

THE AGRICULTURAL LIFE OF THE JEWS IN BABYLONIA

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 20, 2020

In *The Agricultural Life of the Jews in Babylonia Between the Years 200 C.E. And 500 C.E.*, London, Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1931, Rabbi J. Newman states “all bills and conveyances drawn up by the Persian courts were accepted by the Jews even among themselves as binding,” even though they were not drawn up in a manner according to Jewish conception. Samuel replied “The law of the land must be accepted in civil matters.” However, “Recognition of validity, afforded only to documents actually drawn up in the Persian courts, but not to those drawn up at the assemblies of the Aramaeans,” which may denote a remarkable relationship based on trust between the Jews and the Persians.

Newman adds: “As already indicated, the Jews among themselves enjoyed almost complete autonomy. The rulings of the Jewish courts were respected by the government, and contracts drawn up by them were accorded the same validity as those drawn up in the Persian courts. This is proved by the fact that even the Crown officials when selling confiscated property to Jews had the conveyances drawn up in the Jewish courts.”

Newman quotes Rabbi Samuel as “He who acquires (for Taska) on the banks of the Nehara, is an unscrupulous fellow, but we are powerless to eject him as, according to Persian law, he is acting strictly within his rights.” Such an unsatisfactory state of affairs obviously could not continue very long. The Persian government was brought round to appreciate the Jewish point of view.” This too shows there was a good understanding between the Persian administration and the Jewish population.

Newman concludes “The evidence brought in this chapter makes it abundantly clear that Jewish civil law was enforced among the Jews in Babylonia in all cases where it did not directly come in conflict with the law of the land.” He has even gone further than that by showing how the Persian administration often changed its own rules of regulations when they were not in harmony with the Jewish interests. How often one finds such a relationship between the rulers and their subjects in the world history and sadly how often in the Jewish history itself.