸ but as we already seen above, such omissions are quite common in these manuscripts probably due to the ignorance of the copyists.

Towards the end of bircat hamazon “magdil” is said on weekdays, and “migdol” on Shabbat, Yom Tov and certain other occasions.⁷⁹⁹ It is the norm for siddurim to give both these alternatives.⁸⁰⁰ In the Kaifeng manuscripts, only “magdil” appears.⁸⁰¹

The text of “meain shalosh”, after drinking wine is found at the end of the manuscripts of the Pesach hagadah. Although these manuscripts⁸⁰² have the general accepted structure of the text, a number of words have been omitted, probably as a result of successive copying.

⁷⁹⁰ SA OC 208:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 8:14

⁷⁹¹ SA OC 207:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 8:1

⁷⁹² MS 19218 ff.16-19

⁷⁹³ SA OC 215:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:16

⁷⁹⁴ SA OC 188:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:17

⁷⁹⁵ MS 19218 f.18

⁷⁹⁶ SA OC 188:5; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 2:5

⁷⁹⁷ SA OC 188:6, 8; MB 188:31; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 2:12

⁷⁹⁸ It should appear at MS 19218 f.18

⁷⁹⁹ MB 198:5; Ben Ish Chai, first year, Chukat 19

⁸⁰⁰ A number of reasons have been suggested for having these two alternatives. see e.g. Abudarham, hilchot berachot; Baruch Sheamar, pp.214-15; Tzafnat Paneach part 2 Dvinsk, 5(3) (p.6). The Rambam only gives “migdol” (Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah “nusach bircat hamazon”)

⁸⁰¹ MS 19218 f.19

⁸⁰² MS 19219 ff.95-96

As with bircat hamazon, in meain shalosh there are additional words which are added on Shabbat and on Yom Tov⁸⁰³ but unlike bircat hamazon, even without saying them one would still fulfill the obligation of saying this berachah.⁸⁰⁴ The Kaifeng manuscripts do not have these additional words.

The berachah borei nefashot is also found in the manuscripts⁸⁰⁵ of the Pesach hagadah, although also here with several of the words omitted.

If three people eat together in a meal in which bread has been consumed, they have to begin the bircat hamazon with “zimun” in which one of the group invites the other two to say the bircat hamazon by beginning “nevareich sheachalnu mishelo”.⁸⁰⁶ If there are ten people present they add the Divine name in this zimun – “elokeinu”.⁸⁰⁷ (According to the Zohar, prior to this, one begins by saying הב ונברך (hav v’navrich) – (or “Rabbotei nevareich” as it appears in many siddurim),⁸⁰⁸ but this is not brought in the Shulchan Aruch.)

This zimun is found in one of the Kaifeng manuscripts⁸⁰⁹ and it begins with the words “lelokeinu nevareich sheachalnu mishelo”.

One hundred Daily Berachot. The Gemara⁸¹⁰ learns from a verse in the Torah⁸¹¹ that a Jew should recite one hundred berachot each day and this is brought down as halachah.⁸¹²

Amongst the siddur manuscripts from Kaifeng, there is one⁸¹³ titled כפור מאה ברכות (A hundred berachot for Yom Kippur). However the content of this manuscript seems to be quite different. It includes the chapter of the Mishnah במה מדליקין (bame madlikin),⁸¹⁴ various Psalms (especially from the shir hamaalot group of Psalms) and other verses from the Tanach. An article in the journal “Jewish Intelligence” from 1853, which was written immediately after these manuscripts arrived in London, suggests “It may, perhaps have been intended to fill up the leisure moments”⁸¹⁵ However this suggestion does not explain the title on this manuscript.

A possible explanation of this title may be given by reference to the Persian Siddur. In it there is a section headed אתחיל לכתוב מאה ברכות (I will begin by writing one hundred berachot) and it then adds in Judeo-Persian, “There is an obligation on every Jew to say in the course of 24 hours one hundred berachot.”⁸¹⁶ It then begins with the berachah said before going to sleep at night and continues with the text of the

⁸⁰³ SA OC 208:12

⁸⁰⁴ MB 208:58

⁸⁰⁵ MS 19219 f.78

⁸⁰⁶ SA OC 192:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 5:2.

⁸⁰⁷ SA OC 192:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 5:4

⁸⁰⁸ Zohar Balak 186b; MB 192:2; Aruch Hashulchan OC 192:2

⁸⁰⁹ MS 19218 f.16

⁸¹⁰ BT Menachot 43b

⁸¹¹ Deuteronomy 10:12

⁸¹² SA OC 46:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 7:14

⁸¹³ MS 19235

⁸¹⁴ Mishnah Shabbat 2

⁸¹⁵ Jewish Intelligence, p.6

⁸¹⁶ Persian siddur f.12a

daily services (actually for a Shabbat) for the following 24 hours.⁸¹⁷ The prayers recited and the meals eaten in the course of 24 hours should result in 100 berachot being recited. This is especially so on weekdays when in each of the three amidot recited there are 19 berachot. On Shabbat when there are far fewer berachot in the amidah, one should supplement the berachot by eating fruits and other dainties.⁸¹⁸ As was said above, a similar heading was written in the Kaifeng manuscript; however it is likely that the copyist did not know the meaning of it.

Amen: The halachah states that should one hear a Jew reciting a berachah, one is obligated to answer amen after the berachah.⁸¹⁹ On a number of occasions in the Kaifeng manuscripts, the word amen appears following a berachah. However it was not included in a consistent manner.⁸²⁰ Domenge commented that they pronounced it as “amin”.⁸²¹

Shabbat

Cessation from work. Shabbat is a day of cessation from work. The work prohibited on Shabbat comes under 39 headings, which include agricultural activities, cooking, laundry, sewing and weaving activities, hunting and killing living creatures, writing, building activities and making fire.⁸²² Details of the various prohibitions are numerous and often complicated and thus many Jews are not conversant with the details of the law. Probably the most well known of these prohibitions are those of cooking and lighting a fire, possibly since these prohibitions are specifically mentioned in the Torah, “... tomorrow will be a solemn rest, a holy Shabbat to G-d, bake what needs to be baked and cook what needs to be cooked”⁸²³ and “you shall light no fire in all your dwelling places on Shabbat.”⁸²⁴

In addition to the laws from the Torah prohibiting the doing of work on Shabbat, one learns from the book of Isaiah regarding one’s thoughts on Shabbat, “And call the Sabbath a delight ... and you shall honour it by refraining from pursuing your weekly occupations or speaking of them.”⁸²⁵ From this we learn that one should minimise any frivolous conversations on Shabbat, so that one’s speech on Shabbat should be different from that on weekdays.⁸²⁶ One should also not think about one’s financial affairs on Shabbat.⁸²⁷

⁸¹⁷ Persian siddur ff.12a ff.

⁸¹⁸ MB 46:14; The Mishnah Berurah also begins his count from the berachah recited before going to sleep at night.

⁸¹⁹ SA OC 215:2; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:13

⁸²⁰ e.g. MS 19219, after (for example) “borei pri haadamah”, “al achilat maror, and after berachah for wine, but not after some of the other berachot in this same manuscript.

⁸²¹ Domenge, Juifs, p.149

⁸²² BT Shabbat 73a; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 7:1

⁸²³ Exodus 16:23

⁸²⁴ Exodus 35:3

⁸²⁵ Isaiah 58:13

⁸²⁶ Ben Ish Chai, year 2, Vayishlach 4; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 24:1

⁸²⁷ Ben Ish Chai, year 2, Vayishlach 5; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 24:1

There are only a few, very brief mentions of how the Jews in Kaifeng observed Shabbat. According to Leslie, the prohibition of cooking on Shabbat is mentioned in the 1663a stele: “On the seventh day one devotes oneself to the cultivation of one’s spiritual virtue; on (this) day of purification one does not cook.”⁸²⁸

Leslie claims that White’s translation of this sentence in the 1663a stele⁸²⁹ is incorrect since he mistranslated the word “purification” as “fast”.⁸³⁰ Leslie argues that the expression “day of purification” means Shabbat, bringing a proof from the 1489 stele which states that “in each month there are four days of purification”. This, Leslie asserts “clearly refers to the Sabbath, which occurs four times per lunar month.”⁸³¹ Leslie further claims that White⁸³² has also mistranslated the Chinese word in the 1489 stele and instead of the word “purification” has again used the “misleading word ‘fast’.”

In a similar fashion, Professor Andrew Plaks of the East Asian Languages department of Princeton University explains that although the Chinese word 齋 (zhai) which is used on the stele literally means “fast-day”, in fact “as used in various contexts, refers more to a period of quiet meditation than to abstinence.”⁸³³ Such meditation is the way to act on Shabbat. Thus one must conduct oneself in a manner which reflects the spirit and the sanctity of Shabbat.

Clearer references to Sabbath observance are to be found in Gozani’s letter written from Kaifeng in 1704. There he writes that the Jews of Kaifeng “observe the Sabbath, and other Feasts of the ancient Law.”⁸³⁴ and in the postscript to this letter he elaborates on this, “They don’t light Fires or dress any Victuals on Saturdays; but prepare on Fridays, every Thing necessary for that Day.”⁸³⁵ In a letter written about eight years later, he is less respectful about their observance of Shabbat, “They keep the Sabbath day superstitiously to the extent that they do not even light a fire for cooking food, which they must have cooked and prepared the day before.”⁸³⁶

From the foregoing, we cannot know what other laws of Shabbat the Jews of Kaifeng observed, or indeed how many of the laws of Shabbat they were even aware of. Perhaps more to the point, the missionaries, who were well acquainted with the contents of the Bible, were very likely aware only of the prohibitions of Shabbat which were specifically mentioned in the Torah (see above) but were unaware of the detailed laws concerning Shabbat found in the Jewish Codes of Law. Therefore it would not have been obvious to them had the Jews of Kaifeng been observing these other prohibitions.

⁸²⁸ Leslie, JAOS, p.356

⁸²⁹ 1663a stele, White, 2:61

⁸³⁰ Weisz, p.37 also translated the word as “fast”

⁸³¹ Leslie, JAOS, p.356; Ezra also uses the term “purification” (Ezra, p.18)

⁸³² 1489 stele, White, 2:10

⁸³³ Plaks, East Gate, p.36

⁸³⁴ Gozani. Lettres, 18:40; Gozani, Travels, p.16

⁸³⁵ Gozani. Lettres, 18:45; Gozani, Travels, p.20.

⁸³⁶ Gozani, Juifs, p.59

The secondary sources of Finn and Adler also make comments on this subject, presumably derived from the comments of Gozani. Finn writes, “They keep the Sabbath quite as strictly as do the Jews in Europe.”⁸³⁷ He did not elaborate and since there were great variations in the observance of the Sabbath in the various different communities throughout Europe, we cannot draw any conclusions from this remark of Finn’s. Adler observed, “The Sabbath they observed with great strictness; the food was prepared on the day preceding.”⁸³⁸

Even within the framework of cooking on Shabbat, we do not know whether the Jews of Kaifeng knew all or even some of the very many detailed laws.⁸³⁹ For example, there has been tea drinking in China for thousands of years.⁸⁴⁰ Were the Jews of Kaifeng aware that pouring boiling water directly on to tea leaves is forbidden on Shabbat by Torah law, since this will cook the tea leaves?⁸⁴¹

In 1850, a Chinese Protestant, Tseang Yung-Che, visited Kaifeng. In his account of his visit he made the following comment regarding the observance of Shabbat, “The Sabbath days observed by this sect, occur on the four following days among the twenty-eight specified in the Chinese calendar ... which severally fall on the days previous to the Christian Sabbath.”⁸⁴² Even though by the mid 19th century the Jewish community of Kaifeng had largely assimilated, Liebermann reported that “he [Liebermann] was told that some Jews still kept the Sabbath”⁸⁴³ However, neither Tseang nor Liebermann elaborated on how the Jews of Kaifeng observed the Sabbath.

Rabbinical Prohibitions: In addition to work which is prohibited on Shabbat by the Torah, there are many things which the Rabbis have prohibited. One of them is the prohibition of buying and selling, even orally, on Shabbat, since it is usually accompanied by writing.⁸⁴⁴ Another Rabbinical law is that one may not move or handle certain objects on Shabbat. Such objects are known as “muktzah” – which means “objects which are set apart”. One such object is money.⁸⁴⁵

Tseang wrote in his diary on his visit to Kaifeng that at eight o’clock in the morning of 14 December 1850, which was a *Shabbat*, two members of the Synagogue sold him books belonging to the Synagogue. Tseang also paid these Synagogue members “500 cash” for tea and luncheon.⁸⁴⁶ By these sales, the two Jews transgressed buying and selling on Shabbat and the handling of money. However, it is quite possible that these two Synagogue members, and certainly Tseang, were not aware that such activities were forbidden on Shabbat.

⁸³⁷ Finn, p.23

⁸³⁸ Adler, lecture, p.13

⁸³⁹ SA OC 318; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 9:1-6

⁸⁴⁰ Wikipedia, History of tea in China, (Internet: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_tea_in_China - accessed 1 March 2009)

⁸⁴¹ MB 318:39

⁸⁴² Tseang Account, Smith, p.50

⁸⁴³ Ezra, p.36

⁸⁴⁴ Chayei Adam, Hilchot Shabbat 38:6; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 23:12

⁸⁴⁵ Aruch Hashulchan OC 308:7; Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, The 39 Melachos, 1:39

⁸⁴⁶ Tseang Journal, Smith, p.48

By the beginning of the 20th century, Shabbat was no longer observed in Kaifeng. We know from a letter written in 1901 by a Chinese Jew called Li Kinsheng, that by then “none observed the Mosaic Law. The Sabbath was not kept.”⁸⁴⁷

Kiddush and Havdalah. On Friday night kiddush is made over wine⁸⁴⁸ and at the termination of the Sabbath, havdalah is made over wine, spices and a light.⁸⁴⁹ This is additional to the observance of these mitzvot in *the prayers* in the course of reciting maariv on Friday night⁸⁵⁰ and maariv on motzaei Shabbat.⁸⁵¹ Immediately after making kiddush, over the wine, one must make the berachah over the bread.⁸⁵² Were one to make kiddush without immediately eating bread or cake, one would not fulfill the mitzvah of making kiddush.⁸⁵³ Furthermore, one is obligated to eat bread at both the Friday night and Shabbat morning meals.⁸⁵⁴

From the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts we can see that the Jews of Kaifeng observed both the mitzvot of kiddush and havdalah and used wine for them. At the beginning of one of the manuscripts there is the kiddush for Friday night.⁸⁵⁵ The whole kiddush is found in this manuscript, with the exception of the berachah over the wine, but it is most likely that this omission is a copyist's error. From the hagadah manuscripts (see later) it can be seen that they did have wine, presumably not just on Seder night.⁸⁵⁶ This kiddush for Friday night is then followed in the manuscript by the berachah over bread,⁸⁵⁷ thus showing that the Jews of Kaifeng ate immediately after kiddush as required by the halachah.

The order of the berachot in havdalah is wine, spices, light and finally the berachah hamavdil.⁸⁵⁸ The Shulchan Aruch writes that it is best to use hadassim (myrtle branches) for the spices for havdalah⁸⁵⁹ and over them the berachah is “borei atzei vesamim” – the berachah which is recited when smelling fragrant products which come from trees.⁸⁶⁰ Siddurim from various communities (e.g. Italian, Yemenite (both baladi and shami) and Persian,⁸⁶¹) give several alternative berachot to be recited when smelling a species of flora at havdalah, but the *first* one given is

⁸⁴⁷ Laufer, p.325

⁸⁴⁸ SA OC 271; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:6

⁸⁴⁹ SA OC 296:1; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:24

⁸⁵⁰ MB 271:1; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:1

⁸⁵¹ SA OC 294:1; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:6

⁸⁵² SA OC 274:1

⁸⁵³ SA OC 273:1, 3 and Rema; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:8

⁸⁵⁴ SA OC 274:4; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 30:9; The Rambam requires eating bread at all three meals on Shabbat.

⁸⁵⁵ MS 19218 ff.2-4

⁸⁵⁶ MSS 19219 f.12, 19223 ff.1, 15

⁸⁵⁷ MS 19218 f.4

⁸⁵⁸ SA OC 296:1; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:24

⁸⁵⁹ SA OC 297:4

⁸⁶⁰ Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 58:3

⁸⁶¹ Persian siddur f.46a

“borei atzei vesamim”. Ashkenazim always say “borei minei vesamim” irrespective of the source of the flora.⁸⁶²

The only extant manuscripts with the text of havdalah are those of the hagadah for Pesach,⁸⁶³ and it is therefore the havdalah recited when Yom Tov occurs immediately after Shabbat. It should be noted that there is a difference in wording in the hamavdil berachah should the day following Shabbat be a Yom Tov rather than an ordinary weekday.⁸⁶⁴ In this manuscript, the havdalah begins with the berachah over the wine. This is followed by the berachah “borei atzei vesamim” (but no other alternatives are given) and in turn it is followed by the berachah over the light and then by the berachah hamavdil for Yom Tov following Shabbat, which indeed is the correct order. It can thus be seen that the Jews of Kaifeng knew about havdalah, its text, and the various objects used when reciting it.

Synagogue prayers for Shabbat. Unlike any other occasion during the year, the text of the middle berachah in each of the amidot of the maariv, shacharit and minchah services on Shabbat is distinctive⁸⁶⁵: maariv - begins “ata kidashta”, shacharit – begins “yismach Moshe”, minchah – begins “ata echad”.

There are several manuscripts from Kaifeng which contain fragments of the prayers for Shabbat,⁸⁶⁶ although none of them is from the maariv service. Like the other Jewish communities in the world, in Kaifeng the shacharit and minchah (and thus very possibly also maariv) services had their distinctive amidot.

On Shabbat there is in addition to the three daily services, an additional service recited after Reading the Torah in the morning, called mussaf.⁸⁶⁷ During the repetition of the amidah for the shacharit and mussaf services, the shaliach tzibur adds before beginning the final berachah, “Elokeinu ... boracheinu babrachah...” This addition is only made at services where actual duchaning is possible.⁸⁶⁸ However, during minchah services there can be no duchaning throughout the year, (with the exception of fast days), since there is a concern that the kohanim might have drunk wine during the day and thus be forbidden to duchar.⁸⁶⁹

In the various repetitions of the amidah in these Kaifeng manuscripts, this addition “Elokeinu ... boracheinu babrachah...” appears.⁸⁷⁰ However it is also found in the minchah service for Shabbat,⁸⁷¹ which as we have seen is incorrect. This mistake may have arisen due to the lack of knowledge of the copyist.

⁸⁶² MB 297:1

⁸⁶³ MS 19219 ff.1-8 passim; In another MS (19222 f.13) appears ברוך אתה ... המבדיל מבין קודש לחול but no more of the berachah.

⁸⁶⁴ Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:3, 22

⁸⁶⁵ any siddur; SA OC 268:6; Rambam end of Seder Ahavah, “nusach kol haberachot haemtsoiot”

⁸⁶⁶ MSS 19216, 19220, 19229

⁸⁶⁷ SA OC 286; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:5

⁸⁶⁸ SA OC 126:2 Rema

⁸⁶⁹ SA OC 128:38, 129:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 14:1

⁸⁷⁰ e.g. MSS 19216 f.43, 19220 ff.28-29, 55-56

⁸⁷¹ MS 19216 f.62

Shabbat Mevorachin: On the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh, a prayer is added before mussaf announcing the new month and the day(s) of the week on which Rosh Chodesh will occur.⁸⁷² In Kaifeng they had such a prayer in Aramaic.⁸⁷³ “Attend and listen, you kohanim and leviim! The Rabbis have instituted and fixed Rosh Chodesh of the month of ... on the ... day of next week, which day shall be the first day of the month. This should be a good omen for us and for all Israel, now and speedily. May those who rest in the dust rise speedily from the dust; may the dispersed of Israel be gathered; may our eyes and your eyes behold the rebuilding of the Temple and the re-establishment of the Sanctuary and the kingdom of the Mashiach ben David and the consolation of the city of Jerusalem. Now and speedily may all Israel be gathered. Amen.”⁸⁷⁴ This is followed by the names of the days of the week in Aramaic and then by the names of the months of the year.⁸⁷⁵ This text seems to be unique for Kaifeng and the origin of it has not been traced.

A month in the Jewish calendar has either 29 or 30 days. The first day of each month is always Rosh Chodesh. When there are 30 days in a month the 30th day is *also* Rosh Chodesh.⁸⁷⁶ However it would seem from the wording of the above prayer in Kaifeng that they only celebrated *one* day of Rosh Chodesh each month, namely the first day of the new month.

There are also a number of points of interest in the Kaifeng Shabbat services. Two examples will now be given:

(a) The berachah yotzer ohr which follows immediately after borachu has a special long format on Shabbat. Should one however have mistakenly said the weekday format, the Rabbis ruled that one does not have to go back if one had already finished saying that berachah; instead one should say the correct form after the amidah but without the concluding words to the berachah.⁸⁷⁷

In the Kaifeng manuscripts, this berachah is only written in the weekday format.⁸⁷⁸ In Toledo in Spain they did not say this berachah in the Shabbat format either.⁸⁷⁹ In the Persian siddur, this berachah appears in the weekday format, but in the top, side and bottom margins of the same page, is added the Shabbat format⁸⁸⁰ indicating that originally the weekday format of this berachah was recited on Shabbat in Persia.⁸⁸¹

(b) There are Jewish communities that on certain occasions during the year, insert a piyut at baruch sheamar and /or at nishmat. In the Persian siddur there is a piyut at

⁸⁷² Magen Avraham on SA OC 417:1; Aruch Hashulchan OC 417:8

⁸⁷³ MS 19220 ff.38-39

⁸⁷⁴ Translation from Jewish Intelligence, p.3 – slightly adapted

⁸⁷⁵ MS19220 f.39

⁸⁷⁶ SA OC 427; Rambam Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh 8:2, 4

⁸⁷⁷ MB 281:3

⁸⁷⁸ MSS 19216 ff.28-29, 19220 ff.2-4, 19234 ff.1-3

⁸⁷⁹ Tur OC 281

⁸⁸⁰ Persian siddur ff.29b-30a

⁸⁸¹ Persian siddur, ed. Shlomo Tal, p.56. There is a footnote which refers to line 14 on that folio.

baruch sheamar,⁸⁸² and in the Ashkenaz rite there is the piyut “nishmat m’lumdai morashah” which is recited before nishmat on Simchat Torah.⁸⁸³

In the Kaifeng manuscripts, both before baruch sheamar and before nishmat there is an added piyut. As can be seen from the initial letters of the stanzas, both of these piyutim were written by a person called Elazar.⁸⁸⁴ The two piyutim recited in Kaifeng seem to be unique to that place.⁸⁸⁵

Motzaei Shabbat: The maariv service at the termination of Shabbat is slightly longer than that of any other weekday. There is an additional paragraph for havdalah which is inserted into the fourth berachah of the amidah,⁸⁸⁶ and, after the amidah, an additional prayer vihi noam followed by yosheiv b’seter⁸⁸⁷ which in turn is followed by v’ata kadosh is recited.⁸⁸⁸ In services recited during the daytime, v’ata kadosh is preceded by two verses from Isaiah⁸⁸⁹ which begin uva letzion. These two verses which deal with the Redemption, are however not recited on motzaei Shabbat, since the Redemption will not come at night.⁸⁹⁰ The omission of these two verses is the custom followed by Jewish communities throughout the world.⁸⁹¹

There is a Kaifeng manuscript with the service for the termination of Shabbat in which the addition in the amidah⁸⁹² and vihi noam,⁸⁹³ yosheiv b’seter⁸⁹⁴ and v’ata kadosh⁸⁹⁵ are found. However, this manuscript also includes the verses beginning uva letzion⁸⁹⁶ which according to the “Redemption reason” is incorrect.

There is also an alternative reason for not saying the verses beginning with uva letzion” and this is given by Rabbi Aharon of Lunil in his book “Orchot Chaim”. He writes that the kedushah which follows uva letzion needs to be preceded by some Biblical verses, and since on motzaei Shabbat, the Biblical verses beginning with vihi noam have been recited, it is *unnecessary* to say the verses beginning with uva letzion.⁸⁹⁷ It should be noted that the word “unnecessary” was used and thus the recital of uva letzion in Kaifeng, according to this latter reason, could not be classed as incorrect.

⁸⁸² Persian siddur 18b-19a

⁸⁸³ e.g. Service of the Synagogue, Tabernacles, pp.77-78

⁸⁸⁴ MSS 19216 ff.1-3, 16-18, 19226 ff.1-3, 8-9

⁸⁸⁵ Davidson 1:206 piyut 4510, 1:134 piyut 2858

⁸⁸⁶ SA OC 294:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:12

⁸⁸⁷ Psalm 91

⁸⁸⁸ SA OC 295 prologue Rema

⁸⁸⁹ Isaiah 59:20, 21

⁸⁹⁰ MB 295:2

⁸⁹¹ any siddur

⁸⁹² MS 19240 f.21

⁸⁹³ MS 19240 ff.30-31

⁸⁹⁴ MS 19240 ff.31-32

⁸⁹⁵ MS 19240 f.33-37

⁸⁹⁶ MS 19240 ff.32-33

⁸⁹⁷ Orchot Chaim, “mizmorim achar yud-chet” par.4

It is customary after havdalah to sing various zemirot, in particular those which mention “Eliyahu hanavi” who by tradition⁸⁹⁸ will arrive after Shabbat to herald the Redemption.⁸⁹⁹

One of the Kaifeng manuscripts is almost entirely devoted to one of the zemirot sung on motzaei Shabbat.⁹⁰⁰ It is of great length and the beginning is missing. It has a refrain אליה הנביא שלה בזכות (Elijah hanavi shalach bizchut...). The author is unknown and the piyut would seem to be unique to the Jews of Kaifeng.⁹⁰¹

Rosh Chodesh

There are a number of differences between the Rosh Chodesh and the ordinary weekday service. Among these differences is that on Rosh Chodesh there are several additions to the prayers. These are: the addition of yaaleh vyavo in the amidah⁹⁰² and bircat hamazon;⁹⁰³ reciting of half hallel, (with the custom in most oriental communities not to say a berachah before and after the hallel);⁹⁰⁴ Reading of the Torah where four people are called up;⁹⁰⁵ and the reciting of the mussaf service.⁹⁰⁶

In addition there is also a custom for women to refrain from certain household chores,⁹⁰⁷ which lightening of work load was granted to women as a reward for their reluctance to hand over their golden jewelry to Aaron to make the golden calf. Because of this, Rosh Chodesh became a Yom Tov for them.⁹⁰⁸ Not only is it forbidden to fast,⁹⁰⁹ but one should increase the amount of food one eats.⁹¹⁰

Throughout the generations there have been cases of Rabbis calling Rosh Chodesh a “Yom Tov”. One example is when Rashi in his commentary on the Gemara on Rosh Hashanah⁹¹¹ uses the term “Yom Tov”, which Rabbi Shmuel Strashun of Vilna understands to refer to Rosh Chodesh.⁹¹² A further example is that of Rabbi Moshe ben Machir of Safed (who lived in the middle 1500s to early 1600s) who says that on Rosh Chodesh there is simchah (rejoicing) because it is a Yom Tov for the moon.⁹¹³ Furthermore, in his commentary on the Gemara on Taanit, Rashi writes that Rosh Chodesh is called a “Chag” (a Festival).⁹¹⁴

⁸⁹⁸ based on BT Eruvin 43b

⁸⁹⁹ SA OC 295:1 Rema; Maharil, Hilchot Shabbat, p.40a

⁹⁰⁰ MS 19222

⁹⁰¹ Davidson, 1:230 piyut 4993

⁹⁰² SA OC 422:1; Rambam end of Seder Ahavah “nusach bircot hatefillah v’siduran”

⁹⁰³ SA OC 424:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 2:5

⁹⁰⁴ SA OC 422:2; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:7

⁹⁰⁵ SA OC 423:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:4

⁹⁰⁶ SA OC 423:3; Rambam end of Seder Ahavah “nusach kol haberachot haemtzoit”

⁹⁰⁷ SA OC 417:1

⁹⁰⁸ MB 417:3

⁹⁰⁹ SA OC 418:1; Rambam Hilchot Taaniyot 1:7

⁹¹⁰ SA OC 419:1

⁹¹¹ Rashi on BT Rosh Hashanah 25a dh “sheyadu shelo kidshu”

⁹¹² Rashash on Rashi on BT Rosh Hashanah 25a

⁹¹³ Rabbi Moshe ben Machir, Seder Hayom, “kavanat hahallel b’Rosh Chodesh ...” p.21b

⁹¹⁴ Rashi on BT Taanit 30a dh “m’chagah”

From this we can see that there are signs of Rosh Chodesh being regarded as a quasi-festival. In his lecture delivered in 1900 in London, Marcus Adler indeed stated that the Jews of Kaifeng “regarded the New Moon as a festival.”⁹¹⁵ Likewise Tang Yating, Professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, writes of, “Their [the Jews of Kaifeng] celebration of the New Moon as a festival....”⁹¹⁶ Neither of these writers gives a source for this information. Possibly the source is the existence of a siddur manuscript specially for Rosh Chodesh.

J. L. Liebermann the first western Jew to visit Kaifeng, wrote in 1879, in a letter to his father who lived in Austrian Silesia, “Men, women and children used regularly to assemble in the synagogue on the days of the New Moon [Rosh Chodesh].”⁹¹⁷ One immediately asks, why *particularly* on Rosh Chodesh? It must be remembered that the synagogue at Kaifeng had been destroyed several decades prior to Liebermann’s visit, and that possibly even in the period prior to this destruction there had been no services held there. Thus Liebermann’s statement regarding mass assembly for services on Rosh Chodesh is only hearsay and cannot be regarded as reliable. Alternatively, this mass attendance was in fact in *addition* to Sabbaths and Festivals, since he wrote in this same letter “Only Cohanim officiated there [in the Synagogue] on sabbaths, festivals and new moons”.⁹¹⁸ It is possible that Liebermann was referring to the *New Year*, Rosh Hashanah, a day when the masses attend the Synagogue services.

Shabbat Rosh Chodesh: The differences in the Synagogue service for a Rosh Chodesh which occurs on Shabbat rather than on a weekday are that the special Reading of the Torah for Rosh Chodesh, namely the paragraphs in the Torah giving the mussaf sacrifices for both Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh, is read as the maftir;⁹¹⁹ that there is a special haftarah beginning with the words “hashamayim kisi”;⁹²⁰ and that the mussaf amidah is basically a combination of the Shabbat and the Rosh Chodesh mussaf amidot, with the middle berachah beginning with the words ata yatzarta.⁹²¹

The siddur manuscript giving the prayers for Rosh Chodesh is one for Rosh Chodesh which occurs on Shabbat.⁹²² This manuscript contains the shacharit, mussaf and minchah order of service for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. Both the shacharit and minchah amidot include yaaleh vyavo.⁹²³ There is half hallel without a berachah at the

⁹¹⁵ Adler, lecture, p.13

⁹¹⁶ Yating

⁹¹⁷ Liebermann, Report, p.93; Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle, p.12

⁹¹⁸ Liebermann, Report, p.93; Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle, p.12

⁹¹⁹ Numbers 28:9-15; SA OC 425:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:4

⁹²⁰ Isaiah 66; SA OC 425:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:4

⁹²¹ SA OC 425:3; Rambam end of Seder Ahavah “nusach kol haberachot haemtzoit”

⁹²² MS 19234

⁹²³ MS 19234 ff.21-22, 76-77

beginning and at the end.⁹²⁴ The content of the maftir,⁹²⁵ the first words of the haftarah⁹²⁶ and of the fourth berachah of the mussaf amidah⁹²⁷ are all correctly given.

The Jewish Calendar

Calculation of the Calendar: Unlike the civil calendar (1 January – 31 December) which has very few rules, the Jewish calendar has many principles and intricate rules. To work out the calendar for a particular Jewish year, it must first be determined whether the year is an ordinary (12 month) year or a leap year (13 months). Then the molad (mean astronomical lunar conjunction) for the month of Tishrei for the year in question and also for the following Tishrei must be calculated. This is followed by evaluating whether any of the five “dechiyot” which might cause Rosh Hashanah to be postponed for a day or even two days apply, and thus it can be calculated how many days there will be in that year. From this, it can be determined how many days there will be in the months of Marcheshvan and Kislev, (which in some years have 29 days and in others 30). Only then can a calendar for that year be prepared.⁹²⁸

Despite all these intricate rules, it seems that the Jews of Kaifeng were able to accurately work out the Jewish calendar. This can be seen in a letter from Domenge. On 3 October 1722 he went to the Synagogue in Kaifeng, which he writes was on “... Saturday, in the week of their Feast of Tabernacles ... and on the following day ... they made a procession of their Bibles [Simchat Torah].”⁹²⁹ A calculation will show that 3 October 1722 was indeed a Saturday and corresponded to 22 Tishri 5483, which was Shemini Atzeret, whose next day is Simchat Torah.⁹³⁰

While Adler writes that the Jewish calendar “resemble[s] in many respects the calendar of the Chinese themselves.”⁹³¹ Professor Xu Xin comments that “the Chinese calendar was not at all similar to the Jewish lunar-solar calendar, and therefore the Chinese among whom they [the Jews of Kaifeng] lived would have been no help in this area. This in itself is a good demonstration of the religious knowledge of Kaifeng’s Jews during much of their history.”⁹³²

Which of these two comments is correct? The Chinese calendar is a lunar-solar calendar. This means that the months are based on the moon, namely a new month begins at the new moon, but the Chinese Festivals depend on the seasons, which is a function of the sun. Since 12 lunar months are about 11 days less than a solar year, an additional month has to be periodically added into the Chinese calendar. This is as far as the similarity with the Jewish calendar goes.

⁹²⁴ MS 19234 ff.35-41

⁹²⁵ MS 19234 f.48

⁹²⁶ MS 19234 f.49

⁹²⁷ MS 19234 ff.53-56

⁹²⁸ Rambam Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh 6-8; William Moses Feldman (1879 – 1939), *Rabbinical Mathematics and Astronomy*, pp.185-98; Chaim Simons, *How to Calculate the Jewish Calendar*

⁹²⁹ Domenge, *Juifs*, pp.166-67

⁹³⁰ calculation made using tables in Leo Levi, *Jewish Chrononomy*, pp.14-17

⁹³¹ Adler, lecture, p.13

⁹³² Xin, p.84

Unlike the Jewish calendar which *always* adds in additional month of Adar in *specific* years of a 19 year cycle, in the Chinese calendar an additional month is added whenever the deviation from the solar year becomes too great, and it can be added after *any* of the months of *any* year.⁹³³ Thus knowledge of the Chinese calendar will be of no help in calculating the Jewish calendar! Thus it is obvious that neither the statements of Xu Xin nor Adler are totally correct or incorrect. However, Xu Xin describes the situation more practically,

Two Days of Yom Tov: According to the Torah, every Yom Tov is of one day's duration.⁹³⁴ Originally the Jewish calendar was not a fixed calendar, but Rosh Chodesh was determined every month by lunar observation. To inform world Jewry of the day when Rosh Chodesh had been proclaimed in Jerusalem and hence for world Jewry to know the date of any Jewish festivals occurring during that month, a system of fire signalling was first used, but after this method had been sabotaged, messengers were sent out even to the Diaspora to inform the Jews when that month had begun.⁹³⁵ Since it could take a considerable time to inform all the Jewish communities in the Diaspora when Rosh Chodesh had been proclaimed, it was decreed, because of doubt, to observe two days for each Yom Tov in the Diaspora (with the exception of Yom Kippur).⁹³⁶ Even when the calendar was fixed, the custom of observing two days in the Diaspora was and is still observed.⁹³⁷

Did the Jews observe two days of Yom Tov in Kaifeng? After the purchase of the siddur manuscripts by the London Missionary Society, the Society published in their journal "Jewish Intelligence" a summary of the contents of the manuscripts. Following this summary, they wrote, "It is to be observed that in these various Prayers for the different Festivals, we do not find any vestige whatever, referring to the second day of the festivals ... which the rabbis have added to that of the law."⁹³⁸ (The London "Jewish Chronicle" reprinted the entire article word for word⁹³⁹ but omitted this sentence. Whether this omission was a typesetter's error or by design is not known.) Leslie argues with this statement and writes that "contrary to" this article in Jewish Intelligence "second days of several festivals are mentioned."⁹⁴⁰

Who is in fact correct? A study of these manuscripts shows that there is *only one* occasion when it is *specifically* mentioned that they observed two days. This is to be found in the prayers for Sukkot. There the manuscript gives *both* the source for the leining for Shemini Atzeret *and* the source for the leining for Simchat Torah.⁹⁴¹ Since

⁹³³ Wikipedia, Chinese calendar, (Internet: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_calendar – accessed 30 June 2009)

⁹³⁴ Leviticus 23

⁹³⁵ Rambam Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh 3:8

⁹³⁶ Rambam Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh 3:11

⁹³⁷ Rambam Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh 5:5, 6

⁹³⁸ Jewish Intelligence, p.6

⁹³⁹ "Hebrew Prayers used by the Jews....", Jewish Chronicle, (London), 28 January 1853, pp.130-31, 11 February 1853, pp.145-46

⁹⁴⁰ Leslie, p.86

⁹⁴¹ MS 19224 ff.40-41

they observed *two days* at the end of Sukkot, one might assume that they did this for all the Festivals.

There is however a statement by Domenge which could be relevant as to whether the second day of Yom Tov was observed in Kaifeng. He wrote, "... the week of their feast of Tabernacles, which had commenced on the 16th of the said month, because it was a long month of 30 days (in the short months of 29 days they observe the 1st and 15th days, in the long months the 2nd and 16th days) and on the following day, the 24th of the same month, they made a procession of their Bibles [Simchat Torah]" (*bracketed words in original*)⁹⁴² A simple reading could indicate that only one day of Yom Tov was observed in Kaifeng, since he only specifically referred to their observing *the first day* of Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot.

However, if we carefully analyse this statement of Domenge's, we see that it leaves many unanswered questions and problems. (i) Was Domenge just aware of the *Biblical date* of a Yom Tov? Missionaries such as Domenge were very likely knowledgeable about the Bible, but not so regarding the Talmud which gives the enactment of the second day of Yom Tov.⁹⁴³ (ii) Is he suggesting that the month of Elul could have either 29 or 30 days? This would certainly confuse the calendar calculations, which as we have seen, the Jews of Kaifeng seemed to have been proficient in. (iii) At the same place in this very same letter, he made a serious error regarding the leining for Shemini Atzeret.⁹⁴⁴ We can immediately see that he erred here, since it completely conflicts with the leining stated in the Kaifeng siddur manuscript.⁹⁴⁵ (iv) Why does he not say "they observe the 22nd day [Shemini Atzeret]" in the same way as he says "they observe the 1st and 15th days"? It would seem that Domenge's comments here are open to serious question, and it is thus very difficult to draw any accurate conclusions from them, including how many days Yom Tov were observed in Kaifeng.

List of Festivals dated 1850: In 1850 some Jews from Kaifeng sent a letter to T. H. Layton, the British Consul at Amoy.⁹⁴⁶ In this letter they gave a list of six "festival days and days of worship in the synagogue."⁹⁴⁷ According to this list, none of the days corresponds to a special day in the Jewish calendar.

To try and explain this list, Finn put forward the following theory. The Chinese calendar (which like the Jewish one is a lunar calendar) begins one month earlier than the Jewish year, with reference to the notation used in the Torah, which calls the month of Nissan (the month in which Pesach occurs) the first month of the year. It thus follows that the words "second moon (month)" in this list from 1850 was in fact the month of Nissan. By using this method of Finn's, one can get an *approximate* fit for four of the dates in this 1850 list, namely Pesach, Tisha b'Av,

⁹⁴² Domenge, Juifs, pp.166-67

⁹⁴³ BT Beitzah 4b

⁹⁴⁴ Domenge, Juifs, p.166

⁹⁴⁵ MS 19224 f.40

⁹⁴⁶ also known as Xiamen, which is situated in south east China

⁹⁴⁷ Finn, Orphan Colony, pp.41-42

Rosh Hashanah and Simchat Torah , but it is not possible to explain the other two occasions given in this list.⁹⁴⁸ Leslie, however, rejects Finn's theory and puts forward a different explanation. In it, he calls the "second moon" in this list, the third month in the Jewish calendar.⁹⁴⁹ However, using Leslie's method, even fewer dates fit in with the Jewish calendar.

Even according to Finn's explanation, a number of festivals are missing from the list, namely Shavuot, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Chanukah and Purim. From the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts, we know that the Jews of Kaifeng had been aware of *all* these occasions. It must be remembered however that this list was sent to the Consul in 1850 when the Jewish community of Kaifeng had all but assimilated. Many of the notable days in the Jewish calendar had obviously been forgotten or discarded and their place may have been taken by Chinese festivals. It should thus be concluded that this list is very unreliable and very little notice should be taken of it.

Despite all this, for the sake of comprehensiveness, this list will be referred to on a number of occasions in this book, together with the various somewhat forced explanations put forward to try to explain it.

Rosh Hashanah

The first day of Rosh Hashanah is on 1 Tishri⁹⁵⁰ and on this day begins the Ten Days of Penitence.⁹⁵¹ In all the amidot which are recited during these Ten Days, a number of changes are made. In place of "hakele hakadosh" (the Holy G-d), the third berachah concludes "hamelech hakadosh" (the Holy King),⁹⁵² since G-d also takes on the functions of a King during these days in order to judge the inhabitants of the world. Several additions such as "zochreinu..." are inserted into various places of the amidah.⁹⁵³ asking for a favourable judgment. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur "uvechein tein pachdecha..." is added in the third berachah of the amidah.⁹⁵⁴ The mussaf amidah, in place of the normal seven berachot for a mussaf amidah, has on Rosh Hashanah nine berachot.⁹⁵⁵

There are a number of siddur manuscripts from Kaifeng containing the services of Rosh Hashanah.⁹⁵⁶ All the above additions are to be found in these manuscripts.

On the "shalosh regalim" when there is a Torah command to go to Jerusalem,⁹⁵⁷ the words "laalot v'layraot ulhishtachavot" (to go up [to Jerusalem] and appear and worship) are included in the paragraph umipnei chatoeinu in the mussaf

⁹⁴⁸ Finn, Orphan Colony, pp.46-47

⁹⁴⁹ Leslie, JAOS, pp.356-58

⁹⁵⁰ Leviticus 23:24

⁹⁵¹ Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 2:6

⁹⁵² SA OC 582:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:18

⁹⁵³ SA OC 582:5; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:19

⁹⁵⁴ MB 582:17; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:19

⁹⁵⁵ SA OC 591:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:6

⁹⁵⁶ MSS 19217, 19239, 16160

⁹⁵⁷ Rambam Hilchot Chagigah 1:1

amidah. Since there is no such commandment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, these words are omitted on these days.⁹⁵⁸

In the Kaifeng manuscripts these three words do in fact appear in the mussaf amidah for both Rosh Hashanah⁹⁵⁹ and Yom Kippur.⁹⁶⁰ However this accords with the text which appears in the Tichlal of the Yemenite Jews.⁹⁶¹ In his commentary to the Tichlal entitled “Etz Chaim”, written in the 18th century, Rabbi Yichye Tzalach, discusses the inclusion of these three words stating the names of several Rishonim who write that also elsewhere these words are recited in the same way as is done on the shalosh regalim.⁹⁶² These Rishonim include the Tur⁹⁶³ and the Abudarham,⁹⁶⁴ who both wrote that it was the custom in the town of Mainz, to say these words on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The only “piyut” for Rosh Hashanah which appears in these manuscripts was, according to the acrostic, written by a certain Aviator. Its contents deal with the “maaseh mercavah” (the vision by the prophet Ezekiel of the Divine Chariot).⁹⁶⁵ This piyut appears after mussaf for Rosh Hashanah in one of the manuscripts.⁹⁶⁶ It is probably unique to Kaifeng.⁹⁶⁷ This lack of piyutim found in Kaifeng during the repetition of the amidot of Rosh Hashanah, is almost mirrored in Oriental Jewish communities, where only one short piyut is recited.

Blowing the Shofar: It is a mitzvah from the Torah to hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah.⁹⁶⁸ However, there is no mention of blowing the shofar in these manuscripts. Since one of the berachot which is said in the Rosh Hashanah mussaf amidah is titled “shofarot” (verses from the Tanach dealing with the shofar) and it appears in all these three extant manuscripts of the Rosh Hashanah mussaf amidah,⁹⁶⁹ the Jews of Kaifeng obviously knew about the shofar. Perhaps they did not have a shofar and did not know how to make one.

When Rosh Hashanah occurs on a weekday, “yom teruah” (a day of sounding the shofar) is recited in the amidah, and when it is on Shabbat because the shofar is not blown, “yom zichron teruah” (a day of recalling the sounding of the shofar) is said.⁹⁷⁰ However, should the reverse have been said in error, if one had finished

⁹⁵⁸ Machzor Vitri, p.368; Matteh Efraim, 591:4

⁹⁵⁹ MSS 19217 f.10, 19239 f.8, 16160 f.3, MS Toronto

⁹⁶⁰ MSS 19223 f.6, 19237 f.29

⁹⁶¹ Tichlal Jerusalem 5722 – 1962 p.72b, un-numbered page between p.90 and p.91; There are some versions of the Tichlal which just have the words “laalot ulhishtachavot” i.e. omit the word v’layraot.

⁹⁶² Tichlal, Etz Chaim, pp.72b-73a

⁹⁶³ Tur OC 582 (towards end)

⁹⁶⁴ Abudarham, Tefillot Rosh Hashanah

⁹⁶⁵ Ezekiel chap 1

⁹⁶⁶ MS 19217 ff.36-40

⁹⁶⁷ Davidson, 3:310 piyut 39

⁹⁶⁸ Rambam Hilchot Shofar 1:1

⁹⁶⁹ MSS 19217 ff.36-40, 19239 ff.22-25, 16160 ff.9-yud

⁹⁷⁰ SA OC 582:7

reciting that particular berachah of the amidah, the amidah would not have to be repeated.

In these manuscripts only “yom zichron teruah” appears.⁹⁷¹ This accords with the Rambam, who when quoting the text of the amidah for maariv, shacharit and minchah on Rosh Hashanah for *weekdays*, writes “zichron teruah”.⁹⁷² This likewise accords with the opinion of one of the Geonim, namely Rabbi Hai Gaon,⁹⁷³ and also from another unnamed authority who learned this from his Rabbis.⁹⁷⁴ Other possible reasons that “zichron teruah” was always recited could be because the Jews of Kaifeng had no shofar available, or alternatively, this was just due to the ignorance of the copyist of these manuscripts.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur, which is a day specifically set aside for repentance,⁹⁷⁵ occurs on 10 Tishri,⁹⁷⁶ which is in the autumn season. According to Torah law one must on that day “afflict one’s soul” and this is done by abstaining from all food and drink for the entire night and day, and also by other afflictions such as not wearing leather shoes and not washing.⁹⁷⁷ In most Synagogues there is an almost continuous service, from the early morning until the end of Yom Kippur, (in addition to the previous night’s maariv service), whose major theme is repentance.⁹⁷⁸

Regarding this day, the 1489 stele states, “Cutting off from all food and drink, there is rigid abstinence for one whole day, reverently praying to Heaven, for repentance of previous faults, and for moving towards the new good deeds of the present day.”⁹⁷⁹ The 1663a stele goes into even more detail, “But it is still to be feared that men will confuse themselves with selfish desires, and be shallow in regard to the doctrine. That is why at the end of the autumn they close their doors for a whole day, and give themselves up to the cultivation of purity, and cut themselves off entirely from food and drink, in order to nourish the higher nature. On that day the scholar interrupts his reading and study; the farmer suspends his work of ploughing or reaping; the tradesman ceases to do business in the market; and the traveler stops on his way. Desires are forgotten, attainments are put aside, and they all apply themselves to preserving the heart and nourishing the mind, so that through direction there may be a restoration of goodness. In this wise it is hoped that while man remains at rest his heavenly nature will reach perfection, and his desires abating, his reasoning faculty will develop.”⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷¹ MSS 19239 f.8, 16160 f.3, MS Toronto

⁹⁷² Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah, “nusach kol haberachot haemtzoiot”

⁹⁷³ Bach on Tur OC 582 dh “v’ain omrim”

⁹⁷⁴ Terumat Hadeshen, responsum 145

⁹⁷⁵ Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 2:7

⁹⁷⁶ Leviticus 23:27

⁹⁷⁷ SA OC 611:1; Rambam Hilchot Shevitat Asor 1:5

⁹⁷⁸ Machzor Vitri, pp.393-94; Tosefet Yerushalayim, 584:1, (p.36); Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim, p.166

⁹⁷⁹ 1489 stele, White, 2:11

⁹⁸⁰ 1663a stele, White, 2:61

Gozani also hints at Yom Kippur, although he does not mention it by name, “Besides the Sabbath and the Passover, they have also other feasts throughout the year, and among others one in which they mourn and afflict their souls all day long in the synagogue.”⁹⁸¹ Although his expression “afflict their souls” is the expression used by the Torah for Yom Kippur, the word “mourn” is rather applicable to Tisha b’Av. Yom Kippur is certainly not a day of mourning. From the Mishnah, we can see that it is a happy day.⁹⁸² However being “*all day* long in the synagogue”, indicates Yom Kippur rather than Tisha b’Av. On Tisha b’Av it is proper to be in the Synagogue only until almost *midday* reciting kinot.⁹⁸³ Whereas “mourn” is out of place when writing about Yom Kippur, as we shall now see one can certainly use the term “weep”.

The Ben Ish Chai writes that one should pray weeping at all the services of Yom Kippur.⁹⁸⁴ In a similar vein it states in the additions to the “Matteh Efraim”, “And it is good if he is able to weep during this [neilah] service, because even if, G-d forbid, he has been given an unfavourable verdict, by his weeping he will be able to overturn it.”⁹⁸⁵

When writing about Yom Kippur, Finn uses the term “weep”, “They observe ... the Day of Atonement, for it is said that on one day of the year they fast and weep together in the synagogue.”⁹⁸⁶ This is in fact similar to Gozani’s statement (quoted above) but with a significant difference - Finn uses the word “weep” where Gozani writes “mourn”. Finn’s use of the word “weep” must however be treated with caution. He is only a secondary source and he himself was never in Kaifeng. If he was just paraphrasing Gozani and he used the word “weep” instead of “mourn”, then he has added nothing. Possibly however, he took this word “weep” from a different source, and in such a case, it could be positive information.

Prayers on Yom Kippur: On Yom Kippur there are five services – maariv, shacharit, mussaf, minchah and neilah.⁹⁸⁷ The additions to the amidah on Rosh Hashanah, are also added on Yom Kippur, (apart from the nine berachot in the mussaf amidah). At the end of each amidah recited on Yom Kippur, there is a vidui – a confession of sins.⁹⁸⁸ In the repetition of the amidah, this vidui is incorporated into the middle berachah of the amidah.⁹⁸⁹ For the first four services on Yom Kippur, the text of this vidui is identical, but for neilah it is different.⁹⁹⁰

⁹⁸¹ Gozani, Juifs, p.60

⁹⁸² Mishnah Taanit 4:8

⁹⁸³ SA OC 559:3 Rema

⁹⁸⁴ Ben Ish Chai, first year, Vayelech 18

⁹⁸⁵ Elef Hamagen to Matteh Efraim Hashalem, 623 2nd paragraph; Obviously it means that by this weeping, he is showing remorse for his past sins and it is not just an act - see Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 2:3

⁹⁸⁶ Finn, Jews of China, p.23

⁹⁸⁷ BT Yoma 87b; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:8

⁹⁸⁸ Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 2:7

⁹⁸⁹ Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 2:7

⁹⁹⁰ Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah, nusach havidui

There are more Kaifeng siddur manuscripts extant for the prayers of Yom Kippur than for any other occasion in the year,⁹⁹¹ although amongst these manuscripts there are none for the maariv service of Yom Kippur. All the above additions in the amidah, the vidui at the end of the silent amidah, and in the middle for its repetition, and the different text for the vidui of neilah appear in these manuscripts.

Piyutim: The various Jewish communities in the world add many piyutim in the repetition of the amidah on Yom Kippur. Furthermore, the Shulchan Aruch rules that during the repetition of the mussaf amidah, one recites the Avodah (the service of the High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem on Yom Kippur).

However, the content of the repetition of the amidah, as found in these Kaifeng manuscripts, is as for the silent amidah, (with the exception of the vidui being in the middle instead of the end of the amidah). In other words, there are no piyutim in the repetition of the amidah. Even the reciting of the Avodah is completely absent. Only one piyut is given and that is at the beginning of the shacharit service.⁹⁹² It begins with the words נִעְרָץ בְּסוֹד רַבָּה (neeratz b'sod rabbah) and also has these words as the refrain. The authorship seems to be unknown but unlike the other piyutim found in these Kaifeng manuscripts which were unique to Kaifeng, this piyut was also recited by the Jews of Cochin (Kogin).⁹⁹³ However, a comparison between the text of this piyut as said by the Jews of Cochin and that said in Kaifeng, shows that although they are similar, there are indeed numerous small differences, very possibly due to inaccurate copying in Kaifeng.

As with Rosh Hashanah, the words “laalot v'layraot ulhishtachavot” in the mussaf amidah were in Kaifeng inserted into the mussaf amidah.⁹⁹⁴ (see above for discussion)

In neilah the word “kotveinu” (inscribe) is replaced with “chotmeinu” (seal) and likewise there are other similar changes in the amidah.⁹⁹⁵ It is at neilah that a person's final verdict for the coming year is “sealed”.⁹⁹⁶ However, should one err and say “kotveinu” at neilah, one would not have to repeat the amidah.⁹⁹⁷ In the Kaifeng manuscripts, “kotveinu” appears in the neilah amidah and not “chotmeinu”.⁹⁹⁸

Should Yom Kippur be described as a “chag” like other Festivals? Though the term “chag” is found in the Tanach in the case of Rosh Hashanah,⁹⁹⁹ this is not so for Yom Kippur. Were Yom Kippur to be described as “chag”, there would be the mitzvah of “simchat Yom Tov” on Yom Kippur. However it is specifically stated in

⁹⁹¹ MSS 19217 ff.42-46, 19224 ff.2ff, 19228, 19230, 19233, 19237

⁹⁹² MS 19228 ff.1-3

⁹⁹³ Shire Ranenut pp.42-43; Davidson 3:215 piyut 400

⁹⁹⁴ MSS 19223 f.6, 19237 f.29

⁹⁹⁵ SA OC 623:2 Rema

⁹⁹⁶ MB 623:3

⁹⁹⁷ Shevet Halevi, 4:54(8)

⁹⁹⁸ MS 19230 ff.8, 24, 34, 38

⁹⁹⁹ Psalms 81:4; MB 597:1

Masechet Sofrim that on Yom Kippur there is no simchah, since “there is no simchah without eating”.¹⁰⁰⁰

Despite all this, in the yaaleh vyavo paragraph of the amidah in the Kaifeng manuscripts, Yom Kippur is repeatedly called a “chag”.¹⁰⁰¹ However, one could bring some support for this from the Tur who quotes Rabbi Sar Shalom, one of the Geonim who lived in the ninth century, that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, one says in the amidah (in the same way as with the other Festivals), “vatitein lanu ... moadim lesimchah, *chagim uzmanim* ...”,¹⁰⁰² namely describing Yom Kippur as a “chag”. Alternatively, describing Yom Kippur as a chag could well have been the result of an ignorant copyist who knew that every other Yom Tov was called a chag and thus he assumed that it applied also for Yom Kippur.

Unlike Rosh Hashanah where the word מוסף (musfei) – in the *plural* – is used, since there are the mussaf sacrifices for both Rosh Hashanah and Rosh Chodesh – namely *two* mussaf sacrifices,¹⁰⁰³ on Yom Kippur the machzorim of almost all the world communities use the word מוסף (mussaf) – in the *singular* – since there is only *one* mussaf sacrifice.

There are two Kaifeng manuscripts with a fragment of the mussaf service for Yom Kippur and in both of them the word mussfei appears.¹⁰⁰⁴ This accords with the siddur of the Rambam¹⁰⁰⁵ and with the Ben Ish Chai, quoting his grandfather,¹⁰⁰⁶ who write that on Yom Kippur, one uses the word mussfei and not mussaf.¹⁰⁰⁷

On every Yom Tov, the berachah “shehecheyanu” is recited.¹⁰⁰⁸ Normally it is said at the end of the kiddush which is recited immediately before the evening Yom Tov meal.¹⁰⁰⁹ On Yom Kippur when there is no kiddush, most communities recite shehecheyanu immediately after Kol Nidrei.¹⁰¹⁰ The question arising from a case, where having reached borachu in the maariv service for Yom Kippur, one had not yet said shehecheyanu, is mentioned in a responsum by Rabbi Betzael Stern. He writes that in such a case one should say it after kaddish shalem towards the end of the service.¹⁰¹¹ He does not refer to the situation when one has not recited it the entire night. In fact according to some of the writings of the Geonim, the place to recite it is

¹⁰⁰⁰ Masechet Sofrim 19:6; The Levush makes a similar comment, but adds that since Yom Kippur is a day of forgiveness for sins, there is a (spiritual) simchah (Levush OC 128:44). It would seem however, that the term “chag” would not be an expression for a day which had just “spiritual simchah”.

¹⁰⁰¹ MSS 19224 f.2, 19228 ff.20, 34, 19230 ff.29, 44

¹⁰⁰² Tur OC 582

¹⁰⁰³ SA OC 591:3

¹⁰⁰⁴ MSS 19233 f.7, 19237 ff.1, 30

¹⁰⁰⁵ Rambam, end of Seder Ahavah “nusach kol haberacot haemtzoit”

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ben Ish Chai, first year, Vayelech 20

¹⁰⁰⁷ On Yom Kippur, there are apart from the two goats which are offered up, also the goat for Azazel, and for this reason (according to some opinions) one says musfei. (Chikrei Lev, part 1, OC 54 p.97a; Kaf Hachaim, OC 621:27)

¹⁰⁰⁸ Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:23

¹⁰⁰⁹ Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:22

¹⁰¹⁰ SA OC 619:1

¹⁰¹¹ Betzel Hachochmah, 3:16

at the *end* of the maariv service.¹⁰¹² As a general rule for all Festivals, should one omit to recite this berachah on the first night of a Festival, it can be recited any time during the Festival.¹⁰¹³

One of the Kaifeng manuscripts gives the recital of this berachah on Yom Kippur, but it is after the repetition of the amidah at neilah.¹⁰¹⁴ It is theoretically possible to recite it then if one had not previously recited it, since shehecheyanu can be recited even towards the end of the Festival.¹⁰¹⁵

In an article on the Jews of Kaifeng, Raphael Jehudah Zwi Werblowsky, Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, gives a facsimile of the folio in this Kaifeng manuscript¹⁰¹⁶ which shows that the community recited the berachah shehecheyanu after a kaddish shalem and he states that this was at the beginning of the maariv service for Yom Kippur.¹⁰¹⁷ For a number of reasons this cannot be correct: (a) the vidui in the text of this manuscript is for *neilah*, (b) this berachah is preceded in this text by a repetition of the amidah, which one does not have in the maariv service, (c) this berachah appears in this text *after* kaddish shalem after the repetition of the amidah, (d) kaddish shalem is *never* said at the beginning of a service.

From a study of the Persian siddur, an explanation can be advanced as to why the Kaifeng manuscript has this shehecheyanu berachah at the end of neilah. In the Persian siddur, at the end of the neilah service there is an *instruction* in Judeo-Persian saying that “one is obligated to say on the *night* of Yom Kippur [i.e. Kol Nidrei night] the shehecheyanu berachah.”¹⁰¹⁸ (*emphasis added*) It probably appeared as such as an *instruction* in a Kaifeng manuscript of centuries past. One of the successive copyists, who was obviously not learned in Synagogue ritual, in place of writing out this instruction, wrote the entire berachah as if it were to be recited at the end of neilah.

Reading from Torah: The Torah is read both at the shacharit¹⁰¹⁹ and minchah services¹⁰²⁰ of Yom Kippur and on both occasions it is followed by a haftarah.¹⁰²¹ One of the manuscripts gives the correct first and last words of the leining, and of the maftir for shacharit of Yom Kippur. It also states that there is a haftarah but gives no

¹⁰¹² Rabbi Saadia Gaon siddur p.261; Chemdah Genuzah, responsum 158

¹⁰¹³ Magen Avraham OC 473:1

¹⁰¹⁴ MS 19230 f.14. There is also a fragment of a MS (19217) which on f.41 gives the berachah shehecheyanu. It is possible from the placing of this berachah in this fragment that it was recited at about the time of neilah.

¹⁰¹⁵ Since there is no manuscript extant with the maariv service for Yom Kippur, we cannot exclude that this berachah *also* appeared there.

¹⁰¹⁶ MS 19230 f.14. (Incidentally the microfilm of this MS found at the Jewish National Library was prepared incorrectly. It should begin with f.23 continue until the end (f.44) and then continue with f.1 until f.22 which should be the end of the MS.)

¹⁰¹⁷ Werblowsky, Paamim, pp.52-53

¹⁰¹⁸ Persian siddur f.95a

¹⁰¹⁹ SA OC 621:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:11

¹⁰²⁰ SA OC 622:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:11

¹⁰²¹ SA OC 621:1, 622:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:11

details of it.¹⁰²² The manuscript likewise gives the correct first and last words of the leining for minchah but does not mention the haftarah.¹⁰²³

This is then followed by an apparently strange statement “then parashat Bereshit until laasot”¹⁰²⁴ i.e. what is read for the chatan bereshit on Simchat Torah. At first glance this might seem to be a copyist’s error.

However there is indeed a basis for this statement, which is to be found in the commentary by Rabbi Yehudah ha-Barzeloni to the Sefer Yetsirah,¹⁰²⁵ in which he writes about reading from the beginning of Bereshit at minchah on Yom Kippur. In his words, “And in the Yeshivah [one of the Yeshivot of Babylon in the Geonic era] there is a custom that on Yom Kippur at minchah, Bereshit up to [the words] ‘yom echad’ [the first day] are read by heart.” A few lines later, Rabbi Yehudah ha-Barzeloni writes in place of “yom echad” that they read the “first parashah from the Torah”.¹⁰²⁶ There are a number of possibilities as to what these words “first parashah” could mean, one possibility being until “laasot”, which would exactly correspond with the Kaifeng manuscript.

Rabbi Yehudah ha-Barzeloni then added that according to Rabbi Saadia Gaon in many places in Machasia in Babylon, there was the custom to take out the Sefer Torah at neilah on Yom Kippur and read from it the first parashah from Bereshit.¹⁰²⁷

1850 Festival list: Leslie, in his attempt to explain the strange list of festivals sent by residents of Kaifeng to the Consul in 1850 (see above) writes, “I would suggest that the Chinese Jews had, by this time (1850) amalgamated these two fasts [Yom Kippur and Tisha b’Av], celebrating (or at least remembering) them on the 9th of Av.”¹⁰²⁸ This suggestion seems far-fetched. If anything should they have wanted to amalgamate them they would have done so on Yom Kippur which is a Torah law fast.

Sukkot

Sukkot begins on 15 Tishri and lasts for seven days.¹⁰²⁹ On Sukkot there is a Torah law to dwell in a sukkah for the seven days of the Festival of Sukkot.¹⁰³⁰

Domenge, who was in Kaifeng over Sukkot 1722, drew a labelled sketch of the Synagogue and its surrounding courtyards, which included a specific area for a sukkah. He labelled this area, “Parvis ou Estrade du Temple où l’on dresse une grande Tente à la fete des Tabernacles” (a portico or terrace of the Temple (Synagogue) where a big tent (sukkah) was erected for the festival of Sukkot).¹⁰³¹ Xu Xin, who is

¹⁰²² MS 19224 f.16

¹⁰²³ MS19224 ff.20-21

¹⁰²⁴ MS 19224 f.21

¹⁰²⁵ Sefer Yetsirah is a very ancient Jewish mystical book

¹⁰²⁶ Peirush Sefer Yetzirah, p.166

¹⁰²⁷ Peirush Sefer Yetzirah, p.166

¹⁰²⁸ Leslie, p.89

¹⁰²⁹ Leviticus 23:34. This does not include Shemini Atzeret which is really a separate Festival (e.g. BT Sukkah 48a)

¹⁰³⁰ Leviticus 23:42; SA 639:1; Rambam Hilchot Sukkah 6:6

¹⁰³¹ Domenge, Juifs, p.154. Domenge’s sketch of the Synagogue compound which includes the indicated area for the sukkah can be seen in Pollak, Mandarins, p.282

professor and director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University in China, writes “Domenge attended Sukkot services in the synagogue and saw a sukkah hut in the synagogue compound.”¹⁰³² Although Domenge does not *specifically* write that he “saw a sukkah hut” he does write that he attended services in the synagogue on Sukkot¹⁰³³ and it is therefore most reasonable to conclude that he saw the sukkah there.

There are numerous laws regarding the actual building of a sukkah, both in connection with the walls and the “schach”,¹⁰³⁴ but no details are given by Domenge of how it was built in Kaifeng. However James Finn, who was never in China, and can therefore be only a secondary source of information, writes, “In the open space between these chapels [the courtyard of the Kaifeng synagogue], they erect their annual booths of boughs and flowers, at the Feast of Tabernacles.”¹⁰³⁵ It is correct that the schach of the sukkah can be made of “boughs and flowers”.¹⁰³⁶ However it is not known whether Finn wrote this from information he had received about the sukkah in Kaifeng, or was just utilising his general knowledge of Jewish practices.

Throughout the Festival of Sukkot, one must eat and sleep in the sukkah, and indeed the sukkah becomes a Jew’s house during the week of the Festival.¹⁰³⁷ But there are no details of how the Jews of Kaifeng used the sukkah during the festival or whether there were sukkot in the city other than at the synagogue.

All that is known about the utilisation of the sukkah comes from the words of a Chinese Mohammedan soldier, Teah-ting-an, who was a native of Kaifeng in the mid 19th century. He told the Consul Layton, “I have not seen what you describe to me, the Jews dwelling, or affecting to dwell under bowers of trees and flowers at an annual festival. I have not seen any of their ceremonies.”¹⁰³⁸ But this was already in the mid 19th century when many observances of Judaism in Kaifeng had lapsed. Thus we can draw no conclusions from Teah-ting-an’s words on how this mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah was observed in previous generations when the general observance of Judaism by the community was considerably stronger.

Arbaat haminim: Another mitzvah observed during the Festival of Sukkot is the taking of the arbaat haminim – namely the etrog, lulav, hadassim and aravot.¹⁰³⁹ They are taken on all seven days – the first day by Torah law and on the subsequent six days as a Rabbinical injunction.¹⁰⁴⁰

Amongst the siddur manuscripts is one listing the prayers recited during Sukkot. In the list of those prayers recited during Chol Hamoed is the word lamed-

¹⁰³² Xin, p.85

¹⁰³³ Domenge, Juifs, p.166

¹⁰³⁴ SA OC 626-636; Rambam Hilchot Sukkah 4-5

¹⁰³⁵ Finn, Jews of China, p.18

¹⁰³⁶ SA OC 629:1; Rambam Hilchot Sukkah 5:1

¹⁰³⁷ SA OC 639:1; Rambam Hilchot Sukkah 6:6

¹⁰³⁸ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.24

¹⁰³⁹ Leviticus 23:40

¹⁰⁴⁰ SA OC 658:1; Rambam Hilchot Lulav 7:13, 15

vav-lamed-bet-vav - “lulavo”¹⁰⁴¹ which is almost certainly referring to taking the lulav some time during the shacharit service of Chol Hamoed Sukkot. If one takes the lulav, then one takes it with the other three species.

Were all these four species readily available in Kaifeng? The lulav, hadassim and aravot are readily available in a tropical climate. But were etrogim found in the area of Kaifeng? The answer is in the affirmative. A rather unusual species of etrog grew in that area. It is an etrog (citron) in which the upper part opens out like fingers. It is known as the “Chinese citron”, the “fingered citron”, “Buddha’s hand citron” and also by various other names. There are discussions in the Rabbinic literature as to whether it can be used as an etrog for the mitzvah on Sukkot – some permitting whilst others forbidding it.¹⁰⁴²

However, other than in this glancing mention in the siddur manuscript, there is no written indication as to whether and how the Jews of Kaifeng observed this mitzvah.

Prayers on Sukkot: There is a distinctive amidah for the “shalosh regalim” with the appropriate changing of wording for Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret.¹⁰⁴³ Every day during Sukkot whole hallel is recited and according to the custom of Oriental Jewry, the berachah לגמור את ההלל (ligmor et hahallel) is said before its recital.¹⁰⁴⁴

There is only one Kaifeng manuscript¹⁰⁴⁵ with the prayers specifically for Sukkot. Domenge reports seeing such a volume with the title סוכה תמיד (Sukkah Tabid (*sic*) - Prayers for Sukkot) written on the cover.¹⁰⁴⁶ This manuscript is for shacharit for Sukkot, and includes full hallel with the berachah “ligmor et hahallel”.¹⁰⁴⁷ It can thus be seen that the Jews of Kaifeng were aware of the mitzvah to recite whole hallel on Sukkot. Although this manuscript seems to have been primarily written for Sukkot, whenever the word “Sukkot” is mentioned in the amidah, the words “Shemini Atzeret” are added in small letters above the line.¹⁰⁴⁸

Reading the Torah: Every day of Sukkot, namely Yom Tov,¹⁰⁴⁹ Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot¹⁰⁵⁰ and weekday Chol Hamoed,¹⁰⁵¹ has its own distinctive leining. The first two mentioned also have a maftir and haftarah.

There is another manuscript which includes a *list* of prayers recited on the seven days of Sukkot.¹⁰⁵² This manuscript also includes information as to what the

¹⁰⁴¹ MS 19224 f.39

¹⁰⁴² Chaim Simons, *The Chinese Etrog*

¹⁰⁴³ Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah “nusach kol haberachot haemtzoit”

¹⁰⁴⁴ SA OC 644:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:5-6

¹⁰⁴⁵ MS 19227

¹⁰⁴⁶ Domenge, *Juifs*, pp.149, 186

¹⁰⁴⁷ MS 19227 ff.34-45

¹⁰⁴⁸ MS 19227 ff.19, 20, 28, 29

¹⁰⁴⁹ SA OC 659:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:12

¹⁰⁵⁰ SA OC 663:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:16

¹⁰⁵¹ SA OC 663:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:13

¹⁰⁵² MS 19224 ff.36-39

leining (including, where appropriate, the maftir), is for Yom Tov of Sukkot,¹⁰⁵³ Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot¹⁰⁵⁴ and Chol Hamoed Sukkot.¹⁰⁵⁵ The various readings given are exactly the same as those read in other Jewish communities all over the world, with one small exception. For Shabbat Chol Hamoed *Sukkot*, it mistakenly¹⁰⁵⁶ gives the maftir for Shabbat Chol Hamoed *Pesach*.¹⁰⁵⁷ What is the halachah, should one have followed this manuscript and read the incorrect maftir on Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot? Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margoliot writes about an almost identical situation where the incorrect maftir was read on a Festival. He rules that even if the Sefer Torah had already been returned to the Ark, the Sefer Torah should be taken out again and the correct maftir together with the before and after berachot should be read.¹⁰⁵⁸ The manuscript also states that there is a haftarah for the Yom Tov of Sukkot¹⁰⁵⁹ and for Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot¹⁰⁶⁰ but it gives no further details.

Sukkot was once obviously well known and observed by the community in Kaifeng, since even after the community was well on its way to assimilation, the Jews there still remembered it. In a report by a Christian visitor, Rev. William Alexander Parsons Martin, who went there in 1866, it says, “They remember the names of the feast of tabernacles [Sukkot] the feast of unleavened bread [Pesach] ... but all such usages are now neglected.”¹⁰⁶¹ Another report, although possibly less reliable, by J. L. Liebermann, the first western Jew to visit Kaifeng, writing in 1899 about past generations (of a hundred years earlier (?)) states, that “they celebrated Passover,[Pesach] Tabernacles [Sukkot] etc.”¹⁰⁶²

Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah: Although Shemini Atzeret is commonly referred to as the 8th and 9th day of Sukkot, it is strictly speaking a separate two day Festival and it is thus *not* a continuation of Sukkot.¹⁰⁶³ There are several important differences between Shemini Atzeret and Sukkot, one of which being that in place of the word “Sukkot” in the various prayers one says “Shemini Atzeret”.¹⁰⁶⁴ As on Sukkot, on Shemini Atzeret whole hallel is recited with a berachah.¹⁰⁶⁵

Amongst the Siddur manuscripts, there are two fragments¹⁰⁶⁶ giving the prayers for shacharit for Shemini Atzeret. Although both of these manuscripts seem to have been primarily written for Shemini Atzeret, at the place where this Festival is mentioned in the amidah, above it is written “Hamatzot” (i.e. Pesach) and below it

¹⁰⁵³ MS 19224 f.37

¹⁰⁵⁴ MS 19224 f.38

¹⁰⁵⁵ MS 19224 f.39

¹⁰⁵⁶ MS 19224 f.38

¹⁰⁵⁷ SA OC 490:6

¹⁰⁵⁸ Shaarei Efraim, 8:2

¹⁰⁵⁹ MS 19224 f.37

¹⁰⁶⁰ MS 19224 f.38

¹⁰⁶¹ Martin, journal, p.33; Martin, Cathay, p.278

¹⁰⁶² Leslie, p.64 fn.1

¹⁰⁶³ BT Sukkah 48a; MB 668:8

¹⁰⁶⁴ SA OC 668:1; Rambam end of Sefer Ahavah “nusach kol haberachot haemtzoit”

¹⁰⁶⁵ SA OC 644:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3: 5-6

¹⁰⁶⁶ MSS 19238. 19241

“Shavuot”,¹⁰⁶⁷ but surprisingly Sukkot is not mentioned at all. In one of these manuscripts, there is correctly given the whole hallel with the berachah¹⁰⁶⁸ but in the other one only half hallel without a berachah is given.¹⁰⁶⁹

The leining for Shemini Atzeret begins with the words “kol habechor”¹⁰⁷⁰ although there are many communities where they begin this leining 26 verses earlier at “aser t’aser”,¹⁰⁷¹ and the maftir begins “bayom hashemini”.¹⁰⁷² The manuscript¹⁰⁷³ which gives the leining for Sukkot, also correctly gives the leining (including the maftir) for Shemini Atzeret.¹⁰⁷⁴

At mussaf on Shemini Atzeret, one begins to mention rain in the amidah¹⁰⁷⁵ since the rainy season is approaching, and the gabbai accordingly calls out aloud before the silent amidah “mashiv haruach umorid hagashem” (who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall).¹⁰⁷⁶ The manuscript¹⁰⁷⁷ is partially aware of this halachah since it then states “mussaf mashiv haruach”.¹⁰⁷⁸ One can only write “partially” since it would have been more correct to have written “mussaf mashiv haruach umorid hagashem”, as the main thing to be announced is “geshem” (rain), because there are some communities which mention “ruach” (wind) throughout the entire year.¹⁰⁷⁹

The second day of Shemini Atzeret is popularly known as Simchat Torah.¹⁰⁸⁰ It is on this day that one finishes Reading the Torah (and restarts reading it again). To celebrate this, there are “hakafot” – processions around the Synagogue with the Sifrei Torah.¹⁰⁸¹

Domenge who was in Kaifeng in 1722 writes about the “procession they make of the 13 Copies of the Pentateuch of the Bible [Sifrei Torah] ... and carry them round the enclosure of the synagogue.”¹⁰⁸² He gave the date of this “procession” as 4 October 1722, which, as we have seen above, was Simchat Torah – 23 Tishri - that year.¹⁰⁸³ In his account of the Jewish religion written in 1850, Tseang also refers to the observance of Simchat Torah, calling it “‘Festival for perambulating round the sacred writings’ because they then walk in solemn procession round the hall of the Temple.”¹⁰⁸⁴ From Tseang’s language “they hold a great festival” – in the present

¹⁰⁶⁷ MSS 19238 f.9, 19241 ff.10, 11

¹⁰⁶⁸ MS 19241 ff.16-22

¹⁰⁶⁹ MS 19238 ff.15-21

¹⁰⁷⁰ Deuteronomy 15:19; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:12

¹⁰⁷¹ MB 668:12

¹⁰⁷² Numbers 29:35; SA OC 668:2

¹⁰⁷³ MS 19224

¹⁰⁷⁴ MS 19224 f.40

¹⁰⁷⁵ SA OC 114:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:15

¹⁰⁷⁶ SA OC 668:2

¹⁰⁷⁷ MS 19224

¹⁰⁷⁸ MS 19224 f.40

¹⁰⁷⁹ MB 114:6

¹⁰⁸⁰ SA OC 669:1 Rema

¹⁰⁸¹ SA OC 669:1 Rema

¹⁰⁸² Domenge, Juifs, p.198

¹⁰⁸³ Domenge, Juifs, pp.166-67

¹⁰⁸⁴ Tseang Account, Smith, p.51

tense – it could be that they were still in 1850 celebrating Simchat Torah.¹⁰⁸⁵ On the other hand, Tseang also says “The Rabbi then takes ...” – also in the present tense – but from about 1810 there was no Rabbi in Kaifeng.

Possibly, but not conclusively in connection with Simchat Torah, Tseang writes, “Whenever the day arrives for honouring the sacred writings, the disciples must all bathe in the place appointed for that purpose.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Although, as seen above, the Kaifeng community would bathe *every morning* before going to the Synagogue, there is a specific custom for a man to go to the mikvah before *any Festival*.¹⁰⁸⁷

The leining for Simchat Torah is parashat Vezot Haberachah,¹⁰⁸⁸ the beginning of parashat Bereshit (for the Chatan Bereshit)¹⁰⁸⁹ and the same maftir as is read on the previous day.¹⁰⁹⁰

The Kaifeng manuscript correctly gives the leining as Vezot Haberachah.¹⁰⁹¹ However, what then follows is not clear. It seems to indicate that one then reads from Bereshit, which is indeed so for the Chatan Bereshit on Simchat Torah. The manuscript then continues “vayehi b’shalach vayishma Yitro” – the first two words could indicate the leining for the 7th day of Pesach¹⁰⁹² and the following two words the leining for the 1st day of Shavuot.¹⁰⁹³ But why do they appear here in the manuscript? One can find some support for such Readings from the Torah, albeit for the *evening* of Simchat Torah. This custom is first mentioned by Rabbi Isaac Tirana at about the beginning of the 15th century.¹⁰⁹⁴ The Rema later quotes it in his Darkei Moshe¹⁰⁹⁵ and in the Shulchan Aruch where he writes that it is customary to read the “nedarim” from the Torah on the night of Simchat Torah, “and every place according to its custom”.¹⁰⁹⁶ Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger, the Rabbi of Altona, explains this word “nedarim” as specific readings from the Torah which are sold every year to the person being called up to the Torah. He goes on to give a list of examples. This includes the “Song of Moses” which is read on the 7th day of Pesach. In his *examples* he did not include the Ten Commandments which are read on the 1st day of Shavuot, although he did end his list with the word “etc.”¹⁰⁹⁷ However there are a number of Synagogues

¹⁰⁸⁵ This seems to be confirmed by the language of Rev. William C. Milne, who was “for many years missionary among the Chinese”, (Milne, p.406 and title page of book)

¹⁰⁸⁶ Tseang Account, Smith, p.51

¹⁰⁸⁷ based on BT Rosh Hashanah 16b; e.g. Luach Davar B’ito (Each Thing in its Proper Time), (Bnei Brak), any year, any erev Yom Tov

¹⁰⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

¹⁰⁸⁹ Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

¹⁰⁹⁰ SA OC 669:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:12

¹⁰⁹¹ MS 19224 ff.40-41

¹⁰⁹² the leining for 7th day Pesach comes from Parashat Beshalach

¹⁰⁹³ the leining for Shavuot comes from Parashat Yitro

¹⁰⁹⁴ Minhagim, p.53b

¹⁰⁹⁵ Darkei Moshe on the Tur OC 669:1

¹⁰⁹⁶ SA OC 669:1 Rema

¹⁰⁹⁷ Bikkurei Yaakov, 669:13

in Europe, who on the night of Simchat Torah read from various parts of the Torah, which include both the “Song of Moses” and the “Ten Commandments.”¹⁰⁹⁸

1850 Festival list: In the list of Festivals from 1850 is included “Eighth moon, twenty-fourth day – The Scriptures are preached, in the temple; the doors being closed, the scroll is opened out, the Scriptures read – money coloured red is distributed.”¹⁰⁹⁹ If, as Finn suggested (see above), we were to change the date from the Chinese year to the Jewish year and thus get the seventh month, and change the day of the month from twenty four to twenty three, namely to make it correspond with Simchat Torah, it would then have a *slight similarity* with Simchat Torah, insofar as “the Scriptures read” – (at least, in most Synagogues), more than on any other occasion during the year. But we would still be left with unexplained factors such as “doors being closed” and “money coloured red is distributed.” The latter point is especially problematic since money may not be handled on Yom Tov since it is “muktzah”. Although as was seen above, certainly at that period, the Jews of Kaifeng did not know that it was forbidden to handle money on Sabbaths and Festivals,¹¹⁰⁰ this suggestion of Finn’s is still far-fetched.

Chanukah

Chanukah begins on 25 Kislev and is of 8 days duration.¹¹⁰¹ For each of the eight nights an ascending number¹¹⁰² of oil lights or candles¹¹⁰³ are lit, with two berachot (“lhadlik ner shel Chanukah” and “sheasa nisim”) being recited before they are lit each night, except on the first night when an extra berachah (“shehecheyanu”) is recited.¹¹⁰⁴ In the amidah and bircat hamazon, an additional prayer “al hanisim bimei Matityahu” is recited.¹¹⁰⁵

In one of the Kaifeng Siddur manuscripts appears two berachot, “Baruch ata ... melech haolam rikan (?)¹¹⁰⁶ (*sic*) shel Chanukah” and “Baruch ata ... nisin l’avoteinu bayomim hahei (*sic*).”¹¹⁰⁷ Although the words “lhadlik ner” are absent from the first berachah, what *is* written for these two berachot very strongly shows that they are the berachot recited before lighting Chanukah candles. They certainly had oil and candles in the Kaifeng Synagogue, since we know that they had oil-bowl lamps and also candlesticks (not specifically for Chanukah) on the main Ceremonial Table in the Synagogue¹¹⁰⁸ and therefore there was no impediment to their lighting oil lights or candles for Chanukah.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Rabbi Gedaliah Oberlander, Minhag Avoteinu b’Yadeinu, part 1 Elul-Adar, pp.175-78

¹⁰⁹⁹ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.42

¹¹⁰⁰ Tseang journal, Smith, p.48

¹¹⁰¹ SA OC 670:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:3

¹¹⁰² SA OC 671:2; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 4:1

¹¹⁰³ SA OC 673:1

¹¹⁰⁴ SA OC 676:1; Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:4

¹¹⁰⁵ SA OC 682:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:13, Hilchot Berachot 2:6

¹¹⁰⁶ Could this “rikan” be a badly copied “lehadlik ner” with a “daled” looking like a “reish” and some letters omitted?

¹¹⁰⁷ MS 19225 f.10

¹¹⁰⁸ White, 1:6-7

The al hanisim prayer for Chanukah followed by the remainder of that berachah of the amidah is to be found in the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts.¹¹⁰⁹

In his booklet, “The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng-Fu”, Dr. Josef Preuss, wrote, “it is not known whether they [the Jews of Kaifeng] knew the Feast of Chanukkah (*sic*).”¹¹¹⁰ However from the various mentions of Chanukah in the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts, it can be seen that Preuss’ statement is incorrect.

The Gemara states¹¹¹¹ that women are also commanded to observe the lighting of Chanukah candles since they were included in the miracle.¹¹¹² Rashi explains that the reason for this is that it was the actions of a *woman* who prevented a wicked ruler from molesting the young Jewish girls.¹¹¹³ This woman was called Judith and she killed the wicked ruler after he fell asleep as a result of her feeding him cheese dishes and wine. All this is to be found in the book of Judith in the Apocrypha, and in the many condensed reports of this incident.¹¹¹⁴ Also, as a result of this incident, it is customary to eat cheese dishes on Chanukah.¹¹¹⁵

It can be seen from the diary of Ricci that the Jews of Kaifeng knew the story of Judith, (either from the Apocrypha or from one of the condensed accounts) since he writes, “This (*sic*) Jews told many stories of the Old Testament, like those of Abraham, of Judith ...”¹¹¹⁶ Domenge states that they had an incomplete copy of the book of Judith.¹¹¹⁷ We don’t know whether the Jews of Kaifeng knew more than just the story of Judith or whether they knew the customs of Chanukah which resulted from this story.

It would seem that the Jews of Kaifeng had knowledge of the historical events of the period of the first Chanukah, since Domenge reports that the Kaifeng community had the first two books of Maccabees, which were “complete but in bad condition”.¹¹¹⁸ The copies which they had do not seem to be extant today. Even though these books of Maccabees are not included in the Tanach, but are only in the Apocrypha, they are quoted (as are also some other books in the Apocrypha) in the Rabbinical literature.¹¹¹⁹

1850 Festival list: As stated above, included in the list which was sent to the Consul, was “Eighth moon, twenty-fourth day – The Scriptures are preached in the

¹¹⁰⁹ MSS 19218 ff.8-9, 19242 f.1

¹¹¹⁰ Dr. Josef Preuss (1894 - 1958), *The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng-Fu*, p.17

¹¹¹¹ BT Shabbat 23a

¹¹¹² As a general rule women are exempt from positive commandments which have a fixed time, and although the lighting of Chanukah candles comes under this category, it is an exception to this rule.

¹¹¹³ Rashi on BT Shabbat 23a

¹¹¹⁴ e.g. Nissim ben Yaakov, *Chibur Yafeh Mehayeshuah Lehachacham*, pp.22b-23b; Yosef Shabtai Parchi, *Oseh Feleh*, pp.14b-15b

¹¹¹⁵ SA OC 670:1 Rema; Chaim Simons, “Eating of Cheese and ‘Levivot’ on Chanukah”, *Sinai* (Jerusalem), vol.115, 1995, pp.57-68; Chaim Simons, *Divrei Chamishah*, pp.110-19

¹¹¹⁶ Ricci diary, Löwenthal, p.395

¹¹¹⁷ Domenge, *Juifs*, p.129

¹¹¹⁸ Domenge, *Juifs*, p.129

¹¹¹⁹ Tosafot Yomtov on Megillah 3:6 dh “benesiim”

synagogue; the doors being closed, the scroll is opened out, and the Scriptures read – Money, coloured red, is distributed.” Unlike Finn, who interpreted the “eighth month” to really be the “seventh month” in the Jewish calendar, Leslie did precisely the opposite, and postulated it to be the “ninth month” namely Kislev, and thus the Festival referred to in this list to be Chanukah which occurs on the 25 Kislev. Leslie then went on to suggest that “Money coloured red, is distributed” might, “refer to the Hannucah (*sic*) money given to children in the west.”¹¹²⁰

There is a Rabbinical source from the 18th century which states that “it was the custom for poor youth to make the rounds of the houses on Chanukah” - (it would appear in order to receive money).¹¹²¹ Rabbi David Cohen, of “Gvul Yavetz” in Brooklyn, writes that from this stems the custom of Chanukah gelt.¹¹²² There are today many Chassidic Rebbes, including Lubavitch¹¹²³ who distribute this gelt during Chanukah. Although Rabbi Chaim Palaggi, the Rabbi of Izmir *in Turkey* also discusses this custom in his book, and wrote that he himself had witnessed it,¹¹²⁴ it seems to have been mainly practiced in *Eastern Europe*. Even Leslie writes that this distribution of money on Chanukah was “in the west” and even there only from at the 18th century. On this basis it is difficult to accept Leslie’s equation of “money coloured red” with “Hannucah (*sic*) money given to children in the west.”

There is another source which gives a *slight* link between Chanukah gelt and the *colour red*. In Yemen every day during Chanukah, Jewish mothers would give their children a small coin with part of which they would purchase fine sugar with added *red* colouring matter. When mixed with water, it resembled the wine which the adults drank.¹¹²⁵ However, even from this source, to use the expression “money coloured red” is rather farfetched.

Furthermore, what does preaching and reading the Scriptures have to do *particularly* with Chanukah?

Purim

Purim is observed on 14 Adar¹¹²⁶ and commemorates the victory of the Jews led by Mordechai and Esther over Haman.¹¹²⁷ On Purim, Megillat Esther (the Book of Esther in the Tanach) is read¹¹²⁸ from a handwritten megillah.¹¹²⁹ As with Chanukah, an additional prayer “al hanisim bimei Mordechai v’Esther” is recited in the amidah¹¹³⁰ and in bircat hamazon.¹¹³¹

¹¹²⁰ Leslie, JAOS, p.359

¹¹²¹ Magen Avraham OC 670 prologue

¹¹²² Rabbi David Cohen, Bircat Yavetz, p.158

¹¹²³ Shulchan Aruch Harav vol.4, Additions for Chanukah 149 (1455); Likutei Levi Yitzchak, Igrot Kodesh, p.358

¹¹²⁴ Moed Lechol Chai, 27:73, 77

¹¹²⁵ Halichot Taiman, p.64

¹¹²⁶ SA OC 688:3; Rambam Hilchot Megillah 1:4

¹¹²⁷ Esther 9

¹¹²⁸ SA OC 687:1; Rambam Hilchot Megillah 1:1

¹¹²⁹ SA OC 691; Rambam Hilchot Megillah 2:9

¹¹³⁰ SA OC 693:2; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:13

Did they have a copy of the book of Esther in Kaifeng, (and we are not even talking about a kasher megillah)? On this Gozani writes, “They have, it seems, other sacred books, for example Esther, the Prophets, Isaiah, etc.... Most celebrated among them is the story of Esther...”¹¹³² In contrast to this, Domenge writes that they had “almost nothing”¹¹³³ or, in another letter, an “incomplete copy”¹¹³⁴ of the book of Esther. However later he writes, “They have a great veneration for Mordecai ... and even greater for Esther ... and are well acquainted with the story of Haman.”¹¹³⁵ In a still later letter Domenge even refers to their celebration of Purim, “They have a festival for them [Mordecai and Esther], and know the story of their deliverance under Esther by (oral) tradition...” (*the word “oral” is bracketed in original*)¹¹³⁶ We can see from the diaries of Ricci, written at the beginning of the 17th century that even non-learned Jews living in Kaifeng knew the story of Esther, “This (*sic*) Jews told many stories of the Old Testament, like those ... of Mordecai, of Esther ...”¹¹³⁷ From all the above, it is quite possible that they did have a copy of the book of Esther in Kaifeng.

However since Megillat Esther must be read on Purim *specifically* from a handwritten megillah, which has been written to certain definite specifications, the question is whether they had such a megillah in Kaifeng. An ancient megillah which includes pictures and symbols of Chinese art is extant,¹¹³⁸ but it is regarded as unlikely to have been used in Kaifeng. Strong support for its not being from Kaifeng comes from a siddur manuscript from Kaifeng (described later). This siddur manuscript was specifically written for the prayers recited on Purim, yet it makes no mention whatsoever of reading the megillah on Purim. It would seem that any megillah they might once have had, was completely destroyed in one of the floods or fires of the Kaifeng community. Had they had even a damaged copy, there is little doubt that they themselves would have made further copies, in the same way as they made twelve copies of the Sifrei Torah which had been damaged or destroyed.¹¹³⁹

As has already been stated, there is a manuscript¹¹⁴⁰ which specifically gives the shacharit service for Purim. It includes the text of “al hanism... bimei Mordechai v’Esther.”¹¹⁴¹

Reading the Torah: The leining on Purim is the account of the first war between the Jews and Amalek.¹¹⁴² This is appropriate for Purim, since Haman was a descendant of

¹¹³¹ SA OC 695:3; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 2:6

¹¹³² Gozani, Juifs, p.59

¹¹³³ Domenge, Juifs, p.150

¹¹³⁴ Domenge, Juifs, pp.128-29

¹¹³⁵ Domenge, Juifs, p.168

¹¹³⁶ Domenge, Juifs p.198

¹¹³⁷ Ricci diary, Löwenthal, p.395; similar wording in Ricci’s journal, Latin text p.272 and in Ricci’s journal, p.108

¹¹³⁸ White, Introduction pp.3-15

¹¹³⁹ White, Introduction pp.3-15

¹¹⁴⁰ MS 19236

¹¹⁴¹ MSS 19236 ff.22-23, 32-33; 19218 ff.10-12 also has the text of “al hanisim” for Purim

¹¹⁴² Exodus 17:8-16; SA OC 693:4

Amalek.¹¹⁴³ This account is only 9 verses long and since 3 people are called up to the Torah on Purim and the minimum number of verses that can be read for each person is 3, there is only one way to split up the leining between these 3 people, namely 3 verses each.¹¹⁴⁴

The manuscript with the Purim service also gives the leining for Purim, and how it is split up between the three people being called up. Both of these facts are stated correctly¹¹⁴⁵ showing that they knew that there should be three people called up to the Reading of the Torah on Purim and that one must not read less than 3 verses for each person being called up. Alternatively, without knowing this rule of a minimum of 3 verses per person, they did the logical thing and split up the leining on a 3-3-3 basis.

There are a numbers of errors in this manuscript which may be due to the lack of knowledge of the copyist. In both in the silent amidah and in the repetition, the havdalah prayer is included.¹¹⁴⁶ Such an addition is only recited at the *maariv* amidah for the termination of Shabbat and Yom Tov.¹¹⁴⁷ A further mistake in this Purim manuscript is the inclusion of the word “mussaf”¹¹⁴⁸ after the leining although no amidah is given. In fact there is no mussaf service on Purim.

1850 Festival list: Included in the list of festivals is, “Second moon, fourteenth day – Feast of dry wheat, or unleavened bread. Cakes called oil fragrant (*sic*) are distributed to friends.”¹¹⁴⁹ Leslie suggested that the “second (moon)” in the letter was written as 11 (eleven) but was misread as II (two),¹¹⁵⁰ and also holds that one should “push... the months back a month”¹¹⁵¹ and thus make Adar the 11th month in the Jewish calendar rather than the 12th month. On this basis he states that the Festival referred to in this letter is “more applicable to Purim than Passover”. To support this contention, he argues that “cakes called oil fragrance are distributed to friends” refers to the mitzvah of “mishloach manot” which is observed on Purim.¹¹⁵² In this mitzvah one must send *two* food items to a friend.¹¹⁵³ However these suggestions of Leslie’s leave more questions than answers. Firstly, this letter sent to the Consul was written in Chinese characters.¹¹⁵⁴ In the “normal” system of writing numbers in Chinese characters, two is written as 二 and eleven as 十一 and there could be no mistaking one for the other. If one were to use the “financial” system of writing numerals, then

¹¹⁴³ Kaf Hachaim OC 693:22

¹¹⁴⁴ Since it is preferable to read a minimum of 10 verses (SA OC 137:1), some communities (SA OC 693:4), but not all (SA OC 693:4 Rema) repeat the last verse of the Purim leining.

¹¹⁴⁵ MS 19236 f.37

¹¹⁴⁶ MS 19236 ff.16-17, 27

¹¹⁴⁷ SA OC 294:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:12

¹¹⁴⁸ MS 19236 f.37; The same thing is found for Tisha b’Av at MS 19215 f.38.

¹¹⁴⁹ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.42

¹¹⁵⁰ Leslie, JAOS, p.359

¹¹⁵¹ Leslie, JAOS, p.356

¹¹⁵² Leslie, JAOS, p.359

¹¹⁵³ SA OC 695:4; Rambam Hilchot Megillah 2:15

¹¹⁵⁴ White, 1:85

two would be 貳 and eleven would be 拾壹 and there would then be even less chance of misreading the numbers. Secondly, how does one explain eating “unleavened bread” on Purim? Thirdly, sending a friend *just one species of food*, namely, “cakes called oil fragrance” does not fulfill the mitzvah of mishloach manot.

Pesach

Pesach begins on the 15 Nisan and lasts seven days,¹¹⁵⁵ (eight days in the Diaspora). During this period it is forbidden to eat any food which is chametz.¹¹⁵⁶

Apart from the hagadah which was used at the seder service at the beginning of Pesach, there is almost nothing extant to show how the Jews of Kaifeng observed Pesach. There are only indications that they did not eat chametz during the Festival. In a letter written by Gozani in 1704, he writes, “They also keep the Feast of unleavened Bread.”¹¹⁵⁷ This shows that the Jews of Kaifeng ate unleavened bread (matzot) and thus indicates that they did not eat leavened bread during Pesach. In a letter written eight years later Gozani again writes “they retain ... the Passover.”¹¹⁵⁸

Finn suggests a reason why “the early Jesuit missionaries make scarcely any allusion to Passover in China.” He writes, “It may be that this neglect was intentional, for all the great medieval churches of Christendom have been accustomed to look upon that Jewish national festival with suspicion, as being hostile to us in principle, and abrogated by the Gospel.”¹¹⁵⁹

Seder plate: At the seder service, a “seder plate” is placed on the table. Amongst the things on this plate is a piece of roasted meat,¹¹⁶⁰ such as a wing¹¹⁶¹ or the neck¹¹⁶² of a chicken, as a *remembrance* of the Paschal lamb sacrifice which, whilst the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing, was sacrificed on the Temple Mount on the afternoon before Pesach.¹¹⁶³

Gozani writes, “they ... have the Paschal Lamb, in Remembrance of the Israelites coming out of the Land of Egypt, and their passage thro’ the Red Sea.”¹¹⁶⁴ Perhaps this piece of meat which is placed on the seder plate is what Gozani means by “remembrance”. An alternative explanation of Gozani’s words could be that the Jews of Kaifeng actually slaughtered a lamb before Pesach just as the Samaritan sect does to this day on Mount Gerizim near Shechem.¹¹⁶⁵ Adjacent to the Kaifeng Synagogue

¹¹⁵⁵ Leviticus 23:6

¹¹⁵⁶ Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 1:1

¹¹⁵⁷ Gozani, Lettres, 18:40; Gozani, Travels, p.16

¹¹⁵⁸ Gozani, Juifs, p.59

¹¹⁵⁹ Finn, Orphan Colony, pp.47-48. Finn here corrects what he wrote towards the beginning of his book, “The missionaries make *no mention* of Passover.” (*emphasis added*) (p.8)

¹¹⁶⁰ SA OC 473:4; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:1

¹¹⁶¹ Aruch Hashulchan OC 473:9

¹¹⁶² Shulchan Aruch Harav, vol.3-4, hosafot – Hagadah shel Pesach 111(1417)

¹¹⁶³ Rambam Hilchot Korban Pesach 1:1, 3

¹¹⁶⁴ Gozani, Lettres, 18:40; Gozani, Travels, p.16

¹¹⁶⁵ Ynet travel – The Samaritans’ Passover sacrifice, (Internet:

www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3394699,00.html – accessed 24 January 2010)

was a building “for the extraction of Nerves and Sinews” of slaughtered animals¹¹⁶⁶ and possibly the “Paschal Lamb” was also slaughtered in this building. However since Gozani used the words “in Remembrance” and did not use the word “slaughter”, it seems unlikely that the Jews of Kaifeng slaughtered a ceremonial “Paschal Lamb”.

As stated above in the case of Sukkot, visitors such as the Rev. Martin and Lieberman, who visited Kaifeng in the latter half of the 19th century, when the community had all but assimilated, reported that they remembered Sukkot and Pesach.

The Seder: On the first two nights of Pesach, the seder ceremony is held in the home. This ceremony includes two mitzvot which are Torah law: relating the going out of Egypt¹¹⁶⁷ and eating matzot;¹¹⁶⁸ three Rabbinical injunctions: drinking four cups of wine,¹¹⁶⁹ eating maror (bitter herbs)¹¹⁷⁰ and reciting the hallel;¹¹⁷¹ and various other traditions and customs – for example, eating karpas,¹¹⁷² afikoman,¹¹⁷³ “Hillel’s sandwich”.¹¹⁷⁴

There are two copies of the hagadah used in Kaifeng which are extant and there are microfilms of them in the Jewish National Library.¹¹⁷⁵ One of these hagadot is from about the mid 17th century. About one hundred years later a copy was made from it.¹¹⁷⁶ However, in the earlier manuscript, the first folio is missing. It is not clear whether it was missing when the later of these two hagadot (which contains this first folio) was written. If it was, one would have to ask from where the copyist obtained the material for this missing folio? Possibly it was reconstructed from the memory of some of the older more learned members of the community.¹¹⁷⁷

A study of the Kaifeng hagadah shows that there are a number of omissions, especially amongst the many berachot which are recited in the course of the seder service. This is almost certainly a result of the many successive copyings of the hagadah throughout the ages, by copyists who were very likely unknowledgeable about the seder ritual. It should be borne in mind that the berachot in the seder service all begin with the *same* first words, namely, “baruch ata... melech haolam” and thus when copying a sequence of berachot, especially those immediately following the magid section of the hagadah, one can quite easily omit at least one berachah during each copying. In contrast, there are many occasions where berachot not normally

¹¹⁶⁶ Adler, Lecture, pp.8, 10

¹¹⁶⁷ SA OC 473:7; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 7:1

¹¹⁶⁸ SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 6:1

¹¹⁶⁹ SA OC 472:8; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 7:7

¹¹⁷⁰ SA OC 473:5, 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 7:12

¹¹⁷¹ SA OC 480:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8: 5, 10

¹¹⁷² SA OC 473:6; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:2

¹¹⁷³ SA OC 477:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:9

¹¹⁷⁴ SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:8

¹¹⁷⁵ MSS 19219, 19223

¹¹⁷⁶ Chinese haggadah, Introduction

¹¹⁷⁷ A similar suggestion of the scribe writing from memory was made by Padoll, in connection with a different Kaifeng MS. (Burton L. Padoll, A Study of a Liturgy of the Jews of Kai Feng Fu, p.38)

found in the hagadot of other communities, appear in the Kaifeng hagadah. A copyist would not just add in such berachot; there was obviously a tradition to recite such berachot at that particular point in the seder and each case will be discussed at the appropriate place.

The seder service begins with kiddush, which is also the first of the four cups of wine.¹¹⁷⁸ Kiddush always begins with the berachah over the wine: borei pri hagefen. However there was a dispute in the Mishnah over whether borei pri hagefen precedes the main berachah of the kiddush or is recited after it.¹¹⁷⁹ The halachah is that it precedes it.¹¹⁸⁰

In the later Kaifeng hagadah manuscript the berachah “borei pri hagefen” is found *both* at the beginning¹¹⁸¹ *and* at the end¹¹⁸² of the kiddush. In the earlier manuscript, it is found at the end of the kiddush,¹¹⁸³ but since the beginning is not extant, we don’t know whether it also appeared there. It is difficult to know why it appeared at the end of the kiddush. However, it is of interest to mention that there is a solitary opinion of Rabbi Yechezkel Landau that if a woman makes kiddush, then the berachah over the wine comes *after* the berachah for the kiddush,¹¹⁸⁴ but it seems unlikely that this opinion is the source of the unusual order of the berachot found in the Kaifeng hagadah.

If the seder night occurs on Shabbat or motzaei Shabbat then there are appropriate additions to the kiddush.¹¹⁸⁵ The Kaifeng manuscript has all these variations but in no comprehensible order.¹¹⁸⁶

As with the hagadah in Rabbi Saadia Gaon’s siddur¹¹⁸⁷ and in the Persian siddur,¹¹⁸⁸ there is in the Kaifeng hagadah a piyut beginning “bahar banu” in the middle of the main berachah of this kiddush.¹¹⁸⁹

Kiddush is followed by washing of the hands without saying the berachah al netillat yadayim.¹¹⁹⁰ However according to the Rambam¹¹⁹¹ and the siddur of Rabbi Saadia Gaon,¹¹⁹² this berachah is recited, and this is also the custom amongst the Yemenite Jews.¹¹⁹³ The berachah over washing the hands also appears in the Kaifeng hagadah.¹¹⁹⁴

¹¹⁷⁸ SA OC 473:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 7:10

¹¹⁷⁹ Mishnah Berachot 8:1

¹¹⁸⁰ SA OC 271:10; Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 29:6

¹¹⁸¹ MS 19223 f.1

¹¹⁸² MS 19223 f.15

¹¹⁸³ MS 19219 f.12

¹¹⁸⁴ Tziun L’nefesh Chaya (Tzelach) on Berachot, 61b (p.50)

¹¹⁸⁵ SA OC 473:1; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 29:1, 22

¹¹⁸⁶ MS 19219 ff.1-12 passim

¹¹⁸⁷ Rabbi Saadia Gaon siddur p.14

¹¹⁸⁸ Persian siddur ff.59b-60a

¹¹⁸⁹ MS 19219 ff.2-6, 9. There are three folios missing in MS 19219 between f.8 and f.9. However they are present in MS 19223 ff.9-11.

¹¹⁹⁰ SA OC 473:6

¹¹⁹¹ Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:1

¹¹⁹² Rabbi Saadia Gaon siddur p.136

¹¹⁹³ Halichot Taiman, p.43; A list of additional authorities requiring the recital of this berachah

The berachah borei pri haadamah is then recited before eating the karpas.¹¹⁹⁵ This berachah over the karpas will later in the seder exempt one from making this berachah over the maror.¹¹⁹⁶ In the Kaifeng manuscripts, karpas is entirely absent and so is yachatz which should follow it.¹¹⁹⁷

A study of the Kaifeng hagadah manuscript was made by Mark Loeb in 1975.¹¹⁹⁸ On this question of karpas, he writes, “[The second oddity in this hagadah is that] the karpas is eaten not at the beginning of the Seder, but at the beginning of the meal itself. This may be explainable in terms of the fact that the second dipping takes place at this time, and there is no particularly cogent reason why it has to be earlier.”¹¹⁹⁹

There are a number of inaccuracies in this statement. Firstly, it is maror and not karpas which is eaten at the beginning of the meal. Should one not have a vegetable other than maror, then at the place of karpas in the seder, one eats the maror and at the place of maror one again eats the maror.¹²⁰⁰ Moreover, as can be seen in Rashi on the Gemara¹²⁰¹ and more especially in the Tur,¹²⁰² and in the Orchot Chaim,¹²⁰³ there is a reason why the karpas is eaten towards the beginning of the seder. A change in one’s daily routine, such as eating the karpas *before* the meal, is likely to rouse the children’s curiosity and thus, as desired, encourage them to ask questions at the seder. A further indication that the absence of the mention of karpas is a copyist’s error and is not just due to a different custom of the Kaifeng Jews, is that yachatz which immediately follows it is also omitted.

The magid – the relating of the going out of Egypt which then follows, is in the Kaifeng manuscripts¹²⁰⁴ very similar to that recited in other communities, although after the recitation of the “ten plagues”, several paragraphs are omitted in the Kaifeng manuscripts which then continue with the section “Rabban Gamliel”.¹²⁰⁵ However these very same omissions also occur in several non-Kaifeng hagadot.¹²⁰⁶ In the middle of the “bircat hageulah” which is recited immediately before the second cup of wine, a piyut “ata gaalta” is inserted in the Kaifeng manuscripts.¹²⁰⁷ This same

can be found in the Hagadah Sheleimah of Rabbi Menachem Kasher, p.98 and fn.6

¹¹⁹⁴ MS 19219 ff.12-13

¹¹⁹⁵ SA OC 473:6; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:2

¹¹⁹⁶ MB 473:55

¹¹⁹⁷ Should be at MS 19219 f.13

¹¹⁹⁸ Mark G. Loeb, A Study of the Passover Haggadah of the Chinese Jews

¹¹⁹⁹ Mark G. Loeb, A Study of the Passover Haggadah of the Chinese Jews, p.76

¹²⁰⁰ SA OC 475:2; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:12

¹²⁰¹ Rashi on BT Pesachim 114b

¹²⁰² Tur OC 473

¹²⁰³ Orchot Chaim, Hilchot Leil Hapesach 24, (p.80b)

¹²⁰⁴ MS 19219 f.13ff

¹²⁰⁵ MS 19219 f.42

¹²⁰⁶ Rambam. end of Hilchot Chametz uMatzah “nusach hahagadah”; the main hagadah text in the siddur of Rabbi Saadia Gaon, p.139; Persian siddur f.66a

¹²⁰⁷ MS 19219 ff.54-72

piyut is also found in the siddur of Rabbi Saadia Gaon¹²⁰⁸ and in the Persian siddur.¹²⁰⁹

Magid is followed by washing the hands with the recitation of the berachah al netillat yadayim,¹²¹⁰ but this is missing from the Kaifeng manuscripts,¹²¹¹ - almost certainly a copyist's error.

The next stage is eating of the matzah which is immediately preceded by reciting the two berachot: hamotzi and al achilat matzah.¹²¹² The first berachah appears in the manuscripts,¹²¹³ but the second one is absent. This is again almost certainly a copyist's error.

The berachah al achilat maror is recited,¹²¹⁴ and the maror is then eaten. The berachah borei pri haadamah is not recited here since it was already recited before eating karpas and/or since hamotzi has already been said this maror is generally considered to be part of the meal.¹²¹⁵ In the Kaifeng manuscripts, two berachot are given here, borei pri haadamah and al achilat maror.¹²¹⁶

The next item in the hagadah is korech ("Hillel's sandwich");¹²¹⁷ before eating it, "zecher l'mikdash k'Hillel" is recited.¹²¹⁸ All that is mentioned at this point in the Kaifeng manuscripts is זכר לטית (zecher latit).¹²¹⁹ Werblowsky points out that this is similar to זכר לטיט ולתבן (zecher latit uleiven) which appears at the same point in some Yemenite manuscripts.¹²²⁰ Although it is the universal custom today to recite "zecher l'mikdash k'Hillel..." before eating the korech, the Mishnah Berurah in the Biur Halachah indeed questions this custom, since it will constitute an interruption between the berachot over the matzah and the maror, and the korech.¹²²¹

The Kaifeng manuscripts then follow with the after berachah borei nefashot.¹²²² This is not in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch and the hagadot of other communities, because since one has also eaten matzot, the after berachah will be the bircat hamazon recited after the meal.

However there is Rabbinical support for saying the berachah borei pri haadamah before eating the maror and borei nefashot after eating it. There is a responsum by the Rashba¹²²³ which was later reinforced by the Bach.¹²²⁴ The latter

¹²⁰⁸ Rabbi Saadia Gaon siddur pp.144-45

¹²⁰⁹ Persian siddur ff.67a-68a

¹²¹⁰ SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:6

¹²¹¹ Should be at 19219 f.76

¹²¹² SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:8

¹²¹³ MS 19219 f.76

¹²¹⁴ SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:8

¹²¹⁵ Aruch Hashulchan OC 475:8

¹²¹⁶ MS 19219 f.77; This variation found in the Kaifeng hagadah will be discussed later.

¹²¹⁷ SA OC 475:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:8

¹²¹⁸ SA OC 475:1

¹²¹⁹ MS 19219 f.78

¹²²⁰ Werblowsky, Paamim, p.58

¹²²¹ Biur Halachah of the MB 475 dh "v'omer zecheh"

¹²²² MS 19219 f.78

¹²²³ Rashba, 1:241

¹²²⁴ Bach on Tur OC 473 dh "uleinyan"

writes that in order to observe all the opinions of the Rishonim, one should eat the volume of a kazayit (size of an olive) of karpas and when saying the berachah borei pri haadamah have the intention that it will not include the maror which will be eaten later during the seder. After the karpas the after berachah borei nefashot is recited. When later in the seder service hamotzi over the matzah is recited, one should have the intention that this berachah will not exempt a berachah from being recited over the maror. Over the maror one should then say borei pri haadamah and al achilat maror and after eating it recite borei nefashot.¹²²⁵ It would thus seem that the Jews of Kaifeng had a tradition which accorded with these opinions. However, since the section of the seder on karpas is missing from this manuscript, it is not known what was written in earlier manuscripts regarding karpas, prior to some copyist omitting it.

According to the halachah, before bircat hamazon, after having eaten the seder meal and the afikoman, one should wash at least the first two joints of the fingers, ("mayim acharonim").¹²²⁶ Although according to most opinions, including the Shulchan Aruch,¹²²⁷ a berachah is not recited over mayim acharonim, there are some minority opinions which state that a berachah is recited.¹²²⁸ Since this berachah appears in the Kaifeng hagadah manuscripts at this stage of the Seder service,¹²²⁹ it indicates that the Kaifeng community had a tradition to follow these minority opinions.

The text for bircat hamazon, which is the next item in the seder service does not appear in the Kaifeng hagadah, but this is not necessarily unusual, since the text of bircat hamazon is usually readily available elsewhere, such as in every siddur. There is however at this point in the Kaifeng manuscripts an instruction in Judeo-Persian which includes "נברך" (n'varech).¹²³⁰ This same word appears at this point in the hagadah of the Persian siddur¹²³¹ where it instructs the participants to say bircat hamazon and, as with the Kaifeng hagadah, the text of bircat hamazon does not appear in the Persian siddur.

The third cup of wine which immediately follows bircat hamazon is missing in the Kaifeng manuscripts,¹²³² but this is almost certainly a copyist's error. Here, however there is also another possible though unlikely reason for the omission. On the seder night, the recital of bircat hamazon with a cup of wine is obligatory and it is also the third of the four cups of wine at the seder.¹²³³ However, this cup of wine is not unique to seder night. Although it is not obligatory *always* to recite bircat hamazon

¹²²⁵ There are also other authorities such as Rabbi Saadia Gaon (siddur p.136) who after eating karpas say the berachah "borei nefashot" and there are likewise opinions who say "borei nefashot" after eating the maror (Maharil, Seder Hagadah, p.21a)

¹²²⁶ SA OC 181:4; Rambam Hilchot Berachot 7:11

¹²²⁷ SA OC 181:7

¹²²⁸ Sefer Yereim, par.23 p.16a; Raviah 151; Temim Deim also states (p.8a) that a berachah is recited over mayim acharonim, but adds that the berachah is "al rechitzat yadayim".

¹²²⁹ MS 19219 ff.78-79

¹²³⁰ MS 19219 f.79

¹²³¹ Persian siddur f.69a

¹²³² should be at MS 19219 f.79

¹²³³ MB 479:2; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 7:10, 8:10

over a cup of wine,¹²³⁴ it is praiseworthy to do so.¹²³⁵ It is thus possible that the berachah over wine might sometimes be found in a siddur immediately after the text of bircat hamazon and for this reason was not specifically written in the Kaifeng hagadah.

Loeb suggests a link between the Jews of Kaifeng saying borei nefashot after the maror and the absence of the third cup. In his words, "... since they had a shortened blessing for grace after meals (borei nefashot rabot), ... the absence of the third cup was not simply an oversight." (*bracketed words in original*)¹²³⁶ In answer to Loeb's comment, firstly, borei nefashot is not "a shortened blessing for grace after meals". It is recited as an after-berachah *only* after foods which are not of the "seven species"¹²³⁷ and it is not a substitute for bircat hamazon. Even if one could recite borei nefashot as a substitute for bircat hamazon, it would still be very difficult to understand how the recital of borei nefashot could be linked with the absence of the third cup of wine.

The final part of the seder service is recitation of the remainder of the hallel, hallel hagadol and nishmat.¹²³⁸ The remainder of the hallel appears in the Kaifeng manuscripts, as does the berachah for the fourth cup of wine and the after berachah for wine,¹²³⁹ but hallel hagadol¹²⁴⁰ and nishmat are missing. The simplest explanation for this omission is to attribute it to the copyist. However there is perhaps a difference of opinion as to whether or not these two items (which were omitted in the Kaifeng manuscripts) are obligatory. This argument is to be found in a hagadah which was published for soldiers in the Israeli Defense Forces who, if in a state of emergency, must limit the seder service to an absolute minimum. This soldiers' hagadah omits hallel hagadol and nishmat based on the fact that there are versions of the writings of the Geonim and of the Rambam which state that one says hallel hagadol over a fifth cup of wine which is only optional and not obligatory.¹²⁴¹

To summarise the Kaifeng seder, one can see that the Jews of Kaifeng observed most of the requirements of the seder service. Most, if not all, of the omissions in the manuscripts are obviously due to copyists' errors, arising from repeated copyings. A number of berachot which appear throughout the Kaifeng hagadah are not found in the hagadot of other communities. These were very likely recited due to traditions passed down in Kaifeng. As we have shown there are sources in the Rabbinical literature for these additions.

¹²³⁴ SA OC 182:1

¹²³⁵ SA OC 182:1 Rema

¹²³⁶ Mark G. Loeb, *A Study of the Passover Haggadah of the Chinese Jews*, p.82

¹²³⁷ The seven species are: wheat, barley, grapes (including wine), olives, dates, figs and pomegranates.

¹²³⁸ SA OC 480:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 8:10

¹²³⁹ MS 19219 ff.79-96

¹²⁴⁰ Psalm 136

¹²⁴¹ Rabbinate of the Israel Defence Forces, Hagadah Lishat Cherum, Introduction

Prayers on Pesach: Apart from the hagadah, there is very little indeed extant material on the prayers recited on Pesach. Two manuscripts¹²⁴² contain a fragment of the shacharit service, which it would seem was originally written for Shemini Atzeret. Where the words Shemini Atzeret appear in the amidah, above the line is written “Chag Hamatzot” (Pesach), in one of these manuscripts in smaller letters¹²⁴³ and in the other manuscript in letters of the same size.¹²⁴⁴

On the *first two days* of Pesach, on Shavuot, on Sukkot, on Shemini Atzeret, and on Chanukah, whole hallel is recited¹²⁴⁵ together with a berachah at its beginning and at its end;¹²⁴⁶ on the *last six days* of Pesach, half hallel is recited - in many Oriental communities *without* a berachah at its beginning and end.¹²⁴⁷

In both of these two above mentioned manuscripts, the presentation of hallel is incomplete. In one of them a fragment of whole hallel follows together with the berachah at the beginning (the end is not extant).¹²⁴⁸ However there is no comment that part of the hallel was to be omitted on the last six days of Pesach. In the other manuscript, which is for Yom Tov of Pesach, only half hallel appears, without the berachot at the beginning and end.¹²⁴⁹ In this latter case the deficiency is more serious, since a person using this siddur will not have in front of him the berachot and the missing portions of the hallel.

There is also a manuscript¹²⁵⁰ which contains a fragment of a piyut written for Pesach.¹²⁵¹ The beginning is missing; there is a refrain וַאֲמַרוּ פֶסַח הוּא לֵה' (v'omru Pesach hu laShem) and from the acrostic it was very likely written by a person called Elazar. This piyut is followed by hallel hagadol¹²⁵² and then by a fragment of the mussaf service for Pesach.¹²⁵³

1850 Festival list: Although, as we have already stated, the list of Festivals contained in the letter from the community of Kaifeng to the Consul in 1850 is unreliable, the notation “Feast of dry wheat, or unleavened bread” is obviously a reference to Pesach. Furthermore, it accords with other things which were written in past centuries about Pesach in Kaifeng. In his observations on this list made about twenty years after this letter (of 1850) was sent, Finn writes, “The ordinance of unleavened bread shows that this ‘second month, fourteenth day,’ is truly Passover.”¹²⁵⁴ Professor Cecil Roth,

¹²⁴² MSS 19238, 19241

¹²⁴³ MS 19238 ff.7, 8

¹²⁴⁴ MS 19241 ff.10, 11

¹²⁴⁵ Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:6, 7

¹²⁴⁶ Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:10

¹²⁴⁷ Rambam Hilchot Chanukah 3:7

¹²⁴⁸ MS 19241 ff.16-22

¹²⁴⁹ MS 19238 ff.15-21

¹²⁵⁰ MS 19221

¹²⁵¹ MS 19221 ff.1-3

¹²⁵² MS 19221 ff.4-7 (Psalm 136)

¹²⁵³ MS 19221 ff.8-15

¹²⁵⁴ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.46

without any hesitation, also attributes this item in the above list of Festivals to Pesach.¹²⁵⁵

This letter sent to the Consul continues, “Cakes called oil fragrant (cakes) are distributed to friends. (*bracketed word in original*)”¹²⁵⁶

Although at the seder service, one must use only matzot which are made *solely* of flour and water,¹²⁵⁷ there is another kind of matzah known as matzah ashirah which is made from flour and a liquid such as wine or oil.¹²⁵⁸ Although matzah ashirah cannot be used to fulfil the mitzvah of eating matzah on the seder night,¹²⁵⁹ it is eaten during Pesach by Oriental Jewish communities¹²⁶⁰ and it is possible that the “cakes” distributed to friends in Kaifeng during Pesach were matzah ashirah.

Finn in his comments on this 1850 list correctly points out the distinction between matzot and matzah ashirah, “In other countries it is not unusual to mix pure olive oil or wine in the composition of Matsoth [Matzot], or Passover biscuits, by way of festal indulgence, although this is not lawful for the special celebration of the first day of the feast.”¹²⁶¹

Shavuot

From the second night of Pesach and for the following 48 nights, there is the mitzvah to “count the Omer on every night.”¹²⁶² Following the last day of the Omer, is the festival of Shavuot.¹²⁶³

This daily counting which appears in siddurim of communities all over the world, is not found at all in the fragments of the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts. It cannot however be assumed from this that the Jews of Kaifeng did not count the Omer, since we do not have anything even approaching complete siddurim, and this is especially so in the case of the maariv service where the counting of the Omer would normally appear.

Unlike the other Festivals in the Jewish calendar, there are no special laws, as distinct from customs, associated with Shavuot.¹²⁶⁴

The only extant fragments of the Kaifeng manuscripts containing the prayers for Shavuot are two fragments for the shacharit service¹²⁶⁵ and even these were primarily written for Shemini Atzeret. Below the words “Shemini Atzeret” in the

¹²⁵⁵ Chinese haggadah, Introduction

¹²⁵⁶ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.42

¹²⁵⁷ SA OC 462:1

¹²⁵⁸ SA OC 462:1; MB 462:1; Rambam Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 5:2

¹²⁵⁹ SA OC 462:1

¹²⁶⁰ SA OC 462:4 Rema; Yalkut Yosef Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, OC 462:1; Ashkenazim do not eat matzah ashirah.

¹²⁶¹ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.46

¹²⁶² SA OC 489:1; Rambam Hilchot Temidim uMusafim 7:22

¹²⁶³ SA OC 494:1; Rambam Hilchot Temidim uMusafim 8:1

¹²⁶⁴ SA OC 494:3 Rema; MB 494:1

¹²⁶⁵ MSS 19238 19241

amidah in these two manuscripts appears “Chag Hashavuot”.¹²⁶⁶ The incongruences associated with these two manuscripts have already been described above.

In addition to the above mentioned Kaifeng siddur manuscripts which mention Shavuot in the prayers, Finn writes “On a later page, among the journals, we shall however find mention of the Feast of weeks, i.e. Pentecost [Shavuot] ...”¹²⁶⁷ However Finn does not quote a specific reference.

Tisha b’Av and other Fasts

From the book of Zechariah¹²⁶⁸ we learn that in the Jewish calendar there are four fasts commemorating events associated with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the most strict of these fasts being Tisha b’Av – 9 Av, the day when (amongst other misfortunes) both the first and second Temples were destroyed.¹²⁶⁹ The other three fasts are Shivah Asar b’Tammuz – 17 Tammuz, the day when (amongst other misfortunes) there was the breach of the wall of Jerusalem;¹²⁷⁰ Tzom Gedaliah – 3 Tishri, the day when Gedaliah was assassinated and Asarah b’Tevet – 10 Tevet, the day when the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians began.¹²⁷¹

The stele of 1489 states, according to the translation by Tiberiu Weisz, “During the period of four seasons, there were four days of fasting. All the ancestors suffered calamities.”¹²⁷² In his footnotes, Weisz writes that “this was a reference to the four fasts that commemorate the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE ... the 17th of Tammuz... the 9th of Av... the fast over the assassination of Gedaliah in Tishri ... and the tenth of Tevet”.¹²⁷³ Weisz’ explanation of the meaning on this stele is very plausible.

In place of Weisz’ translation “four days of fasting”, White translated this phrase as “abstention for seven days.”¹²⁷⁴ If indeed by the expression “abstention”, White meant actual fasting, then what are the *seven* fasts in the Jewish year to which he is referring? The only time fasting for *seven* days is mandatory is in the last series of fasts for rain, and that is only in Eretz Israel;¹²⁷⁵ hence the stele, (according to the translation by White), is obviously not referring to these seven fasts.

¹²⁶⁶ MSS 19238 ff.7, 8, 19241 ff.10, 11

¹²⁶⁷ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.47

¹²⁶⁸ Zechariah 8:19

¹²⁶⁹ BT Rosh Hashanah 18b; SA OC 549:1; MB 549:1; Rambam Hilchot Taaniyot 5: 3

¹²⁷⁰ Originally this fast was on 9 Tammuz, the day when the Babylonians breached the wall but it was later moved to 17 Tammuz, the day the Romans breached the wall, since the destruction of the second Temple was a greater catastrophe (SA OC 549:2)

¹²⁷¹ SA OC 549:1; MB 549:1,2; Rambam Hilchot Taaniyot 5:2

¹²⁷² Weisz, p.9

¹²⁷³ Weisz, p.9 fn.37. However, as stated above, the 17th Tammuz is in fact connected with the destruction of the *second* Temple. Incidentally the date 586 BCE is from *non-Jewish* chronology. According to *Jewish* chronology, the second Temple was built 70 years after the destruction of the first Temple. The second Temple stood for 420 years and was destroyed in 70 CE. Thus the first Temple was destroyed in 421 BCE – (not 420 since there was no year 0).

¹²⁷⁴ 1489 stele, White 2:11

¹²⁷⁵ SA OC 575:4; Rambam Hilchot Taaniyot 3:5

The term “abstention” must thus have a different meaning from “fasting”. A possible explanation of the meaning of the word “abstention” on this stele was proposed by Leslie who wrote that these “seven days of abstention are particularly suited to Passover,”¹²⁷⁶ when by Torah law one abstains from chametz for seven days.

Prayers for Tisha b’Av: According to the customs of the Oriental communities,¹²⁷⁷ in the amidah for *all* the services of Tisha b’Av there are two additions. These are to be found in the berachah, which begins “tishkon Yerushalayim”,¹²⁷⁸ where there is a special prayer for Tisha b’Av beginning “rachem”.¹²⁷⁹ The second addition which is said on all fast days is found in the berachah shema koleinu in the silent amidah, and in the repetition of the amidah as an additional berachah recited after the berachah reah v’onyeinu.¹²⁸⁰

One of the Kaifeng siddur manuscripts¹²⁸¹ is devoted to shacharit and minchah of Tisha b’Av and it gives these two additions in the correct places.¹²⁸² However, the copyist was obviously not knowledgeable about the prayers and *in addition* to the special version of the berachah of tishkon Yerushalayim which is recited on Tisha b’Av, he *also* wrote the version which is recited throughout the year.¹²⁸³ (The copyist also included in both the silent amidah and the repetition, the havdalah which is recited in the maariv amidah on the termination of Shabbat and Yom Tov.¹²⁸⁴)

Reading of the Torah: The leining for the morning of Tisha b’Av begins with the words “ki toled banim”¹²⁸⁵ and there is also a haftarah which begins “asof asifaim”.¹²⁸⁶ At minchah the leining is “vayechal”¹²⁸⁷ and there are different customs for the source for the haftarah.¹²⁸⁸

The Kaifeng manuscript gives the correct leining for the morning of Tisha b’Av,¹²⁸⁹ the correct haftarah¹²⁹⁰ and also the correct leining for the afternoon of Tisha b’Av¹²⁹¹ but does not mention that a haftarah is recited in the afternoon. The latter fact accords with what the Bet Yosef learns from the wording of the Rambam¹²⁹² that

¹²⁷⁶ Leslie, p.87

¹²⁷⁷ MB 557:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 2:14

¹²⁷⁸ “v’Yerushalayim ircha” in the Ashkenazi liturgy

¹²⁷⁹ “nachem” in the Ashkenazi liturgy

¹²⁸⁰ SA OC 557:1; MB 557:3; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 1:14

¹²⁸¹ MS 19215

¹²⁸² MS 19215 ff.15-16, 16-17, 22-23, 25-26

¹²⁸³ MS 19215 ff.16, 27

¹²⁸⁴ MS 19215 ff.12, 21

¹²⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 4:25; SA OC 559:4 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:18

¹²⁸⁶ Jeremiah 8:13; SA OC 559:4 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:18

¹²⁸⁷ Exodus 32:11; SA OC 566:1; Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:18

¹²⁸⁸ Kaf Hachaim OC 559:42

¹²⁸⁹ MS 19215 f.35

¹²⁹⁰ MS 19215 f.35

¹²⁹¹ MS 19215 f.43

¹²⁹² Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 13:18

(according to the Rambam) no haftarah is in fact read on the afternoon of Tisha b'Av.¹²⁹³

1850 Festival list: In the list appears, “sixth moon, tenth day – Fires are not lit. This is called the fast of the Judges’ gate.”¹²⁹⁴ There is a dispute between the historians on whether this fast refers to Tisha b'Av or Yom Kippur.¹²⁹⁵ If we call the “sixth moon” the fifth month, namely Av, then it would be just within a day of Tisha b'Av. If on the other hand we call it the seventh month, namely Tishri, then it would be exactly Yom Kippur. As we have already seen above, the first alternative fits in much better with the other dates given in this list of Festivals, as far as the numbering of the months goes. However, how do we explain the other two things, namely, “fires are not lit” and “fast of the Judges’ gate”, quoted after the words “sixth moon – tenth day”? On Yom Kippur, as on Shabbat, one is forbidden to light fires. On the other hand, the expression used is “fires are not lit” and although there is no prohibition on making a fire on Tisha b'Av, as a sign of mourning, the lighting in the Synagogue is kept to an *absolute minimum* on Tisha b'Av¹²⁹⁶ - the normal numbers of “fires” lit in the Synagogue is far less than usual. On the other hand for Yom Kippur more lights than usual are lit in the Synagogue.¹²⁹⁷ The second phrase “the fast of the Judges’ gate” is indicative of Yom Kippur, which is the Day of Judgment, on which, at its conclusion, the final verdict is sealed.¹²⁹⁸ However, as we have already said, one cannot regard this list as being accurate.

Other fasts: Other than for Tisha b'Av there seems to be nothing extant on how the Jews of Kaifeng observed these other three fasts commemorating the period of the destruction of the Temple, nor indeed any specific mention of them.

Kashrut

Although there are numerous detailed laws in the Jewish Religious Codes on kashrut, there is very little in the extant material on how the Jews of Kaifeng observed (or did not observe) these laws.

Permitted and forbidden fauna: The Torah gives certain distinguishing signs which differentiate between permitted and forbidden animals, fish and birds. Animals must both chew the cud and have a cloven hoof.¹²⁹⁹ Amongst the forbidden animals are pigs, rabbits, camels, horses, asses and mules. Fish must have both fins and scales;¹³⁰⁰ forbidden fish include sharks, dogfish and eels. The Torah gives a list of forbidden birds which includes vultures, ravens, and storks.¹³⁰¹

¹²⁹³ Bet Yosef on Tur OC 575 dh “rabbeinu kaitsad”

¹²⁹⁴ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.42

¹²⁹⁵ Leslie, JAOS, pp.356-58; Finn, Orphan Colony, pp.46-47

¹²⁹⁶ SA OC 559:3; MB 559:15

¹²⁹⁷ SA OC 610:4

¹²⁹⁸ MB 623:3; Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 2:7

¹²⁹⁹ Leviticus 11:3; SA YD 79:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 1:2

¹³⁰⁰ Leviticus 11:9; SA YD 83:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 1:24

¹³⁰¹ Leviticus 11:13-19; SA YD 82:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 1:14

Permitted and forbidden fauna are referred to in the 1512 stele: "...and in their meat and drink they are careful to observe the distinction between what is permitted and what is not."¹³⁰² Ricci, the Jesuit missionary, writing about a century later, was more specific and wrote, "Although the Chinese and the Saracens and the Jews all partake of the flesh of horses, asses and mules, this last class [Jews] probably refrain from such meats in accordance with a custom peculiar to their race."¹³⁰³ That the Jews of Kaifeng attached great importance to the prohibition of eating pork is shown by a comment made at the beginning of the 17th century by the head of the Synagogue in Kaifeng that "since they had heard so much of Ricci's reputation and learning, they would confer upon him the dignity of high priest of the Synagogue, if he would join their faith and *abstain from eating pork.*" (*emphasis added*)¹³⁰⁴ A few decades later, the Portuguese Procurado General for China, Alvarez Semedo, also referred to the Jews of Kaifeng "not eating of Swines flesh".¹³⁰⁵

Even when the Jewish community in Kaifeng was in the process of assimilation, this prohibition of not eating pork was still observed. This is found in the journal of the Chinese Protestant, K'hew, who reported in 1850 that the Jews in Kaifeng "are forbidden to eat pork."¹³⁰⁶ Similarly nearly twenty years later in 1867, Lieberman in a letter to his father wrote "... the majority of the Jews [of Kaifeng] had become so entirely ignorant of their religion that they abandoned its tenets. Yet their descendants still abstained from eating swine-flesh ... and the eating of anything impure of beasts, birds and fishes."¹³⁰⁷ This seems to be the only specific mention that the Jews of Kaifeng did not eat non-kasher birds and fish either. As least as far as pig products are concerned, it is reported that even at the beginning of the 20th century they still would not eat pork.¹³⁰⁸ In the mid 1920s, they remembered the prohibition against eating pork.¹³⁰⁹ Whether they only "remembered" it, but did not observe it, is not clear.

Shechitah: In order to be permitted for a Jew to eat, an animal or bird must be killed by shechitah.¹³¹⁰ There are numerous laws and details on how shechitah must be performed and the smallest deviation, such as even a very slight nick on the shechitah knife¹³¹¹ can make the animal or bird forbidden to be eaten by a Jew. For this reason, only a Jew who has received a certificate of competence to do shechitah is permitted to do it.¹³¹²

¹³⁰² 1512 stele, White, 2:46

¹³⁰³ Ricci journal, Latin text, p.282; Ricci journal, p.112

¹³⁰⁴ Ricci journal, Latin text, p.274; Ricci journal, p.109; There is similar wording in Ricci's diary, Löwenthal, pp.395-96

¹³⁰⁵ Semedo, Löwenthal p.393

¹³⁰⁶ K'hew, Smith, p.29; Milne, p.406 also reports that this was the case at the same period.

¹³⁰⁷ Liebermann, Report, p.94; Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle, p.12

¹³⁰⁸ Laufer, p.325; Perlmann, p.12

¹³⁰⁹ Leslie, p.71

¹³¹⁰ SA YD 13:1; Rambam Hilchot Shechitah 1:1

¹³¹¹ SA YD 18:2; Rambam Hilchot Shechitah 1:14

¹³¹² SA YD 1:1 Rema; Rambam Hilchot Shechitah 4:3

In the year 1605 Ricci reported that the Jew Ai from Kaifeng who visited him in Pekin “complained of the restrictions which the Grand Rabbi [of Kaifeng] had placed on them, such as not eating any meat of animals which had not been killed by his own hand.”¹³¹³ We can thus see that the Jewish community of Kaifeng observed the commandment of shechitah. About forty years later, Antonio de Gouvea also made a mention of shechitah, “They perform other Mosaic rites. Their priests (rabbis) are those who have faithfully practiced these observances from childhood. Thus they can slaughter animals ...” (*bracketed word in original*)¹³¹⁴ Even though the non-Jews would at that period reproach the Jews of Kaifeng for some of their practices, including shechitah, and despite the fact that the Jews were “much troubled and weary” of these reproaches, they would, in the words of Alvarez Semedo, persist in “not touching a beast, which had been killed by the hand of a Gentile”.¹³¹⁵

The observance of shechitah in Kaifeng was also noted by Pan Guandan, (a Professor at the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing during the first half of the 20th century) who wrote, “Their [i.e. Jewish] Law provides only specially designated Jews may do the slaughtering, and only in a prescribed manner.”¹³¹⁶ Leslie states that according to the 1663b stele, there were “five Ritual Slaughterers” in Kaifeng.¹³¹⁷ However, it is not clear where on this stele this fact is mentioned.

Other prohibitions with fauna: According to the Torah, there are prohibitions against eating the blood,¹³¹⁸ the “hip sinew” (or in technical language the “sciatic nerve”) (gid hanasheh)¹³¹⁹ and certain fats (chailev).¹³²⁰ In the case of domesticated animals (e.g. cows and sheep) all three prohibitions apply;¹³²¹ for wild animals (e.g. deer) the first two prohibitions apply;¹³²² for birds (e.g. chicken and ducks) only the first prohibition applies;¹³²³ and for fish (e.g. salmon and sardines) none of these prohibitions applies.¹³²⁴

The removal of the chailev and the gid hanasheh is a very skilled job and people thus undergo special training to learn the technique.¹³²⁵

In order to remove the blood, a number of veins are first removed from animals;¹³²⁶ in fowl it is just the jugular vein which must be removed or severed.¹³²⁷

¹³¹³ Ricci diary, Löwenthal, p.396; there is a similar wording in Ricci’s journal, Latin text, p.276 and in Ricci’s journal, p.110

¹³¹⁴ de Gouvea, Juifs, p.211

¹³¹⁵ Semedo, Löwenthal, p.393

¹³¹⁶ Pan Guandan, Shapiro, p.49

¹³¹⁷ Leslie, p.42

¹³¹⁸ SA YD 66:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 6:1

¹³¹⁹ SA YD 65:5; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 8:1

¹³²⁰ SA YD 64:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 7:1

¹³²¹ SA YD 64:1, 65:5, 66:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 6:1, 7:1, 8:1

¹³²² SA YD 64:1, 65:5, 66:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 6:1, 7:1, 8:1

¹³²³ SA YD 64:1, 65:5, 66:1; Rambam Maachalot Asurot 6:1, 7:1, 8:1

¹³²⁴ SA YD 66:1; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 6:1, (the non prohibition of blood). Fish do not have a gid hanasheh and these forbidden fats are limited to domesticated animals.

¹³²⁵ SA YD 64:7 Rema

¹³²⁶ SA YD 65:1

The meat then has to undergo a soaking and salting process,¹³²⁸ which was usually done by the butcher or the housewife. (Today, the meat is soaked and salted before it reaches the butcher or the supermarket.)

Ricci mentions the non-eating of the gid hanasheh. “They [the Jews of China and possibly specifically referring to Kaifeng] do not eat the portion of meat containing the thigh nerve. This custom was introduced by the Jews because Jacob was stricken in that nerve.”¹³²⁹ Gozani wrote that “they [the Jews of Kaifeng] abstain from Blood, and that they cut the Sinews and Veins of such Animals as they kill, in order that the Blood may flow away the easier.”¹³³⁰

As late as the first half of the 19th century the Jews of Kaifeng were particular about not eating blood or the gid hanasheh. We know this from at least two sources. One is Robert Morrison (1782-1834), a Christian Protestant missionary in China, who wrote in his journal on 10 October 1818 that he had had a conversation with a Mohammedan who told him that in Kaifeng there was a “sect that plucks out the sinew”, from all the meat which they eat.”¹³³¹ The second source is the Rev. William Charles Milne, who was also a Protestant missionary in China and spent “seven months residence in Ningpo.” He wrote in his diary on 10 January 1843 about a stranger who gave him “very distinct information of a class of religionists in Kaifung fu [Kaifeng], the capital of Honan, his native province, who from his description resemble the Jews. He says they refrain from ‘eating the sinew which is upon the hollow of the thigh’, and they do not touch the blood of animals.”¹³³²

Some years later in his book “Life in China” published in 1857, Rev William Milne, a Church of England missionary, wrote on this subject “... they [the Jews of Kaifeng] now go by the name T’iau-kin-kiau, [挑筋教]¹³³³ - ‘cutting the sinew sect, - because everything that ... [they] eat, mutton, beef, or fowl, must have the sinews taken out’.”¹³³⁴ This wording is almost identical to that used a few years earlier by K’hew¹³³⁵ who seems to have been the first to mention removing the sinews from “fowl”. However, the law regarding removal of the sinews is not applicable to fowl, since fowl do not have a gid hanasheh.¹³³⁶ Either both K’hew and Milne incorrectly

¹³²⁷ SA YD 65:3 Rema

¹³²⁸ SA YD 69:1-7; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 6:10-11

¹³²⁹ Ricci journal, Latin text, p.282 and Ricci journal, p.112, referring to Genesis 32:33

¹³³⁰ Gozani, Lettres, 18:45; Gozani, Travels, p.20

¹³³¹ “Ancient account of India and China, by two Mohammdan travelers...”, Chinese Repository (Canton), vol.1 June 1832, p.44

¹³³² Rev. W. C. Milne, “Notice of seven months’ residence in the city of Ningpo ...”, Chinese Repository (Canton), vol.13, February 1844, p.79

¹³³³ This Chinese expression means “religion which extracts the sinew” (Leslie, p.217). Even as late as 1933, the Jews in Kaifeng still called themselves by this expression; although they said that “as a body they had no religion; but, when asked of what faith they are, they claim to be Jews.” (Brown, 10 February 1933, p.242)

¹³³⁴ Milne, p.406

¹³³⁵ K’hew, Smith, p.28

¹³³⁶ SA YD 65:5; If however, *by a freak*, one were to find a bird with a gid hanasheh, it would be forbidden.

included “fowl” in their lists, or they are referring to removing the jugular vein from fowl in order to avoid the transgression of eating blood. As stated above, Milne wrote that the Jews “do not touch the blood of animals.” In 1850, following his visit to Kaifeng, Tseang Yung-Che wrote an account *entitled* “the Religion which Enjoins the Extracting of the Sinew”.¹³³⁷ However, it seems that after the middle of the 19th century the Jews of Kaifeng stopped “removing sinews from slaughtered animals.”¹³³⁸

Above it was mentioned that the Jewish community in Kaifeng had a least one person who did the shechitah. They also had an “office-bearer” who was the “sinew-extractor”.¹³³⁹ Was his job *just* to remove the gid hanasheh, or did he also remove the chailev? Nothing seems to have been written about this. We learn from Domenge, who in 1722 saw the Kaifeng Synagogue and gives a detailed description and drawing of its components, that there was a special courtyard situated on the northern side of the building where the nerves and sinews of the animals killed for food were extracted.¹³⁴⁰ Perlmann adds that this extraction was done “under the supervision of a competent person commissioned for it.”¹³⁴¹

In the 1930s, the historian Noach Mishkowsky reported that he had met two Chinese Jews who told him that their ancestors usually ate special Jewish meat which had usually been salted and had had the veins pulled out.¹³⁴² Thus the salting of meat was known at least amongst *some* Chinese Jews. It would seem that Mishkowsky is referring to a Chinese Jewish community other than Kaifeng. However, it is possible that in Kaifeng they also knew about the salting of meat in order to remove the blood.

Other laws within the framework of kashrut such as the laws of terefot,¹³⁴³ and mixtures of meat and milk¹³⁴⁴ do not seem to be mentioned in the extant material and thus it is not known whether or not the Jews of Kaifeng observed or were even aware of such laws.

Shaatzneiz

There is a prohibition in the Torah against wearing garments which contain both wool and linen. Such garments are known as shaatzneiz.¹³⁴⁵

James Finn in his book “The Jews of China” writes of the following incident. “A cloth-manufacturer in Stockport, lately brought some samples of a mixed cotton and woolen cloth to a house of the same trade in Leeds. The proprietor of the latter having no occasion for the goods, and remarking that the colours were mostly suited to Asiatic taste, suggested that they might be sent to China. It was answered, ‘They have been there already, and sold at a fair profit, but were returned in a few days, by

¹³³⁷ Tseang, Smith, p.50

¹³³⁸ Pan Guandan, Shapiro, p.50

¹³³⁹ Tseang, Smith, p.51

¹³⁴⁰ Domenge, Juifs, p.155; Finn, Jews of China, p.18; Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.34

¹³⁴¹ Perlmann, p.5

¹³⁴² Noach Mishkowsky (1878 - 1950), Etyoppe Idn in Afrike un Azye, p.132; Pollak, Mandarins, p.228

¹³⁴³ SA YD 29-60; Rambam Hilchot Shechitah 5-11

¹³⁴⁴ SA YD 87-97; Rambam Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 9

¹³⁴⁵ Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11; SA YD 298:1; Rambam Hilchot Kilayim 10:1

the Hong merchants, who pronounced it contrary to their religion that animal and vegetable substances should be woven together and worn.” Finn continues that this resembles the law against shaatnez “but no trace of such a prohibition has been discovered among any other than these nations.”¹³⁴⁶

Several questions arise from Finn’s statement. Firstly, he writes about *cotton* and wool, and not *linen* and wool. Is there a religion which forbids wearing a garment containing *cotton* and wool? Secondly, he does not mention the religion of the “merchants” or elaborate on the identity of “these nations”.

On this question Chen Yuan writes, “Some Westerners say customs in Henan [where Kaifeng is located] and Jiangsu provinces are very similar to those of the Jews. For example ... the prohibition against weaving wool and flax together.”¹³⁴⁷ Note that Chen uses the word “flax” which is linen, and not “cotton” which was used by Finn.

However, Xia Nai, Director of China’s Institute of Archeology, says that this non-weaving of flax and wool was “more likely a conservative peasant reaction against anything new. Local people used cotton padding, or silk floss if they were rich, to keep warm. Wool is not a product of those parts. Coming from the Northwest, it was literally ‘outlandish’ and therefore unpopular.”¹³⁴⁸

It is thus possible that the aforementioned incident is not connected with the laws of shaatnez and therefore no conclusion can be drawn as to whether the Jews of Kaifeng observed the laws of shaatnez.

From Cradle to Grave

Brit Milah: The Torah states that a Jewish male must be circumcised (*brit milah*) at the age of eight days old.¹³⁴⁹ It might be assumed that something as fundamental to Judaism as circumcision would be mentioned in the steles, but this is not the case. Gao Wangzhi, a graduate of Tsing Hua (Qinghua) University in Beijing, discusses this point and writes that such an omission “is understandable. Circumcision is in direct contravention of the Confucian injunction against ‘harming the body bestowed by one’s parents.’ It would have been unwise for the Kaifeng Jews to publicly proclaim it. But they did observe the ceremony for many years.”¹³⁵⁰ It was in fact the missionaries who first wrote about the Jews of Kaifeng observing circumcision.

The earliest mention of circumcision in Kaifeng seems to be by Antonio de Gouvea in 1644, “They perform the circumcision of their sons and other Mosaic rites.”¹³⁵¹ About ten years later a Portuguese, Alvarez Semedo, also refers to “the circumcising of their Infants on the eighth day.” He adds that the circumcision was performed despite the “reproaches” of “the Gentiles” and the negative comments of “their wives and Chinese kindred” who would tell them that it was “a cruell (*sic*) and

¹³⁴⁶ Finn, *Jews of China*, p.65

¹³⁴⁷ Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.32

¹³⁴⁸ Chen Yuan, Shapiro, p.32

¹³⁴⁹ Genesis 17: 9-14; SA YD 260:1, 262:1; Rambam Hilchot Milah 1:1, 7, 8

¹³⁵⁰ Gao Wangzhi, Shapiro, p.122

¹³⁵¹ de Gouvea, *Juifs*, p.211

barbarous thing.”¹³⁵² About half a century later, Gozani wrote “These Jews [of Kaifeng] ... still observe several Ceremonies of the Old Testament, Circumcision for Instance, which they say began in the Patriarch Abraham, as it really did.”¹³⁵³ In a later letter he referred to the day on which it is performed, “they retain circumcision on the 8th day.”¹³⁵⁴

Although as time progressed, it seems that the Jewish knowledge of the Jews of Kaifeng decreased, one of the Jews was, in the 1820s, still able to explain to Gaubil the verse “Shema Yisrael...” and “the commandment of the circumcision.”¹³⁵⁵

In the mid 19th century, the Rev. William Milne, a Christian missionary, sent two Chinese converts to Christianity from Shanghai to investigate the situation of the Jews of Kaifeng. They returned with two Jews from Kaifeng whom Milne questioned. One of these Jews was about forty years old and the other about forty five. Milne wrote that “they had both submitted to the rite of circumcision in infancy.”¹³⁵⁶ Bearing in mind that by that time the Jewish community had almost assimilated, it is remarkable that these two Jews still knew the Hebrew word for circumcision – “*milah*”.¹³⁵⁷ Milne later wrote that the situation as to circumcision in Kaifeng was still the same as when these two men had been circumcised, “The rite of circumcision is still practiced on males, within one month after birth.”¹³⁵⁸ There may be no significance in his wording “within one month” rather than “on the eighth day”; although possibly the Jews explained to Milne that in the case of the baby’s being unwell on the eighth day, the circumcision has to be postponed.¹³⁵⁹

However, there is also contradictory evidence as to whether circumcision was still being practiced at that period of history. The Rev. William Alexander Parsons Martin, an American Presbyterian missionary to China, who made a visit to Kaifeng in 1866 wrote “Since the cessation of their ritual worship, their children all grow up without the seal of the covenant. The young generation are uncircumcised.”¹³⁶⁰ Also at this period, the Jewish apostate Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky wrote that they “have ceased to practice the rite of circumcision.”¹³⁶¹

Nearly half a century later, Perlmann wrote “even circumcision of their newborn sons is not exercised any more.” He related that there were some Jews who were actively opposed to circumcision, “Two lads of seventeen and fifteen [from Kaifeng] were opposed to the operation, and remained uncircumcised.”¹³⁶² However, Edward Ezra reported that one of the Jews from Kaifeng “proposed and then allowed his eldest son, aged fifteen years, to be circumcised, which ceremony was

¹³⁵² Semedo, Löwenthal, p.393

¹³⁵³ Gozani, *Lettres*, 18:40; Gozani, *Travels*, p.16

¹³⁵⁴ Gozani, *Juifs*, p.59

¹³⁵⁵ Gaubil, p.54

¹³⁵⁶ Milne, p.404

¹³⁵⁷ Ezra, p.27

¹³⁵⁸ Milne, p.406

¹³⁵⁹ SA YD 263:1; Rambam *Hilchot Milah* 1:16-17

¹³⁶⁰ Martin, *journal*, p.33; Martin, *Cathay*, p.278

¹³⁶¹ Muller, p.72

¹³⁶² Perlmann, p.12

successfully performed on 27 May last [1902]. The lad was named Israel and he is now receiving instruction.” Ezra commented that the father’s action proved the “great sincerity” and “honesty” of Jews in Kaifeng in their desire to rejuvenate Judaism there.¹³⁶³ A Jewish circumcision is not just some medical procedure but a religious ceremony in which the person circumcised is at the same time given his Jewish name.¹³⁶⁴ As we can see this father did precisely this.

Conversion to Judaism: A non-Jew can convert to Judaism. Unlike other religions, (for example Christianity), Judaism does not have missionaries who attempt to attract converts. On the contrary, a non-Jew who asks to be converted is at first deterred from so doing.¹³⁶⁵ Only if he/she is persistent, can the long preparation for conversion begin. The conversion consists of three stages for a male, namely acceptance of *all* the precepts of Judaism, circumcision and immersion in a mikvah. For a female there are the first and third stages. If any of these stages are absent, the conversion is completely invalid.¹³⁶⁶

The first to mention conversion, albeit implicitly, seems to be Antonio de Gouvea. He wrote in 1644, “These 17 families [in Kaifeng] increased in numbers to 10,000, marrying among themselves; but as time passed, they married heathen Chinese, whom they made thereupon worship G-d from the day of their marriage, making them promise to keep the law of Moses.”¹³⁶⁷ This would be the first stage of conversion and had the other stage/s been carried out, the Chinese spouses would have become fully fledged Jews. As we have seen, the Kaifeng community practiced circumcision and it seems that they had a mikvah.

Support for this statement of de Gouvea’s that they “married heathen Chinese” may be found from the list of names appearing on one of the siddur manuscripts,¹³⁶⁸ which has a section with a large number of names of the men and women in the Kaifeng community who had died. In the women’s section there are 259 names. Berthold Laufer when discussing this list concludes that “it appears that many of these women were Mohammedans or of pure Chinese stock; in one case there is even a woman from the orthodox clan K’una (Confucius) and another neé Mong (Mencius [similar to Confucius]).”¹³⁶⁹

De Gouvea’s statement, however, conflicts with what Gozani wrote, “They do not marry except among themselves. They admit neither Chinese nor Mohammedan into their Hebraic law, which, accordingly, they do not preach to others.”¹³⁷⁰

Marriage: The first commandment in the Torah¹³⁷¹ is for a Jewish male to get married and have at least one male and one female offspring.¹³⁷² There are limitations on

¹³⁶³ Ezra, pp.44-45

¹³⁶⁴ Aruch Hashulchan YD 265:18

¹³⁶⁵ SA YD 268:2; Rambam Hilchot Isurei Biah 14:1

¹³⁶⁶ SA YD 268:3

¹³⁶⁷ de Gouvea, Juifs, p.211

¹³⁶⁸ MS 19218 ff.25-101

¹³⁶⁹ Laufer, p.324

¹³⁷⁰ Gozani, Juifs, p.60

whom a Jew may marry. This includes many close relatives, a woman is already married and a non-Jew.¹³⁷³

For a Jewish marriage to be valid there is a certain strict procedure to be followed. There are theoretically several methods,¹³⁷⁴ but the method used by Jews all over the world is for the man to make a certain statement to the woman and immediately give her an object which has a certain minimum value (traditionally a ring) in the presence of two valid witnesses.¹³⁷⁵ There are also other items in the ceremony such as the berachot over the two cups of wine, and reading and handing over to the bride the signed ketuvah.¹³⁷⁶

There is nothing extant on how the Jewish marriage ceremony in Kaifeng took place. There is only a vague statement in the 1663a stele which states that they followed the Chinese practice, “In matters concerning ... marriage ... the Chinese rites are followed.”¹³⁷⁷ In the 1980s, Wang Yisha, who was Curator of the Kaifeng Museum, writes that this was already the situation by the 14th century.¹³⁷⁸

What are these “Chinese rites”? There are six rites, namely: initiating the proposal; asking the full name and date of birth of the girl; determining the suitability of the match; payment of money in settlement of the marriage; fixing the wedding date; welcoming the bride to the bridegroom’s house.¹³⁷⁹ In principle these six rites do not conflict with Jewish practice. Indeed a similar practice is used in arranging a Jewish wedding.

T’ung, quoting several Chinese authorities, writes “All rites were held in the [groom’s] ancestral temple.”¹³⁸⁰ For a Jew in Kaifeng, the “ancestral temple” was the Kaifeng Synagogue. It is true that members of idolatrous religions in Kaifeng would use methods involving horoscopes or divination to determine the suitability of the match.¹³⁸¹ Since, (even as late as the beginning of the 20th century¹³⁸²), the Jews of Kaifeng were strictly opposed to idol worship, one might reasonably assume that they used other methods to determine the suitability of the match.

Provided the Jewish religious service had been carried out in accordance with the halachah, even if any of these “Six Rites” were contrary to Jewish law, the validity of the marriage would not be compromised.

¹³⁷¹ Genesis 1:28

¹³⁷² SA EH 1:1,5; Rambam Hilchot Ishot 15:4

¹³⁷³ Leviticus 18:6-20, Deuteronomy 7:2-3; SA EH 15-16; Rambam Hilchot Ishot 1:5-6, Hilchot Isurei Biah 1:1-7, 12:1

¹³⁷⁴ Mishnah Kidushin 1:1

¹³⁷⁵ SA EH 27:1; Rambam Hilchot Ishot 3:1

¹³⁷⁶ Chochmat Adam 129:3

¹³⁷⁷ 1663a stele, White, 2:61

¹³⁷⁸ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.178

¹³⁷⁹ Chiu, Buxbaum, p.45; T’ung-tsu Ch’u, p.101

¹³⁸⁰ T’ung-tsu Ch’u, p.101 and fn.55

¹³⁸¹ Chiu, Buxbaum, p.45; T’ung-tsu Ch’u, p.101

¹³⁸² Laufer, p.325

To arrange a marriage, there was a “Master of Matrimonies” whose function was to be in charge of organising these “Six Rites”.¹³⁸³ This is similar today to the Jewish shadchan whose job is basically the same as this Chinese “Master of Matrimonies”.

There were strict regulations on how a wedding celebration was to be conducted in China and any violation was punishable. These regulations controlled how the bride and bridegroom were to be dressed and this depended on the status of the family. The number of lamps, drums and other musical instruments was also regulated.¹³⁸⁴ As stated above, there is nothing extant as to what happened at a Jewish wedding celebration, but it is likely that these same regulations, which seem to be governmental regulations equally applied.

What *is* specifically written about Jewish marriages in Kaifeng are statements regarding whether or not there was intermarriage with non-Jews

At the beginning of the 18th century, Gozani wrote regarding marriages entered into by the Jews of Kaifeng, “These Families marry one among another, and never with the Hoei-boei [foreigners], or Mohammedans, with whom they have nothing in common, either with regard to Books, or religious Ceremonies.”¹³⁸⁵

Even over a century later, the Chinese Protestant K’hew wrote that the Jews of Kaifeng did not intermarry, “The Jews at K’hae-fung-foò [Kaifeng] are not allowed to intermarry with heathens and Mohammedans, neither are they allowed to marry two wives.”¹³⁸⁶ This latter phrase regarding not marrying two wives is of interest. The Torah does not limit a Jew to one wife.¹³⁸⁷ However Rabbeinu Gershom who lived about the year 1000 issued a ban on polygamy. This was only accepted by the Ashkenazi (European) Jews.¹³⁸⁸ Why then did the Jews of Kaifeng also have such a prohibition?

Xu Xin also wrote on this subject showing that although monogamy was the norm among the Jews of Kaifeng, polygamy was not prohibited, since in some cases it was practiced; he quoted cases of Jewish men in Kaifeng having as many as five or six wives.¹³⁸⁹ As far as intermarriage was concerned, in the middle of the 19th century, a Chinese Mohammedan soldier, who was a native of Kaifeng, informed the Consul Layton, “Six families have intermarried with the Chinese. Two families intermarry with Chinese Mahometans (*sic*) only. The Jews give their daughters to the Mahometans; the Mahometans do not give their daughters to the Jews.”¹³⁹⁰

Likewise, very soon after the remarks of this Chinese Mohamedan, the Rev. Martin wrote in his account of his visit to Kaifeng, “... they no longer take pains to

¹³⁸³ Chiu, Buxbaum, pp.45-46; T’ung-tsu Ch’u, p.101

¹³⁸⁴ T’ung-tsu Ch’u, pp.161-63

¹³⁸⁵ Gozani, Lettres, 18:41; Gozani, Travels, p.17

¹³⁸⁶ Chen Yuan, Smith, p.29. There is also a similar wording appertaining to the same period in Milne, p.406

¹³⁸⁷ SA EH 1:9; Rambam Hilchot Ishot 14:3

¹³⁸⁸ SA EH 1:10 and Rema

¹³⁸⁹ Xin, pp.96-97

¹³⁹⁰ Finn, Orphan Colony, p.23

keep their blood pure from intermixture with gentiles. One of them confessed to me that his wife was a heathen.”¹³⁹¹ Unlike the practice of 200 years earlier - as reported by de Gouvea, here there was no mention of the heathen wife’s converting, or even observing any of the Mosaic Law. At this period Schereschewsky made a very pessimistic assessment of the community, In addition to saying that “they intermarry with the natives” he also said “they have idols in their houses ... One has become a Buddhist priest.”¹³⁹² However, such cases of apostasy were so rare that Wang Yisha headed the section of his paper on these apostate Jews as “The Religious Beliefs of a *Few Individuals*” (*italics added*).¹³⁹³ Thus one has to regard Schereschewsky’s remarks with caution, since others said at the same period that the Jews of Kaifeng, despite all their lack of observance of other commandments, did not worship idols. (see above)

At the beginning of the 20th century there was a more positive report given by Perlmann on the marriage practices of the Jews of Kaifeng, “They ... mostly marry among their own tribe.”¹³⁹⁴ It does not seem very plausible that over the course of fifty years, at the same time that the Jews of Kaifeng were losing their Jewish identity, the intermarriage rate would have decreased. There seem to be no quoted statistics of the inter-marriages of the Jews of Kaifeng during this period and so one cannot say whether Martin and Schereschewsky or Perlmann is more correct.

An explanation for the reasons for the phenomenon of intermarriage in Kaifeng, was given by the Jewish historian Albert Hyamson, following a lecture on the “Jews of China” delivered by Marcus Adler in June 1900. Hyamson explained that “intermarriage with natives had only taken place in recent times, and the reason probably was that there were not sufficient Jewish women for the men to marry.”¹³⁹⁵

Yibum: It is stated in the Torah that if a married man dies without offspring and has a brother alive at the time of his death, his widow must marry this brother.¹³⁹⁶ This is known as “yibum”, or “levirate marriage”. (If for some reason the woman does not want to marry her brother-in-law, the Torah gives as an alternative the “chalitzah” ceremony¹³⁹⁷ - this alternative is the practice today among the Ashkenazim.¹³⁹⁸)

We indirectly learn that the Jews probably carried out yibum, from “a legend stating that the Yuan emperor issued a decree outlawing this kind of marriage [which thus] tells us indirectly that it was practiced, since otherwise the decree would have been pointless.”¹³⁹⁹ More direct support for the opinion that yibum was performed by the Jews of Kaifeng is brought by Perlmann. He begins by quoting from the book “A History of the Bible in the Far East” by Alexei Vinogradov, published in Russian in

¹³⁹¹ Martin, journal, p.33; Martin, Cathay, p278

¹³⁹² Muller, p.72

¹³⁹³ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.180

¹³⁹⁴ Perlmann, p.12

¹³⁹⁵ “The Jews of China”, Jewish Chronicle (London), 22 June 1900, pp.21-22

¹³⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 25:5

¹³⁹⁷ Deuteronomy 25:7-10

¹³⁹⁸ Aruch Hashulchan EH 165:15

¹³⁹⁹ Xin, p.97

St. Petersburg in 1889.¹⁴⁰⁰ Vinogradov wrote, “In the provinces of Honan and Kiangsu the custom of Levirate marriages prevails.... There are no sources to be traced when and how this custom has come to China.” Perlmann then answers “As (Kaifung (*sic*) is in the Honan province) chiefly in these provinces the Jews were settled, it may be admitted that the Jews have brought this custom with them and they still continue to adhere to it even after they had become amalgamated and assimilated with the aborigenes.”(*bracketed words in original*)¹⁴⁰¹

Burial: According to Jewish law, following death, the body is washed,¹⁴⁰² wrapped in linen shrouds,¹⁴⁰³ placed in a simple wooden coffin¹⁴⁰⁴ and then buried in a Jewish cemetery.¹⁴⁰⁵ The close relatives then begin a period of mourning. For parents it is of twelve months duration¹⁴⁰⁶ and for other first degree relatives thirty days.¹⁴⁰⁷

As with marriage, the Chinese had strict regulations with regard to funerals which were dependent on the status of the deceased and there were specific rites to be followed.¹⁴⁰⁸ The funeral regulations described the clothes in which the body was to be buried, the value of the object placed in the mouth of the deceased, the type of coffin, the biers and hearse used, the number of coffin bearers, the type of grave and the memorial stone. The higher the rank of the deceased, the more ostentatious was the funeral.¹⁴⁰⁹ As we shall see, at least in the early years of the Jewish community in Kaifeng, the Jews did not follow these regulations.

In Jewish practice rites connected with burial are carried out with simplicity making no distinction between the rich and the poor.¹⁴¹⁰ The 1512 stele states precisely this, although the reason it gives for acting in this way is incorrect, “.... and at funerals he does not make ostentatious display, but follows the ritual regulations, for he does not believe at all in superstitious practices.”¹⁴¹¹ This statement in the 1512 stele puts into question the statement by Wang Yisha who wrote that already by the 14th century, Jewish funeral rites were the same as the Chinese rites.¹⁴¹²

In contrast to the statement in the 1512 stele that Jewish “ritual regulations” are followed in death matters, the 1663a stele states “In matters concerning ... deaths

¹⁴⁰⁰ The publication details of this book are given in Shapiro, p.98 no.120.

¹⁴⁰¹ Perlmann, p.15

¹⁴⁰² SA YD 352:4 Rema; Aruch Hashulchan YD 352:4

¹⁴⁰³ SA YD 352:1-2; Aruch Hashulchan YD 352:1; Rambam Hilchot Avel 4:1

¹⁴⁰⁴ Rambam Hilchot Avel 4:4

¹⁴⁰⁵ Tur YD 367 and Bet Yosef dh “kovrim”

¹⁴⁰⁶ SA YD 391:2; Rambam Hilchot Avel 6:7

¹⁴⁰⁷ SA YD 391:2; Rambam Hilchot Avel 6:1

¹⁴⁰⁸ They were obviously regarded with such great importance that a Chinese named Huitian spent thirty eight years in the mid 18th century, writing a monumental work entitled “Comprehensive Study of the Five Rites.” (Frank Ching, *Ancestors, 900 Years in the Life of a Chinese Family*, p.279)

¹⁴⁰⁹ T’ung-tsu Ch’u, pp.163-67

¹⁴¹⁰ BT Moed Katan 27a-27b; SA YD 352:1, 2, 353:1; Rambam Hilchot Avel 4:1, 13:7

¹⁴¹¹ 1512 stele, White, 2:44

¹⁴¹² Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.178

and funerals the Chinese rites are followed.”¹⁴¹³ Either there had been a change between the years 1512 and 1663 or these “Chinese rites” were performed *in addition* to the Jewish “ritual regulations”.

Support for this latter alternative could possibly come from Perlmann who gives some details of the burial rites as they were at the beginning of the 20th century for the Jews of Kaifeng. “They bury their deceased in coffins, but of a different shape than those of the Chinese ..., and do not attire the dead in secular clothes as the Chinese do, but in linen.”¹⁴¹⁴ Similar comments were made thirty years later by Brown, “When a death occurred, the body was clothed in a simple cloth, placed in a coffin, and buried in the earth.”¹⁴¹⁵ These burial customs accord with Jewish practice and Perlmann specifically states that they were different from the Chinese practices. However whether the Jews of Kaifeng had in past years used linen shrouds and coffins is uncertain. It must be remembered that by this period there was contact with Jews in other parts of the world and the Jews of Kaifeng may have learned the Jewish practice in these matters from visiting Jews.

This may be seen in the case of a Kaifeng family, who after abandoning Judaism relearned the precepts from the Jews of Shanghai. One of these precepts concerning burial was that a “taharah” is done on the body which is then wrapped in white shrouds before burial.¹⁴¹⁶

Jewish cemetery: There is a ruling in the Talmud which states that Jews should assist with the burial of non-Jews,¹⁴¹⁷ but this ruling does not permit a non-Jew to be buried in a Jewish cemetery.¹⁴¹⁸ From this we can understand the ruling that it is “a holy obligation laid down by our Rabbis, that there must be a cemetery exclusively for Jews and that the land [for such a cemetery] should be owned by them [the Jews] and even small communities should be particular about this.”¹⁴¹⁹ Should there be an adjoining non-Jewish cemetery, as is often the case in the Diaspora, there must be a fence between the two cemeteries¹⁴²⁰ and some opinions add that no Jew should be buried within roughly four metres of this fence.¹⁴²¹

The Bach brings an exception to this burial rule. Should one find the bodies of Jews and non-Jews who have been killed together, then the non-Jews can be buried together with the Jews.¹⁴²² On the basis of this opinion, when the flood of 1642, (caused by the breach in the dam by the enemy), killed more than three hundred

¹⁴¹³ 1663a stele, White, 2:61

¹⁴¹⁴ Perlmann, p.12

¹⁴¹⁵ Brown, 10 February 1933, p.242

¹⁴¹⁶ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.179

¹⁴¹⁷ BT Gittin 61a; JT Gittin 5:9

¹⁴¹⁸ Tur YD 367 and Bet Yosef dh “kovrim”

¹⁴¹⁹ Kol Bo al Aveilut, p.162

¹⁴²⁰ Tuv Taam V'daat, 3:253

¹⁴²¹ Minchat Elazar, 2:41

¹⁴²² Bach on the Tur YD 151 dh “asur litein”

thousand inhabitants of Kaifeng, Jews and non-Jews,¹⁴²³ they all could have been buried together. However there is no evidence that such mixed burials occurred.

There have been a number of Rabbinical responsa on the question of the orientation of coffins in graves.¹⁴²⁴ Although there is no source in the Talmud and later Rabbinical authorities mandating a particular direction, there were a number of cities in Europe (and possibly elsewhere in the world) where the dead were buried with their feet in the easterly direction, the direction of Jerusalem, in order to expedite their arrival there at the Revival of the Dead in the Messianic Age to come.¹⁴²⁵

Brown in his article queried whether there was a Jewish cemetery in Kaifeng (see above), since he had found no mention of such a cemetery. He therefore discussed this question with Bishop White who informed him “of a tradition that had been handed down from father to son in the Chao family of a cemetery just outside the west gate of the walled city of Kaifeng-Fu. This cemetery was destroyed by the flood of 1642, which wiped out the city and destroyed the synagogue. The Chaos say that the cemetery was never used after that. At present there is no Jewish cemetery.”¹⁴²⁶ It has also been suggested that in fact it was the big floods during the period 1875-1908 which destroyed the cemetery.¹⁴²⁷ Support for this later date comes from a letter written by Liebermann who visited Kaifeng in 1867. He writes “They [the Jews of Kaifeng] still had a burial-ground of their own [at the time of his visit].”¹⁴²⁸

Research on this question was recently carried out by Yisha, and was author of the book 中国犹太春秋 “Zhongguo Youtai chun qiu” (Spring and Autumn of the Chinese Jews), published in Beijing in 1992. Until he retired, he had been the curator of the Kaifeng Municipal Museum and researched, over the course of quarter of a century, the descendants of the Jews of Kaifeng.¹⁴²⁹ Wang confirmed, as Brown had been told, that there had been a Jewish cemetery located outside the West Gate, but added that it might have been “in the northwest, near the village of Huasheng”, and that the layout was in “the direction of Jerusalem”.¹⁴³⁰ This comment of Wang’s regarding “the direction of Jerusalem” quite possibly means that the graves were orientated so that the feet of those buried there were in the direction of Jerusalem. On this basis, the Jews of Kaifeng followed the custom quoted in the above mentioned Rabbinical responsa.

According to Wang, the cemetery was very large, possibly at least two kilometres in each direction.¹⁴³¹ He also said that it was never re-established after the

¹⁴²³ Brotier, Lettres, 24:63; Brotier, White, 1:52

¹⁴²⁴ e.g. Chatam Sofer, YD 332; Shut Mahariz, 37; Pekudat Elazar, YD 123

¹⁴²⁵ Kol Bo al Aveilut, pp.177-78

¹⁴²⁶ Brown, 3 March 1933, p.277

¹⁴²⁷ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.183

¹⁴²⁸ Liebermann, Report, p.94; Liebermann, Jewish Chronicle, p.12

¹⁴²⁹ obituary of Wang Yisha, China Judaic Studies association, (Internet:

www.oakton.edu/user/~friend/art_wang.html - accessed 22 January 2009). He died in 1996.

¹⁴³⁰ Xin, p.103

¹⁴³¹ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, p.183

flood but “instead, each clan purchased a separate burial place for its own members” and these “family or private cemeteries were scattered in the suburbs of Kaifeng and came into wide use in the eighteenth century.”¹⁴³² Wang gives a detailed list of about ten such private cemeteries with their precise location.¹⁴³³

Mourning: According to the halachah, in the period between death and burial, first degree relatives are forbidden to consume meat and wine until after the funeral.¹⁴³⁴ According to the letter of the law, it is permitted to eat meat during the period of the shivah, although some Oriental Jewish communities abstain from so doing. It is also permitted to drink wine during the shivah, although one should not do so to excess.¹⁴³⁵

The first mention of mourning customs at Kaifeng is in the 1512 stele, and it concerns this halachah. There it is stated, (according to the translation of White), “If anyone is in mourning, meat and wine are forbidden to him....”¹⁴³⁶ However, Weisz translates this with a noticeable difference, “When it came to mourning, [the Jews of Kaifeng] avoided meat and wine...”¹⁴³⁷ Thus according to White’s translation, meat and wine are forbidden, but according to Weisz’, translation are only to be avoided but presumably are not forbidden.

Which period after the death of a close relative is the inscription on the stele referring to? It would seem from the wording that even after the burial, meat and wine was forbidden to the relatives, or at least avoided. Thus the Jews of Kaifeng acted in accordance with the custom of some Oriental communities.

As stated above, in Jewish law the total period of mourning for a parent is 12 months, and for other first degree relatives 30 days. The only *possible* mention of this fact is found in the 1663b inscription which states (according to the translation of White), “when he [a certain Jew from Kaifeng] had returned home on leave for the official [i.e. Chinese] three years’ mourning of his parents.”¹⁴³⁸ However, the translation by Weisz does not mention “three years’ mourning.”¹⁴³⁹ This three years of mourning for a parent is in fact a very ancient *Chinese* custom and dates back about three thousand years.¹⁴⁴⁰

Yearly, at the period of a person’s death,¹⁴⁴¹ and also on Yom Kippur and other festivals,¹⁴⁴² a memorial prayer is recited for the departed person. In the manuscript giving the names of hundreds of Jews of Kaifeng who had died, is also to be found a memorial prayer.¹⁴⁴³

¹⁴³² Xin, p.103

¹⁴³³ Wang Yisha, Shapiro, pp.183-84

¹⁴³⁴ SA YD 341:1; Rambam Hilchot Avel 4:6

¹⁴³⁵ Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu (1929 - 2010), “Tzror Hachaim – Hilchot Aveilut”, p.71, responsum 136

¹⁴³⁶ 1512 stele, White, 2:44

¹⁴³⁷ Weisz, p.26

¹⁴³⁸ 1663b stele, White, 2:88

¹⁴³⁹ Weisz, p.51

¹⁴⁴⁰ Frank Ching, *Ancestors, 900 Years in the Life of a Chinese Family*, p.38

¹⁴⁴¹ Gesher Hachaim, 1:342; Penei Baruch, p.409

¹⁴⁴² Gesher Hachaim, 1:337; Penei Baruch, p.413

¹⁴⁴³ MS 19218 f.103

Between Man and his Fellow

Up to now we have been dealing with mitzvot between man and G-d. There are also many mitzvot between man and his fellow and several of them are mentioned in the primary sources on the Kaifeng Jews.

It is written in the Torah¹⁴⁴⁴ that one must not oppress widows and orphans.¹⁴⁴⁵ There is also the mitzvah of gemilut chasadim to assist people who need help both financially and spiritually.¹⁴⁴⁶

From the steles, we can see that they were very particular about these mitzvot in Kaifeng. The 1512 stele states on this, “Concerning widows and widowers, and orphans and childless old men, and the lame and infirm of every sort, there is none that is not succoured and relieved by compassion, so that no one becomes shelterless.”¹⁴⁴⁷ Likewise, the 1663a stele writes “Orphans and childless old men, wifeless men and widows are all helped and relieved (in the community).”¹⁴⁴⁸

Amongst the other interpersonal laws in the Torah are, for example, “loving your neighbor as yourself”,¹⁴⁴⁹ honour to parents¹⁴⁵⁰ and elder brothers,¹⁴⁵¹ family harmony,¹⁴⁵² etc. The 1663a stele, gives examples of these mitzvot: “[From the Torah] men learn that the principle existing between prince and minister, the affection between father and son, the orderly sequence between the older and younger brother, the faithfulness between friends, and the distinction between husband and wife, have their foundation in the good faculty of knowing and doing.” It concludes that even though thousands of years have passed since the receiving of the Torah, “it is as if they were all in the one day of time.”¹⁴⁵³

The Torah also commands one to be scrupulousness in business dealings.¹⁴⁵⁴ One is required to have an accurate scale of weights.¹⁴⁵⁵ As stated in the 1512 stele, “Coming down to the accuracy of scales and the dimensions of measures, they [the Jews] do not, in the slightest degree, dare to cheat other men.”¹⁴⁵⁶

In conclusion, it can be seen that the Jews of Kaifeng, were just as particular in the observance of mitzvot between man and his fellow, as they were towards mitzvot between man and G-d.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Exodus 22:21

¹⁴⁴⁵ Rambam Hilchot Deiot 6:10

¹⁴⁴⁶ BT Sukkah 49b; Rambam Hilchot Avel 14:1

¹⁴⁴⁷ 1512 stele, White, 2:44

¹⁴⁴⁸ 1663a stele, White, 2:61

¹⁴⁴⁹ Leviticus 19:18; Rambam Hilchot Deiot 6:3

¹⁴⁵⁰ Exodus 20:12; SA YD 240:1-18; Rambam Hilchot Mamrim 6:1

¹⁴⁵¹ SA YD 240:22; Rambam Hilchot Mamrim 6:15

¹⁴⁵² Masechet Derech Eretz Zuta, perek hashalom

¹⁴⁵³ 1663a stele, White, 2:66

¹⁴⁵⁴ Leviticus 19:35; SA CM 227-240; Rambam Hilchot Mechirah

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