
Since the 1980s, interest in research on the persecution of the Jews in the Middle Ages, especially those during the first crusade, has increased, as reflected in the publications of Robert Chazan, Gerson D. Cohen, Jeremy Cohen, Avraham Grossman, Ivan G. Marcus, Anna Sapir Abulafia, and Israel Jakob Yuval. One reason is that there are not only Christian witnesses but also three Hebrew chronicles presenting a detailed account of the events in 1096: The long Chronicle I by Salomo bar Samson, the shorter Chronicle II by Elieser bar Nathan and Chronicle III by an anonymous person of Mainz, which contains only the narratives on Mainz, Speyer and Worms (Haverkamp, pp. 34–43). They were edited for the first time by A. Neubauer and M. Stern in 1892. In 1945, A.M. Haberman used this edition for his Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Šaṭpat.

In the main, three issues were central in the scholarly discussion: 1) How do the three chronicles (written a short time after the events) correspond to one another? Is one dependent on the other? 2) How important was the concept of Qiddush ha-Shem? Is it an issue in the narrations and an interpretation of the events in the 12th century, or does it reflect the thinking of the Jews in 11th-century Ashkenaz? 3) What prompted the authors to write these narrations? Was it a liturgical, martyrlogical interest or did they intend to give a detailed account of the events? What is the historical value of the chronicles? All research was based on the edition of Neubauer/Stern, which appeared 115 years ago and does not comply with present-day editing standards. This gap has now been closed by Eva Haverkamp’s edition.

The elaborate introduction is divided into the following sections: “Historische Einordnung der drei Berichte und Zielsetzung der Edition” (pp. 1–33), “Die Überlieferungen” (pp. 34–142), “Die Beschreibung der Handschriften und deren rezeptionsgeschichtliche Einordnung” (pp. 143–230), “Resümee: Genese und Wirkungsgeschichte der Chroniken” (pp. 231–240) and “Ratio editionis (zur Einrichtung der Edition)” (pp. 241–244). The edition consists of a synopsis of the
three chronicles, presenting the German translation on the left page and the Hebrew recensions on the right page (pp. 246–493). Variants are given in an apparatus beneath the Hebrew text, while notes are placed below the translation, even if they refer both to the translation and the Hebrew text. The translation seeks to be as accurate as possible and does not avoid polemical phrases and terms, as is the case in the translation by M. Stern. In a second part of the edition, each chronicle is presented after the other—in both Hebrew and German (pp. 12–109 (615–518). Because it consists of a short Hebrew abstract (pp. 1–8 [626–619]) as well as a Hebrew translation of “Ratio editionis” (pp. 8–10 [619–617]) and because it is paginated from the end of the book, the volume seems to target a Hebrew-speaking readership. However, it also facilitates reading each chronicle as a continuous text. Finally, there are a detailed bibliography (pp. XX–L) and three indices, one of biblical references—Old and New Testament (pp. 497–504), one of persons (pp. 505–511), and one of place names (pp. 512–517). However, the book lacks an index of rabbinic references. If an edition of a Hebrew medieval text has an index of New Testament references, how much more so might a scholar expect an analogous index of rabbinic references.

The first chapter treats the following in detail: the genre of the texts; the historical background of the persecutions during the “Bauernkreuzzug” in 1096 and their messianic hopes, the alternative “Baptism or Death” versus the former alternative “Baptism or Expulsion”, and the Jews as the “enemy” of the Christian church who must be defeated. It also deals with the concurrence of the Christian and Jewish sources, the concept of Qiddush ha-Shem, the role of the ‘aqeda as a prototype of martyrdom and the significance of offerings as well as the apocalyptic expectations of the Jews involving the vengeance of God. It likewise examines the important role of women, the issue of memoria, the intention of the first edition and the state of the manuscripts and, finally, the purposes of this present edition.

Based on her analysis of the texts, the author concludes that an Urtext existed, as quite a lot of passages are identical both in Chronicle III and I. However, there is no dependency between Chronicle II and Chronicle III. The concurrence of Chronicle I and Chronicle II depends on a presumed source or Vorlage (Φ) (pp. 29, 70).

Regarding the historicity of the texts, the author argues—contrary to Ivan Marcus—that it is possible for historical facts to be extracted