CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES 12

Ottoman Jewry

Leadership, Charity, and Literacy

YARON AYALON

BRILL

Ottoman Jewry

Christians and Jews in Muslim Societies

VOLUME 12

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/cjms*

Ottoman Jewry

Leadership, Charity, and Literacy

By

Yaron Ayalon

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Ottoman Jews, based on engravings appearing in Nicolas de Nicolay, *Le navigationi et viaggi nella Turchia* (Antwerp, 1576).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ayalon, Yaron, 1977- author
Title: Ottoman Jewry : leadership, charity, and literacy / by Yaron Ayalon.
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2025] | Series: Christians and Jews in Muslim societies, 2212–5523; vol.12 | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024046909 (print) | LCCN 2024046910 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004711969 hardback | ISBN 9789004711976 ebook
Subjects: LCSH: Jews–Turkey–History | Turkey–Social conditions–1288–1918 | Turkey–Ethnic relations
Classification: LCC DS135.T8 A926 2025 (print) | LCC DS135.T8 (ebook) | DDC 305.892/405609034–dc23/eng
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024046909
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024046910

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2212-5523
ISBN 978-90-04-71196-9 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-71197-6 (e-book)
DOI 10.1163/9789004711976

To Yuval and Omri

The most wonderful boys, brothers, and friends

Contents

Preface

This story begins, of all places, by a urinal in the expansive bathroom of a restaurant in Abu Ghosh, an Arab village outside of Jerusalem, in early 2004. My family and I convened there for a sumptuous meal of Middle Eastern delicacies to celebrate the invitation I had received from Princeton's Department of Near Eastern Studies to interview for their graduate program as a shortlisted candidate. Joining us for the meal was Mark Cohen, a professor at Princeton and a family friend who, I knew, would have a say in my acceptance to the doctoral program. At the end of the meal, I excused myself to take care of my business, as did Mark. "You should come to Princeton to work on Jews in the Middle East with me" he told me then, "I can even get you more funding if you do, and you can still write about the Ottoman period." Having had little interest in Jewish history until that point, that brief conversation with Mark got me thinking. By the time I made it to the interview a few weeks later, I had already made up my mind.

In August of that year, I moved to Princeton to begin the doctoral program in Near Eastern Studies, and Mark became my academic advisor. It was through my work with him, and with other professors in and outside that department, that I managed to write a dissertation about Jews in the Ottoman Empire and their dealings with natural disasters. My fascination with studying human societies' responses to calamities in an Ottoman context took me to archives and libraries in several countries. It produced several articles and, eventually, a monograph based in part on my dissertation. The book you are now holding is not that book. Rather, the present work is an expansion of parts of the original dissertation, buttressed by copious research into additional sources and new research questions. It builds upon the many lessons I have learned from Mark and from the first book.

Many people deserve my gratitude for helping this project take shape, by providing ideas, pointing me to sources, offering advice and much-needed criticism, or even supporting my academic career along the way. At Princeton, Michael Cook served as my second advisor and has continued to support me with invaluable advice in the years since. Norman Stillman got me my first job at the University of Oklahoma while all academic positions evaporated due to the 2008–9 global financial crisis. In 2011, Ken Stein brought me to Emory University, where I had ample time and space to wrap up writing of my first book, while teaching courses on Jewish history that offered me the opportunity to further think about and develop the principal arguments for this book. In 2013, Kevin Smith welcomed me as my department chair at

Ball State University in Indiana, where I spent 6 years as an assistant professor, teaching courses on Middle Eastern, Jewish, and world history that further informed my research. Finally, in 2019 Tim Johnson, then the dean of the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs at the College of Charleston, hired me to lead the Jewish Studies Program, a department-chair position that demanded nearly eighty hours a week during its first two years and left little time for research or writing. The Covid pandemic only made that worse. For a few years, Tim was not only my boss but also my neighbor. His encouragement and advice, including via hours of socially distanced conversations over beer on my porch, offered the support I needed to see this project through. The generous funding the Charleston Jewish community has provided our program has made taking time away from Charleston to complete this project possible.

More than anything, this project was informed by my work as the Ottoman Empire sectional editor for the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (EJIW). In 2008, Norman Stillman, the executive editor of EJIW, invited me to join the team of editors. While that work entailed hours of tedious editing and rewriting, and produced much frustration at colleagues whose sloppy writing did not resemble anything they had ever published, editing EJIW taught me much about the state of the field, and eventually informed many of the ideas and arguments of this book. Two individuals deserve special gratitude for a decade and a half of friendship: Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah, now at Groningen University, who was the acquisitions editor at Brill when I started working on EJIW. And Maurits van den Boogert, now the Chief Publishing Officer at De Gruyter Brill and then the acquisitions manager overseeing EJIW. Maurits had eyes on this book years before its content ever took shape; when it was finally ready to be considered for publication, he took the time to read and offer extensive and critical comments that made this book significantly better. Sasha has become a family friend and a great partner in thinking about the history of Jews in the Arab world. An ad-hoc reading group for parts of this book she convened in the Hague in April 2024 contributed last-minute yet significant changes to the text.

Over the years and along the way, I have benefitted from the friendship and support of many, indeed too many to mention here. Alan Verskin and I started graduate school together. He has remained a good friend who has more than once saved me from pursuing embarrassing scholarly ideas. Others have contributed directly or indirectly to this project, via conversations and comments offered to preliminary versions of this work, published as articles, presented at the Middle East Studies Association and Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) conferences, or discussed at various panels. They include Yaron Har'el, Devin Naar, Julia Phillips Cohen, Matthias Lehmann, Tamir Karkason, Devi Mays,

Adriana Brodsky, Lior Sternfeld, and the many others who attended panels, roundtables, and the annual Sephardi/Mizrahi caucus meetings at the AJS.

At the College of Charleston, Joshua Shanes welcomed me and has been a good friend and wonderful source of advice since before I began working here. Until he passed away in January 2023, my predecessor as program director Marty Perlmutter provided critical guidance that allowed me to manage both an academic department and work on this and other research projects. And Ashley Walters and Chad Gibbs, who joined our program after my arrival, have been great colleagues who have continuously reminded me (and others) what productive scholarship and engaging teaching should look like. Perhaps unaware of it, they too have pushed me to finally get this project done.

This project would not have come to conclusion without the support of my parents, Ami and Yael, my brother Gil, his wife Sophie, and their daughter Noga – the most recent addition to our family. Although they all live an ocean away in Israel and we only get to see each other once or twice a year, their ongoing support and constant encouragement has made several job transitions and completing this book significantly less frustrating. My father, who taught Middle East history at Tel Aviv University for over 3 decades, read earlier versions of this book's chapters – as he did of my first book – and provided very useful comments. My wife Keren, who has been my partner in this long journey of nearly two decades, deserves utmost praise for her patience with a husband who often prefers the company of books or computer screens to that of people, works at odd hours when most people tend to sleep, and wakes up when for others half a day has passed. My boys Yuval and Omri have shown immense bravery in dealing with a father who had to disappear for a week or two every now and then to focus on writing, and who at times was intellectually and emotionally less accessible. The final stretch of this project, involving diligent editing and proof reading, was made significantly easier thanks to the loving attention of our dog Shoko, who has added much light to our lives, and who sat patiently for hours next to me as I completed work on this book.

All in all, sixteenth- or eighteenth-century Ottoman Jews may take center stage in this story, but its true heroes are my family, near and far, who have tolerated this work and its author's commitment to it for far too long. For them, I am forever grateful.

Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Abbreviations

ACCM	Chamber of Commerce Archives, Marseille
AT	Arba'ah Turim
BOA	Presidential Ottoman Archives, Istanbul (formerly Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi)
BT	Babylonian Talmud
EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica
EJIW	Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World
Even	even ha-'ezer
Ḥoshen	ḥoshen ha-mishpat
IJMES	International Journal of Middle East Studies
JT	Jerusalem Talmud
M	Mishnah
MT	Mishneh Torah
NA	National Archives, London (formerly PRO or Public Record Office)
Oraḥ	oraḥ ḥayim
S	siman (notation of chapters/questions in responsa collections)
ShA	Shulḥan 'Arukh
Yoreh	yoreh de'ah

FIGURE 1 The Ottoman Empire

Introduction

Take almost any book that discusses the history of Jews in the Ottoman Empire and you are likely to read about the prosperity Jews were enjoying in Ottoman domains from the mid-fifteenth century on. Learning of the favorable conditions in the empire, European Ashkenazi Jews flocked there in the second half of the century. Then, the same empire extended a formal invitation to the tens of thousands of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were expelled from Iberia in the 1490s, offering them a safe haven. Those Jews, all bound by a shared Sephardi identity, prospered in the empire right upon their arrival. For many of the migrants, the Ottoman conquest of the Arab provinces in 1516–17 finally opened the road to settlement in their ancestral homeland of Palestine. By the late sixteenth century, prosperity had given way – for the empire overall as for its Jewish subjects – to hardships. Throughout most of the seventeenth century, Ottoman Jews suffered from persecutions, violence, and forced conversions and migrations. As Europeans became increasingly involved in the empire and preferred to rely on Christians rather than Jews, the latter were driven out of the foci of economic power. Internally, Ottoman Jews were organized into autonomous communities that wielded much control over their lives. Rabbis led those communities, and members generally heeded their advice.[1]

The student of Ottoman, European, or Jewish history is likely familiar with these stories. There's only one problem: There is little evidence to support them. What one may call the "standard" narrative of Ottoman-Jewish history was developed from the second half of the nineteenth century by historians of European Jewry, such as Heinrich Graetz (d. 1891) and later Salo Baron (d. 1989), and by historians of Sephardic, eastern, or Ottoman Jewry, such as Salomon Rosanes (d. 1938) and Abraham Galante (d. 1961). Much of that narrative has remained unchanged, even in more recent scholarship. That, despite the scarcity or dubious nature of the evidence suggesting that European Jews arrived in the Ottoman Empire in any significant numbers before the sixteenth century. Or that the Ottomans invited Iberian Jews to settle in their territory. Or that the Ottoman conquest of Palestine suddenly opened new opportunities

1 Studies following this narrative are mentioned throughout this introduction and in Chapters 1 and 2. For general overviews, see: Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*; Levy, ed. *Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (the first third of which is a reprint of his monograph *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire*); Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*; Rozen, "The Ottoman Jews"; "Sephardim/Sephardi Jews"; Meyuhas Ginio, *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem*, 37–86. General Ottoman histories still accept this portrayal of events for Ottoman Jews. See e.g. Mikhail, *God's Shadow*, 172–9; Baer, *The Ottomans*, 158–64.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_002

for Jews to settle there. Or that persecutions were the central feature of the seventeenth-century Jewish experience, rather than being just one facet of it that also affected non-Jews. Or that Jews suffered from economic decline and exclusion in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Or even that rabbis served as the ultimate leaders of their communities, having the final say on all matters, whose decisions people generally did not contest.

This book challenges prevailing assumptions about Ottoman Jews. It proposes a narrative for their history that incorporates new sources and examines global and environmental challenges that hitherto have not been considered part of the Ottoman-Jewish story. Taking the reader from a point preceding the expulsions from Iberia and into the first decades of the nineteenth century, *Ottoman Jewry* also focuses on the issue of communal organization and the role of rabbis as leaders of their congregations. It argues that scholars played a less salient role as communal and spiritual leaders than we have thought; and that the religious community was a rather loose framework within which Ottoman Jews operated, not an isolated autonomous organization. While recent scholarship has pointed to dramatic changes that affected Ottoman Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in matters such as identity, political organization, leadership, literacy and education, and migration, this study shows that processes which unfolded during the sixteenth-to-eighteenth centuries were no less dramatic, setting the stage for what was to come during the nineteenth. Accordingly, *Ottoman Jewry* traces shifts in communal practices in two key areas: charity and education. It argues that, as more Jews preferred to avoid the scrutiny of rabbis and other communal leaders, private initiatives in both areas proliferated throughout the empire, undermining communal and rabbinical authority. Scholars or rabbis, specifically, were the biggest losers in this process. Charity and education were the two principal areas where they traditionally had their most influence, given the absence of alternative options outside the community. Through examining developments in charity and education, this study further reveals the increasingly fragile position of communal leaders in the empire. It does so by examining a broad range of testimonies, mostly found in the responsa literature of Ottoman rabbis. Archival documents, along with Arab and Turkish chronicles, complement the historical picture. Finally, I make only limited use of European sources (diplomatic correspondence and travelogues). As I show below, their authors were often negatively predisposed against Jews or the people of the East more broadly.[2]

2 See, for example, "Expanding opportunities in the eighteenth century" in chapter 2.

Still, a few European observers spent years in the empire, were fluent speakers of Arabic or Turkish, and acquired intimate knowledge of Ottoman society to render their testimonies valuable.[3]

1 Who Were Ottoman Jews?

The proclamation of the First Ottoman Constitution in 1876 launched a campaign for the clearest and most articulate idea of a shared Ottoman identity. Communal leaders and journalists supported the push for a new Ottoman-Jewish identity that, many of them thought, would blur the lines between Jews and other religious-ethnic groups and extract Jews from a state of backwardness. By the 1890s, a civic model of Ottomanism had emerged, one based on cooperation among Ottoman subjects irrespective of faith, which allowed Jews to be proud of their state, show loyalty, and feel a connection to it.[4] For a brief moment, it appeared Jews would succeed in forging a new Ottoman-Jewish identity. Ottoman entanglements in wars with their Christian neighbors; Sultan Abdülhamid II's (r. 1876–1909) adoption of an Islamic form of Ottomanism; and the proliferation of new ideologies among Jews, such as Zionism and socialism, meant that by the time of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 "Jewish leaders found it increasingly difficult to speak of Ottoman Jewry as a single collective … The multiplication of different political affiliations among Ottoman Jews in the wake of the 1908 revolution brought to the fore new and conflicting definitions of Jewish Ottomanism."[5] Indeed, as Devi Mays has recently shown, after 1908 Ottoman Jews did not usually see "themselves as belonging to the same diaspora." Rather, Jews living in the empire "might best be understood as belonging to a series of overlapping diasporas that intersected at key moments and diverged at others."[6] Yet, despite the failed experiment of forging a new Ottoman identity for Jews, both Cohen and Mays refer to the subjects of their studies as "Ottoman Jews." And not only them; "Ottoman Jews" has become a collective term historians use to denote Jews who lived in

3 Such were the French traveler and diplomat Laurent d'Arvieux of the seventeenth century and the Scottish half-brothers Alexander and Patrick Russell of the eighteenth. I cite their works throughout this book. For an extensive study of the brothers' work in Aleppo, see Van den Boogert, *Aleppo Observed*.

4 Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, 19–22, 77–80.

5 Ibid., 103.

6 Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports*, 2, 51.

the vast geographical area that made up the Ottoman Empire.[7] Before the late nineteenth century, the term Ottoman (*osmanlı*) referred only to members of the imperial household, and to the state that carried their name. Ordinary residents of Ottoman cities, Jews included, referred to themselves in other ways. In the early sixteenth century, Jews identified as veterans of the towns or regions in Iberia they hailed from. The next generations adopted other forms of identity, based on their cities of residence in the empire, and eventually also as a Sephardi collective, to be distinguished from Ashkenazi and Romaniot Jews. In the period this study covers, "Ottoman Jews" was not a term Jews in the empire used to describe themselves.[8]

Ottoman Jews, as I too shall refer to them in this book, were well aware that they were living under one political framework, headed by the sultan. Mention of this, usually accompanied by blessings to the ruler, appeared frequently in the introductions to Jewish works printed in the empire, and Jewish chroniclers regularly extolled sultans in their histories.[9] At first glance, it seems there was little that connected Jews in Salonica with those in Jerusalem, or those in Aleppo with Jews in Izmir. Jews in the empire were all, at least formally, second-class subjects who faced discrimination in general and when turning to state-run Islamic (*shar'i*) courts. Such treatment of Jews and Christians was loosely based on the conditions stipulate in the Pact of 'Umar, a document allegedly compiled during the reign of the second caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644). The Pact outlined conditions under which Jews and Christians were to live under the rule of Muslims. The occasional reintroduction of the document, over the centuries by different polities and with significant content changes, likely meant that many of its rules were not thoroughly enforced, or at least depended on local factors.[10] The most salient divides among Jews in the empire, however, had little to do with the Pact or its limitations. They were linguistic and cultural, splitting Ottoman Jews into Iberian- and Arab-oriented, or west and east, zones. Beyond these, local customs of prayer, dress,

7 Many of the texts I mention in the next section on the state of the field refer to Ottoman Jews as such. For recent examples, see Borovaya, *Beginning of Ladino Literature*; Danon, *Jews of Ottoman Izmir*; Ray, *After Expulsion*.

8 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 319–25; Ray, *After Expulsion*, 77–85.

9 See the discussion in Baer, *Sultanic Saviors*, 30–47; Sambari, *Sefer divrei yosef*, 248, 252–3, 304–6; and Shmuelevitz, "Yaḥasei yehudim-muslemim," 75–82.

10 The Pact of 'Umar and its effects have been thoroughly discussed in the historiography. The following provide an overview of studies of the Pact: Cohen, "What was the Pact of 'Umar?"; Simonsohn, "Bein hipardut le-hitam'ut"; Ackerman-Lieberman, "The muḥammadan stipulations."

congregational organization and leadership, and poor relief evolved differently in each community or region.

Why then talk about Ottoman Jews as one entity? First, because there was enough that bound Jews in the empire together, despite the differences. Jews were very active in the Mediterranean commercial scene, and as such maintained relations with others across the empire and beyond. Most Ottoman Jews shared the collective trauma of the expulsions from Spain and Portugal in 1492 and 1497, even if they did not descend directly from a family of expellees. And they were affected by political developments in the empire, and by climatic challenges that beset the region. Second, because it was in the Ottoman Empire, not in eastern or central Europe, that the most significant and influential spiritual and religious literature of the early modern Jewish world was written. And third, we talk about Ottoman Jews because this is the one category that allows historians to study a part of the Jewish world that, ever since the emergence of Jewish Studies as a field, has been marginalized in the historiography. *Ottoman Jewry* aims to correct this injustice by placing Jews living in the Ottoman Empire at the center of discussion, while noting features that distinguished one community from another.[11]

2 Ottoman Jewish History: the State of the Field

Ottoman Jewish historiography has markedly expanded in recent years. The greater share of studies focuses on the later phase of Ottoman history, from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth. Thus, Aron Rodrigue discusses the transformation in Ottoman-Jewish education in the late decades of the nineteenth century following the opening of Alliance schools in the empire. Yaron Har'el considers changes in rabbinical and communal leadership and looks at modernization processes throughout the Arabic-speaking Jewish world of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Julia Phillips Cohen examines the development of Ottoman Jewish identity from the second half of the nineteenth century. Devin Naar documents the transformation of Salonica Jewry from Ottoman to Greek as the city underwent political turmoil in the early twentieth century. Dina Danon looks at the Jews of Izmir through the prism of communal organization, leadership structures, finances, poor relief, and the city's Jews' emerging European orientation. And Devi Mays takes the reader on a journey alongside Ottoman Jewish migrants that spanned

11 For further discussion of the elements that bound Jews in the empire together, see Tsur, *Gevirim ve-yehudim aḥerim*, 48–52.

the world, from the empire to the Americas and back, while exploring questions of identity.[12] Such studies have significantly improved our understanding of what it meant to be a Jew in the late Ottoman Empire. But they do not shed much light on earlier periods. Cohen devotes a few pages of her book's introduction to suggesting an alternative (and, in my view, correct) reading of the Jewish experience in the empire before the nineteenth century: "The story of the special Ottoman-Jewish relationship is a myth," she argues.[13] The earlier periods lie outside the scope of her study and receive no further treatment in her book. Yet she is right to note that "the narrative of Ottoman-Jewish … friendship is built upon a set of common tropes, the most important of which is the image of the Ottoman Empire as a safe haven for Jewish refugees and a place of unprecedented tolerance" and centuries of coexistence. The recurrence, over the years, of accounts that idealized Jewish-Muslim relations has rendered them an unquestionable truth to most observers, and concealed evidence that contradicted them. As many historians relied on the works of a handful of Jewish observers that praised the Ottomans, testimonies contradicting that premise were overlooked. The story of Ottoman Jews thus became primarily that of Iberian Jews and their absorption in the empire, an account often juxtaposed – and contrasted – with European-Christian persecution of Jews.[14] *Ottoman Jewry*'s narrative begins before the expulsions from Spain and Portugal. It questions the notion of constant Muslim-Jewish harmony pervading through the historiography and offers instead an approach that emphasizes alternating periods of prosperity and crisis.

As with the last century of Jewish life under the Ottomans, so has the history of Jews prior to the expulsions from Spain and Portugal been fairly well studied. Thanks to the richness of materials found in the Cairo Geniza, historians have been able to draw a complex picture of Jewish life in the eastern Mediterranean during the Middle Ages. Throughout the twentieth century, scholars such as Jacob Mann, Eliyahu Ashtor, and primarily S.D. Goitein conducted studies in Jewish social, economic, and intellectual history based on materials from the Cairo Geniza, hitherto unimaginable in their depth and detail.[15] The trend has continued with the next two generations of Geniza scholars, who in the last

12 Their studies are: Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*; Har'el, *Sfinot shel esh* and *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*; Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*; Naar, *Jewish Salonica*; Danon, *Jews of Ottoman Izmir*; Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports*. Another study by Paula Daccarett remains unpublished. See her "Jewish social services in late Ottoman Salonica."

13 Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, 4.

14 Ibid., 2.

15 Mann, *Jews in Egypt and in Palestine*; Ashtor, *Toldot*; Goitein, *Med. Soc.*; Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders*.

five decades have produced works on rabbinical leadership and communal authority, economics and trade (both local and cross-continental), and poverty and charity, to name but a few areas.[16] Similarly, Jewish life in Islamic and Christian Spain before the expulsion has been addressed extensively in the scholarship.[17] Such studies have inspired and informed this book. Here and there I note the continuities from the Geniza to the Ottoman periods, as well as some notable changes (e.g. enforcement of the conditions of the Pact of 'Umar or the alleged Ottoman abolition of the position of the Head of the Jews, or *nagid* in Egypt). These have been sufficiently addressed in the scholarship. In this study I only allude to them where appropriate.[18] My sense is that the "middle period," as I call the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, has been the least-understood era of Mediterranean, Sephardic, or Ottoman Jewry. I say "least understood" rather than understudied, because, the relative paucity of scholarship on these centuries aside, the main problem *Ottoman Jewry* addresses is not the quantity of the historiography on Ottoman Jews during that period but its problematic conceptual orientation.

In the nineteenth century, as the field of Jewish studies was developing, historians showed some interest in Jewish-Muslim interactions. They studied mostly the Jewish experience in the medieval Muslim world.[19] This choice to focus on the earlier periods had little to do with the availability of historical evidence. Rather, it was a Euro-centric approach to history in general, and specifically to Jewish history, which dictated historians' focus on a period when Jews interacted with Muslims still in a European context, i.e. in Spain. In his comprehensive *History of the Jews*, published between 1853 and 1870, the German-Jewish scholar Heinrich Graetz glorified the history of Jews under Islam up to the expulsions from Spain and Portugal. From that point, and until the nineteenth century, he understood history in general to progress in two opposite trajectories: European civilization constantly rising, while its Islamic counterpart declining. Accordingly,

16 Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundations*; *Jews in Islamic Countries*; Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*; *Poverty and Charity*; Rustow, *Heresy*; *The Lost Archive*; Simonsohn, *Common Justice*; Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions*; Ackerman-Lieberman, *Business of Identity*; Zinger, *Living with the Law*.

17 E.g. Baer, *A history of the Jews in Christian Spain*; Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*; Sloan, *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal*.

18 For more on the Geniza to Ottoman continuities and changes, see Hathaway, *Arab Lands*, 183–9; Bareket and Barda, "Egypt," 130–2; Rustow and Ma'oz, "Syria," 438–41; Lamdan et al., "Palestine," 22–8; Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 31–2; and Arad, "'Aravit yehudit," 101–24 and "Ha-kahal ke-guf kalkali," 25–62.

19 Stillman, "Academic study."

> Jewish history was gradually transferred to European ground. Judaism assumed … a European character and deviated more and more from its oriental form. Saadya [Gaon, head of the Sura yeshivah, d. 942] was the last important link in its development in the east; Chasdai [Ibn Shaprut, Spanish-Jewish physician, d. 970] and the scientific men whom he influenced became the first representatives of a Judeo-European culture.[20]

After the Middle Ages, according to Graetz, Jewish history that mattered was European, and non-European characters had to be Europeanized first for their history to be worth telling. Being both "Oriental" and Jewish was not a quality Graetz appreciated:

> Chasdai was quite modern in his character, entirely different from the type of his predecessors. His easy, pliant, and genial nature was free both from the heaviness of the Orientals and the gloomy earnestness of the Jews. His actions and expressions make us look upon him as a European, and through him, so to speak, Jewish history receives a European character.[21]

In a later volume, Graetz went on to discuss Ottoman Jews, who, by his assessment, produced little of significance since the sixteenth century:

> The fact that Jews occupied an exceedingly favored position in Turkey for so long a period did not result in correspondingly enduring progress. They did not produce a single great genius who originated ideas to stimulate future ages, nor mark out a new line of thought for men of average intelligence. Not one of the leaders of the different congregations was above the level of mediocrity. The rabbis and preachers were deeply learned in their particular subjects, but kept to the beaten track, without making a new discovery or bequeathing an original contribution, even in their own department. Only one rabbi left to posterity an epoch-making work, which even yet possesses significance, disputed though it be; but even this work contained nothing new or original.[22]

The rabbi Graetz referred to was Yosef Karo (d. 1575), author of the *Shulḥan ʿArukh* (the Set Table), a foundational text of Orthodox halakhah (Jewish

20 Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 3:188.

21 Ibid., 3:215–16.

22 Ibid., 4:611–12. I am thankful to Devin Naar for bringing these quotations by Graetz to my attention.

law) followed to this day in both the Sephardi and (with adaptations) the Ashkenazi world.

The reader may rightly note that Graetz wrote at a time when racist views about white European superiority were widespread. These gave ground to the dismissing of Oriental Jewry as culturally and intellectually inferior. But the assumptions underlying Graetz' study continued to dominate scholarship on Middle Eastern Jews for decades. They were also in line with what eventually became the leading explanation for the fall of the Ottoman Empire: The decline theory, best represented in the scholarship of Bernard Lewis. First presented in 1961, Lewis claimed that the end of the age of great conquests during the reign of Sultan Süleyman I (r. 1520–66) marked the beginning of a long and steady decline, that ultimately, notwithstanding efforts to revive the empire's glory in the nineteenth century, ended in its collapse in World War I.[23] Despite many challenges to Lewis' explanation, it was still relevant enough to justify its rebuke as recently as 2007.[24]

Graetz's understanding of Jewish history after 1492 as being primarily European predated Lewis' decline theory and lasted much longer. Salo Baron, among the greatest Jewish historians of the twentieth century, dealt extensively with Jewish life in the medieval Middle East in his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*.[25] Yet the entire "middle period" of Jews living under Ottoman rule received rather scant attention in the last, eighteenth volume of his work, reserved for all those "other" Jews, i.e. non-European/Ashkenazi ones, living in the Arab Middle East, Iran, Ethiopia, India, and China. Baron's account of Ottoman Jews echoes the decline thesis prevailing at the time, as his narrative moves from "Turkey's golden age" of the sixteenth century to "incipient stagnation" of the seventeenth and eighteenth.[26] One may find it unfair to criticize Baron, not a historian of the Ottoman Empire, of such historical oversight. Indeed, working with sources available to non-specialists, he produced a work well within the scholarly consensus of his time. Yet his account relegated a substantial part of Jewish history to an appendix. The main narrative that truly mattered excluded Ottoman Jews.

---

23 Lewis' decline theory was first introduced in a chapter titled "the decline of the Ottoman Empire"; Lewis, *Emergence*, 21–39. Many of Lewis' ideas about Ottoman decline appeared a decade earlier in Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*. Lewis included a largely similar version of that theory in his best-selling book from 2002, *What Went Wrong?*, 3–66.

24 Sajdi, "Decline, its discontents and Ottoman cultural history," 1–40.

25 See, e.g., Baron, *Social and Religious*, 4:108–16, 160 ff.

26 Ibid., 18:3–295. These pages cover the history of Ottoman Jewry in its entirety. The part devoted to the "middle period" is even briefer (122–81, and parts of 182–295).

Jacob Katz, in a work covering the centuries of the "middle period" from 1958, did the same. Focusing on "the region populated by Ashkenazi Jewry in its broader sense," the book had little to say about Ottoman Jewry.[27] Katz looked at the structure and functions of Jewish communities during the sixteenth-to-eighteenth centuries, their religious institutions, economic activity, family life, and education. Ottoman Jewry contributed one element to his story: Crisis, generated by the impostor messiah Shabbetai Ṣevi, whose movement thrust European Jewry into a struggle between Orthodoxy and its challengers.[28] In the works of leading Jewish historians, then, the role of Ottoman Jews remained marginal. When they came to the fore, their contribution was largely negative.

Until the 1980s, only a handful of historians believed the story of Ottoman Jewry was worth telling. Among them were Moise Franco (d. 1910), who in 1897 published what was apparently the first account of Ottoman Jewish history;[29] Joseph Nehama (d. 1971), who composed a seven-volume history of Jewish Salonica;[30] Abraham Galante (d. 1961), whose numerous works were gathered and published in a nine-volume edition posthumously;[31] and Salomon Rosanes (d. 1938), who wrote the first history of Ottoman Jews in Hebrew.[32] Incidentally, they were all born in areas formerly under Ottoman rule, and were either themselves Ottoman Jews or descendants of Ottoman-Sephardic families. Their histories did not skip the "middle period." Indeed, Galante's scholarship included translations of many primary documents from that period (although most of his work focused on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries).[33] Rosanes devoted three of his six volumes to the late sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries. He, too, believed Jews in the empire experienced a "golden age" in the sixteenth century that ended in 1571; a period of "light and shadows" that lasted up to 1640; a largely negative experience in the following decades, prompted mostly by the Shabbetai Ṣevi affair; and an economic and social decline in the eighteenth century.[34] As I will show, Rosanes' history, as well as

27 Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, 4.

28 Ibid., 213–44.

29 Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman*.

30 Nehama, *Histoire*.

31 Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*.

32 Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*.

33 For examples of such documents, and discussion of pre-nineteenth century history, see Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 1:127–42, 240–9, 2:21–32, 142–4, 3:4–12, 188–205; and documents interspersed throughout vol. 5.

34 Rosanes titled his second volume "perek ha-zahav, 1521–71" (the golden chapter) and his third volume "tekufah shel ora u-ṣelalim, 1575–1640" (a period of lights and shadows). Vol. 4 deals primarily with the Shabbetai Ṣevi affair and its implications. See title pages of Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim* vols. 2 and 3, and the table of contents of vol. 4. Rosanes

Galante's, affirmed rather than challenged the historiographical paradigm of Graetz (whom Rosanes quoted often). More generally, Rosanes' frequent use of biblical quotes to explain events and praise the Ottomans makes one wonder about his historian's credentials. Overall, such early works employed little critical thinking of the sources, be they rabbinical, European, or Jewish chronicles.

The study of Ottoman Jewry expanded somewhat from the 1980s on. Yet, with few exceptions, the new historiography did not challenge old assumptions. The relative paucity of studies about Ottoman Jews meant that erroneous notions became rooted in the broader scholarship on Ottoman and Jewish history. Take, for example, Aryeh Shmuelevitz's book, published in 1984: A decent historical study on the whole, his work focused on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which Shmuelevitz saw as the formative phase of Ottoman Jewry. In his narrative, Jews were part of the Ottoman *millet* system, organized in autonomous communities led by rabbis, and paid various taxes to the government and to communal institutions – all assumptions which future works would accept with some variances.[35] *Ottoman Jewry* argues that they were unfounded or at least imprecise, due largely to an uncritical reading of rabbinical sources.

The same can be said of Paloma Díaz-Mas's oft-quoted book from 1992 on the history of the Sephardim. In Díaz-Mas's sloppy portrayal of the Jewish Ottoman experience, Sultan Bayezit II (r. 1481–1512) is said to have offered the Sephardim "incentives to settle in his empire."[36] And why would he not? After all, "those who came from Spain were … generally more highly cultured and more conscious of their own past," and it were these qualities that led Jews of other denominations to eventually adopt the Sephardi ways.[37] Sephardim in the empire enjoyed "cultural superiority" because *converso*s who arrived there in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century were "generally from the upper and educated class, and often true intellectuals"[38] – a patently false statement

opened Volume 5 with this statement: "When Sultan Mahmud I ascended to the throne, the light of *knesset yisrael* in Turkey had already been extinguished. The splendor of the people, that for two hundred and fifty years had lit the diaspora, diminished, and all of the glory of Turkish [i.e. Ottoman] Jewry had left it, never to return. It was then that an end came to the material and moral status of Jews in the capital, and in all of the state's [i.e. empire's] cities"; ibid., 5:1.

35 Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 11–127. See also Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire* and Minna Rozen, *Istanbul*, who quote Shmuelevitz extensively. Shmuelevitz, in turn, relied on Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities*, published four years earlier, for much of his narrative.

36 Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim*, 38.

37 Ibid., 39.

38 Ibid., 42.

that ignores the hardships and abject poverty many *converso*s who fled the Inquisition had to face. For Díaz-Mas, Jewish life in the empire began to decline in the late seventeenth century, due mostly to Shabbetai Ṣevi, whose brief success "ultimately proved disastrous to Hebrew culture in the Sephardic world."[39] One would have to search hard for evidence for a flourishing Hebrew culture among the Sephardim in the late-seventeenth century. Yet, the author suggests that developments since the Sabbatean crisis resulted in the "impoverishment of intellectual life and Hebrew literary production … the cultural decline was accompanied by the political and economic decadence of the empire," which continued into the nineteenth century.[40]

One may graciously excuse Díaz-Mas' errors in Ottoman history: The field falls outside her expertise, and much of the knowledge we have about the empire today did not exist when she wrote her book. In the early 1990s, after all, it was still acceptable to employ a Eurocentric approach to the empire's history, describing it in the eighteenth century as being immersed in a long crisis and ridden by natural disasters (as if Europe or North America suffered none). It is harder to excuse the many authors who, later on and even in the past decade, have cited Díaz-Mas' book as an authority on Ottoman and Sephardic Jews.[41] Perhaps the field itself was to blame: With so few dedicated historians of Ottoman Jews, even pedestrian works would be taken seriously.

Diaz-Mas' historiographical oversights aside, it was Stanford Shaw's *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* from 1994 that represented scholarly recklessness at its finest. Shaw, whose previous work on the Ottoman Empire was repeatedly censured for sloppiness,[42] transcended the boundary between history and fantasy in his book on Ottoman Jews. The careful reader would find historical errors or unsubstantiated claims on almost every page. Thus, Shaw suggested that the "Ottoman state actively encouraged [Jews] to come and live in the Ottoman Empire under the same conditions of

39 Ibid., 42.

40 Ibid., 44.

41 A Google Scholar search reveals Díaz-Mas's book has been cited 398 times (in either its English or Spanish edition). See https://bit.ly/2mrVfEA and http://bit.ly/4bkOO9C, accessed 18 May 2024.

42 I am referring to Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire Vol. 1* and Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire Vol. 2*. Reviews of the two volumes written shortly after their publication revealed many of the books' flaws, including outright historical errors or unfounded assumptions. See e.g. reviews by Rifaat Ali Abu-el-Haj in *American Historical Review* 82 (1977), 4:1029; C.R. Boxer in *Journal of Asian History* 11 (1977), 2:157–8; Jean Aubin, *Revue Historique* 258 (1977), 2:503–6; R.C. Repp in *IJMES* 11 (1980), 2:273–5; and V.L. Ménage in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978), 1:160–2.

tolerance and freedom which had favored the lives of Jews in the empires of the Umayyads … and Abbasids"[43] and even that it "propagandized throughout Europe to attract Jewish emigrants to their newly expanding state."[44] The Jews, according to Shaw, recognized Ottoman generosity and hospitality. They "declared the Ottoman leaders to be scions of the 'righteous Cyrus', the 'anointed of God', and firmly believed that at the head of the warlike Ottoman hosts the angel Gabriel himself strode with sword in hand to bring near the 'end' and prepare the way for the glorious Messiah."[45] Shaw made such claims, and many others, without citing any evidence.

Shaw's book also contributed to the perpetuation of myths and falsehoods about the Ottoman Empire in general, and the way it treated its Jewish subjects. He wrote extensively about the *millet* system, an "institution [that] constituted a self-governing organization based on religious affinity and directed by religious leaders possessing both secular and religious authority"[46] – a fancy idea, if only such a system existed. But the "*millet* system" premise had already been debunked when Shaw's book was published. This so-called system, Shaw suggested, while leaving much room for religious communal autonomy also "isolated people of different religions from each other [and they were] kept so segregated from one another that they became more mutually hostile and contemptuous … They lived together within the same empire, the same city, sometimes in the same neighborhoods, yet they were separated by more than the walls of their quarters; they were separated even more by barriers of religion, language, customs, and political aspirations."[47] The isolation of Jews from non-Jews was a recurring theme in Shaw's book, an unfounded historical concept to which he returned time and again, without evidence to support it.[48]

Throughout the book, Shaw resorted to sweeping assumptions about the Jewish community in the empire, sometimes based on uncritical reading of one or two reports, and equally often on none at all. He assumed that the congregation had near-absolute power over its members, that rabbis stood at the helm of each community as religious and political leaders, and that they had authority on every matter, from marriage to monetary issues.[49] Jewish communities, Shaw maintained, forced their members to dress in certain ways,

43 Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 29–30.
44 Ibid., 31.
45 Ibid., 34.
46 Ibid., 43.
47 Ibid., 44.
48 See e.g. Ibid., 49, 58, 82.
49 Ibid., 60–63. Shaw was right to note that excommunication as a form of punishment was rarely applied, and that "despite all the laws and regulations as well as the nature of

and rabbis severely punished violators.[50] Learning was central to the Ottoman Jewish experience, so that "in each of the cities and towns of the empire … Jewish communities and wealthy individual Jewish bankers and doctors gathered magnificent libraries and supported the work of hundreds of rabbinical scholars, producing rabbis who served synagogues not only within the Empire but also the communities left in Europe."[51] Finally, Shaw too subscribed to the notion of a "golden age" in Ottoman Jewish history, which "lasted for about two hundred years, until about 1700, and then, almost overnight, it was gone." The end of that era brought with it "poverty and ignorance which lasted well into the nineteenth century."[52] Jewish prosperity, power, and influence, he explained, ended just as the empire entered its long period of decline that ultimately led to its fall in World War I.[53]

Shaw concluded his discussion of the decline of Ottoman Jewry with the following assessment:

> Economic decline and political anarchy stifled much of the intellectual curiosity of the past and ended contacts between most Ottoman Jews and those outside the Empire. Europe now was beginning to enter onto the path of rationalism and enlightenment, but Ottoman Judaism remained dominated by religion. While the Jews of Germany and France emancipated themselves under the influence of Mendelsohn and the Encyclopedie, the overpowering and depressing combination of Ottoman disintegration and abuses, violent community strife, economic decline and poverty, and the domination of life by rabbinical authorities led most Ottoman Jews to withdraw away from active participation in society altogether. The schools, which had long perpetuated the culture and progressive thought brought from Spain, declined and for the most part closed. Ignorance and superstition replaced knowledge and thought.[54]

Ignorance and superstition indeed seem to characterize this paragraph, one so patently outdated even for the time of its writing. As with Díaz-Mas's work,

---

community organization, in no way was the Rabbi absolute," (63) although such assumptions, too, were not substantiated by any evidence.

50 Ibid., 79–81.

51 Ibid., 98.

52 Ibid., 108.

53 Shaw explained the "decline thesis" of the fall of the Ottoman Empire – which was already being questioned at the time his book was written – and treats it as historical fact in ibid., 109–120.

54 Ibid., 131.

Shaw's benefitted from a dearth in historical surveys of Ottoman Jewish history. It is by one account "the most widely read history of Ottoman and Turkish Jewry,"[55] and definitely among the most quoted sources on the subject. The seasoned scholar of Ottoman history may object to my using of Shaw's work as a yardstick for the state of the field, noting that it is outdated and no longer taught or used by any credible historian. A Google Scholar search suggests otherwise: The book has been cited 451 times, of which 270 have appeared in publications from the year 2010 on.[56] These figures reflect only a part of the scene, given that publications in non-Latin script languages are excluded from the search. It also does not include the 37 entries in the recently published *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, an authoritative reference work that covers Ottoman Jewry, which cite Shaw's book as a source.[57] Several historians who have studied Jews in the empire, Sephardic Jews, or the Ottoman Empire in general, have likewise relied on Shaw's undependable history.[58] Even very recent works by reputable historians have made extensive use of it, or relied on motifs Shaw's work helped perpetuate.[59] Perhaps it is the sordid state of the field of Ottoman Jewish history that has driven serious scholars to rely on such shoddy works. *Ottoman Jewry* seeks to rectify this by offering a different history, distinct from the narratives that have all too often relied on unsubstantiated premises.

The many problems in the works of Diaz-Mas, Shaw, and others aside, we now know quite a bit about the "middle period" thanks to the studies of Yosef Hacker and his student, Yaron Ben-Na'eh. Hacker's numerous articles, and notably his unpublished dissertation, have changed the field of Ottoman Jewish history significantly. Ben-Na'eh's articles, covering diverse topics such as burial, charity, and women and gender, have added multiple dimensions to the

55 Baer, *Sultanic Saviors*, 105.

56 bit.ly/3yynhTw, accessed 18 May 2024.

57 For examples, see: Ringer, "Aydın"; Yıldırım, "Mardin"; Ben-Na'eh, "Sürgün"; and Erbahar, "Capsali, Moses Ben Elijah."

58 Examples include: Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 203, 221, 236, 252; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 4, 122; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 37, 39, 278; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 175; Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 317. In Levy, ed. *Jews, Turks, Ottomans*, several articles cite Shaw's book (e.g. 288, 291, 301, 308, 313), though Daniel Goffman cautioned that Shaw's book "should not be revered uncritically" (291, n. 8).

59 See e.g. Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation*, 263–9, 331–2; and Baer, *Sultanic Saviors*, 47–9, 107–115, and throughout the book. Baer's more recent work, a survey of Ottoman history for the general reader, does not cite Shaw directly, but repeats some of his assumptions about Ottoman Jews. See Baer, *The Ottomans*, 81–4, 90–2. A study of Ottoman Manastir from 2021 still relied heavily on Shaw's work for its chapter on the Jews living in that town. See Mihajlovski, *Ottoman Manastır*, 141–61.

discussion of Ottoman Jewish history. His book, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, published first in Hebrew, for the first time depicted the Jewish experience in the western parts of the empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[60] As I show throughout this book, Hacker and Ben-Na'eh's contributions have been indispensable to our understanding of Ottoman Jewry; and, they have also posed some historiographical challenges in their interpretation of rabbinical texts and other materials. It is for that reason that significant parts of this book respond to, or correspond with, the works of Hacker and Ben-Na'eh.

3 What This Book Does Not Do

Exploring several centuries of history in one volume naturally requires compromises. While offering a synthesis of breadth and depth that leans on a wide range of sources, I purposely excluded certain aspects of the grand story. Historical episodes and biographies of individuals that have been extensively discussed in the literature are largely absent from my narrative. The reader will find that such protagonists of the Ottoman Jewish saga as Gracia Mendes Nasi (d. 1569) and her nephew, Don Yosef Nassi (d. 1579), or Esther Ḥandali (also known as Esther Kira, d. 1590) are not discussed in this study. Also absent are influential Jews in the Ottoman court, such as Yosef Hamon (d. *c.*1517–18) and Shlomo ibn Ya'ish (d. 1603) who negotiated with the British on behalf of the Ottomans. In fact, the only place their names are mentioned is on this page.[61] There is relatively little discussion of personal matters such as marriage and divorce, familial relationships, and celebrations of different types, issues which are amply discussed in the existing scholarship; the interested reader may consult the sources referenced here.[62] *Ottoman Jewry* also largely leaves out the story of the *converso*s, or crypto-Jews, those Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had chosen to stay in Iberia, converted to Christianity, and lived secretly as Jews. From the second half of the sixteenth century, their

60 Throughout this book, I refer to the original, Hebrew edition. See Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*. For the English translation, see *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*.

61 The curious reader may find more information about these and other prominent Ottoman Jews in: Roth, *The Duke of Naxos*; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 36–44; Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 9:1–40, 48–68, 79–94; Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Yahudiler*, 135–159; and Lellouch, "Les Juifs dans le monde musulman," 270–1. Each of those individuals also has an entry in the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*.

62 See e.g. Rozen, *Istanbul*, 99–196; Lamdan, *A Separate People*; several articles in Lieberman, ed. *Sephardi Family Life*; Littman, "Ha-mishpaḥah ha-yehudit"; Ben-Na'eh, "Moshko the Jew and His Gay Friends," 79–108; "Migdar nashi," 127–49.

descendants began migrating to the empire – as well as to Italy and Western European cities – where they were allowed to return to Judaism openly. Their increasing numbers in the second half of the sixteenth century prompted debates among rabbis on whether they should be accepted as Jews. Outside the empire, communities that absorbed large numbers of *converso*s experienced tremendous social and organizational change; the arrival of Portuguese *converso*s in Amsterdam, for example, transformed the ways the community had collected and dispensed charity. As several good studies have dealt with the effect of the re-introduction of crypto-Jews into Judaism in the empire and in Europe, this book keeps this matter in the margins.[63]

No study that seeks to be as wide-ranging as *Ottoman Jewry* can address all issues. This work, as any other, is a product of my scholarly choices. By focusing on certain areas of the Jewish experience and omitting others, *Ottoman Jewry* proposes to contribute to our understanding of Ottoman Jewish history in areas where the historiography is lacking.

4 Book Structure

The book is divided into two sections: Chapters 1 and 2 offer a new narrative of Ottoman Jewish history from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Chapters 3 to 5 focus on issues paramount to the Ottoman Jewish experience: Rabbinical leadership and community, poverty and charity, and education and scholarship. **Chapter 1** begins with the background to Jewish settlement in the empire. Arguing that most accounts of pre-fifteenth century Ottoman Jewry lack proper evidence, the chapter expounds on the exaggerated weight historians have ascribed to a letter allegedly sent from Edirne to European Jews encouraging them to settle in the empire, and outlines the fragmented testimonies extant for the period predating the expulsions of the Jews from Iberia. The chapter continues with an account of Iberian-Jewish settlement in the empire in the sixteenth century. The process lasted for decades: The flourishing Sephardic society in the western and eastern parts of the empire only fully emerged in the latter half of the century. The discussion then shifts to events that led to the crisis which affected the empire and its Jews from the late sixteenth century, including the collapse of the Ottoman textile industry. The chapter concludes by offering an environmental explanation to the

63 Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 160–65, 186–9; Ray, *After Expulsion*, 126–34; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, xxxviii–lii; Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 1–31 and throughout the book.

commercial and social efflorescence of Ottoman Jews in the mid-sixteenth century and the hardships that beset them in the seventeenth.

Chapter 2 continues with the looming economic crisis of the early seventeenth century. After exploring the problematic of estimating demographic trends for Ottoman Jews, the chapter picks up the environmental discussion where Chapter 1 left off, with the transition into the Little Ice Age of the seventeenth century. Demographic and economic data suggest that the political crisis in the empire affected its Jews too, though thanks to internal migration some communities grew during this period. The harsh times produced fertile ground for radical ideas: In the capital, the fundamentalist Kadizadeli movement became dominant; within the Jewish world, the prophetic movement of Shabbetai Ṣevi swept through communities and eventually collapsed with the apostasy of its leader. The chapter offers an interpretation of the Sabbatean crisis that transcends the common kabbalistic-spiritual one. It concludes with the eighteenth century, when Ottoman Jewry benefitted from dramatic economic expansion.

Chapter 3 examines the question of rabbinical and, more broadly, communal leadership. It looks at three distinct aspects of the Ottoman Jewish experience: rabbis' ability to enforce a culture whereby Jewish law (halakhah) dominated individual and collective life; communal institutions, and the role rabbis and lay leaders played in them; and the link of Jewish communal organizations with the Ottoman state and its institutions. In this chapter I argue that, prior to the nineteenth century, rabbinical leadership was considerably looser than we had thought: It failed to impose Jewish law, broadly speaking, and was devoid of a clear hierarchical structure. Still, rabbis were fully involved in the shaping and operation of communal services, such as education and the collection and dispensation of charity. Spiritual and lay leaders held positions of influence in their communities, but the latter were often politically more powerful than the former. In many communities, scholars were effectively subordinate to the lay leaders and the congregations that had appointed them.

Chapter 4 deals with poor relief and charity practices. Tracing Ottoman-Jewish customs to ancient and medieval Judaism, I show that old practices continued to evolve in Sephardic communities in the empire in the sixteenth century and later; and that new ones emerged as well. These included the formation of private charitable societies (*ḥevrot*). While at the beginning such societies were merely a function of the community, eventually they became exclusive organizations that competed with it. By the early nineteenth century, almost every Ottoman Jewish community had at least one such society. The proliferation of alternative charitable organizations weakened the authority of communal leaders and, most notably, of the rabbis.

Finally, **Chapter 5** looks into the intellectual world of scholars and their place as educators in the community. It traces processes that had unfolded in the Ottoman Jewish world mostly since the Sabbatean crisis, and which had eroded the influence rabbis had in one of the few areas where they still enjoyed eminence. The changes included a significant expansion of private educational opportunities that were not under the community's purview, and the advent of printing of Jewish texts in Ladino translation. The latter offered many Jews the opportunity to engage with their tradition in ways that no longer required an advanced knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic. Such developments, I argue, led to a greater exposure of the Ottoman Jewish population to halakhic literature, although it did not result in more people embracing a halakhic lifestyle, as the rabbis might have wanted. Rather, it eroded the standing of the specialized knowledge scholars claimed to possess, which in turn led to further decline in their spiritual authority.

Ottoman Jewry, then, offers a new general narrative of the history of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, and revisits some key issues in the social history of Jewish communities. By examining the role of rabbis, and communal charity and education, it suggests a new model for the relationships between the different elements making up the community; and emphasizes the limited scope of Jewish communal organization. *Ottoman Jewry* does this by revisiting the "middle period," an oft-neglected era in the scholarship, when the foundations for the rapid transformations of the nineteenth century were set. The reader will find the period previously considered ridden with decay and decline to be one of exciting developments.

CHAPTER 1

Ottoman Jewry, Origins and Growth

In his assessment of the early years of the Ottoman Empire, Colin Imber has argued that, since early Ottoman chronicles were written at least a century after the events they depicted, they are "as historical records … without value." An analysis of the sources for the fourteenth century, he claimed, shows "that almost all 'facts' about Osman Gazi (the first Ottoman sultan, r. *c.*1299–1324) and his followers are actually fiction." It would thus be "unwise to accept unreservedly any theory of Ottoman origins."[1] Since Imber presented this argument over two decades ago, historians have sought alternative explanations to the *gazi* thesis, ones that incorporate the complexity of early Ottoman society and recognize its Turkic, Greek, Mongol, and other elements.[2]

Similarly, one would be spot on assuming that much of what we think we know about the history of Jews in the empire in its early years is fiction. Indeed, evidence that predates the late-fifteenth century is scarce. Most sources for that period, even for the Ottoman treatment of Jews in the wake of the 1453 conquest of Constantinople, were written at least several decades later by authors of mainly two types: Rabbis who were not writing as historians, and historians whose works were replete with fantastical references that undercut their credibility. I deal with the problematic of relying on rabbinical works as historical sources throughout this book. Early modern Jewish historians, unfortunately, cannot be of much help either. For example, the oft-quoted Cretan rabbi Eliyahu Capsali (d. *c.*1555) discusses Sultan Mehmet II's (r. 1444–6, 1451–81) attitude to the Jews in his history of Ottoman Jewry, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. Adopting themes from the biblical book of Ezra, Capsali quoted the conqueror of Istanbul as if he borrowed the words of Cyrus the Great to the Jews: "Who among you of your people, may his God be with him to come (*va-ya'al*) to Istanbul (*kustadina*) the place of my throne" where each Jew could sit under his vine and fig tree, trade freely, and accumulate land. The result of such a declaration, thus Capsali, was that Jews from "near and far cities in

1 Imber, "Legend," 323–31, quotation from 329.

2 For the classical Gazi thesis for the rise of the Ottomans, see: Wittek, *Rise*, 14, 20–1, 50–1. Kafadar has further developed the Gazi thesis in his *Between Two Worlds*, while Lowry has rejected the old explanation altogether in his *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, and provided further archeological evidence to support Greek-Turkish cooperation in the early days of the empire in his *Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans*, 16–64.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_003

Turkey (*togarma*) … came from their places and convened as a community in Istanbul [numbering] thousands and tens of thousands." Mehmet then allegedly gave them land and houses, which allowed Jews to prosper in his empire. Capsali explained that Jews were doing so well as a result of Mehmet's policy, that from that day on he would transfer Jews from new lands he conquered to Istanbul, where communities continued to flourish.[3] Other than the reference to Mehmet's repopulation policy, which is documented elsewhere, Capsali's somewhat-poetic description was likely a product of his imagination, as was his assertion that Jews were grateful for Ottoman forced migration policies. The descriptions of another Jewish "historian," Yosef Sambari, who lived a century after Capsali, likewise blend history and fantasy.[4]

Sorting fact from fiction, and resorting to non-Jewish sources, one may assume that the first Jews to come under Ottoman rule were those who for centuries had lived under the Byzantines. Known as Romaniots, or Greek Jews, we know little about them before the sixteenth century. Ottoman records are practically silent on Jewish presence in the empire before then. For example, they mention no Jews in Salonica in 1478 – a city whose Jewish population would soar within a few decades.[5] Analyzing the works of rabbis previously believed to have lived in Salonica in the fifteenth century, Hacker concluded that none of them, in fact, did, and that there was little proof of a thriving Romaniot community there at that time.[6]

Several historians have provided more data on early Ottoman Jewry; alas, their information has been largely unsubstantiated, based as it was on dubious sources or none at all. Thus, according to Rosanes, Jews had lived in Constantinople and other Byzantine towns centuries before the Ottoman conquests. And while some areas were depleted of their Jewish populations around the fall of Byzantium, Edirne, the Ottoman capital from 1365 to 1453, had Italian, Ashkenazi, and Karaite congregations operating alongside the indigenous Romaniots already in the 1430s.[7] Likewise, Shmuelevitz suggested that Jews first fell under Ottoman rule when the latter conquered Bursa in

3 Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, 1:81.

4 For more on Ottoman forced migration or *sürgün*, see Hacker, "Shitat ha-surgun," 27–82, and especially 32–9. Although Hacker had acknowledged the problematic of using Capsali and Sambari as historical sources, he and other historians relied on them occasionally. See his "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 71–2, 99–105; "Ha-Rabanut ha-rashit," 228–36; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 95; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 38–9, 66–7.

5 Lowry, "When did the Sephardim arrive in Salonica?," 206–8; Rozen, "Individual and community," 216.

6 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 276.

7 Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:11–14, 204–6.

1326.[8] And in Stanford Shaw's account, Jews had rejoiced at Turkic conquests of Byzantine territories as early as the eleventh century. They actively assisted the Ottomans ever since their early conquests, he argued, which for Jews "meant instant liberation … often from actual slavery." Shaw maintained that Jews "actively helped" Sultan Orhan (r. 1326–62) conquer Bursa in 1324 (*sic*; should be 1326); as a reward, Orhan "brought in Jewish artisans and money changers from Damascus and Byzantine Adrianople … so that it could become the first Ottoman capital." Shaw did not seem to have been bothered by the contradiction between wishing to please the Jews of Bursa and forcing Jews in other places to migrate, or by the implausibility of this story, given that neither Damascus nor Edirne were under Ottoman rule at the time. As I showed in the Introduction, he also did not bother to cite his sources.[9] Shaw then continued to discuss similar Jewish efforts to help in the 1365 Ottoman capture of Edirne, and elaborated on the roles of chief rabbis in Ottoman cities, despite the absence of evidence for the substantial presence of Jews or of chief rabbis in Bursa or Edirne at the time.[10] Shaw's account on the early days of Ottoman-Jewish history, like those by others, are thus of little historical value.

1 One Overplayed Letter

It appears that we are practically in the dark with respect to Ottoman Jewry before the fifteenth century; even for that century, we know very little. The historiography tells us, for example, of the safe haven the Ottomans offered the Jews already in the first half of the fifteenth century, which stood in stark contrast to the persecutions they were facing in Christian Europe.[11] Encapsulating the promise of a comfortable life under the Ottomans was a letter one Yiṣḥak Ṣarfati, an Ashkenazi rabbi settled in Edirne, had reportedly sent to a few European Jewish communities, urging them to migrate to the empire. So far, historians have accepted the basic premises of this story: That Ṣarfati was an influential rabbi in Edirne; that he wrote such a letter, perhaps even with Ottoman encouragement; and that the letter then circulated widely among Jewish communities in Europe, consequently leading to a significant migration of Ashkenazi Jews into the empire in the second half of the fifteenth

8 Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 85. Shmuelevitz did not substantiate this claim.
9 Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 25–6.
10 Ibid., 26.
11 Ibid., 26; Baron, *Social and Religious*, 18:20; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 37–9.

century.[12] It rarely happens that a historical account or its interpretation remain unchanged for over a century, but in this case, it appears, historians are yet to challenge the authenticity of Ṣarfati's letter.[13] Since scholars have relied on this episode to establish the notion that the Ottomans were enthusiastic about absorbing Jews into their domains, it is time to reexamine it.

Adolph (Aharon) Jellinek (d. 1893), a scholar of the nineteenth-century movement of Jewish Studies (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*), first published the story of Rabbi Ṣarfati's missive to European Jews in 1854. In a short pamphlet, he transcribed a part of the text in Hebrew, and added an exposition in German.[14] As far as I can tell, Ṣarfati's letter was unknown to scholars until this point, and every work referring to it cites Jellinek's version directly, or can be traced back to it.[15] Jellinek claimed to have used a copy of the letter he found in the *keiserlichen Bibliothek zu Paris*, now the Bibliothèque National de France.[16] Examining the manuscript Jellinek used raises several questions. First, it is a version of the text copied by what appears to have been a later scribe rather than the original letter; and it follows as an addendum to responsa by Asher b. Yeḥi'el (ha-Rosh, d. 1327).[17] Ṣarfati indeed encouraged people to copy his letter

12 The story appeared in a study dedicated to Ottoman Jews already in 1897, and has not changed much since; see Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman*, 34–5. For Rosanes' narrative, see: Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim* 1:15–16, and again on 238. Rosanes relied mostly on Graetz (Heinrich Graetz, *Divre yeme Yisra'el*, 6:240–2). For other similar versions, see: Baron, *Social and Religious*, 18:20–21; Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 31–3; Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities*, 21–2; Bernard Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 135–6; Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 12, 18, 30–2; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 20; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 4; Halil İnalcık, "Foundations," 4–5; Lewental, "Ṣarfati, Isaac," 261.

13 Another example would be historians' and European visitors' perpetuation of the myth of Ottoman prohibition on printing that lasted centuries, citing time and again imperial decrees that in all likelihood had never been issued. See Ami Ayalon, *Arabic Print Revolution*, 6–8; Yaron Ayalon, "Richelieu," 158–60; and Ch. 5 of this book.

14 Jellinek, *Kontras*, 14–25 for the Hebrew text, v–vii for the German commentary.

15 See n. 12 for examples. The one exception is Hacker, who transcribed a different part of Ṣarfati's letter from the original manuscript; see his "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," appendix A, 2–12.

16 This is now BNF, Ms. Hébreu 421, previously cataloged as Ancien Fonds Heb. 291, as Jellinek indicated in *Kontras*, vii. The library has digitized the manuscript: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b107201407, accessed 20 May 2024. I thank Sara Yontan and Laurent Héricher of the BNF for their help locating this manuscript.

17 The responsa are labeled "teshuvot ha-Rosh o ha-rav Rabbi Asher bar Yeḥiel" (Ms. Hébreu 421, page opposite 1a), but the text itself is not the Rosh's responsa first published in Istanbul (1517), Venice (1552), and numerous subsequent editions: It is not arranged in chapters (*klalim*, or "rules"), and only some of the entries in the manuscript appear in the

and disseminate it,[18] but we do not have an original and thus cannot verify the authenticity of the text. Since the handwriting is of the type commonly found in fifteenth–sixteenth-century Ashkenazi manuscripts, we can assume the letter reached Ashkenazi Europe at some point, but we do not know if it received the readership the author intended for it, or how influential its message was. One may indeed wonder whether the letter resulted in a massive wave of Ashkenazi Jews flocking into the empire. It is doubtful that a letter written in Hebrew – a language in which most European Jews were less than proficient – had such persuasive powers. Furthermore, the little population data we have for Ottoman Jews suggest that Ashkenazi communities there did not grow significantly before the nineteenth century.[19]

Dating Ṣarfati's letter has been a source of much debate among historians. Jellinek erroneously assumed it was a thirteenth-century work, given that it must have been written after the Rosh had compiled his responsa. Others have dated it between the 1420s and 1470s.[20] The manuscript at our disposal was written at some point between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth century.[21] Furthermore, it is possible the letter was written after 1517, since Ṣarfati indicated that Jerusalem was under Islamic rule at the time of writing and, as one may infer, Egypt, Jerusalem, and Ṣarfati's hometown were under the same government, which would have occurred only after the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt.[22] With such a broad range of possibilities, the value of the letter to the history of Jewish settlement in the empire clearly diminishes.

Historians commenting on Ṣarfati's letter have maintained that Ṣarfati was a leading, perhaps even the chief, rabbi in Edirne in the fifteenth century, either before or after the conquest of Constantinople; and that the Ottomans were aware of his intention to invite Jews to settle in the empire, or even encouraged or asked him to write the letter. The text of Ṣarfati's letter, however, tells us none of these things. There is no mention of Edirne or any other specific location other than *Togarma*, the term Jews used to refer broadly to Turkey.

---

printed edition. Compare e.g. Ms. Hébreu 421, q. 1, fol. 12a with Asher ben Yeḥi'el, *She'elot*, *klal* 2, q. 14. See discussion below for the dating of the manuscript.

18 Jellinek, *Kontras*, 15.

19 See e.g. Rozen, *Istanbul*, 51.

20 Jellinek, *Kontras*, vii. For a discussion of the possible dates of Ṣarfati's letter, see Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki" appendix A, 2–5; Prawer, "Minzar ha-Franṣiskanim," 16–17; İnalcık, "Foundations," 4–5.

21 The original catalog entry at the BNF from the nineteenth century dates the manuscript to the mid-fifteenth century; see Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *Manuscrits hébreux*, 57. Laurent Héricher, curator of Oriental manuscripts at the BNF, told me that based on other manuscripts with a similar writing style, Ms. Hébreu 421 was likely copied in the sixteenth century. The catalog now lists it as written between 1401 and 1600.

22 Jellinek, *Kontras*, 19–21.

Accordingly, in his commentary Jellinek did not place Ṣarfati in Edirne. Ṣarfati indicated that on the way from his location to Jerusalem, one had to travel over land "except a passage of six miles through the sea," suggesting that he was referring to the Dardanelles, and therefore was living in Gallipoli, Edirne, or even Istanbul after the conquest. But Ṣarfati also explained that "large convoys [of merchants] go from town to town, from community to community … till they arrive in Egypt, and from Egypt to Jerusalem," which would make little geographical sense had one sought to travel "a short and safe distance" from Thrace.[23] Thus any assumption of Ṣarfati's location is at most an educated guess. The same applies to his status in his community. The title "chief rabbi" is clearly an anachronism, but we should also doubt whether Ṣarfati had a senior status among Ashkenazim of his generation in general. The letter lacks the standard superlatives one usually finds in texts written by senior scholars;[24] Ṣarfati defined himself as "your servant, your little brother" and may not have expected his letter to achieve much, as it would reach places "where no one knows me and my signature."[25] Moreover, thus far I have been unable to find any mention of Ṣarfati in Jewish sources, including hundreds of responsa collections compiled between the fifteenth century and Jellinek's 1854 publication of the letter.[26] Absence of evidence is not always evidence of absence, of course; but I believe it is quite telling in this case: Had Ṣarfati's initiative been a key event in the history of Jewish settlement in the empire, one could reasonably expect to find a trace of it, or him, and probably more than that.

Yet, despite their knowing very little about Ṣarfati, historians assigned great importance to his letter, hyperbolizing its effects. Moïse Franco, among the earliest scholars to study the matter, suggested that Ṣarfati's letter "stirred, so it seems, strong emotions among the communities to which it was addressed," which led to many Ashkenazim moving into the empire.[27] Rosanes too ascribed

23 Ibid., 20–21.

24 On titles, honorifics, and chief rabbis, see Ch. 3.

25 Jellinek, *Kontras*, 15, 20. Hacker already pointed out that the text does not place Ṣarfati in Edirne or enumerates on his rabbinical title; Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki" 4–5. Nonetheless, later authors still ascribed such attributes to him. See discussion below.

26 A few Yiṣḥak Ṣarfatis do appear in the responsa, but none seem to fit the description of our rabbi in time or geography; e.g. de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam ḥoshen ha-mishpat*, s142, 49a; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, oraḥ, klal 4, s14, 1:82a. The Salonican Sephardic rabbi Yiṣḥak Aderbi (d. *c.* 1577) moderated a dispute between two rabbis, Yosef Kazis and Yiṣḥak Ṣarfati, who was also a merchant working in Italy, about money the former claimed the latter owed him. If this is our Ṣarfati, the letter was indeed written in the sixteenth century. See Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s205, 103b.

27 Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman*, 35. Franco does not cite his sources, but admits elsewhere (29) to have consulted the manuscript of Rosanes' work, which had not yet been published at the time.

Ashkenazi settlements in Edirne to Ṣarfati's letter, but admitted he could not assess their size.[28] Years later, Epstein took such assumptions further, arguing without evidence that Ṣarfati, the chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Edirne, could not have sent such an important letter without Ottoman approval.[29] Shmuelevitz too assumed Ṣarfati was Edirne's chief rabbi, whose endeavors led to the coming of many Ashkenazim into the empire in the fifteenth century, reflecting the Ottomans' desire "to promote economic and commercial activities in their country." Ṣarfati might have even coordinated his initiative with the government.[30] Shaw peculiarly proposed that the letter was a great example of how the Ottomans "actively propagandized throughout Europe to attract Jewish emigrants to their newly expanding state."[31] Finally, İnalcık believed that "the sultan himself had Sarfati send out this circular to European Jewry."[32]

Adopting a story of one obscure letter, whose author, time, and place of composition are little-known, historians have uncritically perpetuated a problematic notion about the origins of Ottoman Jewry. Besides being unsubstantiated, assumptions about Ṣarfati's letter do not fit well with what we now know about the early Ottoman state, which incorporated non-Muslims into its economy and forced them to migrate within the empire but took little initiative to import new populations from beyond its borders. From early on, the Ottoman interest in non-Muslims was primarily financial. Treating Christian and Jewish communities as tax-collecting units and largely indifferent to internal communal affairs, it is unlikely they had much interest in their subjects' internal written communications.[33] One should therefore treat Ṣarfati's letter simply as, at best, a curious anecdote about the comfortable status of Jews in the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

---

28 Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:16, 238.

29 Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities*, 20–22. Epstein also claimed that since Ṣarfati did not mention the conquest of Constantinople, the letter must be dated earlier than 1453 (48).

30 Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 12, 18, 30. The only scholar Shmuelevitz cites to support his claim of Ṣarfati's position as chief rabbi is Franco, who did not, in fact, make such a claim, but merely spoke of the chief rabbinate in Edirne in general; see ibid., 18, n. 27–8 and Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman*, 27–35.

31 Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 31.

32 İnalcık, "Foundations," 5.

33 Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan*, 52–9. See also the account of Jewish and other *jizyah* payers provided in an anonymous Ottoman chronicle from the turn of the eighteenth century in *Anonim Oslamnlı tarihi*, 19–20.

2 The Sephardim Arrive

The evidence about Ottoman Jewry becomes a bit clearer around the time of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Minna Rozen has found indications for Jews living in parts of Istanbul, specifically in Galata, Kasım Paşa, and Hasköy, several centuries before the conquest. The number of Jews in the city certainly declined before the Ottoman takeover, as did the overall population, but the trend was reversed soon after Mehmet II's capturing of the city. Mehmet II ordered the forced migration of Jews from other parts of the empire into the city in an effort to repopulate his new capital – not quite the joyful Jewish experience Capsali had imagined. In this process, known as *sürgün*, Romaniot Jewish communities in Anatolia, Greece, Albania, and Bulgaria disappeared or were significantly reduced within a few years. Then, from the 1470s on, Jews began to leave the capital and reestablish presence in the Balkans and Anatolia, and the Ottoman authorities seem to have approved such movements if done for economic reasons, yielding higher tax income to the treasury.[34] Still, as the Ottoman evidence about Salonica from 1478 implies, the process of building communities outside the capital was slow, and probably did not pick up before the wave of Iberian Jewish arrivals after 1492. Galante's survey of Jewish communities in Anatolia also suggests as much, or at the very least that Jews outside Istanbul were not engaged enough in scholarly activities that would have left us written evidence before the sixteenth century.[35]

Historians have generally described the Ottoman treatment of Jews from the second half of the fifteenth century onward as positive. Few would now accept Rosanes' depiction of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople as a fulfillment of biblical prophecies, or his account of Jews cheering for Mehmet II as he entered Edirne. Indeed, Rosanes' admiration for the Ottomans, modeled on that of Capsali and Heinrich Graetz, knew no limits. To him, even the *sürgün* (forced migration, of Jews into Istanbul in this case) was a venture Jews appreciated, as were the various taxes the Ottomans imposed on them once they had consolidated their power in Constantinople, if not earlier.[36] Rosanes was generally right in assessing that life for Jews under the Ottomans, even before the expellees from Spain and Portugal arrived, had been fairly convenient

34 Rozen, *Istanbul*, 1–15, 45–7.

35 Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 3:330–47, and vol. 4, dedicated entirely to Jewish communities in Anatolia, for which Galante found very little evidence that predates the second half of the nineteenth century.

36 Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:19–22.

when compared to Jewish realities in eastern and central Europe. Although several historians have pointed to Rosanes' propensity for exaggeration, many, perhaps for lack of a better account, have adopted his narrative uncritically, including parts that were written in order to demonstrate Jewish admiration for the Ottomans.[37]

Such was also the anecdote about the Ottoman acceptance and invitation of the Jewish expellees from Iberia, one that Ottoman subjects, Jews and non-Jews alike, accepted as historical.[38] According to Rosanes, Sultan Bayezit II (r. 1481–1512), upon hearing of the Spanish monarchs' decision to expel the Jews, claimed that the latter were foolish to give up the economic input of the Jews, thus enriching the Ottoman Empire with the economic power Jews would bring with them. He then issued an invitation to the Jews to settle in the empire, along with orders to his subjects not to harm them once they had arrived.[39] Several historians have recited this story as an explanation for the flocking of Iberian Jews to the empire, even though Minna Rozen, in her book on the Jewish community of Istanbul, debunked it as likely the product of Capsali's, and hence also of Rosanes', imagination.[40] Furthermore, no evidence of Bayezit's decree about the Jews has ever been found, and the Spanish works Rosanes relied on did not disclose their sources.[41] Accepting that the sultan issued such an invitation and the orders to protect the Jews assumes the Ottomans held a view of international affairs far more complex than they

37 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 94–5; Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities*, 48–51, 65–6, 97–100, 145; Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 12 n5, n7, 14 n14, 32 n71 and elsewhere throughout the book; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 39 n76, 47 n7, 49 n11, and elsewhere. Rozen did at one place cast doubt on the validity of information Rosanes supplied (24–5, n28). Ben-Na'eh used Rosanes as a source throughout his work, but admitted he was prone to exaggerations, and mostly substantiated Rosanes' testimonies with additional evidence; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 294 n76, and also 56, 86, 92.

38 As is evident in Ottoman Jews' celebration of the 400th anniversary of the expulsion in 1892. See Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, 140–2.

39 Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 60–2.

40 Historians citing this story include: Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 50; Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 30; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 11; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 7; Aviv et al., "Ottoman Empire," 3:606. For Rozen's discussion of this issue, and of the problematic of relying on narrative sources such as Capsali, see Rozen, *Istanbul*, 38–9. Rozen later explained that while Bayezit's invitation of the Jews was made up, it reflected historical realities by which Jews were effectively welcome in the empire; *Studies in the History of Istanbul Jewry*, 367. For recent studies still repeating the myth of Bayezit II, see Ginio, *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem*, 57–8, and Ray, *After Expulsion*, 48.

41 Aviv et al., "Ottoman Empire," 3:606–7. Rosanes relied on two Spanish sources in addition to Capsali: de los Rios, *Historia*, 3:419; and Aboab, *Nomologia*, 295. Neither provided evidence to substantiate the story.

conceivably did in the late fifteenth century. One needs to look elsewhere to understand the successful absorption of Jews into the empire from the late fifteenth century and their economic and social prosperity there during the sixteenth century. I shall get to that later in this chapter.

The story of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, the subsequent settlement of many of them in the Ottoman Empire, and the prosperity Jews experienced in the eastern Mediterranean in the sixteenth century, has been told repeatedly.[42] Here a brief account will suffice. On 31 March 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella, rulers of Castile and Aragon, signed the decree ordering the expulsion of all Jews from Spain. Followed by the forced conversion of Jews and the abduction and subsequent deportation of Jewish children from Portugal in 1497, the expulsions marked the peak of a process that had lasted many decades, by which the Jews of Iberia had been gradually marginalized.[43] When given the choice between adopting Christianity and leaving, many Jews chose the latter and headed east, though recent research suggests most Spanish and Portuguese Jews chose conversion while continuing to live secretly as Jews, and many of those who initially left eventually chose to return and embrace Christianity. Of those who left, the majority eventually found its way to Ottoman territories, but not in the immediate aftermath of the expulsions.[44] Initially, Iberian Jews settled in the major centers of the Empire – Istanbul, Salonica, and Edirne – and gradually spread to other parts of it as well.[45]

The story of Sephardic settlement in the Ottoman Empire has usually been told as a linear development: Jews were driven out of Iberia, came to Ottoman lands, and rebuilt their communities there. Jonathan Ray, however, has depicted a more nuanced progression from the time of expulsion, one by which Sephardic identity in the empire evolved only in the second half of the sixteenth century. The first decade was remarkably harsh. Tens-of-thousands regretted leaving and negotiated their return and conversion to Christianity within the first few years after the expulsions. Others remained on the move for years before finally arriving in Ottoman lands. The first quarter of the sixteenth century, thus Ray, was "an age of nearly perpetual migration and resettlement." Initially, the preferred destinations of Sephardic Jews were North Africa, Sicily, and Naples. They began to arrive in the empire in significant numbers only

42 For a concise account, see Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, xxv–liv and Rozen, "Sephardim/Sephardi Jews," 4:306–14. See also the following notes.

43 For a detailed discussion of the expulsion and the events that led to it, see Beinart, "Ha-Shemad," 280–308; *Gerush*, 11–38, 195–275. For the events in Portugal, see "Gerush Sefarad – gormim ve-toṣa'ot" 405–6.

44 Ray, *After Expulsion*, 42, 50–6.

45 Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 9; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 5–11.

from the second quarter of the sixteenth century.[46] Ray's account seems more plausible than the swift relocation of tens-of-thousands of Jews from Iberia into the empire within a couple of years. It also helps explain why few texts survived from the early-sixteenth century, compared with the explosion of cultural and religious production during its second half.[47]

Jewish migration during the first half of the sixteenth century, then, moved in both directions, from west to east and vice versa. Jews were constantly on the move in great numbers. Some were uprooted and sought safety, while others were looking for new opportunities. Jews moved back and forth between Islam and Christendom and between Judaism and Christianity. Migration at this stage was an individual or small group experience, reflecting the "rootless nature of Jewish life during most of the sixteenth century." Mediterranean Jewish society was thus made up of "small, interlocking, and tightly organized groups defined by kinship, gender, and even urban neighborhoods." It took some time for a sense of collective Sephardic identity to develop. Initially, the Sephardim set up congregations based on their communities of origin in Iberia. Social divisions based on cities of origin lasted in the large metropolises (Istanbul, Salonica), where there were enough Jews to sustain multiple congregations, well into the second generation of expellees. Such congregations admitted anyone willing to adopt their customs, including Ashkenazim and Romaniots.[48] By mid-century, such divisions had largely blurred in smaller communities, a process that took longer in the large cities. Sephardic identity was emerging in the course of the sixteenth century but, for the most part, the Jews coming from Iberia did not share one unifying identity. Even in the second half of the century, informal networks of families, merchants, and scholars

46 Ray, *After Expulsion*, 50–69, quotation from 62.

47 Some reports have suggested that Sephardic Jews set up a printing press in Istanbul immediately after their arrival, and somehow managed to produce an entire edition of Ya'akov ben Asher's (d. 1340) *Arba'ah turim* by 1493 or 4. More recently, historians have disputed such claims, arguing that re-creating the Spanish-Jewish cultural enterprise in the empire took longer, possibly into the first or second decade of the sixteenth century. See Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 50; Schmelzer, "Hebrew manuscripts and printed books," 262–5. According to Ya'ari's incomplete list, the printing presses in Istanbul published 242 titles in their first century of operation, most appearing after 1530. By then, Jewish printing presses had been established elsewhere in the empire, and the number of printed texts rose dramatically. See Ya'ari, *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta* 17, 59–147; *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-arṣot ha-mizraḥ*, 10–14; and Mehlman, "ha-defus be-Saloniki," 217–70. For details on books omitted from Ya'ari's work, see Ben Menaḥem, "Ha-defus ha-'ivri," 109–20 – a list that does not establish an earlier start date for Jewish printing in the empire.

48 Ray, *After Expulsion*, 31–2, 70–1, 75, quotation from 70.

existed and continued to develop alongside a broader Sephardic identity.[49] This explains the relatively limited scope of scholarly networks in the sixteenth century, compared with the much broader one of the eighteenth.[50]

Several factors contributed to the formation of Sephardic identity. With time, congregations split or united, losing their distinct identities in the process. People joined congregations not in line with their family's origins, and divisions into diverse congregations gradually made less and less sense to descendants of the expellees already born in the Ottoman Empire, or those who had arrived there as children. The shared memories of expulsion horrors and the ongoing reminders – provided by *converso*s who were arriving in the empire in large numbers after mid-century and openly returning to Judaism – molded a new collective identity we now call Sephardic Judaism. Strengthening this new identity was the dominance of Iberian Jews, who far outnumbered the Romaniot and Ashkenazim. Initially, many Sephardim felt disdain for the Jews already living in the empire, Romaniots and others: Disputes over halakhic questions and customs were common during the first half of the sixteenth century, although congregations also cooperated on city-wide matters. Gradually, the Romaniots came to join Sephardi congregations and adopt their customs, and so did the Ashkenazim, on a smaller scale. Iberian congregations embraced new members, and in the process also adopted certain Greek customs. By the mid- to late-sixteenth century, Judeo-Spanish had become the dominant language among Jews in Anatolia, Greece, and the Balkans, even among some Ashkenazim. New or revitalized communities outside the big cities, such as Sofia, Valona, Sarajevo, Bitola (Monastir), Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Split, Bursa, Üsküp (Skopje), and 'Aintab (Gaziantep) had been largely Sephardized by the 1570s.[51] In this new Sephardic society, made up of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, German, and other Jews, local identities of past generations were losing their relevance. At some point in the seventeenth century, the old identities could be detected/discerned in language only: Judeo-Spanish absorbed Greek, German, and Turkish words, and some descendants of Romaniots kept using Greek names.[52]

---

49 Ibid., 82–5, 92; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:133–43.

50 As we shall see in Ch. 5.

51 Ray, *After Expulsion*, 76–92; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 59–70; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 8–10; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 86–98; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 286.

52 Rosanes documented Romaniot names that had survived Sephardization, as well as non-Spanish words often used by speakers of Judeo-Spanish. See *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:209–16, 271–80, 288–9. Rosanes' claims that Sephardic Jews adopted some Greek customs (127–8) and that assimilation was slow in Istanbul, where Romaniot congregations

In places with several congregations, supra-congregational institutions developed to coordinate affairs that affected the community as a whole, such as the distribution of the tax burden.[53] In time, two distinct modes of communal organization emerged: One, in Salonica, prescribed that no collective decision, even if made by a majority of the city's congregations, could be imposed on a single one of them. Another, in Istanbul, stipulated that a majority of congregations in the city could enforce a decision even on the minority that opposed it. It may be that by the 1570s or 1580s most Balkan communities with more than two congregations operated by the Salonica model, while those in Anatolia and the Middle East followed the Istanbul model. It is likely, however, that such models of communal leadership represent rabbis' aspirations rather than actual practices; the evidence for them comes exclusively from rabbinical sources, such as the responsa of Shmu'el de-Medina (Maharashdam, d. 1589) of Salonica. By dictating what was desirable, responsa such as de-Medina's inadvertently exposed the dynamics of Jewish communal life. Thus, praying at a synagogue other than one's own congregation seemed to have been quite common. People moved between congregations and created new ones more often than rabbis thought desirable: Under rabbinical pressure, the Salonica community in the late sixteenth century adopted a city-wide rule prohibiting individuals or groups from leaving a congregation, so as to preserve congregational autonomy. In Istanbul, enforcing issues on a single congregation happened only when the matter had repercussions for all Jews living in the city: Residential arrangements, taxation, relations with the Ottomans, public moral behavior, or accepting the authority of the central *beit din*.[54]

So far, I've addressed Jewish settlement in the western parts of the empire. For its eastern parts, historians have previously noted that Jews had arrived in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt only in small numbers prior to the 1520s. After the expulsions from Iberia, some Sephardi Jews settled in Egypt and Palestine, but it is only after the Ottoman conquest of the Arab territories in 1516–17 that we can talk of economic prosperity and a significant rise in the number of Jews in cities such as Aleppo, Damascus, Safed, Jerusalem, and Cairo.[55] The scant and

---

still operated independently in the first half of the eighteenth century (215–16) are, despite insufficient evidence, plausible.

53 Ben-Na'eh, "Irgun ha-kahal ha-yehudi," 341–67, and especially 341–9; Ray, *After Expulsion*, 83.

54 Hacker, "Ha-irgun ha-kehillati," 294–6. For the source of information on those organizational models, see de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s125, 6b–7a. See also Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:131–2. For another difference in custom between Istanbul and Salonica, regarding gifts grooms wanted to send their brides before the wedding, see Mizraḥi, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, s17, 43–9.

55 For pre-1516 settlement examples, see David, "Yeshuvei ha-Yehudim," 13–26; and Hacker, "Yoṣ'ei Sefarad," 460–67. Historians claiming the Ottoman conquests of 1516–17 opened

mostly unreliable demographic evidence we have for the sixteenth century suggests a population increase in Palestinian and Syrian cities, likely meaning a rise in the number of Jews as well, at least in the second half of the century.[56] But the claim that an Ottoman takeover of the area opened the doors for Jewish immigration right away is anachronistic: It implies that the borders between the empire and the Mamluk Sultanate had been rigidly marked and that Jewish settling in the latter's territory had been restricted for some reason, à la modern immigration policy. More realistically, the frontier between the two states had been porous. In general, no political factors prevented Jews from settling anywhere. It was the arduous path Jews from Iberia had to cross to arrive in Syria and Palestine, and the time it took for the Sephardim to settle in the empire in significant numbers, as discussed above, that accounted for the slow growth of Jewish communities there. The Ottoman conquest, however, did incorporate the former Mamluk areas into the greater Ottoman economic and mercantile network. Thus, while before the conquest cities like Damascus and Aleppo had been a mere transit stop for many Jews on their way to Jerusalem, from the mid-sixteenth century on the area became appealing to Jews (and European Christians) seeking economic opportunities.[57]

Sephardic identity developed somewhat differently in the Ottoman Arab provinces. Damascus and Aleppo had for centuries prior to Ottoman rule a small Jewish presence, with a well-established communal organization during the Fatimid and Mamluk periods.[58] From at least the thirteenth century, there was also a dribble of Jews from Spain and other European countries, who were settling there. But before the mid-sixteenth century, one could probably consider the two communities marginal, even when compared to smaller ones in the empire, such as that of Bursa. In either city there was in the early-sixteenth

---

the way for significant Jewish migration to the area include: Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 1–2; Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 54–5; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 12 (who notes in n. 41 on p. 128 that "the Ottoman conquest resulted in new waves of immigration to [Palestine and Egypt]," although the two sources he lists to support this claim do not state this); Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 10; Aviv et al., "Ottoman Empire," 3:607; Ray, *After Expulsion*, 49. Somewhat surprisingly, it was Rosanes who suggested (on shaky evidence) that a wave of Jews settled in Palestine and Syria after the expulsion from Spain but before the Ottoman conquest. He maintained, however, that Iberian Jews arrived in Egypt only after the expulsion. See Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:184, 200–1. For a good overview of the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt and the destruction of the Mamluk Sultanate, see Hathaway, *Arab Lands*, 33–56.

56 Cohen and Lewis, *Population and Revenue*, 19–22; Ayalon, "Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes," 246–51.

57 On the rise of commercial centers in the Levant, see Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 68–71.

58 As documented in the Cairo Geniza; see Ashtor, *Toldot*, 2:423–5; Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:54, 2:68–70, 75–6, 81–7, 526/n. 20, 527/n. 41.

century only one congregation of predominantly Arabized Jews, known as Musta'ribun (Musta'arvim in Hebrew).[59]

As with the Romaniots in Istanbul and Salonica, the Sephardim in Syria regarded themselves as superior to the Musta'ribun. But unlike in the capital or the Balkans, there was no flood of Sephardim to the Arab territories that would be big enough to challenge Musta'ribi practices, take over communal matters, enforce new customs, or challenge the dominance of Judeo-Arabic among Jews there. Unlike the situation in the western parts of the empire where Ladino quickly became the dominant spoken language among Jews, Syrian Sephardim abandoned Ladino and adopted colloquial Arabic instead. In part, this was a result of the Sephardim being outnumbered by Arabic-speaking Jews in this part of the empire.[60] More than the ratio between indigenous Jews and the Sephardim, however, were practical reasons for the latter's adoption of Arabic, which historians have hitherto paid little attention to.[61] In Istanbul and Salonica, Turkish served as just one of many widely spoken languages. In the Arab areas, Arabic remained the dominant language of society and commerce. Neither the three centuries of Mamluk-Turkish or Circassian rule, nor the Ottoman conquest, had managed to change that. The administration of local provinces, the judicial system, local and regional commerce, and scholarly and daily activities, all took place in Arabic; Turkish was only used when addressing the authorities in the capital. Even half a century after the Ottoman conquest, as some Arab scholars were learning Turkish, Arabic remained the dominant language of everyday affairs. One reason for this was that, unlike other languages spoken in the areas under Ottoman rule, Arabic was the language of Islam, which in turn was the political language the Ottomans used to convey authority and patronage.[62] Such a reality made it impractical for Jews living in Syria to adopt or continue using Ladino. Spanish words and expressions

59 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 99–102.

60 In many ways, this was a different language than the classical Arabic written and spoken in the medieval period. See Arad, "'Aravit yehudit ve-'ivrit," 116–17. For simplicity, I use Ladino here and throughout this book as a catch-all phrase for the many Spanish-derived dialects Jews from Iberia spoke.

61 Levy suggested that the Sephardim's adoption of Arabic was "due to the fact that Arabic-speaking Jews had become largely integrated into the local majority culture and were supported by it in their cultural confrontation with the Sephardim"; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 64. For another support for the argument about the strength of the Arab Jewish community, see Cohen-Tawil, *Yahadut Ḥalab*, 34–5. This question definitely requires further study.

62 Masters, *Arabs of Ottoman Empire*, 12–16, 48–9, 58–9. For the intellectual superiority of Arabic over Turkish in the Arab provinces, see Pfeiffer, "Encounter after the conquest," 220–33, who argues that, at least in the first few decades after the conquest, "learning

found their way into the Judeo-Arabic of the gradually-Sephardized Arab Jews, but Ladino itself was eventually abandoned in favor of Arabic. The integration of Damascus and Aleppo Jews into the local Ottoman-Arab society also meant knowledge of Arabic was indispensable for economic success. The shift toward Arabic took time, perhaps longer than it took the Romaniots in the west to adopt Ladino. In the mid-sixteenth century, it seems that Syrian Sephardim still spoke Ladino, as evident from questions sent to Yosef Karo and Moshe Alsheikh in Safed that included passages in Ladino; one of these questions was dated 1562.[63] The linguistic transformation was largely complete by the early-seventeenth century, when Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto of Damascus discussed the widespread Jewish practice of using Arab names.[64] In the mid-eighteenth century, Arabic written in Hebrew characters was the main medium of written communication among Syrian Jews. Legal documents were drafted in that language, and testimonies in the Jewish court were given in it as well.[65]

The slow disappearance of Ladino among the Arab Sephardim mirrored the piecemeal assimilation of Sephardim and the Musta'ribun throughout the sixteenth century, a process that at times generated fierce disputes between the two.[66] Evidence, admittedly questionable, seems to suggest that the Sephardim already formed the majority in Damascus in the early decades of the sixteenth century.[67] This does not fit in with the assumption of a gradual Sephardic settlement in the empire. It is thus possible that what follows took place a little later than the sources tell us. Sometime around 1540, Rabbi

---

traveled primarily in one direction," that is, Turkish officials and scholars studied Arabic, but Arabs did not rush to learn Turkish (quotation from 233).

63 Karo, *Beit Yosef*, s4, 19; Alsheikh, *Shut. Moshe Alsheikh*, s44, 94–5.

64 Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, s41, 83a–84a. For more on Pinto and his relationship to the linguistic transformations among Jews, see Arad, "'Aravit yehudit ve-'ivrit," 122–3.

65 Laniado, *Maharash*, s10, 126–7; "Shut.," 62; Dweck ha-Kohen, *Reaḥ sadeh*, s16, 57b; Sasson, *Knesset Yisra'el*, 7a. The Russell brothers also noted the extensive use of Arabic among Jews in Aleppo in the eighteenth century; Russell, *Aleppo, 1756*, 78; *Aleppo, 1794*, 59–60. Still, here and there words and expressions in Ladino were preserved, as a discussion on the prohibition of gambling in the eighteenth century suggests; Laniado, *Beit dino shel Shlomo*, yoreh, s3, 123–4, where *casa de juego* was used for a house in which gambling took place.

66 Dotan Arad has claimed that the Musta'ribi and Sephardi communities were still largely separate in leadership and residential neighborhoods in the first half of the sixteenth century; Arad, "'Edah meyuḥasah berurah," 97.

67 A Jew who passed through the city in 1521 reported that out of 500 Jewish houses, the Musta'ribun occupied only 60. Rosanes noted that by that time there were three synagogues in Damascus, one for the Musta'ribun and two for the Sephardim, but it seems more likely that a separate Sephardi synagogue was established only later; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 2:141.

Moshe Najarah, a Sephardi, became the head of the rabbinical court (*av beit din*) there.[68] A story of a dispute around the Jewish cemetery that erupted during Najarah's tenure, wether accurate or not, displays the initial animosity between the two factions. The Sephardim, for shortage of space but also because of their disdain for the Musta'ribun, bought a plot of land in 1545 to serve as their separate graveyard. They asked all Jews in the city to contribute to that end, but the Musta'ribun refused. When a few years later a wealthy Arab Jew bought a plot nearby and asked to be buried there, the Sephardim warned him that they would dig out his bones, as Musta'ribun were not dignified enough to lie next to Sephardim.[69] The row over the cemetery broke out at a time when Sephardim and Musta'ribun were constantly fighting over seat allocations in the synagogue, eventually leading to the establishment of a second, Sephardi house of prayer.[70] The separation between the two communities clearly eroded over time, and was merely nominal by the eighteenth century. In the 1590s, the head of the rabbinical court, accepted by the Musta'ribun, was a Sephardi, Efraim Penziyeri (d. 1620), marking the assimilation of the local Arab Jews into the majority Sephardic way. Panziyeri's successor, Josiah Pinto, was also a Sephardi. In Damascus, this Sephardi takeover was further assisted by a flow of Sephardic Jews coming from Safed since the late sixteenth century, and those escaping that town after a Druze massacre there in 1604.[71]

In Aleppo too, the Sephardim seem to have considered themselves a separate congregation soon after their arrival, and sought to challenge Musta'ribi practices.[72] According to one source, they nominated a rabbi to serve as a judge (*dayyan*) and established a separate *beit din*.[73] Two incidents around mid-century reflected tensions between the groups. The first involved the *mikveh*, the public pool used for ritual purification. The Sephardim had stricter requirements for operating the *mikveh*, and they petitioned a Musta'ribi rabbi several times to bring the *mikveh* up to their standards, but he ignored them. The dispute deteriorated into a violent clash when Sephardi representatives, who came to discuss the matter with the Musta'ribi rabbi, were met by an angry mob.[74] At about the same time, the two factions were also in dispute over seating arrangements in the synagogue, just as it happened in Damascus.

68 Ibid., 3:218–19. Rosanes also claimed Najarah was the city's chief rabbi, a title that did not exist in sixteenth-century Damascus. See the discussion on chief rabbis in Ch. 3.

69 Ibid., 2:142; Rivlin and Rivlin, *Korot*, 17.

70 *Korot*, 17.

71 Ibid., 18; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 3:228–32. For more on Safed, see Ayalon, "Safed."

72 Har'el, "Maḥloket ve-haskamah," 123.

73 Dayan, *Yashir Moshe*, introduction, 2.

74 Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s52, 48a–b. For other accounts and commentaries of the *mikveh* dispute, see Har'el, "Maḥloket ve-haskamah," 123–6; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 2:210.

At first, the Sephardim used to pray with the Musta'ribun in the same synagogue, at least several times a week, with each congregation occupying a separate wing. As more and more Sephardim settled in Aleppo, the synagogue became overcrowded. Eventually, the Sephardim established their own place, thus marking the spiritual division by a physical one.[75] The Sephardi-Musta'ribi schism, however, was short lived. As Sephardi scholars rose in prominence, dependence on them for resolving legal matters increased. In Aleppo, as elsewhere, Musta'ribun gradually preferred Sephardic courts to their own, while Sephardim still largely refrained from appearing in front of Musta'ribi judges. At some point, even members of the prominent Dayan family that had dominated the Aleppo community for centuries admitted there was no one left in their family worthy of the position of *av beit din*, and it passed into the hands of the Sephardim for good.[76] Nominal separation between the two communities continued into the seventeenth century. For example, sometime in the 1570s, the Musta'ribun recognized the authority of the Sephardi Shmu'el Laniado (*ba'al ha-kelim*, d. 1605 or 10)[77] as *av beit din*, but were still represented at the court by a scholar from the Dayan family.[78]

In Damascus and Aleppo, as elsewhere in the eastern parts of the empire, animosity between Sephardim and Musta'ribun seems to have reached a peak after the mid-sixteenth century; the disdain of the former toward the latter was pronounced in no kind terms in the responsa. For example, writing about the aforementioned *mikveh* dispute, Yosef Karo mentioned a rabbi from Safed who was "miserable and persecuted by a congregation of the Arab sect (*kahal mi-kat 'aravim*) who has no mouth to speak and no audacity to raise his head as he is scared of them and mortified due to the intimidations and exaggerations they level at him."[79] Toward the end of the century, customs and language blended, and the two factions effectively became one community. While

75 Har'el, "Maḥloket ve-haskamah," 127–9.

76 Ibid., 130; Dayan, *Yashir Moshe*, introduction, 2.

77 Laniado was nicknamed *ba'al ha-kelim* (master of the tools) for his many halakhic works, whose titles began with the word *keli*; Ayalon, "Laniado family," 3:208–10. Neither date of his passing is backed by solid evidence. For 1605 see Sutton, *Aleppo*, 247, 260; for 1610, Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 3:235. The history of the Laniado family is replete with date inaccuracies, which casts some doubt on their alleged role as leaders of the Aleppo community. See Ayalon, "Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes," 56–7.

78 By Sutton's account, which is not quite reliable, Laniado arrived in Aleppo from Safed where he had been a student of Yosef Karo, which places him in Aleppo by 1575 at the latest; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 258–60. For the Dayan judge serving alongside Laniado, see Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 3:233–5.

79 The context was a dispute about the city's ritual baths (*mikva'ot*), during which Karo was arrested by the Ottoman authorities and only released when the Sephardim came to his aid; Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s52, 48a–b. See also Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, oraḥ, siman 1, 1a–2b.

probably indistinguishable to the outside observer or the Ottoman authorities, in the seventeenth century Sephardi rabbis still treated the Musta'ribun as a separate group in their responsa.[80]

In some similarity to the Syrian cities, the community in Cairo was split into several congregations in the early-sixteenth century. Unlike Damascus and Aleppo, Cairo had attracted Jews from all over the Jewish world for centuries before the Ottoman conquest.[81] During the sixteenth century, the Cairo community was divided into several congregations, including the Musta'ribun and the various immigrant groups: Italians and Sicilians, the Maghribim (from North Africa), and the Sephardim. Such divisions continued in Cairo at least till the eighteenth century, although by then Jews spoke primarily Arabic, Sephardic customs were widely followed, and Sephardi scholars led the *beit din*.[82]

Likewise, in Jerusalem the Sephardim gradually became the dominant sect. While the Musta'ribun maintained a separate synagogue and *beit midrash* where studies took place in Arabic rather than Ladino, and the Ashkenazim administered their own *kahal* independent of the Sephardim, by the seventeenth century both communities had come to recognize the administrative superiority of the Sephardim.[83] The official leader of the community, chosen among the city's Jews and formally confirmed by the *shar'i* court, was a Sephardi. In a court record from 1609, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews pronounced their support for the appointment of a leader from among the Sephardim.[84] Filings from 1621 and 1646 asked the court to appoint Sephardim to represent the community's financial matters. The judge (*qadi*) accepted the appointments, noting that such individuals shall represent "their [i.e. Sephardi] community

80 Dayan, *Yashir Moshe*, introduction, 2; Har'el, "Maḥloket ve-haskamah," 129–30. In the seventeenth century, Yoshiyahu Pinto mentioned Musta'ribun in Aleppo, Baghdad, and other places; Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, oraḥ, s4, 3b–6a. In the eighteenth century, Laniado noted that the elders of his town (Aleppo) had told him that the Sephardim and Musta'ribun used to pray together, except on some occasions when they would pray separately; Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, oraḥ, s14, 69. In the early-nineteenth century, the division between the two congregations was marginal, but still apparent in minor issues, such as the manner in which one rolls a Torah scroll in the synagogue; 'Antebi, *Ḥokhmah u-musar*, 297–8.

81 This is at least the impression one gets from the Cairo Geniza, of Egypt as a major trade hub that attracted many Jews since Fatimid times. See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:29–59, 209–20.

82 Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 200–5.

83 Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (16th century), 7; *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century), 3–4, 56, 126–7.

84 Bearing the title ra'is ta'ifat al-yahud; *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century), 5–6.

and the remainder of the Jews residing in Jerusalem."[85] Numerically, the Sephardim were by far the largest sect in the city already in the early seventeenth century, thanks to assimilation and to the flow of Jews from Safed from the late sixteenth century.[86] Furthermore, the status of Jerusalem in the Jewish world overall attracted seasonal and permanent migrants. Many of those settling in Jerusalem arrived there toward the end of their lives or as students and did not have a steady source of income. The rise in non-productive residents and the increased dependency on donations led to the evolution of a system of contributions from diaspora communities to sustain students in the city. Such funds were at first shared among Sephardim and Ashkenazim, but at some point in the eighteenth century Sephardim in the diaspora began to insist on supporting Sephardi students only, and so did the Ashkenazim, thereby further enhancing their mutual segregation.[87]

While the Musta'ribun had effectively integrated into the Sephardi community by the early seventeenth century, the Ashkenazim remained a separate and significantly smaller group, relying on the Sephardim only for representing the city's Jews to the Ottoman authorities. The Ashkenazi community appointed their own lay leaders (*parnasim*) who collected taxes and took loans on behalf of the Ashkenazi community, and maintained real-estate property separately from the Sephardim.[88] Still, social relations between the two groups were not entirely cut off, as attested by evidence on Jews who left the Ashkenazi community to join the Sephardi one (and vice versa) and on intermarriage between them that became more common in the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteen century.[89]

3 The Textile Industry and the Decline of Safed

From the very beginning, Jews had been involved in the Ottoman economy on all levels, from petty laborers to international merchants, from money lenders

85 *'aleihem ve-'al she'ar 'adat ha-yehudim ha-garim bi-yerushalayim*; ibid., 7–8, 10–12, quotation from 8.

86 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 102–6.

87 For an overview of the system of contributions sent to Jerusalem from diaspora communities, see Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 15–69. This system had its origins in the late sixteenth century; Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (16th century), 34.

88 *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century), 83, 105, 655–60.

89 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 107–8.

or changers (*sarraf*s) to tax farmers working for the state.[90] In the course of the sixteenth century, with the arrival of the Sephardim and other European Jews, Jewish economic activities expanded considerably.[91] In the two big Jewish centers of Istanbul and Salonica in the early decades of the sixteenth century, one could find Jewish tailors, carpenters, pharmacists, bakers, fishermen, blacksmiths and tinsmiths, mirror makers, glassmakers, gunpowder makers, painters, as well as singers, dancers, and actors.[92] By far the most significant economic development of the time was the entry of Jews into the textile industry. Jews, who had dominated the production of textiles in many cities in Iberia, brought with them the technology of producing cloth to Salonica. According to one explanation, the Jewish textile business got its boost from the Ottomans' entrusting Salonica Jews with manufacturing uniforms for the Janissaries.[93] Another attributes Jewish success in this trade to the Ottoman preference for Jews over Italians, who had dominated it before the sixteenth century.[94] Both explanations point to the emergence of Salonica as a major Jewish center and the empire's textile capital by the mid-sixteenth century.

The primary material used to produce clothes was wool. Wool was imported as a raw material to Salonica from elsewhere in the empire, notably the Balkans and Anatolia, after which it was sent to be dyed in Safed. Along with the rise of Salonica as the leading center for fabric production, Safed became a locus for wool dying, thanks to its freshwater streams which were needed for the procedure. Accordingly, the city attracted a considerable number of merchants, and its Jewish population swelled in the first half of the century, as did that of Salonica.

Safed, like the other holy cities of Palestine – Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tiberias – had always attracted Jews from the diaspora. In particular, Safed developed as a center for the study of kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism. From the early-sixteenth century, the importance of Safed in the Jewish world rose dramatically. Economically thriving thanks to the textile industry, the city attracted many, mostly Sephardi scholars. Soon, the city became famous in the Jewish world both for its economic prosperity and as a hub of Jewish learning. Among the scholars teaching there were Ya'akov Berab (d. 1546), who

90 İnalcık, *Economic and Social*, vol. 1, 209–11; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 226–28.

91 It is possible that the explosion of information about Jewish economic activities from the sixteenth century rather than real growth accounts for this impression; however, this isn't likely given general improving conditions in the sixteenth century. See discussion below.

92 Rozen, *Istanbul*, 233.

93 Mazower, *Salonica*, 52.

94 Goffman, "Jews," 18.

attempted to renew the official ordination of rabbis in 1538;[95] Berab's students Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulḥan ʿArukh*, Moshe Mitrani (ha-Mabit, d. 1580), and Moshe Cordovero (d. 1570); Karo's students Moshe Alsheikh (d. 1600) and Yom-Tov Ṣahalon (Maharitaṣ, d. 1638); Mitrani's son, Yosef Mitrani (Maharit, d. 1639); and the founder of modern kabbalah, Yiṣḥak Luria Ashkenazi (ha-Ari, d. 1572) and his most prominent disciple, Ḥayim Vital (d. 1620).[96]

Safed's economic and scholarly prosperity did not last long. Between 1570 and 1590, virtually its entire stratum of leading scholars had either died or left the city. Some moved to neighboring Jerusalem or Damascus, and Safed ceased to attract new students. Early signs of a financial crisis were already noticeable in the 1560s and were felt by many in the early-1570s. The price of wool from the Balkans rose sharply from the mid-1570s, which made production in Safed unprofitable due to high transportation costs.[97] An Ottoman decree requiring Safed Jews to move to Cyprus in 1576, presumably for financial reasons, caused great turmoil in the local community and, although it was rescinded in 1578 (also due to financial concerns), it likely prompted some Jews to leave.[98] The introduction into the markets of cheap English woolen broadcloth in the 1580s eliminated whatever wool industry remained in Safed.[99] Jewish merchants left, seeking opportunities elsewhere. Safed suffered further from severe droughts in 1583–4, 1591, and 1599, and epidemics in 1586–7, and 1594–5. From 1595 to about 1610, eastern Anatolia was marred by the outbreak of the Jelali (or Celali) revolts, a series of anti-Ottoman rebellions that involved more criminals and bandits than ordinary military units and required significant resources to subdue. The Celali revolts produced population movements and further shortages of basic staples that were felt throughout the region, including in Safed.[100] From 1604, military disputes between the Druze Maʿan family, led by Faḥr a-Din II and his brother, and forces loyal to the Ottomans in the northern Galilee area, led to further emigration from Safed. Rival forces conquered the town several times. By 1653, after another round of famine and conquests, Safed was practically devoid of Jews.[101]

95 Ayalon, "Berab, Jacob"; Katz, "Maḥloket ha-semikhah," 28–45.

96 Ayalon, "Safed"; Ben-Na'eh, "Caro"; Shepkaru, "Vital, Ḥayim."

97 Aviṣur, "Ṣefat," 67–8.

98 See Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*, 295–7 for the texts of the two decrees. The expulsion decree did not list the reason for deportation but required all deportees to be rich. The reverse order explained that the damage to the local economy would have been too harsh.

99 Braude, "International competition," 438, 447.

100 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 167–74; Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 146–71.

101 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 2–6; Ayalon, "Safed."

Safed's commercial and scholarly decline occurred in the context of a greater crisis in the Ottoman Empire and throughout the world, that had begun in the last third of the sixteenth century and intensified in the first half of the seventeenth. The dwindling of Safed's Jewish population and the collapse of its wool industry did not, however, mark the end of Ottoman Jewry's domination of the textile industry, or its deep involvement in the empire's economy and international commerce. It was merely a temporary setback. The seventeenth century saw the rise of Izmir as a new commercial center, and many Jews and European merchants moved there. The same happened later in Aleppo. Before we get to that, however, I need to explain what brought Ottoman Jews social, spiritual, and economic prosperity in the eastern Mediterranean following the horrors of the expulsions from Iberia, during most of the sixteenth century.

4 Ottoman Jews and the Environment

The arrival of the Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire ushered in a period of rapid social and economic growth for Jews. Within one generation, Sephardi communities developed in all major Ottoman centers, and by the sixteenth century's third quarter the Sephardim were the dominant Jewish sect throughout the empire. Jews were fully integrated into the Ottoman economy and had even monopolized certain areas, such as tax farming and the textile industry. Regional and international trade in the Mediterranean expanded dramatically after the expulsions from Iberia, thanks in part to a Sephardi mercantile network that transcended borders and continued to spread in Europe and the New World. And scholarship advanced to a great extent, disseminating to a widening readership thanks to the printing press, and influencing even Ashkenazi halakhic thought in eastern and central Europe. What brought Jews such prosperity, so soon after the horrors of the persecutions and expulsions from Iberia? Historians have so far attributed Jewish efflorescence in the eastern Mediterranean in the sixteenth century to the welcoming attitude of the Ottomans, to the relative lack of restrictions on Jewish religious, cultural, and economic activities, and, more broadly, to Ottoman expansion into Europe and its military, diplomatic, and economic strength under sultans Selim I (r. 1512–20) and his son Süleyman I (the Magnificent, r. 1520–66).[102]

102 The role of Jews within the Ottoman economy has been widely discussed in the scholarship. See e.g. Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 2:18–20, 67–77; Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 1:123–7; Baron, *Social and Religious*, 18:119–21; Shaw, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 37–108; Levy, *Jews*

Since, as we have seen, the Ottomans did not exert special effort to bring Jews into the empire or absorb them, such explanations are wanting. They do not account for why Jewish life flourished at the time it did – roughly from the 1490s to the 1570s – and not in the fifteenth or seventeenth centuries. After all, at least at the imperial level, the Ottoman state had been built from the outset on a mixed heritage that celebrated religious and cultural diversity, with loose boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims. True, this paradigm changed somewhat after 1517 following the Ottoman absorption of Syria and Egypt, when for the first time the empire governed a majority of Muslims.[103] But, as we know, this had little adverse effect on the Jews: Attitudes toward Jews and Christians did not change profoundly enough to stifle growth in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Moreover, from the sixteenth century and more so in the seventeenth and eighteenth, the Sephardim were successful in a growing number of areas outside the empire, under presumably less tolerant Christian governments. In Livorno, Amsterdam, London, and across the Atlantic, in such places as Recife and Suriname, Sephardic Jews built flourishing communities, expanded their mercantile networks, and ascended to the dominant class by playing instrumental roles in their countries' economies and overseas explorations, and even by owning black slaves.[104] We thus need a more credible explanation for the Ottoman-Sephardic success in the sixteenth century.

Beyond considering Ottoman tolerance or acceptance of Jews and what such terms would even mean in a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century context, one needs to look at global environmental factors to better understand what I would call the "Sephardi Revolution" of the sixteenth century: A period of several decades during which expelled and dispossessed Iberian Jews gathered in the eastern Mediterranean created a new culture that absorbed indigenous Jewish traditions, and built incredibly wealthy mercantile and intellectual networks. In a study of the late-medieval world, Bruce Campbell has combined historical, archeological, genetic, and dendrochronological evidence to show that the unusually warm climate in the High Middle Ages had reached a peak in the 1250s. It was followed by significant cooling, due to diminished solar irradiance,

of the Ottoman Empire, 24–39; Goffman, "Jews," 15–34; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 37–44; Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 27–9; Ze'evi, *Jerusalem*, 3–4, 141–71.

103 I say "somewhat" because even where Jews and Christians were only a substantial minority, as in the Ottoman capital of the early sixteenth century, their presence definitely affected the way the Ottomans governed. See Şahin, *Peerless among Princes*, 97–8.

104 Studies on Sephardic Jews in the West that focus on economic growth in the sixteenth century include: Trivellato, "Port Jews of Livorno," 31–48; *Familiarity of Strangers*, 45–58. For Sephardi economic dominance and slave ownership, see Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks*, 55–63, 175–9, 192–204, 219–67; and Ben-Ur, *Jewish Autonomy*, 30–111.

from the 1270s. Dry winters and wet summers ensued, leading to arctic winters in Europe and to famine in the early decades of the fourteenth century. Sheep scab and cattle plague caused much damage to agricultural production in the late-thirteenth to early-fourteenth century throughout Eurasia, in part due to the Mongol invasions that generated unprecedented cross-continental movement. It was also in the second half of the thirteenth century that plague (*Yersinia pestis*) began to spread from central Asia westward. The 1340s–70s, according to Campbell, were the pivotal, and most devastating period of what he terms the "Great Transition" of the world from medieval to early modern times. It was then that weather crises, warfare, and the spread of plague into Europe converged to form a mighty storm, launching the Little Ice Age. In East Asia conditions were hardly better, with plague and drought – especially detrimental to an agrarian economy based on rice – hitting China repeatedly. The Black Death reduced populations in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe dramatically, and recurring epidemics throughout the remainder of the fourteenth century delayed recovery until the second half of the fifteenth century. While there was some rapid post-Black Death economic rebound, it had abated by the early-fifteenth century. Between the 1370s and 1470s, "climatic conditions continued to deteriorate, disease, often acting in concert with climate, kept mortality levels elevated, population numbers continued to drift down, market demand remained slack, the expansion of Mamluk and Ottoman power raised an almost impermeable barrier to any renewal of direct trade between Europe and Asia … environmental constraints upon both human and agricultural reproduction remained strong."[105]

For Campbell, the Ottomans might have been an impediment to global trade. But they were also the great beneficiaries of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century transition. The Ottomans had been a nomadic polity that began to spread from western Anatolia in the early-fourteenth century, when the climatic crisis had already begun to be felt in the area. For their primary adversary, the Byzantines, the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries were disastrous. Civil wars in the 1320s, '40s, '50s, and '70s created and perpetuated a financial crisis, which the Black Death had only worsened, and which opened the door for Ottoman intervention in Byzantine affairs. A 1354 earthquake and Ottoman advance into southeastern Europe hampered recovery. While the Ottomans took advantage of Byzantine weaknesses already in the early-fourteenth century by capturing Bursa (1326), Nicea (1331), and Nicomedia (1337), the mid-century crisis accelerated the process. The Ottomans thus moved to take

105 Campbell, *The Great Transition*, quotation from 15; a summary of the book's arguments is provided in 3–19.

Gallipoli (1354), Edirne (1365), Thrace and Macedonia (1370s–80s), Sofia (1382), Albania (1385), parts of Serbia (1389), and Salonica (1387, and again in 1430).[106] Irrespective of internal Byzantine woes, the early Ottomans, being Anatolian nomads, had two tremendous advantages: They were less dependent on agrarian production, since they were constantly on the move and fed their growing armies by plundering (or taking by permission) food and livestock from the areas through which they passed.[107] And they suffered fewer casualties from plague, since the disease affected sedentary populations that came in constant contact with rats – the primary agent spreading plague to humans – far more than nomadic ones.[108] The continued demographic and economic crisis of the fifteenth century, coupled with those Ottoman advantages, contributed to the fall of Byzantium in 1453, when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople.

As the Ottomans solidified their rule in formerly Christian territory, they also built a stable, pluralistic empire. Whereas life in Christian Europe was marred by wars, subsistence crises, disease, and economic insecurity, the Ottomans offered stability, opportunities for growth, and a reasonable tax burden. As they attracted to their ranks Byzantine soldiers and Greek subjects, the Ottomans maintained a sense of openness to other traditions. Indeed, with few exceptions, Christians incorporated into the empire were not immediately forced to convert to Islam. Some former Byzantine soldiers even led Muslims into battle for the Ottomans, in blatant departure from Islamic law. The presence of numerous joint Christian-Muslim shrines along the path of Ottoman conquests in the Balkans, where Christians and Muslims could mingle, suggests that the early Ottoman state was open to inter-communal relations. Perhaps it was the reality of a Muslim minority governing a Christian majority that occasioned this. But we also have evidence for the fascination of early sultans with Christian culture, and with Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The Great Transition of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries thus created not merely a Muslim state that obstructed European trade, but also a polity with roots in Islamic, Central Asian-Turkic, Mongol, and Greek traditions.[109] By the time the Sephardim arrived, the empire's multicultural experiment had been nearly two centuries old.

---

106 Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 48–9.

107 Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 15–18. Relying on food provided by or taken from local farmers was a common practice in medieval Anatolia among Turkic tribes. See Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life*, 58–61.

108 Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 50.

109 Ibid., 53–4. Campbell has dealt with the Ottomans very briefly, and only in the context of cutting Europe from its direct access to trade with the east. See Campbell, *The Great Transition*, 371.

Campbell correctly observed that the rise of the Ottomans imposed challenges to Europe and delayed its recovery in the fifteenth century. By the time Sultan Mehmet II died in 1481, the empire had conquered extensive areas in the Balkans and the Black Sea basin, and effectively controlled the northeastern Mediterranean and the Adriatic. Along with the Mamluks, who ruled in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, Turkic-Islamic states had control of all major trade routes leading from Asia to Europe. The Ottomans also affected access to silver, as they had captured two major mines in Serbia and Bosnia in 1455 and 1460. In the late fifteenth century, economic pressure led Europeans to seek other routes to trade with Asian markets that would not require dependency on the Ottomans or Mamluks; and new sources of bullion. The Genoese, Spanish, and Portuguese all sponsored expeditionary voyages west and south into the Atlantic; between 1488 and 1499, the voyages of Bartolomeo Dias, Vasco de Gama, Christopher Columbus, and Amerigo Vespucci opened up new trade routes into India and China and new opportunities in the West Indies and North and South America. From the early-sixteenth century, European merchants once again had direct access to Asian markets. Coupled with a period of increased solar irradiance, warmer temperatures, and fewer plague eruptions, the early-sixteenth century ushered in a period of demographic and economic growth in Europe, though more so in the northern parts of the continent, where the Dutch would soon emerge as a world empire, than in the south.[110]

The Ottoman Empire, at first, benefitted from these improved conditions despite losing its trade and silver advantage. It continued to expand, its forces reaching east into Iranian territory, temporarily capturing Tabriz in 1514 and Baghdad in 1534; south into Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, in 1516–17, ending the Mamluk Sultanate; and north into Christian Europe, reaching the outskirts of Vienna in 1529.[111] The Ottomans also experimented with their own version of sea explorations, setting posts in Yemen, the Strait of Hormuz, and even reaching as far east as Diu and Goa on the west Indian coast and Sumatra and Malacca (now in Malaysia); in the 1530s and '40s, Ottoman fleets engaged in a series of battles with the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.[112]

How warmer was the sixteenth century compared with the preceding two? According to some historians, the period was part of the Little Ice Age, which had begun in the early-fourteenth century, and continued until the early (or

110 *The Great Transition*, 371–3, 389–92.

111 For a brief account of Ottoman territorial expansions, see Quataert, *Ottoman Empire*, 20–5.

112 Casale, *Age of Exploration*, 34–116, and see map on 81 for Ottoman-Portuguese naval encounters in the 1530s and 40s.

mid-) eighteenth. Others include in the Little Ice Age only the period beginning in the 1570s or even 1590s, when the northern hemisphere began to cool again. By the latter approach, "the Little Ice Age" describes the disastrous climate of the seventeenth century.[113] Either way, there is little doubt that the first six decades of the sixteenth century were relatively warm, offering a comfortable climate that was in part responsible for the sustained demographic growth of that era, for the first time since the Black Death. Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who called those six decades in Europe "the beautiful sixteenth century," described rising temperatures, receding ice caps in the Alps, early harvests, and moderate winters during the period from 1500 to 1560, with the exception of a cold spell from 1526 to 1531.[114] Within that brief period, 1529 seems to have been the worst year, with an extremely cold and humid summer from May to September throughout France and Germany, followed by an even colder autumn and winter.[115] The harsh climate of 1529 seems to have been a major reason for the Ottoman failure to sustain the siege on Vienna that Fall.[116]

The relatively convenient climate of the first six decades of the sixteenth century allowed the Ottomans to continue consolidating their power in Europe and the Middle East. Under Süleyman I, the Ottomans had reached the apogee of their territorial expansion. Economically, too, the empire was doing well: There was no shortage of commodities such as timber, grain, and sheep that sustained building and war efforts and fed the millions who came under Ottoman rule. By the early-sixteenth century, the empire had become highly efficient in using its resources, and had an elaborate settlement policy that ensured there would be enough people to grow food and produce whatever was necessary to sustain its economy.[117] The early-sixteenth century was not, by any means, devoid of crises: The emergence of the Reformation and the Catholic response to it threw

113 For the first approach, see Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire humaine et comparée du climat*, 31–89. For the second, Parker, *Global Crisis*, 3–25 and White, "Climate change in global environmental history," 400–2. White used the late sixteenth century as the starting point of the Little Ice Age for his study of the Ottoman Empire; see *The Climate of Rebellion*. Pierre Alexandre has argued that in fact the first half of the fourteenth century was relatively warm, with the exception of the period of the Great Famine, 1315–21, an approach Jordan claimed was the most trustworthy; see Jordan, *Great Famine*, 16.

114 Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire humaine et comparée du climat*, 157–76.

115 Ibid., 176–9.

116 Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 78–9.

117 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 28–51. Resettlement of populations to promote economic and social interests was not a novelty of the sixteenth century: As we have seen, the Jews of the Balkans and Anatolia were transferred to the capital area after the conquest of Constantinople.

FIGURE 2 Rulers of the sixteenth century, from left: Shah Tahmasp I of Safavid Iran (r. 1527–76), Sultan Süleyman I of the Ottoman Empire (r. 1520–66), and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–56)
WIKIPEDIA, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Europe into a social and political turmoil that only worsened in the later part of the century with the onset of an unfavorable climate.

The Ottoman conquests in Europe and the Middle East were, according to one historian, part of a contest between three leaders each aiming at creating a global religion united under his banner: The Ottoman-Sunni Süleyman, the Shi'i Shah Tahmasp of Safavid Iran (r. 1524–76), and the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (r. 1519–56).[118] While that decades-long struggle demanded immense resources and took its toll on the empires' populations and economies, the inability of any one leader to subdue either of his two rivals created a political equilibrium from Central Europe through Iran (and slightly later, into India as well) unparalleled in the preceding or following centuries. It was not those three empires alone that enjoyed such stability: Favorable climatic and economic conditions, coupled with a balance of power between religious rivals, encouraged the rise of rulers able to stick around for decades in Europe and Asia. In the thirteen years from 1533 to 1547, no major state from Portugal in the west to China in the east saw a transition of power, and, if one counts Russia out, the period extends to 23 years, beginning in 1524.[119] It was within

118 Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 57, 61–2, 67–8, 71–2, 91–2.

119 The rulers were: John III of Portugal (r. 1521–78), Charles I of Spain (who was also Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire, r. 1519–56), Francis I of France (r. 1515–1547), Henry

such a rare stable environment that the Sephardi Revolution took place, that Jews from Iberia were rebuilding their communities and expanding their mercantile and intellectual outreach.

Political stability and economic and demographic growth typically favor minorities. The history of Jews in Christian Europe demonstrates this well. Christian persecution of Jews, from legal restrictions to vandalism and massacres, had existed since Roman times. From the late eleventh century, with the advent of the Crusades and the rise in Christian fervor, the frequency of anti-Jewish incidents increased dramatically. But it was only from the late thirteenth century – coinciding with the drop in global temperatures – that Jews began to be systematically expelled from Europe. Prior to the expulsions from Spain and Portugal, Jews were driven out of England (1290), France (1306, and again in 1322 and 1394), Hungary (1349 and 1360), Brussels (1370), Austria (1421), and areas in Silesia (1401, 1453, and 1455). The Black Death and subsequent plague eruptions that stalled demographic recovery led many to blame the Jews for their misfortunes, and thus to further persecutions of Jews from the mid-fourteenth century and into the fifteenth all over the continent. Nor did the expulsions from Iberia mark the end of troubles for Jews in Christian Europe. Indeed, Jews were later expelled from Lithuania (1495), Regensburg (1519), Prague (1540), Naples (1541), Genoa (1550 and 1567), the Papal States (1569), and Milan (1597). Martin Luther's anti-Jewish pamphlet, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543) most likely inspired anti-Jewish incidents in reformed areas, which had already been ongoing with the expulsion of Jews from Saxony (1537), and which led to their departure from several other German cities in the 1540s.[120] And yet, none of these sixteenth-century examples came close in scope to the great expulsions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While Sephardic Jews were not welcome everywhere after leaving Iberia, new opportunities gradually opened up for them in and outside the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century on, such as in Livorno, Venice, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London. Thus, the concurrence of improved climatic, political, economic, and demographic conditions in Europe and the Mediterranean with the migration of tens-of-thousands of Jews from west to east (and back), created promising opportunities for Jews. These factors help explain the economic, social, and

VIII of England (r. 1509–1547), Gustav I of Sweden (r. 1523–60), Sigismund I of Poland (r. 1506–48), Ivan IV of Russia (r. 1533–84), Süleyman I of the Ottoman Empire (r. 1520–66), Shah Tahmasp of Safavid Iran (r. 1524–76), and Jiajing Emperor of Ming China (r. 1521–67). For Mughal India and Japan, such stability would come later, as these were two areas that largely escaped the world crisis of the seventeenth century.

120 Yerushalmi, "Exile and expulsion," 3–22; David, "The Lutheran Reformation," 126–30.

intellectual transformation Ottoman Jews underwent in the first two thirds of the sixteenth century.

From the 1570s onward, the Ottoman Empire began to experience a series of challenges that undermined the economic and social prosperity of the age of Selim and Süleyman. Until recently, historians regarded the destruction of the Ottoman fleet at the hands of a coalition of Christian forces off the coast of Lepanto in 1571 as the turning point in the empire's fortune. From that point, the era of great conquests was over, and stagnation or even decline replaced prosperity for the following three centuries. Lately, historians have come to consider other factors for the consolidation (and at times, loss of) Ottoman territories from the late sixteenth century.[121] Thanks to the works of Sam White and Alan Mikhail,[122] we now consider environmental factors as key to the shift the empire experienced from the late sixteenth century. The economic and scholarly downturn in Safed too apparently had something to do with a changing environment, as suggested earlier. For the empire as a whole, it was the onset of the Little Ice Age, perhaps more than the naval loss at Lepanto, that brought about famine, drought, food supply shortages, and internal rebellions. The flooding of European markets with silver from the Americas made things even worse and led to frequent currency devaluation. These challenges that also affected the balance of power in the imperial palace, changed the empire so dramatically that one historian dubbed the state that emerged at the beginning of the seventeenth century the "Second Ottoman Empire."[123] These changes did not skip Ottoman Jews, who emerged in the seventeenth century as a highly mercantile class, tied into world Jewry and non-Jewish merchants in an extensive network stretching as far as the new world. And yet, Ottoman Jewry too suffered from the seventeenth century global crisis.

---

121 Lewis, *Emergence*, 21–73; Sajdi, "Decline, its discontents and Ottoman cultural history," 1–40.

122 Mikhail, *Nature and Empire*; White, *The Climate of Rebellion*.

123 Tezcan, *Second Ottoman Empire*.

CHAPTER 2

Ottoman Jewry, Opportunities and Crises

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw dramatic transformations in Ottoman Jewish life. The consolidation of Ottoman Jewry around Sephardic identity continued for most of the seventeenth century. Ottoman Jews also further expanded their commercial outreach, thanks in part to Sephardic dominance of trade in western and New World ports, as well as the settlement of western Sephardim, mostly Sephardic Jews from Italy, in the empire. As we shall see in the following chapters, it was in those two centuries that Jewish communities all over the empire developed elaborate welfare systems and produced an impressive body of scholarship that came to be revered across Europe, while also becoming accessible to new audiences due to its popular dimension. At the same time, Ottoman Jews also suffered from the economic and social crises which resulted, in part, from the Little Ice Age that beset Europe and the Mediterranean from the late-sixteenth century on. In the seventeenth century, Ottoman Jews experienced financial challenges that led to migration from smaller centers to major cities. They were subjected to harassment from pious puritans within the Ottoman state, who hounded anyone not following their version of Islam, including non-Muslims. And they saw the rise of a messianic movement in their midst that threatened to rip through the fabric of Jewish society, in the empire and elsewhere. Recovery from the woes of the seventeenth century took different forms and lasted through most of the eighteenth. By the early nineteenth century, Ottoman Jews were emerging as a cosmopolitan, western-oriented community with transformed political and religious institutions.[1]

1 Demography and Economy

The economic and scholarly decline of Safed in the late-sixteenth century marked a temporary end to Jewish settlement there, and reflected mercantile

1 I use the term *cosmopolitan* here and elsewhere to refer to communities whose members were well-connected, diverse, and embodying multiple ethnic and religious cultures, with some ties to (if not inherently part of) an economic or intellectual elite. Cosmopolitan cities were those in which people of different origins lived and interacted on multiple levels. For more on Ottoman cosmopolitanism, see Coller, "East of enlightenment," 447–52; Ergül, "The Ottoman identity," 1–2; Rothman, "Interpreting Dragomans," 771–3.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_004

changes occurring in the eastern Mediterranean that made producing wool there no longer profitable. The collapse of the Safed cloth industry and the subsequent emigration of scholars from it contributed to an increase in the Jewish population of neighboring Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo and to the establishment of academies of learning elsewhere.[2] Safed, however, was a rather small town and its community's dispersal had only a limited effect on Jewish life in the empire. The same cannot be said about Salonica, the center of Ottoman wool production which boasted a very large Jewish community.

Salonica had grown to become a major wool production and Jewish center by the mid-sixteenth century. Several historians have gone so far as to suggest that, at least from the 1520s to the second half of the seventeenth century, if not all the way to the twentieth century, Jews formed the majority of the city's population.[3] All of them, it seems, have relied on the same evidence to make this claim: Four Ottoman tax records for the city from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These include one from 1519, where Jewish households (*hane*) amounted to 53% of the city's total recorded households; two records from 1530–1 and 1567–8, which provide no data on the total number of the city's *hane*s and the Jewish share of them; and a fourth from 1613, where Jewish households constituted 64% of the total.[4] Several problems arise from these figures, however, which render the assumption that Jews formed the majority of the city's population somewhat dubious. First, one must bear in mind the obvious caveats regarding Ottoman tax records to which historians have alluded elsewhere: The surviving documents are usually few and far between; we do not know how many people made up each *hane*; we know that the destitute, disabled, and widows were exempt from taxes, and hence not counted; and we may reasonably assume that communal leaders did their best to cheat by reporting a smaller number of tax-owing households (thus it is possible that the number of Jews in the city was higher than reported).[5] The Salonica records

2 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 16. Yosef Mitrani and Shlomo b. Yosef Karo both moved from Safed to Istanbul and launched successful scholarly careers there; see Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 47–8.

3 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 170; Levy, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 6; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 9; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 59–62; Rozen, "Salonica," 219; Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 2.

4 Exact numbers as provided in the tax documents were 3143 Jewish tax-paying households out of a total of 5904, in addition to 930 Jewish bachelors in 1519; 2645 Jewish households in 1530–1; 2883 Jewish households and 2271 Jewish bachelors in 1567–8; and 2933 Jewish households out of a total of 4584, and 2270 Jewish bachelors in 1613. These tax records appear in: Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities*, 263–4; Lowry, "When did the Sephardim arrive in Salonica?," 207–11; and Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 168–70.

5 İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History*, 25–9; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 53–60; Faroqhi, "Ottoman population," 360–65.

might indeed reflect a rise in the city's Jewish population over time and even a Jewish majority, but there are also other, equally plausible ways to read them. For example, the disappearance of Jewish bachelors, who had appeared in the 1519 report, from that of 1530–1 and their return in a markedly higher number in the 1567–8 report may be attributed to a change in counting methods, a successful tax-evasion scheme in 1530–1, or even a clerical error (since the data for Christian and Muslim bachelors were provided in 1530–1). This is as likely an explanation as Lowry's, who suggested the 1567–8 report reflected a surge in non-married men arriving from the Balkans to work in the city.[6] Furthermore, the number of bachelors listed in 1567–8 is identical to that listed in 1613 (2271 vs. 2270). Hacker claimed the number for 1613 was exaggerated, which then raises the question whether that of 1567–8 was equally implausible.[7] The stark difference between the proportion of bachelors out of the overall population among Jews and non-Jews – 2270 bachelors and 2933 households for Jews vs. 152 and 1090 for Muslims and 982 and 561 for Christians – also casts doubt on the validity of any of the reports. At least statistically, there should have been no such discrepancies between the three communities. In theory, of course, there might have been good reasons for these odd figures; but there is simply too much that we do not know to use these tax registers to claim Jews formed the majority of Salonica's inhabitants at any time.

Acknowledging problems with the Ottoman registers, Hacker turned to other sources to get a better sense of the Jewish population size. He found that traveler accounts, while offering inflated numbers for the city's Jews, likewise indicated that Jews formed the majority in Salonica.[8] Ben-Na'eh has accepted this general assessment by foreign travelers, and has suggested that the considerable gap between the numbers provided by outside observers and those in Ottoman tax records resulted from the reality of widespread poverty among Salonica Jews: too poor to pay taxes, many of them were not counted in the surveys.[9] Perhaps a simple (and sensible) explanation would be that no one in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, in Salonica or other major city, be it an Ottoman tax collector or an itinerant traveler like Evliya Çelebi, had the tools to assess population size accurately. Galante's survey of Jewish life in Istanbul under each sultan reveals just that: The data was mostly anecdotal. A table he compiled for the city's Jewish population was based only on foreign observers who had no tools for credible demographic assessment.[10] Evidence from

6 Lowry, "When did the Sephardim arrive in Salonica?," 208.
7 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 172, n. 55.
8 Ibid., 170.
9 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 61–2.
10 Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 1:119–42, 189–91.

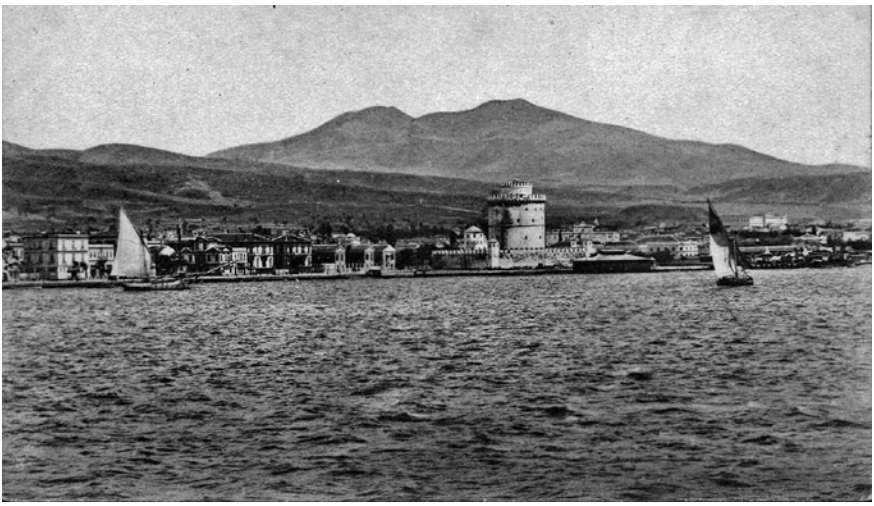


FIGURE 3 The port of Salonica in the late 19th century
DAVID M. RUBINSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE UNIVERSITY

the responsa is also subject to this limitation. In the 1580s, Shmu'el de-Medina of Salonica described his city's tremendous demographic growth during the preceding two decades, but without explicit reference to its Jewish population. From this Hacker concluded that the city's Jewish population in the early 1580s was considerably larger than that of the 1530s. Other Jewish sources Hacker consulted led him to a similar conclusion.[11] All of this still seems to leave us with no credible evidence indicating that Jews constituted the majority of Salonica's population; it is just as likely that they did not.

Sparse Ottoman tax records and anecdotal rabbinical and foreign evidence tell only a part of the story. Rather than a constant growth in Salonica's Jewish community from the early sixteenth century, a drop sometime in the first half of the seventeenth, and then another rise, perhaps we ought to think of the city's Jewish population as constantly fluctuating. This inconclusive observation is equally valid for other Ottoman towns given available data. Hacker, describing Salonica as "a Jewish city," discussed factors that affected the number of Jews in the city. Beyond economic migration to Salonica – as Jews did to Istanbul, Edirne, and later, to Izmir – the city's Jewish population also suffered from natural disasters. Epidemics hit there and elsewhere repeatedly in the sixteenth century. Some resulted from famine, others triggered one, as in the epidemic

11 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 171–4. For de-Medina's testimony, see de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam ḥoshen ha-mishpat*, s296, 35a.

of 1503 that was followed by failed harvests in 1504. Further epidemics in the 1530s and 1540s took an especially high toll on the Salonica Jewish community, as thousands perished, and many others left the city. Similar effects were reported for other Jewish centers in the Balkans, such as Sofia.[12] Epidemics continued to erupt later in the century too, leading Hacker to assume that they had become a common fact of life in Salonica, which Jews had come to expect during the summer months.[13] Finally, like epidemics, fires broke out in the city regularly, a result of dense housing made up of flammable materials, such as wood. As in other Anatolian and Balkan cities (and unlike cities in Syria), wood was the main construction material, and neighborhood fires happened regularly. Here and there, major conflagrations destroyed significant parts of a city. In Salonica, such fires took place in 1510, 1545, and 1620. At least the latter two resulted in widespread devastation, many Jewish casualties, harassment of Jews who were seen as responsible for a fire's outbreak, and emigration.[14] Such shifts in the city's population were not detectable in state records, where surviving tax documents were so few and far between.[15]

Economic consideration also affected Jewish settlement in Salonica, where commercial opportunities were a key factor in attracting Jews throughout most of the sixteenth century. Like Safed, Salonica was known for its wool industry; unlike in Safed, that industry did not collapse in the 1580s with the introduction of English fabrics. That happened later. One account suggests that the wool industry there was large enough and, given Salonica's access to the sea, overhead costs were sufficiently low to sustain profitability longer than in Safed. Three factors eventually led to a gradual decline of Salonica as a textile center, and hence to the dwindling of the Jewish community there by the mid-seventeenth century. One was the entry of the English into the textile market via the Levant Company from the 1580s onward and, more aggressively, since the 1600s. Another was an increase in the state's demand for clothes for the military, while supplies remained constant or even declined, and the state insisting on paying fixed rather than market prices. That demand more

12 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 179–82.

13 Ibid., 184–5. Alan Mikhail has confirmed Hacker's supposition by showing that plague was an integral part of the environmental cycle that people in the empire expected and prepared for; see Mikhail, *Nature and Empire*, 214–15. Hacker was mistaken, however, in assessing that Salonica suffered from epidemics more than other Ottoman cities. For a broader view of this question, see Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 64–87.

14 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 185–90; For a general discussion of fires in Ottoman cities, see: Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 87–93; Boyar and Fleet, *Istanbul*, 77–89.

15 Typically, though, the Ottomans would adjust tax assessments in the aftermath of major disasters to reflect the new population figures; see Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 93–4.

than doubled between 1580 and 1590, creating immense pressure on wool producers in the city, and driving up the price of wool further. Then, a third factor was a sharp rise in the price of Anatolian and Balkan wool from the 1610s. Salonica's cloth industry was further pressured, as the Ottomans did not update the price they were paying for finished products even though the cost of raw materials increased, driving many producers and merchants out of business. Evidence shows wool was still being produced in Salonica in the early 1620s, but the industry stopped being profitable afterwards.[16] This likely led many Jews to seek opportunities elsewhere; whether this produced a long and steady decline of Salonica's Jewish population – even until the early eighteenth century, is speculative.[17]

2 The Environment, Again: Jewish Settlement Patterns and the Little Ice Age

It was no coincidence that the Ottoman army demanded more clothes in the 1580s and that the price of wool, ultimately related to the price of sheep, rose dramatically in the 1610s. To understand the long-term effect of these changes on Ottoman Jews, we need to take a short detour to discuss environmental developments in the empire, the Mediterranean, Europe, and the world at large from the late-sixteenth century on.

In the Ottoman context, the origins of the seventeenth-century environmental crisis lie in a series of repeated famines in Anatolia from the 1560s on, which intensified population pressure already felt in the area. Drought was the main cause of famine: It was responsible for food shortages in 1564–5, 1570–1, 1574, and 1583–5. The last of these was particularly harsh, and affected most of the empire's territory, from the Balkans through Anatolia and into Greater Syria.[18] Further exacerbating the problems were the frequent outbreaks of plague epidemics from the 1560s to the 1580s, as well as recurrent wars. With the exception of the Battle of Lepanto, the Ottomans did pretty well on the battlefront. But wars took a heavy toll at home and led to internal revolts and banditry. During the 1583–4 campaign against Persia, for example, reports on

16 Braude, "Salonica woollens," 231–5; "International competition," 438–7.

17 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 60–61. Ben-Na'eh cites Ottoman tax documents that show significantly fewer Jewish *hane* in 1693 than in 1640 (1388 vs. 5884). This discrepancy could have resulted from factors other than a long and steady decline. The gap of over fifty years between the two reports seems to render such a reading of developments somewhat dubious.

18 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 78–82.

banditry flowed into the capital from all over Syria and eastern and central Anatolia.[19] Wars, epidemics, and famines, combined with Ottoman policies aimed (unsuccessfully) at controlling market prices while diverting food shipments from certain areas to sustain the military, led to a breakdown of the food provisioning system by the mid-1580s.[20] The surge in demand for clothes for the military from the 1580s, which the Salonica textile industry had to meet, was another form of diverting resources. In the long run it contributed to the collapse of the food supply system, as it drove people, including many Jews, out of business and increased migration.

By the early 1590s, conditions had deteriorated further as the Little Ice Age set in and wars continued. The drought of 1591–96, so Sam White has argued, was "the longest in the eastern Mediterranean for the past six centuries and by far the worst in the empire's history."[21] During that period and until 1606, the Hungarian War with the Hapsburgs devastated the military and its supply lines, and reduced the availability of food throughout the empire. Drought, famine, plague, and dysentery, coupled with exceptionally harsh winters in the Balkans, led to an Ottoman-Hapsburg standoff that yielded no meaningful gains to either side. The campaign lingered on, mounting tremendous food and materiel demands that the Ottoman economy was all but unable to meet. As the food provisioning system throughout the empire continued to decline, grain and sheep prices rose sharply from the mid-1590s, and rampant inflation ensued. In response, the state debased its currency and tried to further raise revenue by imposing new taxes. All of this led to a dramatic rise in banditry incidents during the 1590s, some instigated by crowds of hungry people plundering entire villages. By 1596, disturbances finally erupted into the series of full-blown rebellions against the state, the aforementioned Celali Revolts.[22] Led by able commanders, the revolts met with initial success, as the empire, preoccupied with wars against both the Hapsburgs and Persians, had few resources to spare for combating the rebels. Only from 1606 could the state address the domestic challenge in earnest, but even where it was successful in suppressing the rebels the violence "unleashed a flood of refugees, driving a vicious cycle of desperation, lawlessness, and flight."[23]

19 Ibid., 85–93.

20 Ibid., 95–102.

21 Ibid., 141–3, quotation from 141.

22 Ibid., 143–52.

23 Ibid., 163–74, quotation from 163. For more on the Celali revolts, see Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 141–88.

Exigent climatic conditions continued to hit the empire in the following years. During the first decade of the 1600s, the freezing and then flooding of rivers, and excessive amounts of snowfall, occurred almost annually. As a result, by 1608 wheat and sheep had come to cost five times as much as they had in 1595. The increasing difficulty to grow or obtain food led to the desertion of vast areas in Anatolia, which for the first time in millennia became uninhabited.[24] The first decade of the century ended with the long cold spell that affected Anatolia and Europe in its entirety from 1607 to 1610, now considered one of Europe's coldest periods in the last five hundred years. The consequences, dire for Europe, were also harsh for the Ottomans, who had to deal now with another wave of Celali revolts.[25] Later, in 1621–2, heavy rains and extreme cold led to the freezing of the Bosphorus and widespread famine in Istanbul and its environs. The cold winter of 1622 was responsible, at least in part, for severe losses on the battlefront and the eventual deposition and execution of Sultan Osman II (r. 1618–22) in May of that year. This last regicide marked the beginning of the Ottoman era which Baki Tezcan called the "Second Empire," in which the Janissaries and the religious establishment held effective power, appointing and dismissing sultans at will.[26]

The removal of Osman II in favor of his predecessor and uncle Mustafa I (r. 1617–8, 1622–3), and the latter's unseating and replacement by Murad IV (r. 1623–40) did not mark the end of climate-related troubles for the empire. The summer of 1625 brought a series of natural disasters around the capital, including earthquakes, heavy storms, plague, and sheep disease. These further exacerbated the food crisis. Elsewhere in the empire, the 1620s and 1630s were equally devastating: A severe plague erupted in Egypt and Syria in 1626, resulting in famine and halting regional and international commerce for months; and in 1629–30, a destructive flood hit Mecca, while drought struck Crete.[27] In such times of high food prices and dwindling supply of livestock (the inevitable result of too little grain to feed the animals), the price of wool rose too. The Salonica wool industry thus collapsed in the 1620s not only due to the flooding of the market with cheap English and Venetian wool, begun several decades earlier, but also because the rising prices of sheep and wool due to successive

24 Ibid., 174–9.

25 Ibid., 181–5. For effects of this cold spell and the harsh climate of the first two decades of the seventeenth century in Europe, see Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire humaine et comparée du climat*, 305–37.

26 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 190–98; Tezcan, *Second Ottoman Empire*, 153–226.

27 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 199–200; Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 67.

droughts, famines, and supply difficulties finally made Anatolian and Balkan wool unprofitable.[28]

Whether or not the Jewish community in Salonica shrank over the seventeenth century, as Ottoman records imply, and whether or not it remained a major Jewish center as the proliferation of its congregations suggests,[29] there is no doubt that many Jews left it in the aftermath of the wool industry's collapse. Jews elsewhere in the empire were likewise on the move in the first half of the seventeenth century in greater numbers than before, escaping the harsh realities of the Little Ice Age and seeking new economic ventures. This might have ultimately resulted in the near disappearance of smaller Jewish communities, such as the western Anatolian Bursa, Manisa, and Tire; the evidence on that is inconclusive.[30]

Communities in the larger cities benefitted from this migratory movement. An imperial capital, Istanbul presented economic opportunities smaller or peripheral towns could not offer. It attracted Jews from elsewhere in the empire, as well as *converso*s, Sephardim who had lived in Europe for decades as Christians, practicing their Judaism clandestinely and now openly returned to Judaism. The absorption of more Sephardim in the city, and the gradual molding of Iberian and Greek congregations into one Sephardic-Ottoman identity from the late-sixteenth century, led to the near disappearance of Romaniot congregations in the seventeenth century. Lists of congregations and data gathered from Ottoman tax records show a significant shift in the composition of Istanbul's Jewry. Many of the 47 Romaniot congregations mentioned in 1540 are absent from the tax survey of 1596–7.[31] Records from the seventeenth century show the number of Romaniot taxpayers dropping slightly, while that of the Sephardim grew threefold from 1608 to 1688.[32] In the 1688 survey, Romaniots are still listed separately, an administrative division which

28 The shift from Salonican to English and Venetian wool is reflected in a list of wool consumption in Edirne, in which no wool from Salonica is reported after 1624. The list is discussed in Braude, "Salonica woollens," 233–4.

29 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, talks about a drop in the city's Jewish population on 61, and discusses its evolving congregations on 68–70.

30 Ben-Na'eh argued as much in ibid., 44. Evidence Galante compiled, as part of his survey of Turkish Jewish communities, is anecdotal for smaller communities in Anatolia between the second half of the seventeenth century and the early nineteenth. It appears Jews continued to live outside the major centers, though in very small numbers; see Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 4:30–40, 88–93, 156–64, 254.

31 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim* 66; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 65–6.

32 Rozen, *Istanbul*, 51.

probably had little practical meaning. The records also suggest a trend of consolidation of congregations. Whereas in the sixteenth century many congregations split into smaller groups, the reverse occurred in the seventeenth, with large congregations of over one hundred households subsuming smaller ones. Furthermore, it appears that congregations founded from the late-sixteenth century on were named after prominent communal leaders or places of origin elsewhere in the empire rather than Iberian towns – another mark of the shift from local-Iberian to Ottoman-Sephardic identity.[33]

As with Salonica, one should use caution in treating data on Istanbul coming from Ottoman tax records. While one may reach general conclusions about demographic trends and shifts in the Romaniot-Sephardi balance, one must also bear in mind the partial nature of our evidence. The records imply that Istanbul had considerably more Jewish poll-tax paying households at the end of the seventeenth century (1690) than at its beginning (1608 and 1623). Fragmentary evidence from foreign observers and Ottoman court records suggests that tens-of-thousands of Jews resided there by the 1690s. Yet given the gap of over seventy years in Ottoman tax records, one might wonder whether it should be safe to assume that the city's Jewish community grew steadily during that century, or that such growth indicated economic or social developments. Ben-Na'eh, who has suggested as much, has also observed that the city's location away from areas of rebellion and war attracted Jews to it; that its food provisioning system worked well; and that one could easily find employment in the capital – assumptions that seem to be somewhat problematic.[34] As Sam White has shown quite compellingly, Istanbul suffered from climatic extremities throughout the century. Rebellions and wars often reached dangerously close to it; political mutinies were a common sight within the capital itself; and the city did suffer from severe food supply problems. As a result, making a living in the city was far from easy.[35]

A brief account of the hardships Little Ice Age weather caused from the 1640s onward reveals why the capital's realities were not quite attractive to Jews and other migrants seeking a comfortable life. The winter and spring of 1640–1 were among the wettest on record, leading to major floods around the capital. In Egypt, the opposite occurred: The Nile flood fell short, food prices shot up, and famine ensued. Since Egypt was the chief supplier of grain to the

33 Uriel Heyd, "Jewish communities of Istanbul," 299–303.

34 Ben-Na'eh does not provide evidence for these assumptions. See Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 53, and in general the discussion on Istanbul's Jewish demographic in 50–7.

35 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 192–99, 211–22. For a general discussion of the dangers of living in Istanbul, see Boyar and Fleet, *Istanbul*, 72–106.

empire, famine there no doubt led to food shortages in other provinces and in the capital.[36] In 1647, volcanic activity spread cold and dry fog across the Mediterranean, keeping temperatures considerably lower than average. Then, an earthquake struck the capital in June 1648, toppling many buildings.[37] In 1657–8, a spell of freezing snowy weather hit Anatolia and the Balkans, which blocked roads and affected supply lines to towns and villages, raising the price of food and causing shortages in the markets. Then, a major fire broke out in Istanbul in 1660, leading to mass migration of Jews within Istanbul itself. I shall return to that disaster shortly.[38]

The climate was rather moderate in the late-1660s and early 1670s. Then the coolest phase of the Little Ice Age, known as the Late Maunder Minimum, began around 1675 as temperatures cooled all over Europe, and a series of very cold winters in the Balkans followed.[39] From then to the mid-1680s, drought once again extended into Anatolia, and Egypt suffered from plague and famine. An eruption of Mount Etna in 1682 cast a dry fog over the entire Mediterranean area, keeping temperatures low. The Ottoman defeats in the Balkans and Vienna in 1683, after suffering from adverse conditions in supply lines and on the front, should be viewed in the context of the Little Ice Age as well. In 1685, as the Holy Roman Empire's alliance with the Venetians pushed Ottoman forces south, persistent cold brought serious famine to Greece and Anatolia. In the autumn of 1686, the Ottomans lost Buda and continued to retreat, only to face an even harsher winter in 1686–7. That year was among the driest ever recorded, with drought registered in the Aegean and Anatolia. Harsh conditions and the deterioration of the food provisioning system once again led to rebellions from 1686.[40] From 1689, volcanic activity drove temperatures further down. Recovery did not begin until the 1700s, as every year in the 1690s saw either intense rainfall and floods, or drought with very dry winters and freezing lakes and rivers throughout Anatolia and the Balkans. In Syria the situation was no better, with repeated plague epidemics erupting annually from 1690 to 1693, and famine in 1696–7. In light of such conditions throughout the century, the description of Istanbul as a peaceful and bountiful city appears exaggerated. If the number of Jews in the city remained the same or even grew – and we have no evidence to suggest this – it was more likely

36 Mikhail, *Nature and Empire*, 82–123.

37 For further evidence on this earthquake, see Ambraseys, *Earthquakes in the Mediterranean*, 487.

38 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 212–15. For more on the Great Fire of 1660, see Baer, *Honored by the Glory*, 82–5.

39 Luterbacher et al., "The Late Maunder Minimum," 441–62.

40 White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 215–18.

the result of a process by which small town, frontier, and rural populations flocked to large cities in times of hardship, Istanbul being an obvious destination for such internal migration. That is, the assumption that the number of Jews in Istanbul grew from the early to the late seventeenth century may not be too far-fetched, but it had little to do with Jewish economic or social prosperity. In Istanbul itself, life was neither easy nor convenient and, as we shall see, the harsh climate was only one factor accounting for this. Perhaps a more responsible assumption would therefore be that the number of Jews in Istanbul fluctuated greatly between the 1623 and 1688–90 surveys, but that currently available data does not permit a more accurate assessment.

Outside the two large Jewish centers of Salonica and Istanbul, Sephardic communities continued to evolve and benefit from what appears to have been a gradual rise in population thanks to intra-empire migration. Edirne was one such town, which attracted Jews to it, including a group from Istanbul, as one of its congregations' names suggested. The number of congregations in Edirne reached thirteen in the second half of the seventeenth century. How big was its overall growth is unclear, though: Ben-Na'eh's assessment, that the city's Jewish population nearly doubled during the reign of Mehmet IV (r. 1648–87), who chose to reign from Edirne, seems to require some more evidence. Although the city apparently attracted more economic activity during his reign, Mehmet IV's infatuation with the puritan Qadizadeli movement seems to have made his reign a rather unfriendly period for Jews (as well as for Christians, and many Muslims). One wonders, then, whether this reality was consonant with Jews seeking to be close to the palace at such times, so much so as to double Edirne's Jewish community.[41]

Another Jewish community that could have benefitted from the increased migration of the seventeenth century was that of Jerusalem. Numerous accounts indicate the flocking of Jews to Jerusalem, first from Safed and then from elsewhere in the empire and Europe. Such evidence, however, still falls short of allowing us to assume with assurance that the city's Jewish population grew appreciably from the mid-sixteenth to the late-seventeenth century. Data Minna Rozen compiled from Jewish, Muslim (Ottoman tax or *shar'i* court records), and Christian (traveler) reports indicates that the city's Jewish community either declined or remained steady from the 1620s to the 1690s. Rozen tried to deal with this demographic quandary by suggesting that many of the immigrants were either short-term pilgrims, or old people who moved to

41 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 44–5.

Jerusalem to die there and did not survive long enough to be registered. What we may responsibly assume, very loosely, is that the city had anywhere from 700 to 2000 Jews at any given time until the end of the seventeenth century.[42] Despite its centrality in the Jewish tradition, Jerusalem did not replace Safed as a center of learning. While the study of kabbalah there developed thanks to a few refugees from Safed who had brought with them the writings of Moshe Cordovero and Yiṣḥak Luria, descendants of Safed luminaries preferred to set up their academies elsewhere.[43]

As we have seen, by the mid-seventeenth century the Jerusalem community was united under a Sephardic leadership when facing the Ottoman authorities, with the Ashkenazim keeping their *kahal* separate while sharing the tax burden with the Sephardim. Disputes between Sephardim and Ashkenazim around questions of fundraising in diaspora communities marred the relationship between the two factions from the mid-seventeenth to well into the nineteenth century.[44] In the course of the seventeenth century, the tax burden on the Ashkenazim increased dramatically, despite a lack of evidence for it growing in size. Their leaders took up loans to sustain the Ashkenazi community, but despite multiple repayment extensions the *shar'i* court imposed on their creditors, the Ashkenazi community reached insolvency by the early eighteenth century.[45] One court case from 1707 tied between the Ashkenazim's debt and the decline of donations coming in from overseas. In 1720, Muslim creditors burned down the Ashkenazi quarters in the city. The remaining Ashkenazim then fled Jerusalem, and for several decades there were virtually no Ashkenazim there.[46] Since the latter made up a fairly small share of the city's Jewish population, it is not likely that the overall number of Jews in Jerusalem was much affected by their flight. The most assuring conclusion would be merely that the number of Jews there changed throughout the eighteenth century and remained fairly small. This, again, may not be the most assuring demographic assessment, but it is the best the very partial available data permits.

42 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 15–20.

43 Ibid., 210–11. Shmu'el Vital, the son of Ḥayim Vital, Luria's student from Safed, moved to Damascus, while the children of Yosef Karo and Moshe Trani moved to Istanbul; see Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 48.

44 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 170–95.

45 Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century), 105, 655.

46 *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century), 153–4, 210–11.

3 Izmir and Aleppo

Of all migration-related developments in the seventeenth century, none was more dramatic than the rise of Izmir. Formerly a small port town, Izmir (or Smyrna) on the Aegean coast became a major commercial port from the late-sixteenth century. Jews, mostly from elsewhere in the empire, and European Christians settled there for the city's role in the silk trade, a commodity in high demand in Europe. Traditionally, silk from the Far East reached western Anatolia by caravans from Iran. Silk convoys had traveled from Tabriz via Tokat to the main distribution center in Bursa, whose market was known as *ipek hanı* (silk market).[47] A growing European demand for silk in the sixteenth century, mainly in Italy and France, prompted western merchants to seek convenient ports for its shipment to their countries, since Bursa had no direct access to the sea. From late in the century, Izmir was transforming from a small port for exporting mainly cotton and grains to nearby markets, to a key stop on the silk route.

Jews began to arrive in Izmir at about the same time that the wool industry was decaying in Salonica. In Izmir, Jews soon integrated into the city's booming economy and came to profess an array of occupations: They were contributing to the development of artisanal and craft trades, worked as brokers, money-lenders, and customs agents, and served as translators and commercial middlemen as well as tax farmers.[48] By some estimates, Jews formed the majority of tax-farmers, customs officials, and translators working for Europeans in the city up to the devastating earthquake that destroyed Izmir's port and brought an end to the city's prosperity in 1688.[49] The earthquake and the great fire that ensued claimed many lives, including Jews. According to one report, it destroyed half the city, leading many to be buried or burnt alive.[50] Commercial activity then came to a near standstill, to recover only in the early eighteenth century.[51] Up to 1688, however, Izmir managed to shield its inhabitants, including the Jews, from the woes of the seventeenth century global crisis. That was perhaps its greatest appeal for Jews and other migrants.

---

47 İnalcık, *Economic and Social, vol. 1*, 196. Bursa was known to have been an important trade spot for silk as early as 1400. For an extensive discussion of the silk trade from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, see ibid., 218–243.

48 Faroqhi et al., *Economic and Social, vol. 2*, 505–6, 519; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 47.

49 Goffman, "Jews," 26–9; Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 37–9.

50 Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid*, 1:348.

51 Barnai, "The development of community," 43–44.

For Jews, Izmir was a new type of experience. Having had few Jews or none at all prior to the late-sixteenth century, the city became the first Jewish center to be formed after the expulsions from Iberia and populated largely by Sephardic Jews who had already lived elsewhere in the empire. Izmir was thus the first truly Ottoman Jewish city. Still, scant demographic accounts suggest that the Jewish population in the city was rather small, even at its peak in the second half of the seventeenth century; by one estimate it comprised around five thousand, namely comparable in size to the Edirne and Aleppo communities.[52] The Izmir community, however, was more significant for its composition than for its size. Other major Jewish centers in the empire in the early seventeenth century encompassed mostly Jews whose ancestors had arrived from Iberia or Central and Eastern Europe, with the indigenous Romaniots largely integrated into the Sephardic majority. The communities in Istanbul, Salonica, Aleppo, and Cairo evolved in the course of the sixteenth century through the integration of indigenous Jews and immigrants from outside the empire. Jews arriving in Izmir, however, were largely internal migrants, coming from other Ottoman Jewish communities in search of economic opportunities and a safer environment in turbulent times. A century after the expulsions, they now represented a collective Sephardic identity, as differences among Iberian Jews waned and Italian, Sicilian, and Romaniot Jews largely adopted Sephardic customs.[53] While Sephardic congregations in the sixteenth century in Istanbul and Salonica formed on the basis of their Iberian cities of origin, those in Izmir grouped according to the arrival time of their founders or by their city of origin within the empire, and were often named after individuals rather than locations. Becoming an integral part of the mercantile and social scene, the Sephardic identity of the Izmir Jews gradually transformed further into Ottoman-Sephardic identity.

According to Ben-Na'eh, there were five congregations in Izmir in the 1630s, six in the 1640s, and ten at about the time of the 1688 earthquake. These numbers were rather small in relation to Izmir's overall Jewish population, he noted, and reflected the uniqueness of the Izmir community in the seventeenth century. Ben-Na'eh was incorrect about the comparison – Aleppo, which by his own account had a similar number of Jews, had one-to-two congregations in

52 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 63–4. The demographic evidence underlying this assessment is somewhat problematic, drawn as it is from various other places in the empire before the nineteenth century. Ben-Na'eh also suggests that the Cairo community was comparable in size but provides no evidence for that.

53 Ray, *After Expulsion*, 84–5, 92, 135, 143. Hacker's list of Salonica's 27 congregations demonstrates their transformation, as members were not originally Sephardic; see Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 224–7.

the seventeenth century – but correct about his assessment of the Izmir community as a new creation.[54] Barnai pointed out the different organizational forms in Izmir, by which congregational divisions hardly mattered beyond the physical location of their synagogues. Taxes were collected from the community as a whole, and a central leadership headed by chief rabbis emerged.[55] Barnai and Ben-Na'eh have suggested that these features inspired similar communal and leadership models elsewhere, most probably an erroneous assumption.[56] As I argue in the next chapter, the evolution of a chief rabbinate in Izmir in the seventeenth century was not a model for other communities to follow, but rather an anomaly.

Aleppo gradually became Izmir's silk-trade rival, and largely replaced it after the 1688 quake. Aleppo saw considerable commercial growth after the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century, as reflected in the construction of *khan*s and markets in the city center. In 1548, the Venetians established a consulate there, and were followed by the French in 1557 and the English, with their Levant Company, in 1581. By the end of the century Aleppo had become an international trade center, with a growing European mercantile and diplomatic residency, including European Jews. Despite some commercial downturn due to the Celali revolts of the early seventeenth century, Aleppo emerged as a significant wool, silk, and commodities market, with the nearby small port town of Alexandretta (Iskenderun) serving as its outlet to the Mediterranean. From 1688 to 1722, Aleppo was the primary hub for the silk trade in the empire, but the re-emergence of Izmir and the flood of refugees, reaching Aleppo after the fall of the Safavid dynasty in Iran in 1722, led to a shift in the products traded there. And still, European merchants continued to trade in Aleppo, their number apparently reaching several hundred individuals on the eve of the nineteenth century.[57]

As a regional commercial center, Aleppo attracted merchants from neighboring towns and villages and peasants and peddlers who tried to sell their merchandise there, among them many Jews. Although not as important to its economy as the trade with Europe, the state of Aleppo's hinterland agricultural activity – prosperity or stagnation – had a considerable effect on its economy. Regionally manufactured products, such as olive oil, soap, and cotton were

54 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 64, 70. For more on the size of the Aleppo community, see Ayalon, "Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes," 246–51.

55 Barnai, "Organization and leadership," 278–80; *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 63–89, 135–96.

56 If they did, I could find no evidence for them. See Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 70–1.

57 Bruce Masters, *Economic Dominance*, 11–33.

also sold in Aleppo, to locals as well as Europeans.[58] Aleppo was also part of a north-south trade axis, which connected it with Damascus. The latter, at one time a leading regional commercial center, lost its prime to Aleppo once European merchants preferred it, with its easy access to a port, over Damascus. Consequently, there was no European diplomatic and commercial presence in Damascus before the nineteenth century.[59] Aleppo's Jewish community also absorbed European Jews, who had settled there from the mid-seventeenth century (known as the *frankos*), and its scholarly production far exceeded that of Damascus: More Rabbinical works were written in Aleppo, and their halakhic stature was generally higher.[60]

A closer look at the general and Jewish populations of Aleppo and Damascus reveals, once again, the problematic of assessing the number of the empire's Jews, as historians have repeatedly tried to do. Aleppo's Jewish community may have grown considerably while that of Damascus might have stalled or seen only slow growth; but the evidence substantiating these trends is scant. Even the seemingly reliable data gathered in the late-nineteenth century is of little help: The yearbook (*sâlnâme*) published for 1291/1874–75 for the province (*vilâyet*) of Aleppo reported 80,361 men and women in the city, among them 17,142 Christians and 5,036 Jews.[61] The 1287/1871–72 *sâlnâme* for Damascus stated the number of households (*hâne*) rather than that of inhabitants: there were 14,695 households, of which 1,500 were Christian and 415 Jewish.[62] Assuming six persons per household on average, the Damascus population would thus be estimated at 96,000, including 10,000 Christians and 2,500 Jews.[63] But, although the Ottomans seemed to care more about statistics, these were still based on notoriously problematic tax registers, and hence less than credible. For the earlier period, several scholars have tried to assess the Jewish and general population of these cities. Jean Sauvaget rightly dismissed most European travelers' evaluations as fantasy and contended that

58 Faroqhi et al., *Economic and Social, vol. 2*, 499–509.

59 Masters, *Economic Dominance*, 14–15; *Christians and Jews*, 71. More missionary efforts were concentrated in Aleppo than in Damascus; see e.g. Jesuits, *Lettres*, 1:119–89.

60 At least this is what surviving textual evidence suggests. In my work on the two communities, the greater share of rabbinical works I was able to locate came from Aleppo; Ayalon, "Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes," footnotes throughout Ch. 1 and 2, 46–143, and 252–78. Rabbinical works from Aleppo have so far been the subject of two studies: Har'el, *Sifrei ereṣ*, and especially the introduction, 11–27; and Sutton, *Aleppo*.

61 *Salname-i vilayet-i Halep*, 8:109.

62 *Salname-i vilayet-i Suriye*, 3:129.

63 In the census for Aleppo, a population of 80,361 included 12,600 households, about 6.5 people per household.

only the number of houses may reliably be evaluated. Estimates of these indicated that Aleppo had about 14,000 houses throughout the Ottoman period, of which Jews inhabited 260 in 1570 and 477 in 1683.[64] Antoine Abdel Nour has suggested Aleppo only had between 60,000 and 80,000 inhabitants during the sixteenth century, and Damascus no more than 90,000 in the eighteenth century.[65] André Raymond concurred, and deduced that Aleppo's population reached 100,000–120,000 by the end of the eighteenth century, of which about 20 percent were Christian. He offered no data for Jews prior to 1860, when Damascus and Aleppo each had by some estimates roughly 4,000.[66] Studying eighteenth century Aleppo, Abraham Marcus has reckoned that throughout that century, the city's population was around 100,000–120,000, among them about 20,000 Christians and 3,000–4,000 Jews.[67] Marcus, like others, relied on the many estimates by Europeans who had passed through Syria or had resided there in the Ottoman period. European population estimates abound and vary greatly, as the examples cited here show.[68] But, since European visitors or locals had no credible tools to assess population size, we must question the validity of any such estimate.

As with other cities, Ottoman documents shed only small light on Aleppo's demographic scene. According to a poll-tax register from January 1673, there were 562 Jewish households in the city.[69] In 1691 the number decreased slightly, to 545.[70] In Damascus, according to reports of this type, the Jewish community

64 Sauvaget, *Alep*, 226–9, 238.

65 Abdel Nour, *Introduction*, 274, 333.

66 Raymond, *Grandes villes*, 57, 114; Raymond, "Une communauté en expansion: les chrétiens d'Alep à l'époque ottomane," 357.

67 Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 13.

68 1. Teixeira, *Travels*, 68–70, counted 26,000 houses, of which about 1,000 were owned by Jews in Aleppo in 1600. 2. Andreasyan, *Polonyalı*, 150, reported 40,000 Christians were residing in Damascus. 3. D'Arvieux, *Mêmoires*, 6:434–9, estimated the population of Aleppo in 1683 to be between 285 and 290 thousand, of which 30 to 35 thousand were Christians and about 2,000 Jews. 4. Russell, *Aleppo, 1756*, 77, assessed in 1742 the population of Aleppo at about 235,000, of which 30,000 were Christians and 5,000 Jews. 5. Pococke, *Description*, 124 had similar numbers for Damascus a year later. 6. Russell, *Aleppo, 1794*, 1:362–4 agreed with the 1742 numbers for Aleppo. 7. Van Egmond, *Travels*, 2:337–40, had the Aleppo population at 300,000, of whom 40,000 were Christian and 3,000 were Jews. 8. For the late eighteenth century Browne, *Travels*, 398 and Devezin, *Nachrichten*, 8–10 suggested Aleppo's population to be between 200,000 and 633,000, with 20,000 Christians and 3,000 Jews.

69 BOA, MMD 9849, 127.

70 BOA, MMD 1215, 38. This report does not distinguish between Jews living in the city and those residing in its vicinity.

was a bit smaller, comprising only 406 *hane* in 1695.[71] Other reports group together Christians and Jews, or data from several areas, thereby blurring the picture of particular Jewish communities.[72] One document showed an annual increase in the number of *cizye* payers for the years 1709–15, from a total of 4,994 Christian and Jewish households in Damascus, Jerusalem and other villages in 1709, to 5,366 of them in 1715.[73] With no distinction by place and community, such figures tell us little. Given the scarcity of credible demographic evidence on Jewish communities, and the difficulties of relying on Ottoman tax records, perhaps we would do well to avoid speculative appraisals and acknowledge, instead, our inability to offer more than a very tentative and crude assessment, pointing to a trend of slow growth over several centuries, with wide population fluctuations in between due to man-made and natural factors.

Although we cannot appraise the Jewish population size or the extent of migration, we may assume that Jews moved between communities in big numbers and often enough to affect tax liabilities, and thus stir a discussion on where one should pay one's taxes. As we have seen, communities had tried to limit migration by placing restrictions on the autonomy of congregations and on people's ability to pay taxes in a congregation other than their own. Such measures were largely ineffective; in Salonica, for example, they were abandoned by the mid-seventeenth century, according to Ben-Na'eh.[74] Such efforts, however, were intra-communal: From the Ottoman perspective, Jewish (and Christian) communities and congregations served as tax units rather than social ones. So long as tax money continued to flow, the state remained indifferent to people's congregational affiliation and did not impose restrictions on migration. It intervened only when major disasters prompted migration on a scale large enough to affect tax revenue.[75]

4 Hardships and Prophecy

As we have seen, moderate climatic conditions that led to political stability and economic prosperity were favorable to minority communities. The reverse is equally true, as attacks on Jews during and after the Black Death in Europe

71 BOA, MMD 1292, 15–17.

72 A tax-record from 1102/1690–91 shows poll-tax household payers in Damascus, without identifying any of them as Christian or Jewish (BOA, MMD 4439, 4–41).

73 BOA, MMD 3782, 2–4.

74 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 68–70.

75 Ibid., 70; Rozen, "Individual and community," 216–17, 231–2; Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan*, 59, 100–3; White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 89.

demonstrate.[76] The hardships of the Little Ice Age too brought with them more harassment of Jews, most notable among these the Ukrainian-Cossack Revolt of Bogdan Khmelnitsky in 1648–9, in which over 10,000 Jews died and many more became refugees.[77] That revolt, as Geoffrey Parker has shown, was directly related to the harsh climate in Poland-Ukraine in the preceding years: Intensely hot summers and bitterly cold winters, which spawned locust attacks, failed harvests, and mass starvation.[78] Just as the harsh global climate of the seventeenth century contributed to social and political upheavals in Europe (e.g. the Thirty Years War, 1618–48) and China (the fall of the Ming and rise of the Qing around 1648), so too it affected the Ottoman Empire and thus the lot of its Jewish subjects.[79]

The seventeenth-century climatic shifts generated instability in the empire that facilitated the rise of the puritan movement of the Kadizadelis (or Qadizadelis). The 1622 downfall of Sultan Osman II had much to do with the cold winters and famine leading up to the spring of that year. They were important components of the changed conditions that facilitated the sultan's deposition by his subordinates and the rise of Janissaries, grand viziers, and other palace functionaries to dominance, thereby marking the power shift from the Ottoman household to other groups. In the seventeenth century, the reign of only three out of eight sultans ended with a natural death. A similar reality would persist at least until the late-eighteenth century. With two sultans, Murad IV (1623–40) and Mehmet IV (1648–87), having had impressively long tenures, it is hard to argue for political instability under the Second Empire's system. Still, the diffusion of power in several directions and the dependency of sultans on other functionaries, along with the Little Ice Age harsh weather, and the empire's constant engagement in wars, left the door wide open for radical ideologies to emerge and gain tremendous influence. In the capital, it was the puritan Kadizadelis who dominated affairs intermittently throughout the seventeenth century. In the Jewish world, social and political fragmentation gave rise to the messianic movement of Shabbetai Ṣevi.

Indeed, it was not a mere chance that the rise of the Kadızadelis occurred in the 1630s amidst severe weather, famine, and other natural calamities. One disaster – a major fire in 1633 – gave rise to Kadızadeli-inspired government

76 Benedictow, *Black Death*, 392–3; Gottfried, *The Black Death*, 73–5.

77 For more on the Khmelnitsky Uprising and its effects on Jews in Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, see Teller, *Rescue the Surviving Souls*, 23–39, 107–31.

78 Parker, *Global Crisis*, 167–74.

79 For more on the connections between climatic disasters and the Thirty Years War and the Ming-Qing transition, see ibid., 118, 123, 125–30, 142–4, 221, 226, 229, 245–5.

actions: A prohibition on smoking and drinking coffee, the destruction of several coffeehouses, and the execution of smokers and drinkers.[80] The Kadızadelis sought to free Islam, as practiced in the empire at the time, of innovations and introduce instead a pure form they believed had existed in the Prophet's days. The movement surged twice into a position of great influence in the capital: First under the leadership of the movement's founder, Kadızade Mehmet Efendi, during the reign of Murad IV; and again during the reign of Mehmet IV, who was influenced by a coalition of the sultan's mother, Turhan, his preacher Vani Mehmet Efendi, and the Köprülü grand viziers. In the 1660s and 1670s, the Kadızadelis launched a series of forced conversions of people and spaces to their form of Islam. When the Great Fire of 1660 burned extensive areas in Eminönü and Galata where Jews and Christians had lived, Vani, Grand Vizier Ahmet Köprülü, and Turhan seized the opportunity to advance their agenda: Non-Muslims living in these neighborhoods were forced to relocate, and a mosque complex was built in the area previously inhabited by Jews (now the Yeni Camii, or New Mosque). Eminönü after the fire was transformed from a primarily non-Muslim neighborhood into a conspicuously Islamic space, marked by the Qur'anic inscriptions that adorned the mosque complex.[81]

Efforts to Islamize the urban landscape, blatant discrimination against Christians and Jews, destruction of churches and synagogues, the prohibition of the sale of alcohol, and the shutting down of taverns, were all characteristics of the Kadızadelis' influence in the capital. Ben-Na'eh was right to describe their period in power as one of hardships for Jews.[82] Kadızadeli rule did not end behaviors the leaders of the movement abhorred, such as the production and sale of alcohol. But it definitely inspired anti-Jewish mob action against individuals suspected of moral misconduct. Raşid Efendi described one case in detail: A Jewish merchant in Istanbul in 1680 who had an affair with the wife of a Muslim merchant was apprehended by a mob, forced to dig his own grave, and then stoned to death, all at the encouragement of Ottoman officials.[83]

---

80 Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 90.

81 Baer, "The Great Fire," 159–64. Forcing Jews and Christians to relocate so a mosque would be built appears to have been used rarely. At least I could only find one other example for it in the sources, in Istanbul in 1703; see *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, 216. In another instance, the Islamization of space occurred more organically: after the first Ortaköy Mosque was built in 1720, Jews and Christians gradually left the area as more Muslims settled by the new mosque, apparently without anyone forcing them to relocate; Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid*, 2:1275.

82 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 85.

83 Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid*, 1:215. In the 1680s, Jews and Christians in Istanbul reportedly continued to produce alcohol in their homes and sell it despite the prohibitions; ibid., 1:347–8.

Such Kadızadeli-inspired policies enacted and actions taken during the reign of Mehmet IV marked a departure from common Ottoman practices, not the norm.[84] Actions such as the destruction of drinking houses to make room for a mosque lasted a bit longer into Süleyman II's reign (r. 1687–91), but there is little evidence to suggest that the entire period from the 1580s to the end of the seventeenth century was one of Islamic harassment of Jews, or that the apex of this radicalization occurred during the reign of Mustafa II (r. 1695–1703).[85] At least some of the hardship Jews faced in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was in fact the result of growing European involvement in the empire that pushed Jews out of certain professions rather than of Ottoman policies. As we shall see later in this chapter, European merchants and diplomats preferred to deal with and employ local Christians over Jews.

The exceptional nature of Kadızadeli-inspired policies, combined with the influx of Jewish refugees arriving in the empire following the 1648–9 massacres, and messianic ideas that had been widespread among Sephardi Jews (and *conversos*) since the fourteenth century gave rise to another puritan movement, that of Shabbetai Ṣevi (d. 1676).[86] Until recently, the main explanation for the rise of Shabbetai's movement, Sabbateanism, rested on a growing Jewish interest in mysticism, or kabbalah.[87] A profound upheaval in Jewish consciousness, a product of the shock of the expulsions from Iberia, entailed a popularization of kabbalah. Its principles abstruse and difficult for the average Jew to comprehend, the main ideas of kabbalah spread throughout the Jewish world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and became a vibrant and all-embracing force. Safed, as we have seen, was the primary center for kabbalah in the sixteenth century, where Yiṣḥak Luria formulated much of its principles, transmitted by his disciples Ḥayim Vital and his son Shmu'el (d. 1678), who worked in Jerusalem, Cairo, and Damascus.[88] Kabbalistic principles spread to various communities in the empire, facilitating the penetration of messianic ideas.[89]

---

84 Baer, *Honored by the Glory*, 105–20, 163–78. For a rare example of an Ottoman order to destroy a synagogue in Aleppo in the 1560s, see Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-ma'amad ha-politi veha-ḥevrati," 108.

85 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 84–8. Ben-Na'eh depicts three major waves of harassment of the Jews, stretching with little interruption throughout this period. For an example from Süleyman II's reign for displacement of drinking houses serving Jews and Christians to make room for a mosque, see Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i vekayiat*, 298–9.

86 See Marc Baer's recent discussion on this issue in his *The Ottomans*, 281–300. For the spread of messianic ideas among Iberian Jews, see Verskin, *Diary*, 13–4.

87 Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 1–102; Idel, *Kabbalah*, xi–xx, 74–111.

88 Scholem, "Vital, Ḥayim ben Joseph," 546–49; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 3:231–2.

89 Minna Rozen argued that the obsession of Jerusalem scholars with kabbalah set the stage for the Sabbatean movement there, and worldwide; Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 219–20.

Recent explanations, however, ascribe a lesser role to kabbalah as a force that encouraged the spread of Sabbateanism. Instead, it has been argued, myriad factors created the conditions for such a movement to emerge. The climatic crisis of the seventeenth century, along with the constant Ottoman involvement in wars and revolts against them, was one factor. Another was the gradual exclusion of Jews from key positions in certain areas of employment in the second half of the seventeenth century due to heavy involvement of European merchants and diplomats who preferred to deal with Greek merchants and translators. This process, according to historian Cengiz Şişman, led to Jews losing "their dominant roles in the Ottoman power structure" by the 1660s.[90] Şişman has suggested that the political instability in the empire contributed to the atmosphere that bred a radical movement. He has rejected the notion that kabbalah had much to do with the emergence of the movement, stating that "Lurianism was not the major reason behind the rapid dissemination of the movement," but became part of the ideology of Shabbetai's followers only after his death. Shabbetai's interest in sufism, or Islamic mysticism, likely also played a role in the development of his ideas.[91] The Kadızadelis seem to have inspired Sabbateanism, and Shabbetai resorted to some of their rhetoric in his own message.[92] The connection between the two prophetic movements was quite obvious to the late seventeenth-century Ottoman historian Raşid, who summarized Shabbetai's interaction with Vani that led to the former's embracing of Islam in one short paragraph.[93] Finally, the combination of factors noted above and past experience with popular messianic figures such as Shlomo Molkho (d. 1532) and David ha-Re'uveni (d. *c.*1538) made Ottoman Jewish and Sephardi society ripe ground for a popular messianice movement on a grander scale.[94]

And indeed, for a brief while Shabbetai Ṣevi's prophesy enticed and beguiled the Jewish world. Shabbetai was born in 1626 in Izmir. Likely suffering from bipolar disorder, sometime between 1648 and 1650 he began to voice messianic claims in public, eventually leading to his banishment from the city by 1654 (possibly earlier).[95] From then till 1665 he wandered across the empire, residing for periods in Salonica, Istanbul, Cairo, and Jerusalem. In April 1665, Shabbetai arrived in Gaza to meet a young rabbi named Nathan, who was the first to

90 Şişman, *Burden of Silence*, 19–24, quotation from 24. See also Barnai, *Shabta'ut*, 15–68.

91 Şişman, *Burden of Silence*, 124–6, 237–9.

92 Ibid., 25–34; Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 187–8.

93 Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid*, 1:84.

94 On Re'uveni and Molkho see Verskin, *Diary*, 26–8.

95 On Shabbetai's mental health issues see Elkayam, "Kivru emunati," 21–5; Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 125–38.

FIGURE 4 Shabbetai Ṣevi (1626–76)
BROCKHAUS AND EFRON, JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, 1903–8 (IN RUSSIAN)

recognize his messianic tendencies. Nathan traveled with Shabbetai to Jerusalem and then back to Gaza, where he announced Shabbetai as the Messiah, sweeping the local community. From that moment, the movement spread like fire throughout communities in the Ottoman Empire, and eventually reached Europe as well. While the rabbis of Jerusalem rejected his message, and even sent missives to other communities warning them of Ṣevi, Shabbetai's movement continued to grow. In Amsterdam and Hamburg, written reports about Shabbetai arriving from the Ottoman Empire, trusted at face value, jolted the community and inspired transgressions of Jewish law and other behaviours previously unthinkable.[96]

Shabbetai set out to Izmir via Safed, Damascus, and Aleppo in the summer of 1665. His arrival in any city with a Jewish community produced remarkable effects: Entire communities showed great enthusiasm for him, there were manifestations of mass ecstasy, and the appearance of new prophets was announced.[97] Accounts from Aleppo show that the reaction to Shabbetai's sojourn there involved not merely public enthusiasm but also a far-reaching transformation of Jewish life, which, though temporary, would leave its impact on the community for years. Reports sent to Istanbul upon Shabbetai's arrival in Aleppo noted the appearance of 20 prophets there. Many quit their jobs or closed their businesses and committed themselves to prayer, atonement, and charity. The wealthy also established a special fund for the poor, to enable them to devote their entire time to study. At one point, the prophet Elijah allegedly showed up at the synagogue, dressed in white.[98] In September 1665, Shabbetai reached Izmir. Banned from the city before, he now entered as the community's undisputed leader, appointing and dismissing rabbis. Shabbetai acted as an autocrat, his followers persecuting his opponents. Aharon Lapapa, previously an esteemed rabbi who refused to accept Shabbetai's prophesy, had to flee for his life in December after Shabbetai pronounced his opponent, Ḥayim Benveniste, as the sole leader of the community.[99]

In early 1666, Shabbetai sailed to Istanbul, promising to depose the Sultan. The Ottomans learned of his plan and apprehended him at sea. He spent most of that spring and summer confined in Gallipoli, his place of imprisonment turned into a pilgrimage site for his followers. Thousands from all over the empire and beyond reportedly visited him there. That summer, known

96 Dweck, *Dissident Rabbi*, 16, 149–50.

97 Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 234–54.

98 Scholem, "Reshimot," 57–8; *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 255–8.

99 Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 136–9, 147–50, 237–45, 265–73; Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 375–89.

by Shabbetai's followers as the period of illumination, Shabbetai spoke of redemption and ordered the fast days of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av, commemorating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, be turned into joyful holidays celebrated with food, wine, and dancing. Missives ordering his followers to rejoice rather than fast and mourn on those dates were sent to many communities. Shabbetai also added a holiday on the 24th day of Tammuz, to be observed like the Sabbath, with the threat that violators would be stoned to death.[100] By allowing deeds previously prohibited, speaking of bringing back old biblical punishments, and abrogating fast days – a sign that the messiah had come – Shabbetai employed the language of halakhah, in which he was well versed, to position himself above the rabbis.[101]

His fantastic actions that summer notwithstanding, on 16 September Shabbetai was brought in front of the Sultan's imperial council (*divan*), where he was given the choice of immediate execution or conversion to Islam. He chose the latter, adopting the name Aziz Mehmet Efendi. Soon the news of Shabbetai's apostasy spread in the Jewish world and produced profound shock among rabbis and ordinary followers alike. This did not put a sudden end to the movement, however, as many at first refused to accept the news and clung to their belief in Shabbetai's mission or sought a plausible explanation for what had happened. But most Jews reluctantly admitted that they had been misled and swept into a yearlong emotional experience of messianic revival.[102]

Restoring communal life to its pre-Sabbatean order took time. In Izmir, the debate between Ḥayim Benveniste, the leading rabbi who became Shabbetai's surrogate, and his critic Lapapa continued until the latter's death in 1667. Benveniste then served as the sole judge in Izmir's rabbinical court until his passing in 1673. There are some indications that he recanted, and one that he was in touch with the leading Sabbatean leader Abraham Cardozo as late as 1669. That Cardozo himself found refuge in Izmir from 1675 to 1681 after being expelled from other communities suggests there were still quite a few followers of Shabbetai in the city. Sabbateans could profess their beliefs openly in Izmir at least until the early eighteenth century.[103] But the main locus for Shabbetai's believers after his conversion and death was Salonica. They established the Dönme sect, and eventually left Judaism altogether. Many other believers in Shabbetai remained Jews, and their numbers were not negligible even in the eighteenth century.[104]

---

100 Ben-Na'eh, "Igeret bilti yedu'ah," 91–5.

101 Kahana, "Shabbetai Ṣevi," 394–402.

102 Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 55–60.

103 Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 238–45; *Shabta'ut*, 95–6.

104 Barnai, *Shabta'ut*, 97–8. For more on the Dönmes, see Şişman, *Burden of Silence*, 83ff.

In Jerusalem, the community's leadership largely rejected Ṣevi, but his followers continued to operate there, at first clandestinely, and in the early eighteenth century, with many Sabbateans migrating to Jerusalem, openly.[105] In Aleppo, Shlomo Laniado *ha-zaken* (the "Elder," d. *c.*1700), the Sephardi rabbi who welcomed Shabbetai, and his Musta'ribi companion Mordekhai Dayan, sent two missives in 1669 affirming their appreciation for Shabbetai, who had "saved Israel from destruction." Indeed, they argued, the rabbis of Jerusalem acted foolishly when rejecting him, as there had to be a plausible explanation for his apostasy, one yet to be revealed.[106] By Laniado's report, there were 600 followers of Shabbetai in Aleppo at the time, including a few rabbis, one of whom Laniado sent to lead a Sabbatian faction in Mosul.[107] Sabbateanism likely had a following in Aleppo into the eighteenth century.[108]

The Sabbatean experience left a profound imprint on the Jewish world, within and outside the Ottoman Empire. In Ottoman communities, a surge in anti-Sabbatean polemical literature during Shabbetai's ascent and in the years following his conversion gave way by the early eighteenth century to complete silence on the issue, due to rabbis' efforts to erase that chapter in the community's history from memory. Indeed, many works on Sabbateanism have remained in manuscript only. This in turn allowed tracts in support of Ṣevi, or other heretical ideas, to circulate rather freely without attracting much attention.[109] While the majority of Jews living in the empire in the early eighteenth century were not directly exposed to rabbinical literature, a shift in literacy, reading practices, and hence accessibility to rabbinical knowledge later in the century created, for the first time, competition to mainstream rabbinical Judaism. I explore such developments in Chapter 5.

In discussing the effects of Sabbateanism on Western European Jewry, David Ruderman described it as "the quintessential example of an early modern transregional Jewish cultural phenomenon."[110] While Shabbetai had been largely forgotten by the early eighteenth century, his messianic ideas lingered on, if merely in challenges to rabbinical authority that did not reference him

105 Barnai, *Shabta'ut*, 92–3.

106 Scholem, "Te'udot shabta'iyot," 190–3; *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 751–2. Shlomo Laniado was called the "Elder" by later sources to distinguish him from his eighteenth-century namesake, Rapha'el Shlomo (d. 1794).

107 Scholem, "Te'uda ḥadashah," 537; *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 751–2.

108 Shlomo Laniado *ha-zaken* died in either 1700 or 1714 but definitely not before 1693, when he appears as the signatory on a ruling in his son's responsa collection. See Laniado, *Beit dino shel Shmu'el*, 85, 1:46. For more on evidence tying Laniado the elder to Sabbateanism, see Ayalon, "Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes," 56, 62–3.

109 Barnai, *Shabta'ut*, 98–102.

110 Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 145.

directly. One notable author, Moshe Ḥagiz (d. 1750), launched a campaign in the early eighteenth century against what he and others considered heretical ideas and a dangerous decline in rabbinical authority. Ḥagiz, who wrote extensively against closeted or crypto-Sabbateans allegedly living and operating in Amsterdam and elsewhere throughout Europe, was effectively fighting for the traditional rabbinical establishment and against what he considered heretical ideas. Sabbateanism, in other words, represented a deviation from what traditionalists like Ḥagiz viewed as the right way.[111] It was then, in the early eighteenth century, that Sephardic Orthodoxy emerged, as a response to the various challenges modernity posed to a rabbinical authority that had already been weakening.[112]

From the second half of the seventeenth century, rabbinical authority among Western Sephardim was under attack by several forces, among them Sabbatean messianism, crypto-Sabbateanism, Enlightenment-era ideas, and outright secularization. The latter was of particular import where Jews faced few restrictions on their acculturation into the surrounding Christian society, as in London and Amsterdam. In such places, challenges to rabbinical authority abounded. They were further enhanced by the arrival of *converso* Jews from Portugal, who lacked a firm tradition of following rabbinical advice and thus were more prone to Sabbatean messianism and other ideas. Sabbateanism, then, at once reflected the changes European-Jewish society was undergoing and contributed to its transformation, notably through further weakening rabbinical authority.[113]

In the eighteenth century, Sabbateanism signified a new form of religious and prophetic enthusiasm that rabbis opposed, rather than an actual following of Shabbetai Ṣevi's teachings. The struggle between crypto-Sabbateans and traditionalists, one historian claimed, was about competing elites. Within that ongoing dispute, challengers of the rabbinical order were often accused of

111 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 121.

112 Ibid., 143. Scholars have disagreed over the emergence of orthodoxy in Western Europe and among the Sephardim. Lehmann agreed with Carlebach that defending rabbinical authority against the challenges of secularization, skepticism, heterodoxy, and the Sabbatean heresy marked the beginning of modern rabbinic Orthodoxy in the Sephardic world; see also Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy*, 277–8. Ruderman, in response to Jacob Katz's claim that orthodoxy emerged only in the nineteenth century, argued that "Orthodoxy in the context of early modern and modern Jewish history is indeed a response to a crisis. It emerges out of a critical need to legitimate rabbinic authority among a growing number of Jews who either question it … or ignore it … The difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarding the emergence of Jewish orthodoxy is a matter of degree, not substance"; Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 146–55, quote from 149.

113 Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 123–6.

Sabbateanism even if they did not associate themselves directly with, or even mention, Shabbetai Ṣevi. Even the Polish Jacob Frank (d. 1791), an unequivocal Sabbatean who launched a movement that incorporated Sabbatean and Christian elements, was effectively advocating not for Sabbateanism but rather for "subversion of rabbinic norms and rabbinic authority." The response to those enthusiasts came mostly from rabbis and their adherents, who were understandably concerned about diminishing rabbinical authority and sought to distance such challengers from the mainstream community by labeling them Sabbateans or heretics.[114] In that sense, Sabbateanism contributed, even if indirectly, to the "profound social and cultural transformation" European, and notably Western Sephardi Jews experienced from the first half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. During that period, Sephardic Jews everywhere "underwent a multifaceted process of transformation that changed their symbolic world order."[115] The long-term effect of Sabbateanism among Eastern Sephardim was weaker, partly due to the different status of rabbinical authority in the Ottoman Empire. I will discuss that in the next chapter.

What, then, do we make of Shabbetai Ṣevi's prophecy and its lingering effects? As we have seen, some have classified Shabbetai's success and fall as a product of kabbalistic upheaval. Others have focused on the internal crisis within the Jewish world or, more generally, on the seventeenth-century global crisis. What bounds all of these explanations is the notion that Shabbetai Ṣevi was in fact a proto-populist, his movement bearing many of the markings of populist political movements of the nineteenth, twentieth, and even the twenty-first centuries.

Nowadays, one speaks of populism as an endeavor to generate a shared identity among different groups and publics so as to facilitate their common support of a cause. Modern populists typically define the "people" either as a *sovereign entity* or as *the common people*. In the former, the people are seen as the ultimate source of political power, a collective body whose concerns must be addressed lest they mobilize and revolt; populist leaders, however, tend to ignore the people's sovereignty once in power. The latter definition reflects a critique of the dominant culture, the "elites" or "establishment" of some sort, which views the judgments, tastes, and values of the common people with suspicion. The "common people" are thus those excluded from power or influence. Populists often use this definition of "people" as a way to unite the

114 Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 140–6, quote from 144. For more on Frank, his interactions with the followers of Ṣevi (the dönme) in Salonica, and his later activities in Poland, see Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 6–20 and throughout the book.

115 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*, 26.

masses behind them, even when the "people" are made up of disparate groups. In both definitions, the people are always a construct very different from the elites, and populists thrive on the distinction between them and the "corrupt" political, economic, or cultural "privileged" class.

Throughout history, the elites against which populists rose were defined on the basis of power or class. Such definition conveniently excluded the populists themselves, who often came from the class they were censuring, and elite members who were sympathetic to their cause. Populists have managed to avoid the contradiction between criticizing the elites and effectively becoming a part of them after attaining power, by employing an anti-establishment rhetoric that redefined the elites. They would never be counted as elite but rather as an agent of change, an anti-establishment element within the establishment. Whether populist leaders can then deliver on their promises is irrelevant: There will always be enemies of the people who seek to prevent the populists from reaching their goal, hence the populists can never be blamed for failures, no matter how long they have been in power. Their promises need to only be appealing; they do not have to be in touch with reality. Inability to deliver, and a divisive agenda that throws one group ("the people") against another ("the establishment"), have become two of the core characteristics of populist leaders in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[116]

Shabbetai Ṣevi, while not bearing all the characteristics of a modern populist, certainly qualifies as a proto-populist. Ṣevi founded a movement that sought, in part, to respond to the increasing globalization of the Ottoman economy that, he believed, the existing Jewish communal structures and leadership supported. Through his messianic claims and by riding on a wave of popular kabbalah, he sought to transform the Jewish world by overthrowing the rabbinical establishment and communal order that claimed authority over all public and private matters. As we will see in the next chapter, such claims were often unfounded; rabbis mostly lacked the political power they claimed to have. Practicalities aside, Shabbetai's initial success suggests that many resented rabbis and students (*talmidei ḥakhamim*) as a privileged class, and that such resentment grew in a time of great crisis as the mid-seventeenth century. One way to challenge the rabbinical establishment was Shabbetai's allowing and even encouraging of transgressions of Jewish law in public. As we will see, the ability of rabbis to enforce a lifestyle molded on halakhah was rather weak. People's choice to evade halakhic practices in their private lives was one thing; public calls to shatter even the appearance of a social order based on

116 For good summaries of the basic characteristics of modern populism, see: Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism*, 9–19 and throughout the book; and Müller, *What Is Populism?*

Jewish principles was quite another. Shabbetai succeeded with the latter: His movement was public by nature. The transformation of Jewish society took place in public, for all to witness. This included the dissolution of social hierarchies via marginalizing rabbis who refused to get on board and promoting others, abrogation of halakhic principles many had already abandoned in their private lives, introduction of new rituals, transforming of obscure ones into major celebrations, and replacing the authority of the Talmud with that of the prophet (Nathan) and messiah (Shabbetai).[117] Shabbetai's ability to permit innovation and transformation of religious principles and transgressions one would not previously dare commit in public was perhaps his greatest appeal.

Like later true populists, Shabbetai's message also spoke to people from the establishment whom he assailed. Recognizing Shabbetai's influence, many rabbis throughout the eastern Mediterranean embraced his message and supported his leadership, and thus also his messianic and prophetic claims. By so doing, they relinquished their claimed role as ultimate leaders of their communities. And as with more recent populists, one may assume that Ṣevi's scholar supporters backed him out of political calculations no less, or even more, than out of a genuine belief in his message.

When Ḥayim Benveniste of Izmir accepted Ṣevi's authority, he was elevated to the position of leading rabbi of the city and collaborated with the persecution of dissenters who refused to accept Ṣevi, such as Shlomo Elghazi and Aharon Lapapa. As Barnai has convincingly shown, Benveniste's support of Ṣevi made sense in light of the long dispute between rabbinical factions in the city, and for Benveniste it paid off.[118]

The detailed testimony of Yaʿakov Sasportas, a fierce opponent of Shabbetai who lived and wrote in Amsterdam and Hamburg, helps us understand the appeal Shabbetai had on rabbis in communities farther away from Izmir. Such leaders should have been the first to recognize Shabbetai's fraudulent claims. Sasportas perceived the undermining of rabbinical authority as an affront on the established social order. Shabbetai succeeded, thus Sasportas, in convincing rabbis to join the masses in supporting him, abandoning their leadership positions that would have entailed a more cautious approach toward his messianic claims.[119] In his fury over Sabbatianism's efforts to transform Jewish life, Sasportas demonstrated that followers of Shabbetai often justified their actions by invoking fake passages they attributed to Jewish texts.[120] The

117 Dweck, *Dissident Rabbi*, 90, 125; Ben-Na'eh, "Igeret bilti yeduʿah."
118 Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 197–245.
119 Dweck, *Dissident Rabbi*, 17–19.
120 Ibid., 91–2, 103–9.

growing number of people who claimed to have received prophetic revelations further eroded time-honored hierarchies and contributed to the social and political breakdown of Jewish communities.[121] Sabbtaians were apparently not much different from the followers of modern populist politicians, who would often manipulate or make up evidence to fit their narrative while taking steps to undo decades or centuries of established order.

Further associating Shabbetai with modern populists was his prowess in telling his followers what they wanted to hear, and in making promises he could not fulfill seem credible. At the same time, his devotees largely abandoned the skepticism that had traditionally characterized Jewish learning and that should have prevented a charlatan like Shabbetai from gaining that much influence. In other words, just like most modern populist politicians, Shabbetai was a talented demagogue.[122] As the studies of Gershom Scholem and others suggest, the general crisis of the seventeenth century and the pogroms in Ukraine and Poland in 1648–9 fueled messianic fervors among Jews in the eastern Mediterranean and resulted in a proliferation of kabbalistic ideas, likely in a simplified format. In practice this meant that Jews were seeking a more accessible, and possibly less restrictive, form of Judaism than the one prescribed by rabbis, a way to practice halakhah with fewer constraints. By voicing messianic claims and pronouncing himself leader of communities along the path of his Jerusalem-to-Izmir journey during the summer of 1665, Shabbetai gave many Jews what they had wanted. He appointed and dismissed rabbis, dictated religious practices, annulled dietary and other halakhic laws, and finally set sail to Istanbul, promising to depose the Ottoman sultan. In good populist fashion, "proofs" of Shabbetai's powers circulated throughout the Jewish world in missives his supporters compiled, and in which various miracles – such as the appearance of biblical prophets – were recorded.[123] Thus, in the summer of 1665 in Damascus, Aleppo, and Izmir, the upheaval Shabbetai's real presence generated – end of rituals, Jews ceasing to work – contributed to stories of the alleged appearance of the prophet Elijah.[124] The blurring of boundaries between myth and reality, and people's willingness to renounce the difference between what they wanted to hear and what was actually happening, are clear

121 Ibid., 169.

122 Ibid., 93–5, 326–7.

123 Scholem recorded several such instances in his study. See Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 145, 252, 352–4, 382–3, 390–2, and see 215 n. 42 for blurring boundaries between fact and myth as the movement grew.

124 Ibid., 258, 417–8. On 418, Scholem explained that "the phenomenon of mass prophecy is by no means rare in the history of religious movements that are borne by particular enthusiasm."

characteristics of modern populist, authoritarian movements. In Hamburg, Sasportas noted with dismay the multitude who accepted the news about Shabbetai's prophecies and the coming of redemption without critical examination or doubt. This had practical implications: Many people sold all their possessions and quit their jobs, preparing for a trip to the Land of Israel that never came; and the Sephardi-Portuguese community declared anyone who doubted Shabbetai a heretic.[125] In true populist fashion, Shabbetai's movement led people to abandon skepticism and reason, and successfully flipped the discourse so that those seeking to preserve Jewish communal life would be portrayed as those threatening its very foundation. Even scholars who would have opposed Shabbetai were reluctant to express their reservations in public, some working to silence (verbally and physically) those who still spoke publicly against him by noting that opposition to Shabbetai, rather than his mere movement, caused confusion and chaos.[126]

Finally, Shabbetai Ṣevi's movement was proto populist in the way it ended and the imprint it left on the Jewish world decades after his apostasy. The collapse of populist movements and the ideologies they professed has often led to a process of disillusionment followed by purging, whereby street names were changed, statues removed, and historic events erased from the collective narrative. In the aftermath of Shabbetai's conversion to Islam, scholars and communal leaders worked to obliterate the shameful episode from memory: Shabbetai's name was no longer mentioned in writing (at least in printed works; manuscripts bearing and even praising his name have survived); rabbis from Amsterdam to Izmir issued orders (*haskamot*) never to mention him; and scholars, even those well familiar with the history of the movement, refrained from relating to individuals suspected as Sabbateans.[127] Those who still followed Shabbetai in the wake of his apostasy had a good reason to do so clandestinely: Supporting him or following his movement's customs would have been risky. Shabbetai too recognized this risk in a letter he sent his believers on 21 December 1673, seven years after his conversion, imploring them to keep their faith in him in their hearts only, while abandoning any external expressions of it, including all the customs his movement developed, revert to observing fast days, and reintegrate into their Jewish communities.[128]

After Ṣevi's apostasy, Ḥayim Benveniste of Izmir resumed his anti-Sabbatean position, though, as I suggest above, it is possible that he did not truly recant. In

125 Dweck, *Dissident Rabbi*, 117–18.
126 Ibid., 151–2, 156–7.
127 Barnai, *Shabta'ut*, 142–3.
128 Elkayam, "Kivru emunati," 11–21.

responsa he wrote between Shabbetai's sojourn in the city and his own death in 1673, Benveniste did not mention him even when relating to his dispute with Rabbi Lapapa. A seemingly contemporary account, published two centuries later, described Shabbetai's summoning of the entire Izmir community to the Portuguese synagogue on 14 December 1665 to announce Benveniste's appointment as the community's only leader, but did not not mention Ṣevi by name.[129] Similarly, Shlomo Laniado, one of Shebbetai's most ardent supporters in Aleppo, continued to promote Sabbateanism long after Shabbetai's conversion. Yet little is known about Laniado's whereabouts at that stage beyond several letters he had sent in support of Ṣevi.[130] His name appears as a signatory on a few responsa published in the collections of others, and he seems to have died only around 1700.[131] Later generations of Aleppo scholars, and notably members of the Laniado family, made no mention of his Sabbatean tendencies, and in general refrained from discussing his biography at length.[132] From the early eighteenth century on, Sabbateanism, despite its contribution to the evolution of Orthodoxy, remained largely hidden and persecuted, at least in the Ottoman Empire whence it emerged – just as the followers of failed modern populist movements would be.

5 Expanding Opportunities in the Eighteenth Century

The arrival of European merchants and diplomats from the late-sixteenth century onward increased the integration of Jews into the Ottoman economy. There are indications that the presence of Jews in some professions in certain areas of the empire declined during that period. For example, in the Arab

129 Palachi, *Sefer Avraham Ezkor*, 35:a. The text, initially written in an unknown date, provides an account of the announcement in Izmir that compelled Jews in the city, believers (in Ṣevi) and non-believers alike, to come to the Portuguese synagogue to kiss Benveniste's hands. The text warned Ṣevi's opponents from publicly rejecting the words of Mai (*mem-aleph-yod*), an acronym for *mashiaḥ elohei ya'akov*, or the messiah of the God of Jacob – an implicit reference to Ṣhabbetai Ṣevi. See also Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 237–45.

130 Scholem, "Te'udot shabta'iyot," 190–3; "Te'uda ḥadashah," 537.

131 Laniado the elder was one of three rabbis to rule in a case of an *'agunah* (literally "chained," a woman whose husband's whereabouts were unknown or who refused to divorce her); ha-Levi, *Lev Shlomo*, s24, 27a. He also commented on a question about one's right to bequeath a customs-house position; Shama', *Korban isheh*, s34, 140.

132 See eighteenth-century examples in: Laniado, *Kise Shlomo*, 6; Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 1:6. For a nineteenth-century example, see: Laniado, *Li-kedoshim*, 81–2. For a recent example, see: Sutton, *Aleppo*, 257–8.

parts of the empire, Jewish translators (*dragomans*) and middlemen largely disappear from the late-seventeenth century. This happened due to expansion of European trade in the empire and merchants' preference of hiring local Christians for such jobs, to a great extent for their hatred of Jews.[133] There are no signs, however, that this shift had implications for the Jews' involvement in the broader Ottoman economy.[134] Ben-Na'eh has maintained that by the second half of the seventeenth century fewer Jews served as customs agents and tax farmers in the empire's western parts. He has also suggested that the involvement of Ottoman Jews in international commerce declined during that century, as trade shifted to the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic, while more Greek and Armenian merchants competed with Jews. Evidence Ben-Na'eh has not considered, including more recent findings, disputes such assumptions.[135] Indeed, elsewhere in the empire Jews continued to head customs houses;[136] and, as Bruce Masters has shown, in the eighteenth century Jews were so dominant in Syrian-Iraqi-Indian trade routes that convoys did not travel on Saturdays.[137]

---

133 Examples for animosity toward Jews abound in European archives. A few examples: 1. In a letter sent to Marseille in 1692, the French consul Louis Chambon expressed his wrath with the Jews, who enjoyed French protection but paid less customs and got their merchandise unloaded first, as their friends worked at the customs house. He asked to revoke the protection given to Jews, but his request was apparently denied, as he continued to complain about the Jews in a series of letters in subsequent months; ACCM, J900, letters dated 26 April, 22 June, and 2 September 1692, and 28 May 1693. 2. In 1699, Jean-Pierre Blanc, Chambon's successor, wrote that Jews threatened to seek another European protector, and argued that the abandonment of Jewish merchants would deal a devastating blow to French commerce in the region. He repeated such claims 6 years later; ACCM, J901, letters dated 23 July 1699 and 3 February 1705. 3. In 1711, Jewish commercial activity was again perceived as detrimental to French interests in Aleppo; ACCM, G5, pamphlet entitled "la réponse faite au mémoire de M. Armoul au sujet de la protection des Juifs." 4. King Louis XV issued a decree on February 4, 1727 that established rules for French protection of local Jews in the Levant, effectively hindering their ability to trade via French vessels; ACCM, J1586, "ordonnance du roy." 5. A British consul's order from 1744 to avoid employing Jews as translators (at the time there were likely very few Jews left in such positions); NA, SP 110/68, 52.

134 Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 74–6.

135 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 249–50, 255–6. As the discussion below shows, Jews continued to be involved in international trade in what appears to be similar or increased levels compared with the sixteenth century. For an example of Armenian and Greek merchants competing with Jewish ones, see Hakkı Kadı, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants*, 29–64.

136 Bashan, "Ḥayye ha-kalkalah," 98–102. See also questions submitted to rabbis in the eighteenth century about Jews in customs houses in Aleppo in: Shama', *Korban isheh*, s33–7, 137–65; 'Antebi, *Mor ve-ohalot*, s14, 100b–104a.

137 Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 119–20.

Despite some minor achievements, European attempts to marginalize the Jews economically were largely unsuccessful. In some areas, European pressure leading to the hiring of local Christians in lieu of Jews drove Jews out of some occupations, thereby diminishing their political and economic standing in certain locales. I have previously discussed a set of such instances from Aleppo, where Jewish merchants and translators gradually lost their influence around the turn of the eighteenth century. Yet overall, Şişman's postulation that such European pressure caused Jews to lose their dominant position in Ottoman power structures seems exaggerated.[138] European efforts to curtail Jewish economic endeavors had a rather marginal effect, as ample evidence shows.[139]

By the mid-eighteenth century, Jews were fully integrated into the Ottoman economy. They appear in Ottoman documents everywhere, from wealthy businessmen to petty peddlers.[140] They were members of guilds, and at times dominated trade of a certain commodity in a city, despite protests and complaints by Europeans. As the latter were endeavoring to curb Jewish economic power, an extensive Sephardi mercantile network was emerging, which transcended the empire into the Mediterranean, Western Europe, and the New World, culminating in the eighteenth century. Such developments naturally affected the social fabric of Jewish communities. They offered opportunities in the greater world beyond the community to a growing number of Jews, thus confronting rabbinical and communal authority with new challenges. With expanding literacy and the emergence of a Ladino press that offered popular texts for non-scholars, Jewish experiences in the eighteenth century were setting the scene for the dramatic developments of the nineteenth.

Ottoman Jews engaged in a wide range of professions. A tax record for Istanbul from 1595–7 already shows Jews active in 119 occupations, including physicians and pharmacists, merchants buying and selling anything from silk and wine to juice and junk, butchers, manufacturers of sheets and other cloths, metal smiths and jewelers, moneychangers and lenders, couriers and

138 Şişman, *Burden of Silence*, 19–24. Şişman referred to the mid-seventeenth century. While it is possible that Jews experienced some economic decline at the time (in part due to global conditions rather than direct European intervention), the eighteenth century saw Jews well-integrated into many areas of the Ottoman economy.

139 See further examples for this below, as well as in Thomas Philipp, "French merchants and Jews," 315–25.

140 Jews' involvement in the Ottoman economy (before and during the eighteenth century) has been widely discussed in the scholarship. See e.g. Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 5:98–122, Tsur, *Gevirim ve-yehudim aḥerim*, 73–87; Masters, *Christians and Jews*; Rozen, "The Ottoman Jews," 256–71; Goffman, "Jews," 15–34.

intermediaries, gardeners and domestic servants.[141] There were no pressures, by the state or otherwise, designed to steer Jews to particular professions, but data for Istanbul from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggest they were particularly drawn to a few specific areas. Tax farming was one of them, from the late-fifteenth century and into the early seventeenth, an area that Romaniots first dominated but then was taken over by the Sephardim. In the early seventeenth century, Jews administered the collection of customs in Istanbul, Izmir, Alexandria, and Aleppo, a practice that in some areas continued well into the eighteenth century. Jews were also heavily represented in financial occupations, from lending to supplying. And, by the mid-seventeenth century, Jews in the empire's major port cities – Istanbul, Salonica, Izmir, Alexandria, and, a bit later, Aleppo and Baghdad – were becoming more involved in regional and international trade.[142]

As we have seen, after the 1688 Izmir earthquake and the collapse of trade there, Aleppo's economy flourished. Jews played an integral part in the city's development. Evidence about the Jews in that city and in neighboring communities, such as Damascus, further reveals their deep involvement in the Ottoman economy. Unsurprisingly, here too Jews were part of a greater commercial system, which included manufacturers, traders and service providers, usually organized in guilds. At one time in the eighteenth century there were 157 registered guilds in Aleppo, many with Jewish and Christian members.[143] A poll-tax register from 1695–6 provides the names of Jewish heads of household in Damascus, along with their professions. The most mentioned were jewelers (*kuyumcu*), processors of silk (*harîrî*), cloth dyers (*boyacı*), peddlers (*çerçi*), and day laborers (*ırgad*). There were also brokers or agents (*dellâl*); moneychangers/bankers (*sarrâf*), providers of merchandise or credit (*bâzergân*), clerks (*yazıcı*), and carriers of goods (*nakkal*). Many Jews were merchants or providers of services: Butchers and poultry sellers (*kassâb*, *tavukçu*), liver vendors (*ciğerci*), millers (*tahhân*), greengrocers (*bakkal*), druggist-grocers (*aktar*), itinerant buyers and sellers of junk (*eskici*), couriers (*ulak*), and physicians (*tabîb*, *hakîm*). As in other cities, Jews were also producers of ropes (*fettâl*), limestone (*kireççi*), candles and lamps (*mûmcu*), woolen cloths or garments (*abacı*), sugar (*şekerci*), and beads (*ferrâd*). Buying and selling real estate

141 Yerasimos, "La communauté juive d'Istanbul," 127–8.

142 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 248–55; Goffman, *Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 87–91; "Jews," 15–34; Tsur, *Gevirim ve-yehudim aḥerim*, 142–5.

143 Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 157–62; BOA, Halep, 1:27, 46. The deep involvement of Jews in commercial and artisanal guilds has been long documented. See Baer, "Administrative, economic and social functions," 28–50; Faroqhi et al., *Economic and Social, vol. 2*, 589–95; Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, 205–86.

appeared to be a lucrative business for quite a few Jews.[144] In their work, Jews did not operate in isolation: Cooperation with non-Jews, either through trade or in business partnerships, was rather common.[145]

From the second half of the seventeenth century, Aleppo was emerging as an international trade center mostly of raw goods, an anchor in a trade network that spanned the Mediterranean and beyond. Sephardic Jews were instrumental in the development of this mercantile system. Two centers in Italy attracted Sephardic Jews who had previously settled in the Ottoman Empire, as well as some *converso*s, from the late-sixteenth century onward: Venice and Livorno. A charter issued in 1589 allowed Jews to settle freely in Venice. Declining economic opportunities in Ottoman cities such as Salonica led some Ottoman Sephardim to move there and engage in international trade, including with ports in the Ottoman Empire.[146] But the more significant trade center was Livorno. Following the issuing of two decrees in 1591 and 1593 that permitted Jews to settle there, practice their religion freely, and enjoy judicial autonomy, a large number of Sephardim migrated to the city. They came from the Ottoman Empire, where their ancestors had settled earlier in the century, and from other European centers; many were *converso*s who could now openly return to Judaism without fear of the inquisition. In the early decades of the seventeenth century, Sephardim were well integrated into the city's commercial elite.[147] Favorable conditions allowed Livorno Sephardim to create an international trade network largely based on religious and familial ties with Sephardic Jews in other parts of the world. Christians benefitted immensely from that network too, as did the Livornese authorities.

The region with which Livorno Jews had their most significant commercial relations was the eastern Mediterranean, and within that region, Aleppo. In the early-seventeenth century, links with the New World were still meager, and trade from Livorno to the New World passed through European intermediaries. The focus of Livorno Sephardim was therefore on the Levant, where they

144 BOA, MMD 1292, 15–7. Najwa al-Qattan extracted a similar list of Jewish occupations in Damascus from the *shar'i* court records; see al-Qattan, "Damascene Jewish community," 202. Both lists bear striking resemblance to another Mark Cohen compiled for the Jews of Medieval Cairo; Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 56–66. For Jews in real estate, see al-Qattan, "Across the Courtyard," 20–6. Evidence for Ottoman Egypt suggests similar occupational patterns; see Bashan, "Ḥayye ha-kalkalah," 105–11.

145 Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 183–4. Examples of business cooperation between Jews and others abound in Ottoman documents; e.g. BOA, Halep, 1:43, 47, 123, 2:271, 3:16, 47, Şam, 2:5, 17, Şikâyet, 2:246.

146 Davis and Ravid, *Jews of Early Modern Venice*, 92–4.

147 Trivellato, "Port Jews of Livorno," 33.

dealt mostly with former co-townsmen, those Jews of Livornese origin whom the eastern Sephardim called *frankos*. The largest number of *frankos* settled in Aleppo, but even there their numbers in the second half of the seventeenth century did not exceed a few dozen. Those "port Jews" in Livorno, Aleppo, and other Ottoman cities, were responsible for maintaining connections between Italian and Ottoman port cities. Irrespective of their port of operation, these Sephardic Jews formed a social-cultural class defined by its involvement in international commerce. Eastern Sephardim, however, were largely excluded from this vast international network. In the seventeenth century, they were less cosmopolitan than the *frankos* in their connections, dress, and spoken languages; did not enjoy European protections; and typically engaged in more traditional occupations, such as brokerage and credit. As such, they supported the mercantile efforts of Western Sephardim and benefitted from international trade indirectly. The presence of the *frankos* in the Ottoman Empire would, by the mid-eighteenth century, transform Ottoman Sephardic Jewry more broadly, culturally and educationally, as the *frankos* became more involved in the local communities and eastern Sephardim took positions working for them and other Europeans.[148]

The disparities between eastern and western Sephardim Trivellato and Lehmann describe might have been there in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Trivellato has suggested this variance was reflected in linguistic differences. Western Sephardim quickly learned the idioms of the countries they settled in (Italian, Dutch, or English) in addition to their command of Portuguese, the dominant commercial language among the Sephardic diaspora. This allowed the Sephardim in Livorno to develop commercial ties with Sephardic traders as far away as Amsterdam, London, and the New World. All the while, she has argued, Eastern Sephardim continued to speak Ladino, a practice that betrayed their lack of assimilation into the Mediterranean mercantile network.[149] Such an observation, however, overlooks the nearly full integration of Ottoman Sephardim into Arab society in the Levant, where by the eighteenth century Arabic had largely replaced Ladino as the primary spoken and regional trade language. By that time, one finds evidence that at least some eastern Sephardim also spoke other languages.[150] Other indications of the

148 Ibid., 37–40; Lehmann, "A Livornese 'port Jew'," 69–71; Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 66, 114–15.

149 *Familiarity of Strangers*, 64–5.

150 Evidence of Ottoman Sephardim in the Arab provinces of the empire using Arabic as their primary language of communication appears in the responsa. See e.g. Ḥuṣin, *Ṣedakah u-mishpat even ha-'ezer*, s8, 76, s10, 107, s13, 145–6, s15, 149; and the many examples appearing in Benaim, *Sixteenth-Century Judeo-Spanish Testimonies*, 351–77, 396–450.

deep involvement of non-western Jews in all levels of the Ottoman economy, including intra-regional and international trade, appear in *shar'i* court records from Istanbul. While Jews mentioned in these records alongside Muslims and Christians may have engaged in trade with other countries only indirectly, they were clearly an integral part of a growing Mediterranean economy that reached across imperial boundaries. By the mid- to late-eighteenth century, trade with faraway places included products as basic as vegetables and sugar. This drew even modest Jewish merchants into the wider network of international commerce to which few Jews had access a century earlier. One case from 1765 reveals that in Istanbul's Sultan Bayezid and Mahmud Paşa markets, imported knives, beads, needles, and other similar objects were sold. These goods were brought in from other provinces of the empire, as well as from Europe, and primarily from Venice. Members of the guild in charge of purchasing and selling the merchandise included several Jews.[151] Another report from 1774 discussed a complaint by members of the glassmakers' guild (*camcı esnafı*), which included several Jews, against a band of profiteers (*muhtekir taifesi*) that likewise encompassed Jews. The glassmakers argued that they had a signed decree (*firman*) granting them monopoly over the distribution and sale of glass products imported from outside the empire, and that the defendants were violating this ruling and taking away from their profits.[152] And a third example from 1786 mentions several Jews among members of the bottle-sellers' guild (*şişeci esnafı*), which was responsible for buying and distributing bowls, cups, lamps, chandeliers, and other glass items coming into Istanbul from Austria, Hungary, Venice, England, and other places. The elders and experts of that guild would purchase crates of such items from European merchants.[153] Even basic items such as vegetables were brought into the capital from other places near and far. Jews were involved in this trade, some as members of a guild that purchased vegetables directly from farmers throughout the empire – squash, eggplant, cabbage, spinach, turnip, beets, tomatoes, okra, celery, radishes, onion, garlic, cauliflower, melons, and artichoke. Other Jews competed with the guild by growing their own crops.[154] These and other cases noted in the Istanbul

There's further evidence of other languages spoken by Sephardi Jews in the empire's eastern provinces, including Turkish (e.g. Ḥuşin, *Ṣedakah u-mishpat even ha-'ezer*, s6, 58–9) and Italian (e.g. Thomas Dawes to C. Lyttleton, letter dated 1 March 1761, Ms. Stowe no. 754, 3:fol. 85, in the British Library, London). See also Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 8.

151 *taşra vilayetlerden ve frengıstan'dan gelen*; 7/255/783 (November 1765), as quoted in Kal'a, ed. *İstanbul ahkam defterleri*, 2:97–8.

152 8/204/664 (October 1774), as quoted in ibid., 2:163–4.

153 11/180/556 (October–November 1786), as quoted in ibid., 2:354–5.

154 9/61/219 (May 1782) and 10/245/871 (April 1783), as quoted in ibid., 2:260–1, 331–2.

court records confirm that Jews were part of a bustling mercantile scene that transcended the boundaries of the capital, irrespective of whether or not those Jewish merchants ever travelled outside the empire.[155]

Whereas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Western Sephardim were leading in access to international markets, by the eighteenth their connections and influences came to be shared by broader sections of Ottoman Jewry. Granted, cosmopolitanism was still a rare feature among Jews in the East; the model of Jews from the capital who were engaging with foreign merchants did not necessarily typify their counterparts in remoter areas of the empire. One may imagine that Jewish involvement in trade expanded by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, even in the eastern provinces of the empire. We may cautiously assume that the segment of Jewish society that engaged in international trade or related occupations (such as production and processing of raw materials that were to be shipped out of the empire) and collaborated with the Sephardic diaspora or non-Jewish Europeans had grown compared to a century earlier. Admittedly, the evidence for this is anecdotal at best.[156]

The arrival of European traders and diplomats in the Levant, and the Sephardic merchants that accompanied them, changed the landscape of commerce in the eastern Mediterranean and transformed Ottoman Jewish society in the long run. Following the formation of the English Levant Company in 1581, the Dutch and French also established organizations that traded in the region, in 1625 and 1666. Together, representatives of the three countries enjoyed near

155 For other cases see: 8/46/143 (glassmakers), 8/147/467 (orange sellers), 8/248/810 (quilt sellers importing merchandise from France via the Mediterranean), 9/321/1181 (50 Muslims, 15 Jews, and 5 Christians represented the guild of tobacco sellers in court, arguing that members of the cured meats and basket-makers guilds sold people concoctions for smoking made of pear, figs, and cucumber leafs, causing them financial damage), 10/67/265 (makers of navy blue slippers sold to Europeans), 10/105/398 (where Jews serve as inspectors of trade deals between European and Iranian merchants and Istanbuli members of the fresco-makers' guild), 12/51/150 (Jewish merchants importing wool purchased from foreign merchants to make products that would compete with the hat-makers' guild, which supplied Janissaries, gardeners, and cooks working at the palace), as quoted in ibid., 129–31, 148–50, 186–7, 303–4, 314–18, 319–20, 386–7.

156 As Trivellato showed, from the seventeenth century on, raw materials were the main commodity coming out of the Levant into European markets; see Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 112–15. Registries of the Levant Company trading from Aleppo demonstrate that their and the French and Dutch's primary trade was indeed in a wide spectrum of raw materials, including almonds, cinnamon, coffee, cloths of various types, ginger, iron, pepper, quicksilver, sugar, tobacco, and wool; see e.g. "Rates of goods imported and exported … agreed to by the French, English, and Dutch stations in Aleppo for the year 1737" in NA, SP 110/57/2; and "Rates of goods imported and exported … for the present year 1715" in NA, SP 110/67, 333–5.

monopoly on trade between the Levant and Europe.[157] For much of the seventeenth century, Ottoman Jews and the *frankos* who joined them dealt with European markets via representatives from these countries, who extended Jewish merchants associated with them legal protections. Under capitulations agreements European powers had signed with the Ottomans, their citizens were not subject to Ottoman law, did not pay taxes to the Ottoman government, and could seek adjudication with their country's consul or ambassador.[158] Such privileges were extended to the *frankos* from Livorno who settled in the empire, but eventually also to local eastern Sephardim who worked for them. As we will see in the next chapter, the *frankos* employed a large number of locals, effectively creating two classes of Jews. We may assume such a problem existed in other Ottoman cities where different classes of Jews emerged based on their foreign protection status. This, even though the overall number of Jews enjoying foreign protection had not risen dramatically with respect to the overall population throughout the eighteenth century.[159]

In Aleppo in the second half of the eighteenth century, these changes generated a severe communal crisis. The *frankos* dispute I discuss in the next chapter tore the community apart and attracted the attention of rabbis from throughout the empire. Perhaps more than anything, it epitomized the changes Ottoman Jews had undergone since the mid-seventeenth century, which took them into faraway worlds and farther from rabbinical authority. In the eighteenth century, Jews not only attained greater exposure to the world. They also witnessed significant internal transformations in their communities: The rise of a privileged class, wealthy and protected by European trade agreements; new challenges to the halakhic order rabbis sought but often failed to impose, inspired in part by Sabbateanism; fragmentation of charity, accompanied by the formation of new services not run through the synagogue or supervised by rabbis; and the expansion of literacy, coupled by a proliferation of literature in Ladino, which made works on Judaism and Jewish law accessible to a general, non-scholarly readership. Such profound changes had been largely complete or well underway by the turn of the nineteenth century, when the empire had launched a series of reforms that would change the world of Ottoman Jews once again.

157 Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 69.

158 For a detailed analysis of the capitulations and their implications, see Van den Boogert, *The Capitulations*, 30–52.

159 Ibid., 85–92.

CHAPTER 3

Communal Leadership, Rabbis, and Others

Shmu'el Laniado (d. *c.*1750), a prominent rabbi and judge (*dayyan*) in eighteenth-century Aleppo, ordered his community one day to refrain from eating vine leaves. Tiny worms were discovered in the leaves some women had bought to prepare for the Shabbat meal, and their presence rendered the leaves non-kosher and their eating forbidden. As a precaution, Laniado also ruled out boiling the leaves and killing the worms. The order, signed by several rabbis, arrived at an inopportune time, on a Friday morning, when cooking for Shabbat had already been mostly completed. Throwing out or giving away pots full of food meant some families would be left with little to eat for the weekend. Yet the rabbis' insistence and a threat of excommunication induced many to comply with the directive. Discontent within the community grew, however, as weeks went by and the rabbis were unwilling to lift the ban. At some point, a group of young Jews moved to rebel: They announced publicly that consuming vine leaves was permissible. Despite the risk of excommunication and their summoning to the *beit din* (the rabbinical court), the dissenters managed to garner the support of a few rabbis and continued to challenge the authority of Laniado and the other scholars, an act that carried no apparent adverse consequences for them. The controversy ended with the lifting of the ban several months later.[1]

Shmu'el Laniado heralded from a family of Sephardic scholars who had arrived in Aleppo in the early sixteenth century. According to Yaron Har'el, members of this family served as chief rabbis of the Aleppo community continuously until the early nineteenth century. What the title "chief rabbi" meant – what authority such leaders had over their congregations, and how they ascended to that position – is not quite clear.[2] More broadly, historians have grappled with defining the roles rabbis played in Ottoman communities, explored whether some towns had a central rabbinate and what authority such body might have had, and conjectured on the manner rabbis worked vis-à-vis

1 Abul'afyah, *Ḥanan elohim*, 261–77.

2 Yaron Har'el understood the title to mean a functionary who was responsible for communal affairs to the Ottoman authorities, and the head of the rabbinical court. In Aleppo, he claimed, the rabbinate position was bequeathed from one Laniado rabbi to another until 1805; Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 39–58. See also Bornstein-Makovetzky, *'Ir shel ḥakhamim*, 175–87, who uses the terms "chief rabbi" (*ha-rav ha-rashi*) and "city rabbi" (*rav ha-'ir*) interchangeably.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_005

lay leaders.[3] This chapter revisits the question of leadership in Ottoman communities prior to the nineteenth century, especially the roles of rabbis and lay leaders. If an uncontested leadership of one rabbi, or a group of them, did not exist – as the vine leaves story seems to imply – and if Ottoman Jewry at the local or imperial level was not organized hierarchically, how shall we understand rabbinical leadership, communal structure, and the Jews' commitments to their institutions and rules?

Addressing these questions requires differentiating between three levels of the Ottoman Jewish experience. One involves the power of rabbis to enforce a communal culture that placed halakhah at the center of individual and collective life. Another focuses on communal institutions and the role rabbis and lay leaders played in them. And a third links Jewish communal organization with that of the Ottoman state and its institutions. As we will see, at least until the mid-nineteenth century rabbinical leadership was rather loose. Lacking a clear hierarchical structure, it failed to impose Jewish law as a guiding principle in the lives of individuals and congregations. Beyond offering advice on personal, financial, and communal matters, rabbis were deeply involved in shaping the role of communal services, such as charitable organizations and education. It was through such institutions that rabbis, alongside lay leaders, achieved high status and prestige among their followers, just as sultans and other Ottoman officials became benefactors of their subjects by sustaining certain services or establishing foundations.[4] On both the state and community levels, relationships between leaders and commoners were shaped by pious customs of the tradition and grounded in religious practices and rites; eminence was often a product of religious legal and scholastic erudition. Spiritual and lay leaders alike held positions of influence, but the latter were usually more politically powerful than the former, often due to financial wealth and familial prestige. Indeed this was so in the empire as a whole, where even the chief Muslim justices were subordinates of sultans, who sought to appear pious but were not trained as scholars; and in the Ottoman Jewish world, where in most communities rabbis were effectively subordinate to the lay leaders and congregations who had hired them.

Jewish communal organization in the empire also mimicked the state in its absence of consensus on the role of religious law in everyday life. While

3 See a good summary of this question in Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 234–36. For an instance of the traditional approach that recognizes tensions between scholars and lay leaders and places rabbis at the helm of communities, see Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Cooperation and conflict," 15–30.

4 Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 69–72, 90–113.

rabbis wanted to mold public and private life around halakhah, common sense, precedent, and daily necessities often prevailed. Many Jews were deeply committed to their community as a sociocultural framework, but not necessarily to following the lifestyle rabbis expected. In a world with porous religious boundaries, Jews and other Ottoman subjects crossed religious lines regularly, in living quarters, business partnerships, personal associations in public and private, and in the *shar'i* court. As we shall see in this chapter and in the next two, cross-communal cooperation only increased during the eighteenth century. Such a setting was hardly conducive to maintaining strict, centralized rabbinical authority.

1 Rabbis in the Existing Scholarship

In a recent book on the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire, Tom Papademetriou finally put to rest the *millet* system explanation for Ottoman governance of non-Muslims.[5] Rejecting the assumption that the empire governed the Greek Orthodox via the patriarchs, Papademetriou shows that the Ottomans saw Greek patriarchs primarily as tax farmers, while negotiating with various elements of the community at the same time. The image that emerges from his analysis is one of a fractured society, not a centralized one. The patriarch's control of his flock was, according to Papademetriou, fiscal rather than political. The state, for its part, treated non-Muslim subjects as individuals, not as corporate entities; membership in communities was simply a convenient mechanism for raising revenue, as "fiscal concerns were at the heart of the relationship between the Ottoman state" and its Christian communities.[6] Outside monetary concerns, religious leadership was simply too loose, and patriarchs and bishops had "little control over members of the community."[7]

Papademetriou's observations seem to apply to the Jewish community as well. While lacking a position parallel to that of the Greek-Orthodox patriarch, or a comparable hierarchical organization, fiscal issues were still the primary factor tying Jews to their communities, whether via taxation or charitable contributions. In the Jewish context, Benjamin Braude tore the *millet* system narrative apart and rejected the idea of centralized Jewish leadership already

5 For an overview of this outdated approach, see Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 15–30; and Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 125–6, who already in 1984 claimed that the story of the evolution of the *millet* system was "without historical foundation" (126). See also n. 8 below.

6 Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan*, 11–2, 52, quotation from 101.

7 Ibid., 59.

in 1979.[8] Since the mid-1980s, historians have mostly followed Yosef Hacker's analysis, which rejected the idea of a *millet* system and a hierarchical leadership for the Ottoman Jewish world overall and claimed no chief rabbi ruled over Ottoman Jewry from Istanbul.[9] There is, so far, no evidence for formal regional or empire-wide leadership structures before 1835.[10]

In view of Braude, Hacker, and, most recently, Papademetriou's studies, discussing the role of rabbis among Ottoman Jews would seem unnecessary. Yet, as so often happens, research in the past three decades has yet to give up completely on old assumptions about rabbinical leadership and power, at least on the local level.[11] A reexamination of the issue, then, may well be in order here. Historians of the Ottoman Jewish world have described communal institutions with different degrees of formality, as well as a process of appointing officials to leadership positions. Functionaries included rabbis who served on the rabbinical court, or bore different titles such as chief rabbi (*rav rashi*), teacher of Torah (*marbiṣ torah*), or sage of the congregation (*ḥakham ha-kahal*); and lay leaders (*parnasim*, *memunim*, *tovei ha-ʿir*, or the *maʿamad*), who were in charge of day-to-day affairs in each congregation, and whose actions relied on the decisions of a convention of all tax-paying adult males in a community (*yeḥidim* or *porʿei ha-mas*). Lay leaders were also in charge of representing a community to the Ottoman authorities, though the roles of representation and management of congregational affairs were not always held by the same

8 Braude, "Foundation myths," 1:69–88. For an overview of the debate Braude's thesis generated, see Van den Boogert, "Millets: Past and present."

9 Hacker, "Ha-Rabanut ha-rashit." For an earlier version of this essay, see: "Ottoman policies." Hacker summarized his findings about the Ottoman Jewish community and rejected the *millet* system narrative in his "Ha-irgun ha-kehillati," 287–309 (see 288 for the *millet* system). For the older narrative, see: Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:23–5, 44–5, 65, 70–5; and Epstein, "The leadership of the Ottoman Jews." For interpretations similar to Hacker's, see: Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 17–30; Levy, "Hakamat mosad ha-ḥakham bashi"; *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 53–9; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 70; Tsur, *Gevirim ve-yehudim aḥerim*, 41.

10 Galante's biography of scholars in Istanbul from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, all of whom he called chief rabbis (grand rabbins), was based almost entirely on Rosanes' unfounded claims; see Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 1:231–49. Bornstein-Makovetsky has suggested that a pattern of regional organization and leadership existed in Egypt, but did not provide any evidence for this; Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 132–3. In Syria, there seem to have been no regional Jewish centers either, and nor were there any in Palestine; Har'el, *Sfinot shel esh*, 83; Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century), 30. For other parts of the empire, see Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 234–6.

11 E.g. Mazower, *Salonica*; Rozen, *Istanbul*; *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*; Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*. Notable exceptions are Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, and the section about the Ottoman Empire in Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 27–29, 81–85.

people. This, in part, helps explain why in Ottoman state documents rabbis are often conflated with lay leaders, and some Jewish representatives are defined as "chief," even though in all likelihood they had no special status within their congregation.[12] As I show below, the Ottoman bureaucracy had only a loose understanding of the internal hierarchy and leadership structures of Jewish communities.

By Ottoman times, Jewish communities in the eastern Mediterranean were no longer led or associated with the old centers in Babylonia. The academies (*yeshivot*) and their leaders (*ge'onim*) that provided spiritual guidance for Jews near and far were long gone, as were positions such as the Exilarch (*rosh ha-golah*) or the Head of the Jews (*nagid* or *ra'is al-yahud*) in Egypt, who from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries provided spiritual and political leadership for Jews in Egypt and neighboring areas.[13] What replaced these leadership structures? It appears a far less hierarchical or formal system. Meir Benayahu attempted to address Jewish leadership in the empire in a short book published in 1953. He stated at the outset that

> Every [Sephardi] congregation [in the Ottoman Empire] had elected officials and independent ordinances. The rabbi (*ḥakham ha-kahal*) had the authority to preside over his congregation's members' legal matters, to administer the congregation on one hand, and to deliver sermons on Shabbat [at the synagogue] and head the *yeshivah* on the other … and the main title used to describe that rabbi was *marbiṣ torah*, a title based on the fact that the rabbi's primary concerns all derived from the principles of the Torah.[14]

This statement suggests the rabbi led his congregation and had broad authority on a range of issues that his followers respected and adhered to. But delving deeper into the evidence Benayahu himself provides reveals a more nuanced picture. It was congregations that appointed, or effectively hired, rabbis to administer various functions for them, from teaching children and advising on halakhic matters, to serving on the rabbinical court and even administering the congregation's finances. The practice of hiring a *marbiṣ torah* emerged in

12 Ayalon, "Rethinking leadership," 331–3.

13 For a good summary of Geniza-era leadership among Jews in the eastern Mediterranean and its eventual dissipation, see Cohen, "Communal self-government," and a more in-depth discussion in his *Jewish Self Government*.

14 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 11.

Spain in the fifteenth century (possibly earlier) and continued in Sephardic congregations in the empire.[15]

Examining the appointment process of rabbis can help clarify their standing within the congregation and the community at large. In general, rabbis were appointed through a decision of either the *parnasim* or *por'ei ha-mas*, depending on the place and time.[16] Thus, in sixteenth-century Salonica, the majority of a congregation's membership signed a letter in support of a rabbi's appointment, vowing to follow his advice.[17] Individual congregants were directly involved in appointments in Magnesia (in Greece) and Valona (Vlorë, in Albania), where one rabbi served four congregations.[18] In seventeenth-century Egypt, lay leaders appointed rabbis and the congregants approved the decision subsequently.[19] In Izmir at the same time, any taxpayer above a certain financial level had a say in the decision to appoint a rabbi, but in 1749 community leaders, allegedly consulting with its rabbis, changed the rule under the pretext of declining moral standards and too many internal feuds. From that point on, rabbis were appointed by the majority of the city's *tovei ha-'ir*, a decision other individuals could not appeal.[20] In eighteenth-century Aleppo, it appears the *yeḥidim* were called upon to deliberate on major issues, and that their authority superseded that of lay leaders.[21]

What authority did rabbis have within their congregations? At times, an appointment would be confirmed by a *qadi* in the Islamic court, or even imposed by one. Benayahu cited a few cases from Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica where a rabbi would be imposed on a congregation by a *shar'i* court ruling; however, such cases were not as common as he argued.[22] The Ottoman state

15 Ibid., 11–13.

16 Ibid., 15–24.

17 De-Buton, *Leḥem rav*, s70, 29b. See other similar examples in Beṣal'el Ashkenazi, *She'elot*, s25, 79b and de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s135, 9a (in the edition I used, pagination restarts after page 40, so 9a is effectively 49a).

18 For Magnesia, see de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s90, 34a. For Valona: de-Buton, *Leḥem rav*, s73, 31a. For other examples, see Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s66, 26b–27b, and s68, 29a–30a.

19 Ha-Levi, *Darkei no'am*, yoreh, s4, 16b–17a.

20 Mayo, *Sefat ha-yam*, yoreh, s21, 21a. The text as Mayo quotes it describes the rabbis as part of the decision to change the appointments process. But it is very possible that rabbis were essentially left out of it, or only agreed to it later.

21 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, ḥoshen, s39, 518–19. According to Laniado, one of our main sources on eighteenth-century Aleppo, his family had led the Aleppo community since the sixteenth century. He does not provide information on how appointments were handled prior to his time. See *Kise Shlomo*, 6–8.

22 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 19–20.

was usually quite oblivious to the identity of Jewish leaders or to recognizing them as such as long as taxes were collected and delivered promptly. More often, a rabbi's appointment to lead a congregation relied on a written commitment he received and, more significantly, on his capability to form bonds with community members and assert his wishes. In other words, notwithstanding written agreements between rabbis and congregations, rabbinical positions were rather informal. Challenges to rabbis' authority occurred frequently, and often successfully. When one scholar thought the person appointed to the rabbinate was unfit or less qualified than others, he could mount resistance by rallying his supporters to depose the appointee, regardless of whatever commitment the latter had received.[23] Similarly, we hear of scholars who did not openly challenge an appointed rabbi but took steps to limit his influence, by teaching competing classes and attracting a large group of followers.[24]

The responsa provide ample examples of challenges to the authority of rabbis. Rabbis Shlomo ha-Kohen of Salonica (d. 1602) and Yosef Mitrani of Safed and Istanbul (d. 1639) related one notable case of a fierce dispute between a *parnas* and a *marbiṣ torah*. The altercation between the two might have been exceptional, but it does reflect the weakness of rabbis' position in Ottoman communities. According to the story, a *parnas* in a community was approached by its rabbi (*ḥakham u-marbiṣ torah*) who asked him to arrange for the rabbi's son to sit at the synagogue in a place deserving of his standing, among the *parnasim*. The *parnas* replied that he had to ask for the other *parnasim*'s consent, and the rabbi agreed, but the rabbi's wife said that her son will sit where he deserved, no matter what. The *parnas* then went to consult with his peers, who outright refused the request on the grounds that the rabbi's son was involved in vandalism in the synagogue to the extent that they had had to banish him, and even paid him off so he would no longer set foot there. That son, they continued, used to curse in the synagogue and never contributed to charity. So, the *parnas* went to convey the decision to the rabbi and urged him to accept it, warning that squabbling with the *parnasim* on the matter could lead to the rabbi's removal from office. Rejecting the advice, the rabbi came to the synagogue with his son and a relative. Although the *parnasim* had locked the building, the rabbi and his company managed to break in. The *parnas* then approached him and accused him of seeking to make his son the congregation's rabbi (as implied by his new seating arrangement). He reminded the rabbi that the idea was his wife's and added that he should not have listened to

23 For examples of this, see de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s80, 44b; de-Buton, *Leḥem rav*, s72, 30a–b.

24 Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s179, 148a–157a.

her. When the rabbi swore that his wife had nothing to do with it, the *parnas* called him a liar, insisting that he had personally heard the wife encouraging him. The rabbi then announced that he will make his son the next *ḥakham* and no one could stop him. The *parnas* cautioned the rabbi that the congregation could dismiss him from office, to which the rabbi reacted by announcing a ban (*nidui*) on the *parnas*. The congregants, however, did not affirm the move, given a communal ordinance that no one individual in their congregation may excommunicate another.[25]

The response of Mitrani and ha-Kohen to this dispute is worthy of discussion in itself, and I shall get to that later. The story exposes the weakness of rabbis – even those with an official position and designated synagogue seat – vis-à-vis lay leaders and the *yeḥidim* of the congregation in general. Examples for this weakness abound in the responsa from the sixteenth century on.[26] It is revealed in cases where rabbis responded to a question with a lengthy halakhic discussion in support of a position, only to finally admit that reality dictated the opposite solution. Thus, one scholar ruled that a community may appoint a *parnas* whose father was not Jewish, despite Jewish law prohibiting such an appointment; and another pardoned those who talked during prayer at the synagogue, because they were following communal custom, and noted that their rabbi unjustly imposed a *nidui* on them – despite evidence suggesting that *nidui* was the appropriate measure against such offenders.[27] Some rabbis refused to compromise or accept insubordination from their congregation. Frustrated by their failure to assert a halakhic agenda, they resigned from their position as *marbiṣ torah*.[28]

The duties of rabbis appointed to positions in their congregations varied widely. Some writs of appointment preserved in the responsa reveal what duties congregations expected their *marbiṣ torah* to fulfill, and what the latter received in return for his services. A rabbi's position was sometimes defined in rather vague terms. For instance, three congregations in Manisa in 1555 appointed one Yiṣḥak Ḥazan to be their *marbiṣ torah*, stating loosely that his position would be one of leadership, guidance, and teaching, and that no one

25 Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s32, 1:15a–b; ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 3*, s37, 46a–b. I combined the different elements of this story, which appear in those two sources, into one.

26 Hacker, "Gevulotehah shel ha-otonomyah ha-yehudit," 368–73. As I show later, Hacker erred (here and on 386–7) in attributing this weakness to the lack of rabbinical courts' official authority from the state.

27 Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, a, s2, 1b–3a; Dweck ha-Kohen, *Reaḥ sadeh*, s12, 309–25.

28 E.g. the case the seventeenth-century Izmir rabbi Barukh Kal'ai cited in his responsa; Kal'ai, *Makor Barukh*, s29, 42b–43a, and another in Melamed, *Mishpat ṣedek*, a, s34, 111a. See also Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 73–4.

shall violate his rulings. In exchange, he received a generous weekly salary, holiday bonuses several times a year, guaranteed for three years, and a moving allowance, since he arrived from Edirne.[29] Another appointment letter from Rhodes, dated 1614, similarly defined the rabbi's task generally as being the congregation's leader, provide halakhic guidance, and serve as a *dayan* whose rulings would be binding for all.[30] One essential duty of the congregational rabbi was delivery of the weekly sermon (*derashah*) on Saturdays – so much so, that a common way for another rabbi to defy the authority of the appointed one was to attempt to deliver a sermon in his stead. Serving on the *beit din*, however, seems to have been a duty some locales included in their rabbis' position description, while others did not: At times, lay leaders served on the *beit din* exclusively, or shared responsibilities with rabbis, the former overseeing issues such as business or neighborly disputes, while the latter dealt with marital and familial affairs.[31] Appointed rabbis were prohibited, for the most part, from excommunicating members without the consent of either the *parnasim* or the congregation as a whole.[32]

Despite evidence suggesting that rabbis were not all-powerful, Benayahu chose to trust reports that implied the opposite, such as that of Ḥayim Benveniste of Izmir – who in the late seventeenth century asserted that "the custom of Israel and of this town is not to take any action, small or big, without the consent of the *ḥakham ha-marbiṣ torah* or without consulting" him.[33] Benayahu thus concluded that the *marbiṣ torah* fulfilled the most important position in the community: He was the spiritual leader, the teacher of halakhah, the one who delivered weekly sermons, and the adjudicator of religious, familial, marital, even monetary disputes. For Benayahu, he was the overseer of all *kahal* matters and the one validating the actions of the *parnasim*. As such, the rabbi had the authority to draft regulations, impose fines, enforce his opinions on religious and public matters, and excommunicate offenders. Lay leaders executed his directives, their actions considered valid only with

29 *hekimuhu 'aleihem le-sar u-le-kaṣin ve-lihiyot marbiṣ torah be-tokham le-horotam derekh yashar lifnei ish 'al ha-torah ve-'al ha-'avoda 'al emet ve-'al ha-shalom ve-ish lo yamreh et devaro*; de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s90, 34a–35a, quotation from 34a.

30 *li-hiyot lanu le-kaṣin u-le-rosh marbiṣ torah*; Benveniste, *Sha'ar Yehoshu'a*, s2, 7a.

31 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 25–6, 41–5, 55–9.

32 Ibid., 28, 48. See also: Ṣahalon, *Shut. Maharitaṣ*, s55, 57b–58b; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s32, 1:16a–b; Mizraḥi and Ben Ḥayim, *Mayim 'amukim*, 2, s69, 114b–115b. For an example of a *marbiṣ torah* who was given the authority to excommunicate, see ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 4*, s6, 7b–8a.

33 Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s244, 300a.

his consent. No one was allowed to challenge the *marbiṣ torah*'s authority. Once appointed – often for life and un-removable – his verdict on all issues was binding.[34] Izmir and Salonica even had superior rabbinical offices, and those heading them, known as *ha-rav ha-kolel*, wielded absolute authority over Jewish affairs in their city.[35]

Later historians have largely relied on Benayahu's reading of the role of rabbis in Ottoman communities. Barnai has suggested that, by the seventeenth century, Jewish communities had spiritual leaders who held official positions within the "general rabbinate" (*rabbanut kollelet*). Every city had a chief rabbi, and major cities such as Istanbul, Salonica, and Izmir had several rabbis sharing the post. Barnai did not elaborate on the duties of this institution or on its functioning vis-à-vis the "public leadership" (*hanhagah ṣiburit*, his collective term for lay functionaries).[36] In Izmir, the community Barnai has studied most, there was a central rabbinate from the early seventeenth century onward. It was sometimes led by one rabbi; at other times it was shared by two, or more. Bequeathing the post of chief rabbi to one's scion was quite common there, as it was – so Barnai has argued, incorrectly – in other Ottoman communities. Rabbis were the primary leaders of the Izmir community; *parnasim* seemingly played a marginal role.[37]

Leah Bornstein-Makovetzky's scholarship is replete with references to chief rabbis.[38] There was one in Cairo throughout the Ottoman period, she notes, and in Alexandria and other smaller Egyptian communities from the seventeenth century on. The lay leaders appointed chief rabbis, who then served on the *beit din* and were in charge of marital matters and other familial disagreements. The *parnasim* handled all administrative affairs, while the rabbis' consent was needed for all communal decisions, and at times they enacted regulations on their own.[39] A similar structure appears in Bornstein-Makovetzky's recent study on the Jews of Aleppo. Even before the Ottoman era, she argues, ultimate leadership of the entire community was in the hands of rabbis.

34 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 41, 48.

35 Ibid., 94–9.

36 Barnai, "Yahadut ha-imperyah," 496–8.

37 Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 135–264. Barnai acknowledges the existence of a public leadership in Izmir made up of non-scholars, but aside from a brief mention (136), this group is absent from his account of the Izmir community. See also Levy, *Jews*, 67–8.

38 See below, as well as her many entries in *EJIW*, e.g. "Alba, Isaac de"; "Alfandari, Aaron ben Moses"; "Algazi, Solomon ben Abraham"; "Chios"; "Covo family"; "Geron (Gueron) family"; "Peraḥya, Ḥasday ben Samuel ha-Kohen"; and "Peraḥya, Aaron ben Ḥayim Abraham ha-Kohen."

39 Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 134–43.

Bornstein-Makovetzky uncritically accepts the premise appearing in rabbinical sources from Aleppo, by which from the sixteenth century on, while lay leaders played some role, the community adhered to a chief rabbi from the Sephardic Laniado family. The rabbis "usually administered … the city's matters unchallenged." They were paramount in Aleppo, while the *parnasim* and other functionaries were their subordinates.[40]

In Salonica and Edirne too, historians placed the rabbis at the top of the community's hierarchy. In the former during the sixteenth century, Yosef Hacker found no central rabbinical authority that governed the Jews regularly: "the city had no chief rabbinate and no *beit din gadol* with an institutional authority." Hacker reckoned that lay leaders were at times at least as powerful as rabbis and their approval was needed for the enactment of communal ordinances (*takanot*). He further suggested that rabbinical authority was prone to feuds around appointments and decisions that could split congregations into two camps. And yet, despite the acknowledged limits on their power, rabbis take center stage in Hacker's discussion of the Salonica community: Their prescribed rules created the framework for Jewish life in the city, and people generally followed their rulings.[41] Avigdor Levy likewise assumed that a rabbinical council, or chief rabbinate, operated regularly in Salonica since the end of the seventeenth century. And in Edirne, he noted, two rabbis – Avraham Geron and Menaḥem Ashkenazi – shared the post of chief rabbi from 1722 onward, and their descendants continued to dominate the city's community affairs until the nineteenth century.[42] What such observations have in common is, once again, their uncritical acceptance of evidence from rabbinical sources, despite rabbis' clear interest in portraying themselves as more powerful than they likely were.

Only for Jerusalem, thanks to the extensive works of Minna Rozen and Amnon Cohen, a different picture emerges, one of a circumscribed rabbinical authority and of lay leaders who in practice administered all communal matters and institutions. Two formal posts seem to have existed there: that of chief rabbi, or "congregation sage" (*ḥakham ha-kahal*), and that of "elder of the Jews" (*sheykh al-yahud*). The community selected both, and the *qadi* confirmed the latter's appointment. In principle, the *ḥakham* was in charge of spiritual guidance and teaching, and served on the *beit din*. The *sheykh* was responsible for

40 Bornstein-Makovetzky, *'Ir shel ḥakhamim*, 169–87, quotation from 180. For Aleppo (and Damascus, which operated by a similar model), see also: Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 14–16, 39–40; *Sfinot shel esh*, 83–84; and Rivlin and Rivlin, *Korot*, 12–14.

41 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 212–15, 237–64, quotation from 258.

42 Levy, *Jews*, 68.

mundane affairs, the functioning of communal services, and representing the community to the authorities. At times there was overlap between the two posts, when a rabbi would also serve as *sheykh*. The *sheykh* was often one of several *parnasim* who shared responsibility for communal affairs.[43]

The clear impression one gets from the existing scholarship, then, is that rabbis throughout the Ottoman Empire had official positions in their communities, ruled by appointment, and at times were recognized by the state. Historians have used labels such as "chief rabbi" or "general rabbi" for officially appointed rabbis without offering clear qualification for such titles.[44] They have usually overlooked the distinction between the nature of rabbinical authority and the functioning of communal institutions. Thus, Hacker distinguished between the synagogue as a place of prayer and celebrations, and as a space for administering communal matters, from collecting taxes and charity to spreading information; but he stopped short of outlining the limits on the power of rabbis in setting a halakhic, social, or economic agenda for their people.[45] Important questions seem to have been left unanswered in this portrayal: What, exactly, did these rabbinical positions entail? How much clout did their bearers have within their communities? What was the distribution of power between rabbis and lay leaders?[46] Did rabbis, who helped lead, guide, and sustain their community, also manage to enforce religious standards on its members? Was it possible for one to disobey a rabbi's orders, ignore the community's ordinances, and still take part in its charitable activities? Could Jews regard rabbis as communal leaders without adhering to their advice, without heeding the community's agreements with them, and without observing halakhic principles in their daily routine? The literature tends to view the community as a cohesive unit, where strong rabbinical leadership equaled a healthy functioning of institutions and vice versa. One wonders, however, whether these last two aspects of communal life were truly interdependent.

A terminological confusion further obscures the essence of rabbinical leadership. As far as I can tell, the modern term for chief rabbi, *rav rashi*, does not appear in Jewish sources before the nineteenth century. This is not surprising, given that no such position formally existed before 1835, around the time

43 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 139–45; Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century), 1:3–4; *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century), 25, 30.

44 A good summary of this question (but with no resolution) appears in Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry*, 19–24; and in Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 146–63.

45 Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 228–31.

46 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 234–36 acknowledges the ambiguity of rabbinical titles and positions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See also Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 260–4.

the Ottomans were enacting religious and social reforms in their empire. For the period preceding 1835, historians have taken several titles to mean a leading, or "chief" rabbi. These included *ha-rav ha-kolel* (the general rabbi), *ha-rav ha-mushlam* (the complete or perfect rabbi), *ha-rav ha-muvhak* (the bold rabbi), *ha-ḥakham ha-meṣuyan* (the excellent scholar), *ha-dayan ha-meṣuyan* (the excellent judge), *ḥakham ha-kahal* (sage of the congregation), *resh mata* (head of the city), *mara* (or *mari*) *de-atra* (rabbinic authority of the locale), the aforementioned *marbiṣ torah*, and even *resh metivta* (head of the yeshivah). While some of these, like *resh metivta* and *ha-dayyan ha-meṣuyan*, imply the rabbi in question indeed held a concrete position, in general these titles conveyed eminence of some sort without revealing much about the function of the person bearing them.

Yoḥanan Breuer has suggested that such honorifics had specific meanings, and that at least in one community, Izmir, there was a clear hierarchy of titles. Arguing that a distinction between different scholarly titles had existed since Talmudic times,[47] he found that until the late-seventeenth century, such epithets as *ha-ḥakham ha-na'aleh*, *ha-ḥakham ha-meromam* (both meaning "the lofty sage"), *ha-ḥakham ha-shalem*, *rav ve-'aṣum* ("grand and immense"), *ha-rav ha-kolel*, *ha-rav ha-muvhak*, and *ha-rav ha-mufla* (the "magnificent" rabbi) were attributed to rabbis interchangeably. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, such titles seem to have been given some specificity: Only the president of the rabbinical court (*av beit din*) was now addressed as *ha-rav ha-kolel*, whereas other equally eminent scholars were called *ha-ḥakham ha-shalem*. One testimony from the mid-nineteenth century suggests that in the eighteenth century only a community-appointed rabbi had the authority to grant titles to other scholars. The titles *ha-ḥakham ha-na'aleh* and *ha-ḥakham ha-meromam* were applied to those who did not hold official rabbinical appointments, while no one but official appointees were called *rav*. Such norms, however, seem more fitting of the nineteenth century, when a hierarchy of rabbinical positions evolved among Ottoman Jews throughout the empire. The meaning of titles prior to the mid-nineteenth century seems to be shrouded in mist.[48]

How did the Ottoman state treat hierarchy within Jewish communities or among rabbis, if one indeed existed? With no deep understanding of the functioning of Jewish communities – or interest in it, for that matter – the Ottomans

47 For more on this, see Breuer, "Gadol mi-rav," 41–2, who quotes Rav Sherira Ga'on (d. 1006) as saying "rabbi is greater than rav, raban is greater than rabbi, and greater than raban is one's name" (*gadol mi-rav rabi, gadol mi-rabi raban, gadol mi-raban shemo*), meaning that there was no appropriate title for the most eminent of scholars.

48 ha-Kohen, "Torat ha-te'arim," 505–9.

used the term *haham* to denote a Jewish leader, irrespective of that person's scholarly qualities. Since the state regarded *dhimmi* (non-Muslim) communities primarily as tax-collecting entities, a Jew representing such an entity to the authorities, or in a court case, would be labelled *haham* and sometimes *haham başı* (denoting not a "chief rabbi," but rather a bearer of general leadership or representative role). Evidence from the late-eighteenth century could be a source of confusion in this regard: It reveals that the Ottomans regarded Christian patriarchs and Jewish rabbis (*hahamlar*) as equivalent positions, assuming that Jews, like Christians, had some kind of religious central leaderships – which, of course, they did not.[49] Similarly, the title *haham başı* apparently referred to a learned individual rather than to a chief rabbi at the helm of his community. One document from that period describes a *haham başı* as a recently deceased individual who played an unspecified leadership role in Galata (part of Istanbul) and was involved in the financial administration of his community.[50] In another, the *haham başı* is the supervisor of the *kethüda*, the Jewish representative to the authorities on tax issues.[51] And a third document quotes the text of a petition by Jews, in which the term *haham başı* is mentioned three times with reference to one communal functionary, who tried to prevent individuals from entering Jewish homes and committing acts of fornication during the men's absence. This last case is the only pre-nineteenth century text I have found in which Jews apply the title to a person.[52] While in this case the individual in question might well have been an appointed rabbi, it is not at all clear that this was so in the previous two documents. Ottoman usage of the terms *haham* and *hahambaşı* indicates a rather loose perception of Jewish leadership: A person thus described held some leadership role in his community *at the time* he approached the Ottoman authorities. He could have been a scholar, as rabbis and many lay leaders were, or any other functionary. Beyond playing an administrative or institutional role in the community's relations with the authorities, these appellations tell us little. They were no different from another title the Ottomans used to denote leaders of assorted groups, including Jewish communities: *cemaatbaşı*.[53]

---

49 For examples of matters involving Christians and Jews, where the *patriklar* and *hahamlar* are mentioned on equal footing, see BOA, C. BLD. 146 (1786); C. DRB. 15 (1789); C. DRB. 17, where the Jewish leader is referred to as *hahambaşı* (1789); HAT 1386/55002 (1790), here too the Jewish leader is *hahambaşı*; and HAT 1412/57471 (1791).

50 BOA, D.BŞM.MHF. 53/9, from 1768.

51 BOA, C. DRB. 438, from 1773.

52 BOA, C. ADL. 1533, from 1785.

53 In a case from 1775 about bread bakers in Istanbul, the court record refers to a number of Jews as "the leaders of the Jewish community" (*millet-i yehuddan cema'atbaşıları*); 8/239/774, as quoted in Kal'a, *İstanbul ahkam defterleri*, 2:181.

Confusion of rabbinical titles appears even in places where, according to historical literature, a hierarchy of scholars did exist, and where one family had dominated Jewish social and political life for centuries, as in Damascus and Aleppo. Written references from the *frankos* dispute, which tore the Aleppo community apart from around the 1770s (I discuss it in more detail below), demonstrate this well. Rabbi Yehudah Kaṣin of Aleppo openly challenged a ruling by the *av beit din* Rapha'el Shlomo Laniado. Among the measures he took was a plea to Mordekhai Galante, whose family, by some accounts, led the Damascus community in the eighteenth century, to weigh in.[54] Kaṣin approached Galante as *resh mata ve resh metivta*, a title that tells us little about the functions Galante fulfilled. In his reply, quoted in Kaṣin's book, Galante referred to Kaṣin as the bold rabbi, the head and commander (*ha-rav ha-muvhak le-rosh ule-kaṣin*, using a pun on the rabbi's last name). He then calls Kaṣin's rival, Laniado, *ha-rav ha-muvhak mari de-atra*.[55] Laniado, like Galante, heralded from a family of celebrated scholars and was by some accounts Aleppo's chief rabbi in the second half of the eighteenth century.[56] Still, Galante, who in his role as leading rabbi in nearby Damascus would have been aware of rabbinical hierarchy had one existed, treated Kaṣin and Laniado as equally eminent. Furthermore, Laniado himself described Kaṣin as *ha-rav ha-kolel*, and his brother Eliyahu Laniado called Kaṣin *ha-rav ha-muvhak*, demonstrating that such titles had little practical meaning.[57]

Titles can be misleading. They tell us little about the official or practical position of a person beyond implying that the individual in question was reasonably educated. The vague rabbinical appointment letters I have considered above suggest a range of responsibilities that varied across different communities, and it is very likely that other learned individuals, who did not obtain an official appointment, fulfilled some of those functions as well. Furthermore, there was at least some overlap between the functions of rabbis and those of lay leaders, as both groups shared an interest in maintaining the community as a socially cohesive unit whose institutions served observant and less-observant Jews. In the balance between scholars and *parnasim*, the former seldom had the final say on ordinary communal matters. More often than not, they failed to enforce a social order based on halakhah and respect for the rulings of scholars. To understand why this was so, we need to take a short detour and

54 For the alleged role of the Laniado and Galante families in Aleppo and Damascus, see Har'el, *Sfinot shel esh*, 21–7 and *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 40–2, 57–8.

55 Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 1:178.

56 Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 40–42; Bornstein-Makovetzky, *'Ir shel ḥakhamim*, 176–77. For more on the Laniado family, see Ayalon, "Laniado family."

57 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, 264 and p. 15 of the introduction.

examine the landscape within which Ottoman Jews operated, beyond the economic aspects already discussed; the limitations the state imposed on them; and the opportunities that were available to them to interact with non-Jews.

2 Jews in Ottoman Society

Historians have characterized Ottoman society as one in which religion was "the primary organizing principle."[58] Islamic law, a recent study explains, "conferred legal superiority to Muslims and imposed restrictions on non-Muslims … In return for a poll tax and their acceptance of a series of rules that rendered them legally, socially, and culturally inferior to the Muslims, [Jews and Christians] could continue to live under Muslim rule."[59] The scholarship on Jews and Christians under Islam, for both the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman periods, has largely accepted this assumption. Such an understanding of the Islamic state implies that inter-religious divisions molded people's life-realities: their social status, residential locales, occupations, and even how they behaved and reacted to changes around them. It assumes that communities were formed primarily along religious lines. They were autonomous, in the sense that they served as separate, and principal, source of authority for their members. According to this approach, for Jews and Christians the religious community was congruent with public authority and life routine; it formed the framework within which most social interactions occurred and disputes were settled, away from state authorities.[60] Such communities operated in constant tension with the Islamic state. As historian Jack Tannous has recently shown, there were tangible financial incentives for Jews and Christians to convert to Islam, most notably to escape the burden of the poll tax, that largely made forced conversions unnecessary. Such methods to promote conversion to Islam were employed at least in parts of the Ottoman Empire as well.[61]

---

58 Hanioğlu, *A Brief History*, 25. For standard overviews of the status of non-Muslims under the Ottomans, see Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 16–40; Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 39–48; and Akyılmaz, "Osmanlı devletinde reaya," 40–54.

59 Şahin, *Peerless among Princes*, 18.

60 See, for example, Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:1–170, 273–407; Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 64–92. For an extensive list of works representing this approach, see Simonsohn, "Overlapping jurisdictions," 9–10, n. 14–18. For a contrary view, see al-Qattan, "Litigants and neighbors," 511–33.

61 Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 320–32. See also Lellouch, "Les Juifs dans le monde musulman," 289–90 and Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans*, 64–109.

One study of Jews and Christians under early Islam has questioned the premise of isolation between *dhimmi*s and Muslims. A measure of autonomy indeed marked the functioning of a community within its own jurisdiction, to which most Muslim jurists readily consented. Yet neither the latter nor the state wished to compel non-Muslims to settle all their legal matters only within the boundaries of their own communities or prevent their access to litigation in a Muslim court. Rather, it was non-Muslim communal leaders who promoted the idea of judicial autonomy, seeking thereby to maximize their sway over their followers' affairs by narrowing alternative options. Non-Muslim communal realities were thus molded by a "discourse of resistance," intended to evoke fear and suspicion toward "the other," the *goyim* (gentiles) in the Jewish case. Religious leaders preached against inter-confessional contacts and promoted a separatist agenda time and again in their writings. In reality, however, such rigid religious divisions did not hold. In Middle Eastern cities, one can talk about a "murkiness of confessional boundaries," and a "plurality of authorities," reflected in business partnerships, personal friendships, and familial bonds – all among members of different faiths. On the whole, features that were common to Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Middle Eastern urban culture brought them together more than they pushed them apart.[62]

Such a reading of the scene is well applicable to Ottoman Jewish communities. In a study of Jewish courts in the Empire, Hacker has shown the weakness of rabbinical courts, and of rabbis, in asserting their position, maintaining judicial independence, and restricting Jewish turning to Ottoman courts. These difficulties seem to have puzzled Hacker, who tended to regard Ottoman Jewry as a traditional society that followed Jewish law and its commandments (*miṣvot*), and thus should have avoided turning to gentile courts, a strictly prohibited move. Hacker, who perhaps would not consider the weak ties of some Jews with halakhah as a possible reason for their act, tried to explain it by suggesting that, on most issues, the state did not recognize rabbinical courts or bestow on them an official status.[63] Hacker may well have blamed the wrong actor for the failures of the Jewish judicial system. Indeed, segregation from Islamic society and autonomy were vital to a hierarchical rabbinical leadership that could dictate a day-to-day halakhic agenda; but in an Ottoman Jewish world so integrated into the surrounding society and so connected to its non-Jewish neighbors, it was all but impossible to sustain. The assumption that Jews adhered

62 Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 7–9; see also: Udovitch, "The Jews and Islam," 655–84; Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:70–4. On the anxiety Muslim rulers felt toward Christians and Jews in the medieval period, see Tannous, ibid., 405–15.

63 Hacker, "Gevulotehah shel ha-otonomyah ha-yehudit," 359–84.

to Jewish law as the principal guideline of their life is in fact quite problematic. It is acceptable only if one uncritically adopts the depictions of communal realities appearing throughout the responsa; and it might look logical to historians examining the shift from traditionalism to modernity which Jews worldwide experienced in later centuries. But there is little evidence to suggest that Ottoman Jews, in the sixteenth or eighteenth centuries, were overall strict adherents of halakhah. Moreover, a distinction between spiritual rabbinical leadership and the community as a purveyor of social services suggests that an autonomous model may have been needed to maintain the former, but not the latter. Decentralized leadership entailed weaker rabbinical authority, not weak communities.

Historians of Ottoman Jews have often disregarded the differentiation of communal functions and paid little attention to the layers of Jewish experience.[64] This has resulted in confusing, sometimes even contradictory portrayals of the status of Jews in the empire. Consider Barnai, who has argued that there was

> complete separation between the different societies … Jews and Christians could not integrate into the closed Muslim society, just as much as they could not become involved in its spiritual life … it was customary in the empire that different social and religious groups resided in separate neighborhoods, though this rule was not always followed. Because the relatively high level of the Jews … it was especially difficult for Turkish society to absorb the Jews and accept them socially and culturally. Such separation [between Jews and Muslims] had helped Jews preserve their uniqueness, including their linguistic uniqueness.[65]

On the next page of the same essay, however, Barnai suggests that Jews *were* in fact integrated into the Ottoman economy and society and that "these [Jewish and Muslim communities] were not entirely closed off and isolated from one another."[66] Bornstein-Makovetsky made similarly self-contradictory claims about the Jews of Aleppo.[67] And Yaron Ben-Na'eh has argued that Jews

64 Hacker has alluded to the dual function of the synagogue as a place of spiritual support and worship on one hand, and a locus of financial transactions on the other. Accordingly, in Salonica in the sixteenth century, many Jews divided their lives between two congregations, one for the former functions, the other for the latter; see "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 229–31.

65 Barnai, "Yahadut ha-imperyah," 488.

66 Ibid., 489–90, quotation from 490.

67 Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-ma'amad ha-politi veha-ḥevrati," 115–18.

> suffered from a debased public image and a low social status … Personal relations between Muslims and *dhimmi*s in general, and [Muslims and] Jews in particular, were marked, above all, by the loathing and repugnance Muslims demonstrated toward all protected people.[68]

Ben-Na'eh presented ample evidence for the harsh treatment of Jews under Ottoman rule, which included forced labor, rape, blood libels, expulsion from Jewish-dominated areas and destruction of communities, and the frequent use of offensive nicknames for them. Overall, he concluded, the Ottomans had "a sense of superiority … toward all other nations that was shared by people of all walks of life."[69] Much of the evidence Ben-Na'eh used in support of this assessment comes from the mid-seventeenth century Kadızadeli period, when a puritan movement promoting religious revival and imposing forced conversions of peoples and spaces dominated the empire and the palace, as we have seen. The Kadızadelis were notorious for their harsh treatment of non-Muslims (and Muslims who were not devout enough by their standards), and their tenure in power was hardly representative of Ottoman treatment of the Jews, which was apparently markedly more lenient in both earlier and later times.[70] Aware of these realities, Ben-Na'eh acknowledged that Jews were, after all, well integrated into Muslim society:

> Physical proximity led to social relations, even friendships between Jews and Muslims … Hebrew sources have preserved many testimonies of friendships among men: encounters during and as part of work … in guilds, and in places of entertainment, such as coffee and drinking houses, at public baths, and at times in mixed parties in private homes … There are also testimonies of romantic encounters and intimate relations between Jewish and Muslim men and women … sources from different cities all over the empire relate the arrival and the active participation of gentiles in family celebrations.[71]

---

68 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 90, my translation from the original Hebrew edition. For an English version of this text, see: *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 124–28.

69 *Yehudim*, 90–96, quotation from 96.

70 Baer, *Honored by the Glory*, 65–80, 93–104, 109–19; Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 95–96, 169–70. The mid-seventeenth century, in general, was a bad period for Jews and other groups all over the world thanks to Little Ice Age-related weather. Neither Ben-Na'eh nor other historians of Ottoman Jewry have taken that global perspective into consideration. On Jews and the global crisis of the seventeenth century, see Parker, *Global Crisis*, 167–73, 198–208, 555–57, 581–84, as well as the previous chapter.

71 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 97–98. Ben-Na'eh discusses the Kadızadelis on 84–8 but stretches the period of Jewish hardship to over a century, from the 1590s to the early 1700s. In his

As this – and other similar accounts[72] – indicate, Jews were not quite segregated from greater Ottoman society. Thus, the model of a closed-autonomous community seems untenable. Moreover, the relative openness to non-Jewish society which the Sephardim had brought with them from Iberia further contributed to Jewish integration. And as ties with non-Jews on all levels became more common, the ability of communal leaders, especially the scholars, to dictate a particular lifestyle diminished.

How deeply integrated were Jews in Ottoman society? I shall address this briefly given the ample literature on the question and the discussion in Chapter 2.[73] While the legal status of non-Muslims was certainly inferior, in reality Ottoman rule over them was rather fluid, its codes being periodically re-defined by officials of all levels, from sultans to local *qaḍi*s. Rulings by *şeyhülislâm*s, the empire's chief religious authorities, who discussed issues of Jewish and Christian life in their fatwas, clearly reflected this duality. While at times imposing limits on non-Muslims – in matters such as religious ceremonies, wine drinking in public, construction or renovation of places of worship, and the validity of a *dhimmi*'s testimony against a Muslim in court[74] – they often adopted a laxer approach that was not necessarily congruent with *dhimmi* law, a measure that sometimes resulted in contradictory rulings on one matter by the same jurist.[75] Thus, on one hand, requests to expand or rebuild houses of worship were at times denied;[76] Jews and Christians were required to dress in a manner that distinguished them from Muslims;[77] and *dhimmi*s

---

other works Ben-Na'eh highlights the integration of Jews into Ottoman society and the many hardships they suffered at the hands of Muslims; e.g. "Bein gildah le-kahal," 277–318, and especially 300–302; "Kevurah, ḥevrot kevurah," 187–224, and especially 194–97. In the studies quoted here, however, he has not addressed the evident tension between the two trends – hardship and integration – and why such patterns might have coexisted.

72 E.g. Rozen, "The Ottoman Jews," 259–63; Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 27–29.

73 Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities*, 19–47; Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 30–34; Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 39–48; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 18–34; Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 111–23; Sharkey, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews*, 64–114; Şahin, *Peerless among Princes*, 18–19.

74 For public demonstration of religion, see Düzdağ, *Ebussuud Efendi*, 96:*fatwa*s 410–11; Menteşizade, *Fetava-yi Abdürrahim*, 1:78–80. For wine drinking, and the justification of Muslims entering Christian drinking-houses (*meyhane*) and shattering wine-barrels, see Düzdağ, *Ebussuud Efendi*, 96:409, 412, 97:413; Menteşizade, *Fetava-yi Abdürrahim*, 80. For evidence in the *shar'i* court, see Düzdağ, *Ebussuud Efendi*, 98:419–24.

75 E.g. *Ebussuud Efendi*, 89:358; Menteşizade, *Fetava-yi Abdürrahim*, 1:79–80. Sultan Süleyman I's *şeyhülislâm* Ebussuud Efendi (d. 1574) ordered in one case that a church destroyed in a fire not be rebuilt, whereas in another he permitted such reconstruction (Düzdağ, *Ebussuud Efendi*, compare 105:463 to 106:465).

76 Tawtal, *Watha'iq*, 1:41–43.

77 Thévenot, *Empire du Grand Turc*, 220–25; Russell, *Aleppo, 1794*, 1:366; *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, 176.

appearing in the Muslim court (*maḥkama*) were disadvantaged legally, as a Muslim's testimony was considered weightier. This matter was reflected by the court's scribes deliberately misspelling of their names and noting their different faith.[78] But on the other hand, many churches and synagogues were rebuilt and expanded;[79] the ban on loud prayer was not tightly enforced;[80] restrictions on clothing were not always imposed; and wine was drunk publicly.[81] There was a discrepancy, then, between the vision *şeyhülislâm*s and *qaḍi*s – and hence also rabbis and patriarchs – portrayed in their writings, and the daily experiences of their followers.

The Ottoman discrimination against non-Muslims, apparently more verbal than practical, was once understood as reflecting a firm Ottoman belief in Islamic supremacy.[82] Recent evidence, however, calls for a more critical reading of the empire's treatment of its minorities. With the conquest of large parts of the Arab Middle East in 1516–17, the empire now had a Muslim majority for the first time. In the following decades, its bureaucracy began to resemble that of other Islamic states, owing in part to ongoing intellectual and legal exchanges between Arab and Turkish scholars. The Ottomans ruled in the name of Islam while encouraging other religious groups to assimilate into Muslim society, thereby drawing on the legacy of acceptance and tolerance they had developed while still a Muslim minority governing a majority of Christians. An Islamic identity, as reflected in the bureaucracy, did not in itself require systematic discrimination against non-Muslims. Rather, it was the state's desire to assert its authority and patronage over its subjects that, at times, led to such discrimination. The same kind of concern motivated rabbis to assert authority over their Jewish followers. Just as the symbols of Islam served as a common language that bound the Ottoman state with its subjects, so was the halakhah – at least in the eyes of rabbis – the platform that bonded all Jews together, even those who did not fully adhere to rabbinical

78 Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 31–37; Tucker, *In the House*, 86–87, 129–30. Jews were registered in court records as *yahudi*, Catholics as *naṣrani*, Greek Orthodox as *rum*, Armenians as *armani*, and all Christians in general as *dhimmi*. Non-Muslim names were deliberately misspelled (e.g. Musa, with a *sin*, for Muslims, and Muṣa, with a *ṣad*, for non-Muslims).

79 See examples in Andreasyan, *Polonyalı*, 153; Tawtal, *Watha'iq*, 1:15, 35–36; Burayk, *Ta'rikh*, 26; Ḥuṣin, *Ṣedakah u-mishpat oraḥ yoreh ḥoshen*, s9, 156, s34, 256; 'Antebi, *Yoshev ohalim*, author's introduction.

80 Due to lack of space at the synagogue in Aleppo, some Jews were convening at an adjacent house from which they could clearly hear the person leading the prayer. This indicates that the sound of prayer was audible outside the synagogue; Laniado, *Maharash*, S6, 76.

81 Burayk, *Ta'rikh*, 73–76.

82 Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 40; Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-ma'amad ha-politi vehaḥevrati," 104–5.

authority. Governing different ethnic groups, the Ottomans used the symbols of Islam – in legal procedures, the bureaucracy, architecture – as the idiom that was understood by all, Muslims and others alike. Instances of distinguishing between Muslims and non-Muslims or underscoring the superior status of the former over the latter, were part of that Islamic discourse. Mostly, though, such occurrences did not prevent Muslim subjects from interacting with Jews and Christians.[83] Likewise, attempts by Jewish leaders to foster segregation were met with limited success.

Ample evidence supports this alternative explanation and suggests that the Ottomans had a fairly open attitude toward Jews (and Christians), one that encouraged integration rather than segregation. This is seen, among other areas, in housing arrangements and occupational pursuits of Jews. Middle Eastern cities were made up of quarters, among them those traditionally designated as Jewish or Christian.[84] As noted by urban historians of the Ottoman Empire, such as Antoine Abdel Nour and André Raymond, segregation between quarters was hardly ever complete, and was definitely not dictated by the state. While considerations of access to services and products, such as the synagogue, kosher food, and wine might have impelled Jews to cluster in one area, commercial concerns and personal wealth often led community members to live in different neighborhoods.[85] If residential patterns documented in Medieval Cairo are indicative of later, Ottoman realities, spatial segregation was first and foremost the interest of rabbis; repeated protest by scholars against the selling of house sections to Muslims suggested at once that this was a widespread phenomenon and that rabbinical advice in this regard was of limited efficacy.[86]

As we have already seen in Chapters 1 and 2, Jews formed an integral part of the urban economy. They held positions in the production, sales, real estate, and services sectors, and were active members of guilds, sometimes in positions superior to Muslims – trends that continued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[87] If Jews were considered inferior to

83 Masters, *Arabs of Ottoman Empire*, 48–49; Pfeiffer, "Encounter after the conquest," 219–39; Semerdjian, "Naked anxiety," 664–69; and Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 62–64.

84 Raymond, *Grandes villes*, 296–97, 333–40; Rozen, *Istanbul*, 55–61; Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 2:257–58; Nehama, *Histoire*, 2:36–37.

85 Raymond, *Grandes villes*, 168–72, 174–79, 296–97; Abdel Nour, *Introduction*, 173–80.

86 Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:13, 20–21.

87 See Chapter 2. For more on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see: al-Qattan, "Across the Courtyard," 20–26; Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 157–62; Baer, "Administrative, economic and social functions," 28–50; Faroqhi et al., *Economic and Social, vol. 2*, 589–95.

Muslims in principle, such a lesser status seldom affected their day-to-day affairs.[88] Jews had extensive interactions outside their community and were affiliated with diverse social and economic circles. Such spatial and occupational circumstances were hardly conducive to an effective enforcing of rabbinical authority.[89]

The coherence of the religious community; its functioning as an autonomous unit that settled all its disputes internally, in the *beit din* and according to halakhah; and people's adherence to the advice of rabbis on most matters, was an aspired ideal more than a reality. Despite scholars' obvious interest in portraying themselves as communal leaders with uncontested authority, one does not have to look far for the constant struggle between rabbis on one hand, and lay leaders and commoners on the other: The responsa reveal it time and again. A weakened rabbinical authority, however, did not mean that communal institutions were less effective or that dependency on them diminished. In some important areas the community had little outside competition before the nineteenth century: Services at the synagogue, the education of children, and the collection and dispensation of charity were all executed exclusively within the framework of the community.[90] In these practices, even those who did not strictly follow halakhic principles in their daily routine tended to respect rabbis' ordinances. Required to belong to a congregation for tax purposes, many Jews sought to participate in or benefit from various services the community provided without necessarily accepting rabbinical authority as a guiding principle in their lives. One must wonder, then, what true power did rabbis have in these circumstances, when people had alternative options to the community while also depending on it to some degree? The eighteenth-century Aleppo dispute around the *frankos*, which demonstrated the limits of rabbinical authority, provides some clues.

88 İnalcık summarized the situation: "The urban population of the empire … was divided into the two categories of Muslim and non-Muslim, but this was a classification which the şerîat [Islamic law] imposed and [it] did not correspond to the real social and economic divisions in society. Muslim and non-Muslim merchants and craftsmen, in fact, belonged to the same class and enjoyed the same rights … From time to time the sultans sought to fulfill the provisions of the şerîat by issuing laws forbidding non-Muslims to wear the same clothes as Muslims, to own slaves or to ride horses, but these decrees were ineffective"; İnalcık, *Classical Age*, 150–51.

89 For more on the different circles within which Jews operated, see Arad, "'Edah meyuḥasah berurah," 100–1.

90 Ayalon, "Poor relief in Ottoman Jewish communities," 67–82. See also the discussion in Chapter 4 below.

3 The Frankos Affair

What began as a minor disagreement in the Aleppo community soon deteriorated into a bitter dispute over regional prominence that involved scholars from Damascus and Jerusalem. The *frankos* were European Jews, mostly Italians from Livorno, who had settled in Aleppo and other Ottoman cities in the seventeenth century. Initially arriving along with Christian merchants to trade in the region, many stayed for a long time and married local Jewish women. Others would travel back and forth from the empire to Livorno. As citizens of European states, they enjoyed the exemptions from Ottoman laws which the empire granted them under the capitulations.[91] That, and their ties with their states' consuls, led many of them to maintain a limited relationship with the local (by then mostly) Sephardi community. Despite the *frankos*' dual commitment to their European nation and to the local Jewish community, and their quasi-outsider status, the dispute around their communal obligations demonstrates the weakness of rabbinical authority in the empire overall, as it drew in the local Sephardic community and scholars from neighboring towns.

A commercial hub, Aleppo had a sizeable community of *frankos* by the mid-eighteenth century. As in Salonica and elsewhere in the empire,[92] the Aleppo *frankos* were able to separate themselves from the larger Sephardi community thanks to an understanding they had reached with the city's rabbis and lay leaders sometime after the 1670s, by which communal ordinances (*takanot* and *haskamot*) and local practices (*minhagim*) would not be binding on them. This agreement was not achieved easily. Shlomo "the Elder" Laniado, who as far as we know also served as *av beit din*, explicitly demanded that the *frankos* follow the congregation's *haskamot*, but as most other rabbis and the *parnasim* did not support him, he backed off. A few years later Laniado again brought up the issue, but a *frankos* delegation managed to convince him that it was not in the community's interest to enforce its regulations on them. The rabbi again withdrew his demand, but refused to supply the *frankos* with a writ confirming their exemption from communal decisions: "It is enough that you ask me to maintain

91 The status of the *frankos* was somewhat akin to that of the *beratlı*s, those holding a document issued by the Ottoman authorities at the request of foreign powers. A *berat* conferred legal, fiscal, and commercial privileges on its holder. As far as I can tell, the *frankos* enjoyed many of the same privileges as the *beratlı*s, even though their status was likely that of a *müste'min*, i.e. one enjoying *aman* or protection. See Van den Boogert, *The Capitulations*, 30–1; Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 42–9; Luṣki, "Ha-frankos be-Ḥalab."

92 Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 39–40; Borovaya, *Beginning of Ladino Literature*, 206–10.

my silence," he exclaimed.[93] Based on these understandings, which remained in effect for nearly a century despite rabbinical opposition, the Aleppo *frankos* refused to pay their taxes with the local Jews, and were not obliged or expected to contribute to communal charity, even though many of them did. As one tax register suggests, the Ottomans recognized the division between the local Jews and the *frankos*, and collected taxes from the two groups separately.[94] The *frankos* were thus a good example for a group that rejected attempts to impose rabbinical conventions, while still wishing to maintain connections with the Jewish community and participate in certain activities.

The roots of the *frankos* crisis go back to the emergence of new elites among local Sephardi merchants, many of whom obtained working positions with the *frankos* during the eighteenth century.[95] For the Sephardim, a job with the *frankos* not only assured one of a nice income but also paved the way to European consular protection. Having been largely excluded from the expanding commercial networks of Livorno Jews in the seventeenth century, by the mid-eighteenth a *nouveau riche* class had emerged among the eastern Sephardim. Its members now enjoyed a legal status equivalent to that of Europeans (and the *frankos*), hardly paid taxes, and usually rejected the community's rabbinical authority to dictate daily practices. Displeased with the growing number of tax-evading subjects, the Ottoman authorities periodically increased the tax burden on the Jews. And since the community paid its taxes as a whole, those not fortunate enough to win European protection via the *frankos* had to make up the difference.[96]

The privileges of the *frankos* and their associates were time and again criticized by another Shlomo Laniado (d. 1794). His language suggested an expectation for unequivocal acceptance of his authority. Yet the dispute that unfolded

93 Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 6.

94 BOA, MMD 9849, 127. Dating 27 January 1673, the document mentions two groups of Jewish poll tax payers: "Arab Aleppo Jews residing in Aleppo" (*Haleb'de sakin 'urban haleb yahudileri*), and a smaller group of "Frankish Jews residing in Aleppo" (*Haleb'de sakin ifrenci yahudileri*). The first group numbered 377 tax-paying households, while the latter had 73. *Ifrenci* in this document refers to the *frankos* and not to the Sephardim, as Masters has argued, as by 1673 the Sephardim were already the majority in Aleppo. They likely comprised more than 73 households, and because they spoke Arabic, the Ottomans considered them (and the original Jewish inhabitants of the city, the *musta'ribun*) Arab; see Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 55–6.

95 For a detailed account of the *frankos* crisis, see Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 42–9. For the two competing, contemporary narratives of the dispute, also cited below, see Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s34, 459–81, s39, 501–28; and Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 31, 78–114.

96 Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 42–45; Marcus, *Eve of Modernity* 45–7.

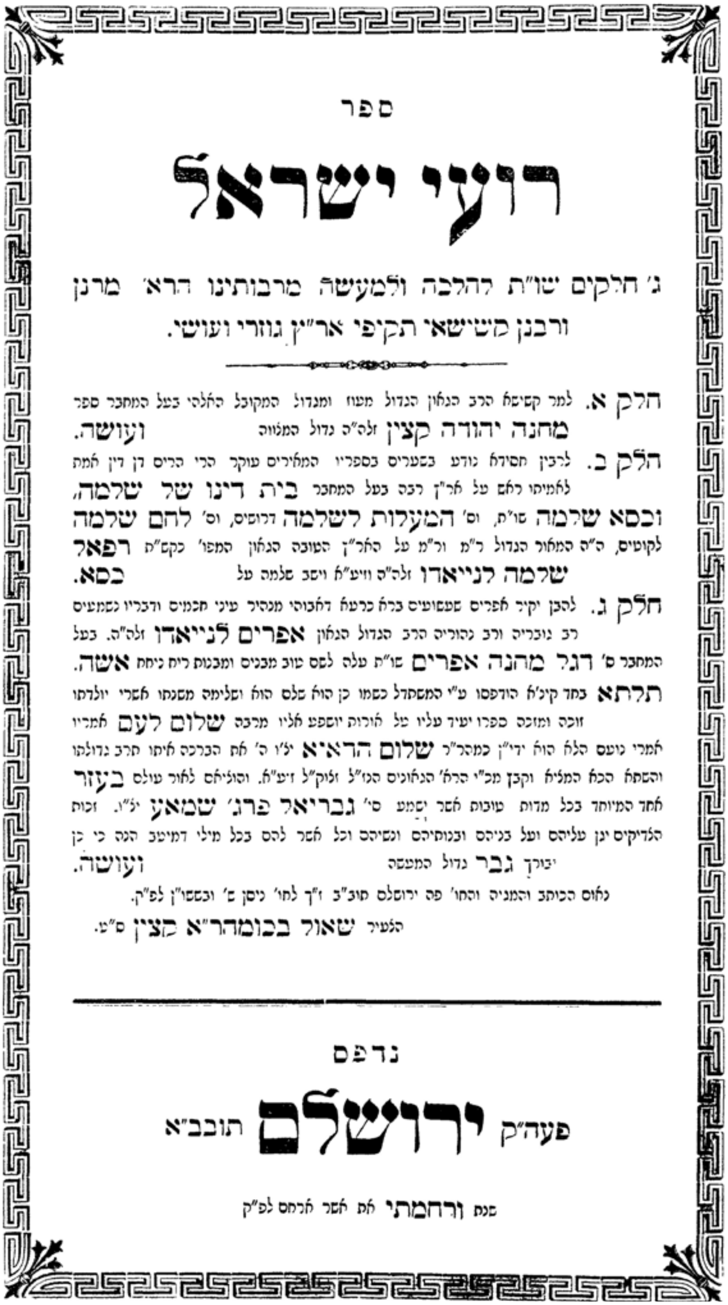
between Laniado, the *frankos*, their local supporters, and other scholars, indicates that the aura of rabbinical leadership Laniado projected was a far cry from reality. The story begins with one warehouse owner, apparently a local Sephardi who aligned himself with the *frankos* and worked for a non-Jewish European employer, and who had managed to obtain a writ from the Ottoman authorities exempting him from paying taxes. When community agents, acting as tax-farmers on behalf of the Ottoman government, demanded that he paid his share, the stock-keeper refused. Laniado intervened and contended that the exemption document was invalid, whereupon the stock-keeper approached three rabbis outside Aleppo, who ruled in his favor. Laniado rejected their verdict, as did all the other Aleppo rabbis, who sided with Laniado in this case. But the stock-keeper did not cooperate, and when summoned to the *beit din* to clarify the matter, he refused to show up. Normally such behavior would have led to his excommunication, but there is no indication that this happened.[97]

Shortly after, the Sephardic community reached a *haskamah*, with Laniado's encouragement, that women should not walk by themselves in the city's gardens and orchards – a decision that originally had little to do with the *frankos*.[98] One *franko* man, who wished to obey the decision, then had an argument with his wife about going out on her own. When she insisted that the *frankos* were never obliged to follow the community's ordinances, and that she should not be sitting at home when all her friends go out, the man approached Laniado, who ruled that the *frankos* ought to follow the *haskamah*. When the matter was brought to the attention of the wife's father, he convened the leaders of the *frankos*, who protested against the attempt to change a long-standing agreement. Laniado provided a lengthy response, in which he openly sought to incorporate the *frankos* into the local community and subjugate them to his authority.[99] But Laniado's leadership was not to remain unchallenged. His main rival in the community, Yehudah Kaṣin, wrote a long tract covering all the possible reasons for including the *frankos* in the *haskamot*, only to reject them one by one. As he explained, the *frankos* were traditionally excluded from communal decisions not only in Aleppo but also everywhere else in the empire. Kaṣin dismissed Laniado's claim that

97 Ibid., 46–49. Har'el does not specify what type of legal document Jews received that provided them with the same privileges as Europeans. The rabbinical sources that describe such exemptions from taxes (which Har'el cites) do not offer such details either.

98 For the background of this communal decision, see Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 31. Here and below, I refer to the indigenous Aleppo Jewish community, which in the eighteenth century was made up of descendants of the expellees from Iberia and the Musta'ribun, as the Sephardic community.

99 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, 459–81, 501–28.


ספר

רועי ישראל

ג' חלקים שו"ת להלכה ולמעשה מרבותינו הרא' מרנן
ורבנן קשישאי תקיפי אר"ץ גוזרי ועושי.

חלק א. למר קשישא הרב הגאון הגדול מעוז ומגדול המקובל האלהי בעל המחבר ספר
מחנה יהודה קצין זלה"ה גדול המצוה ועושה.

חלק ב. לרבין חסידא נודע בשערים בספריו המאירים עוקר הרי הרים דן דין אמת
לאמיתו ראש על אר"ן רבה בעל המחבר בית דינו של שלמה,
וכסא שלמה שו"ת, וס' המעלות לשלמה דרושים, וס' לחם שלמה
לקוטים, ה"ה המאור הגדול ר"מ ור"מ על הארץ הטובה הגאון המפו' כקש"ת רפאל
שלמה לניאדו זלה"ה וזיע"א וישב שלמה על כסא.

חלק ג. להבן יקיר אפרים שעשועים ברא כרעא דאבוהי מנהיר עיני חכמים ודבריו נשמעים
רב גובריה ורב נהוריה הרב הגדול הגאון אפרים לניאדו זלה"ה. בעל
המחבר ס' דגל מחנה אפרים שו"ת עלה לשם טוב מבנים ומבנות ריח ניחח אשה.

תלתא בחד קיו"א הודפסו ע"י המשתדל כשמו כן הוא שלם הוא ושלימה משנתו אשרי יולדתו
זוכה ומזכה ספרו יעיד עליו על הורות יוספא אליו מרבה שלום לעם אמריו
אמרי נועם הלא הוא ידי"ן כמהר"ר שלום הראיא יצ"ו ה' את הברכה איתו תרב גדולתו
והשתא הכא המליא וקבץ מכ"י הרא' הגאונים הנז"ל זלוק"ל זיע"א. והוציאם לאור עולם בעזר
אחד המיוחד בכל מדות טובות אשר ישמע ס' גבריאל פרג' שמאע יצ"ו. זכות
הצדיקים יגן עליהם ועל בניהם ובנותיהם ונשיהם וכל אשר להם בכל מילי דמיטב הנה כי כן
יבורך גבר גדול המעשה ועושה.

נאום הכותב והמגיה והחו' פה ירושלם תוב"ב ז"ך לחו' ניסן ש' ובשפו"ן לפ"ק.

הצעיר שאול בכמוהר"א קצין ס"ט.

נדפס

פעה"ק ירושלם תובב"א

שנת ורחמתי את אשר ארחם לפ"ק

FIGURE 5 The title page of the second edition of *Sefer Roʿey Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1904), which bound the writings of Rapha'el Shlomo Laniado, his son Efrayim, and Yehudah Kaṣin, and which includes an extensive account of the *frankos* affair

PUBLIC DOMAIN

the *frankos* had been in Aleppo long enough to fall under the community's jurisdiction, arguing that the community itself still saw them as temporary settlers. Kaṣin thus effectively accepted the *frankos*' legal argument that they were to be considered as *müste'min*s rather than *re'aya*, i.e. European subjects who settled in the empire yet enjoyed the same protections European traders and diplomats had.[100] He asserted that the potential damage from requiring the *frankos* to follow communal ordinances would be too great to endure. The *frankos*, despite paying their taxes to the state separately, contributed to communal charity: They supported the needy, paid for their education, helped widows and orphans, and sustained the sick; in exchange, they only asked to maintain the old agreement their forefathers had reached with Laniado's ancestors.[101] In other words, the *frankos* sought to uphold the separation between membership in the community and adhering to rabbinical ordinances. Attempting to change the status quo, Kaṣin claimed, would inevitably lead to a severe economic crisis.[102] The century-old *frankos* compromise, he concluded, was not ideal but it was better than the alternative.[103] Kaṣin's fears were not unfounded. Laniado's insistence led the *frankos* gradually to distance themselves from the community in the following years.[104]

As far as Laniado was concerned, the authority he sought to impose on the *frankos* was at once rabbinical and communal: As he saw it, the community was him, he governed it, and all others had to comply with his rulings. Kaṣin argued this would lead to financial disaster for the *frankos* and for many in the community whom they supported. Yet effectively, the *frankos* dispute was one of power and authority: It opened the way for a wider debate about issues, such as the number of judges serving in the Jewish court (one, as Laniado claimed was the established custom, or three, as Kaṣin wanted and the Talmud stipulated[105]), whether the *av beit din* could excommunicate a defiant member, whether he had the right to appoint other judges, and whether he may change communal ordinances without congregational approval. This open debate, documented in detail in Laniado's and Kaṣin's responsa, revealed the diffuse nature of the Aleppo rabbinical establishment, where in lieu of a central leadership one finds competing authorities who were supported by different parts of the community and scholars from neighboring towns.

100 Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 78–81, 114. For more on the *müste'min*s, see Van den Boogert, *The Capitulations*, 30–1.

101 Ibid., 96–97.

102 Ibid., 104, 107.

103 Ibid., 78.

104 Rapha'el Shlomo Laniado et al., *Ro'ey Yisrael*, 2:25–6.

105 BT, Sanhedrin, 1:2a–3b.

The *frankos* debate occurred in a small Jewish community; but it revealed a political structure and weakness of the rabbinate that typified Ottoman Jewish realities throughout. The arrival of the *frankos* and Christian Europeans in the empire opened many doors for Jews and further encouraged integration into the surrounding society. By the mid-eighteenth century, it would be more accurate to describe Ottoman Jewry as largely made up of a loose network of cosmopolitan communities, whose members were well connected with individuals of different faiths and spoke several languages, than a top-down hierarchical religious organization. In the *frankos* dispute, Laniado and Kaṣin seemingly found themselves on opposing ends of a legal question; in practice, however, they were arguing not about the liberties of the *frankos* but over the best way to keep their community under rabbinical leadership as they understood it. Judging by testimonies of their nineteenth-century successors in Aleppo, Laniado and Kaṣin failed to stop the weakening of morals and common disrespect for halakhah.[106] Irrespective of such subjective observations, the nineteenth century saw the decline of old rabbinical establishments whose status relied on intellectual eminence; the proliferation of extra-communal institutions competing with those of the community, and at times run by the same *parnasim* who led the community; and eventually, in the second half of the century, the rise of a new rabbinical elite that governed Jews in the empire by official appointment and hierarchical bodies that resembled modern rabbinical institutions.[107]

4 Toward a Model of Communal Leadership

The nature of the evidence historians have used in studying Ottoman Jewry has led them to develop a communal model that placed rabbis at the top and accorded them extensive authority. While the range of sources for Ottoman Jewish history has been broad, it has been mostly rabbinical responsa that

106 Avraham ʻAntebi of Aleppo (d. 1848) lamented his community's situation: Women no longer covered their faces when among strangers and walked around freely without their husbands. Men and women sat together at weddings and other parties. People no longer came to the synagogue at midnight to study and pray, and when they did show up, they passed their time gossiping, doing business, and drinking alcohol; ʻAntebi, *Ḥokhmah u-musar*, 22–24, 31–33, 191–93. Rabbi Ḥayim Labaton, also of Aleppo (d. 1869), criticized the foreign influences on the community, reflected in the invitation of gentile musicians to Jewish events and the playing of loud and secular music in Jewish homes; Labaton, *Nokhaḥ ha-shulḥan*, 5, 7.

107 For more on these developments, see Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 17–23.

have provided the foundation of what we know about internal communal matters. The majority of primary sources used by historians are of this type.[108] Take, for example, the studies of Leah Bornstein-Makovezky, an oft-quoted historian who over the past four decades has published hundreds of articles on Ottoman Jewry. In a study from 1986 on the relations between rabbis and lay leaders, she stated that communities in the empire "constituted a traditional society whose ways of life were governed by Jewish law, in accordance with fixed halakhic norms" and that Ottoman Jewish society "sought to establish religious criteria in public affairs, for all areas of life, in accordance with traditional Jewish patterns." It was successful in this endeavor, so that "the authority of the secular-political leadership depended upon the legitimization of the religious leadership."[109] Works she has published later seem to suggest that her view on this issue has remained largely unchanged.[110]

Tapping rabbinical sources made sense, given that outside observers – Arabs, Turks, Europeans – were not adequately familiar with the inner workings of Jewish communities to provide reliable accounts.[111] But rabbinical sources suffer from a significant shortcoming, which historians have hitherto confronted only marginally, namely, that they were written by the very people whose idea of communal structure was that of a top-down hierarchical model. It is conceivable that rabbis portrayed themselves and their peers as enjoying uncontested authority, because they believed this to be the ideal of Jewish communities. After all, rabbis wrote their responsa as legal rather than historical texts.[112] Similarly, members of prominent families of scholars would have

108 As attested by the bibliographies of those studies; e.g. Rozen, *Istanbul*, 376–81; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 357–64; Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 341–59; Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 377–406. A notable exception are the studies of Amnon Cohen on the Jews of Ottoman Jerusalem, based almost exclusively on the *shar'i* court records; see Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (16th century); *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century); *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century).

109 Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Cooperation and conflict," 15.

110 Bornstein-Makovetzky, *'Ir shel ḥakhamim*, 108–23, and throughout the book.

111 Hacker thought otherwise, but the European authors he cites could not tell the difference between a rabbi and a learned individual who served as a lay leader; see Hacker, "Gevulotehah shel ha-otonomyah ha-yehudit," 356–7.

112 Simcha Fishbane has argued that responsa are a problematic source for the study of history because "they are not disinterested historical witnesses" but rather reflect Jewish legal maxims. Rabbis did not have future historians in mind when writing them, and thus "to suggest a social reality based upon … [the] responsa is problematic"; Fishbane, "Is it a crime to be interdisciplinary?," 146–47. Historians of Ottoman Jews have noted certain problems with the responsa, but none has so far argued that the rabbinical perspective in itself was problematic. See e.g. Goldish, *Jewish Questions*, xlviii–liii; Barnai, *Jews in Palestine*, 5; Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 4–5.

wanted to demonstrate their eminence by claiming a leadership role that had passed from father to son and received overwhelming communal support.[113] At the very least, one must take into account that, in the rabbinical world within which these scholars operated, unintended and subconscious distortions of history were quite likely.

Lamentably, it is all but impossible to penetrate the Jewish experience with non-rabbinical evidence. Nor are accounts by Jewish chroniclers, such as Eliyahu Capsali and Yosef Sambari, very useful here: Few and far between, they also suffer from serious historiographical problems that render them essentially useless for this purpose.[114] In addition, Jewish community registries (*pinkasim*), which were administered by lay leaders, have been preserved in some European communities but, as far as we know, not for the Ottoman Empire.[115] Consequently, the historian is left mostly with rabbinical texts, which one should read most carefully and critically, as I have tried to do here. Given the fluidity of inter-religious boundaries, one would expect these sources to reflect the limited power of rabbis and their restricted ability to enforce halakhah. And indeed, the responsa provide not-so subtle clues for the precariousness of rabbinical authority, as I have outlined earlier in the chapter. For studying Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire, they are still, with all their shortcomings, the best type of source available.

The evidence thus far suggests that prior to the nineteenth century reforms, most Ottoman Jewish communities did not operate with a top-down structure headed by a rabbi. It also reveals that the power and influence of prominent rabbis was limited. The capacity of rabbis to impose their opinion and enforce halakhah varied across the empire and depended on several factors: their personal qualities; the respect their congregation showed them; their prescribed duties, whether as teachers and advisers only or also as *dayanim*; and the responsibilities delegated to them through official appointments (where such a procedure existed). Rabbis thus relied on persuasion more than coercion, a norm compatible with the Jewish tradition of debating, whereby scholars discussed matters and eventually deferred to the majority opinion or to that of an eminent scholar (whose standing derived from learnedness and charisma

113 For an example of rabbinical claims based on progeny, see Laniado, *Kise Shlomo*, 6–8, and an English translation of that text in Ayalon, "From Spain to Syria," 387–90.

114 Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*; Sambari, *Sefer divrei yosef*. For a discussion of historians' uncritical usage of these sources and their many historiographical problems, see Hacker, "Ha-Rabanut ha-rashit," 226–36 and "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 72, 99–114.

115 Hacker, "Gevulotehah shel ha-otonomyah ha-yehudit," 381 and Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 131 argued that no such documents have survived. In my research, I have so far not been able to find any.

rather than an official position). This had been the Jewish way of settling differences of opinion since Talmudic times. Even in periods where historical evidence clearly suggests the existence of hierarchical structures, such as under the Ge'onim and Exilarchs of Babylonia or the Negidim of Egypt, there was still much room for dissent.[116] Similarly, in the Ottoman period we see a plurality of views, within communities and across the empire, with scholars not being weary of criticizing others, even when those were considered more prominent. The *frankos* dispute was one instance of this, but even in Izmir, where in the seventeenth century a general rabbinate overseeing all city congregations seems to have existed, disagreements among scholars were frequent. The one notable exception to this tolerant setting was the brief tenure (1665–6) of the false messiah Shabbetai Ṣevi in the Jewish community there, when his opponents were persecuted and rabbis who publicly rejected him, such as Shlomo Elghazi and Aharon Lapapa, had to seek refuge elsewhere.[117] In the end, it was the relative openness to different ideas and traditions that characterized Ottoman society at large, and the Sephardic integrative rather than isolationist tradition, that won the day.[118]

This brings us back to the story of the *parnas* who accused a rabbi of lying.[119] The reader will recall that the *parnas* dubbed the rabbi "a liar" after the latter denied his wife's involvement in his move to promote his son in the synagogue's seating arrangement, whereupon the rabbi announced the *parnas* excommunicated. The evidence in this case, gathered from two sources, was quite compelling against the rabbi. The *parnas*, a respected, learned lay leader, clearly had a bigger following in his congregation than did the rabbi. By his account, he showed the rabbi and his family respect when trying to resolve the matter, until the moment when the rabbi brought up an argument that contradicted what the *parnas* had witnessed. Even after accusing the rabbi of lying,

116 Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 125–41, and 208–39 for challenges to the authority of the Ge'onim that erupted from time to time during the ninth and tenth centuries. For eleventh- and twelfth-century Egypt, see Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*, 163–71; and Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:55–61.

117 The Izmir community experienced turmoil in the mid-seventeenth century. Attempts to settle disputes between rabbis and their factions by establishing a rabbinate revealed the precariousness of rabbinical authority. See Barnai, *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa*, 199–245. For an account of Shabbetai Ṣevi's brief rule in Izmir, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 389–433.

118 The Sephardim brought with them a spirit of social and economic integration into the surrounding society that had characterized Jewish life in Iberia before the expulsion. Even the organization of poor relief, a matter handled solely within the Jewish community, was inspired by Catholic models of charitable societies; Ray, *After Expulsion*, 23–7; Yom Tov 'Asis, "'Ezrah hadadit," 259–79.

119 See above, pp. 99–100.

and hearing the rabbi's threat that "I will make him [(i.e. his son) a *marbiṣ torah* in this community] and let's see who dares speak up against me," the *parnas* gently reminded the rabbi of his place: "you should use caution, rabbi (*ḥakham*), since if the congregation wishes to tell his eminence (*kvod torato*) that they do not want [his services], they will."[120] From this exchange, it is clear that the *parnas*, representing the other lay leaders of the congregation, was politically stronger.

In a responsum, Shlomo ha-Kohen of Salonica (d. 1602) expressed his aversion to cases involving fierce disputes and clarified he did not know the rabbi or the *parnas*. He agreed that the *parnas*, a highly revered individual, had treated the rabbi with respect, and deduced that if the rabbi had indeed lied about his wife's involvement, his *nidui* of the *parnas* was invalid, even though ha-Kohen believed that rabbis could excommunicate regardless of a communal ordinance stating otherwise. Ha-Kohen's criticism is subtle, in that it maintains respect for the rabbi without rebuking the *parnas*.[121] Not so Yosef Mitrani's response: "You, the elder, the *parnas*, the *dayan* … have grossly disrespected the *ḥakham* … by telling him in the presence of many others that he had taken a false oath and lied. We must not believe this." Mitrani insisted that in his actions the *parnas* showed disrespect for the rabbi; and that the rabbi was not bound by the community's *haskamah* that one may not excommunicate another. Mitrani ends his rebuke of the *parnas* by urging him to

> take this advice from me: Accept this rabbi and you will see peace. Flatter him and show him that rows and rows of people [support him], as your words have been tough on him. As a *dayan* and a revered elder leader, you are expected to respect the Torah and the old sage [i.e. the rabbi in question]. Revere the God of Israel and thank [the rabbi]. You are not doing this in reverence of flesh and blood but rather of God, as one shall respect *talmidei ḥakhamim* more than oneself … I do not know you or the rabbi, so accept this as my honest advice.[122]

We do not know if and how the *parnas* responded to Mitrani's advice, or if it ever reached him; indeed, we hardly ever learn how those turning to rabbis for advice reacted once their question had been answered. The responsa provide a window into the type of issues rabbis were asked to comment on. But that window usually closes with the completion of the response, and we do not know

120 Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s32, 1:15a–b.
121 ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 3*, s37, 46a–b.
122 Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s32, 1:15b.

what happened after that. Even when more rabbis than one were addressed with the same question, as in our case, the accounts were too often 'timeless' in that they did not tell us whether the different scholars were approached simultaneously or consecutively, perhaps due to the inquirer's dissatisfaction with the answer(s) he had received – or even if one of the responses came years later, in order to make a general point. Here, therefore, we can only surmise that the *parnas* would not have been happy with Mitrani's reply.

Mitrani's arguments represented his view – and that of many other rabbis – on the place of scholars, and especially appointed rabbis, in the Jewish community. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, leading halakhic scholars such as Shmu'el de-Medina (Maharashdam, d. 1589) and Ḥayim Benveniste (d. 1673) argued for the central role of the appointed rabbi in the synagogue and in his congregation. In a ruling from 1669, Benveniste explained that

> If there is a *ḥakham marbiṣ torah* in a congregation, obviously their [the *parnasim* or the congregation's] decision is invalid without first consulting the *ḥakham marbiṣ torah*. And that is according to a simple custom in all communities, by which we do not adopt any *haskamah*, big or small, without the permission of the *ḥakham ha-marbiṣ torah*. Without him no person shall raise his hand to support a *haskamah* … That is also the custom in our town of Izmir … if there is a rabbi in town, any *haskamah*, on monetary or other matters, adopted without his approval is worthless.[123]

Yom-Tov Ṣahalon (Maharitaṣ, d. 1638), the Safed rabbi who also operated from Istanbul and Cairo, went as far as stating that a congregation could not dismiss an appointed rabbi even when not pleased with his performance, and had to continue to pay him.[124] Such claims, however, were not quite consonant with reality.

An important facet of this debate was the question of excommunication. Both Mitrani and ha-Kohen argued that applying this measure was within the prerogative of appointed rabbis and the *beit din*, irrespective of communal ordinances. Since Jewish leaders in the empire could not employ capital punishment or imprisonment to discipline offenders,[125] imposing *ḥaramot* and

123 Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s244, 299b, and more broadly the extensive discussion on this issue in that responsum, as well as in s172, 205b. See also Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 48–52.

124 Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s60, 1:126–8. Ṣahalon made a similar argument in s118, 2:33–6, and s161, 2:103–4.

125 Hacker has shown that Jewish courts in the empire had virtually no authority outside purely halakhic matters. See Hacker, "Ha-shiput ha-'aṣmi ha-yehudi," 349–88.

niduyyim (two forms of excommunications) was the only effective tool at their disposal to enforce normative behavior. Rabbis and lay leaders had a common interest in preserving this option and using it when appropriate. On the whole, however, excommunication was not applied very effectively. The sources reveal instances of rabbis threatening disobedient coreligionists with *ḥerem*, without ever implementing one. Such, for example, was the case in the vine leaves conundrum with which this chapter begins.[126] The many regulations communities had adopted since the sixteenth century, which prohibited taking cases to the Muslim court on pain of *ḥerem*, suggest that rabbis and even *parnasim* indeed meant to use such a punishment against violators, and that they regarded taking a case to a gentile court as a transgression grave enough to justify the measure. Still, Jews often turned to Ottoman courts, even on matters which could easily be resolved within the community, such as marriage and divorce. The reason for that was not – as Hacker has suggested – the weakness of the Jewish judicial system vis-à-vis the Ottoman one; Jews in Crete, while still under Venetian rule, frequently resorted to state courts on the Island and in Venice.[127] Rather, the limited ability of rabbis to impose a lifestyle based on halakhah, broadly speaking, accounted for this: Some people clearly adhered to Jewish law and never disputed their rabbis' judgment, while many others did not.[128]

Threats of *ḥerem* in other instances were equally ineffective. Rabbis in Istanbul and Salonica repeatedly renewed regulations whose violation was punishable by excommunication, suggesting that people ignored them with little consequence. In Izmir, rabbis gave up the fight by the mid-seventeenth century, and annulled ordinances which the greater part of the community could not realistically be expected to abide by.[129] Far more often than not, transgressions of religious law had no apparent consequences for the offenders. Despite rabbis' insistence on their right to impose such punishments, many

126 Rosanes has documented several such cases in *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 3:329–30, 4:58–83, 255–56, 5:299, 392, 6:23–24.

127 Lauer, *Colonial Justice*, 102–91.

128 Hacker, "Gevulotehah shel ha-otonomyah ha-yehudit," 384–7. Moshe Mitrani argued against the appointment of a young scholar to be *marbiṣ torah* on the ground that, in addition to being uneducated, he resorted to gentile courts to resolve his matters; Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, 3:s77, 14b–15a. See also the discussion in ha-Kohen, *Maharshakh*, 1:s10, 39, where a qadi who was fond of certain rabbis warns the *parnasim* to resolve a matter internally before it gets to him, suggesting the two legal systems were in communication, and that Jewish leaders would not have been surprised by Jews taking cases to the *shar'i* court.

129 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 132–33, 184–85; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 3:259–66, 4:32.

communities had ordinances that disallowed any single individual, even the *marbiṣ torah*, to declare another member *menudeh*, leaving that authority to the *beit din*, which was manned mostly by *parnasim*. Some rabbis reluctantly accepted that reality.[130] To the extent that excommunication was used, it was done mostly by judges in the *beit din*, where lay leaders served exclusively or with scholars. Rarely did rabbis manage to impose it on their own.

The limits on rabbinical authority stemmed not from their lack of intellectual eminence, but rather from the simple fact that appointed rabbis were employees of their congregations. Their authority derived from writs of appointment that defined their duties, in clearer or vaguer terms, and it was the congregation that paid their salary. As such, they were subordinate, not superior, to lay leaders and the *kahal* in general. That an employer-employee relationship existed between rabbis and congregations or lay leaders is apparent from ordinances, contracts, and rulings that expound on a rabbi's source of income.[131] The Portuguese-Castilian rabbi Yiṣḥak Abravanel (d. 1508), who never made it to the Ottoman Empire, set the rules for paying a *marbiṣ torah*, arguing that he must not take any funds directly from individuals but rather from the community as a whole, to wit, that communal taxes or charity should fund the position.[132] In the empire, appointed rabbis were paid through different mechanisms: Large congregations had resources to pay their rabbis a regular salary; smaller ones diverted incomes from meat or wine taxes, shared a rabbi with another congregation (or more), or even allowed individual gifts to the rabbi, but dictating a fixed amount each person could give, so as to prevent special favors.[133]

130 Yom-Tov Ṣahalon was asked to comment on a dispute between a *marbiṣ torah* and a *parnas*, where the former had told the latter that he is *menudeh*. Ṣahalon sided with the *parnas*, arguing that the communal rules against individual *niduyyim* was in effect (this was possibly the same dispute Mitrani and ha-Kohen discussed in the case I mention above); Ṣahalon, *Shut. Maharitaṣ*, s55, 57b–58b. See also Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 48.

131 Dweck has reached a similar conclusion about Sephardi rabbis in Amsterdam and elsewhere in Europe. See Dweck, *Dissident Rabbi*, 13–19.

132 Abravanel, *Naḥalat Avot*, 219; Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 13–14.

133 For congregations paying rabbis regular salaries, or sustaining them through taxes collected on meat, wine, or the selling of *miṣvot* in the synagogue, see: *Marbiṣ Torah*, 30–3. For sharing rabbis or even lay leaders between small congregations to save money, see de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s90, 34a; Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s197, 100b–101b; Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s118, 33–6. For individuals paying a rabbi directly, see: Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s22, 442–4, where he explains that if a community pays the rabbi through a fund, it should collect donations from its members by wealth, whereas if people give the rabbi directly, it must be a fixed sum per soul.

Further indications for what one would today call an "employer-employee relationship" included congregations offering a new rabbi to pay his moving expenses if he arrived from another town; attempts to lure a *marbiṣ torah* from one town or congregation to another by offering him better terms; and negotiations over terms and duties conducted between the *parnasim* and a rabbi they wished to hire. Thus a rabbi brought to Manisa from Edirne in 1555 had moving expenses included in his contract.[134] And another, who had left his community in Kastoria (in Greece), was offered the same as part of his re-hire.[135] Shmu'el de-Medina recounted the story of one rabbi, who had an annual renewable contract with one community to serve as their *marbiṣ torah*, until leaders of another, faraway community, offered to hire him on a five-year commitment and cover his moving expenses generously. This triggered negotiations between the rabbi and his current congregation, at the end of which they agreed to match the external offer he had received. The question arrived at de-Medina's desk after the rabbi complained that his congregation did not live up to its obligations, misleading him to give up on a lucrative offer. de-Medina sided with the rabbi.[136] Such negotiations between a rabbi and his congregation were, apparently, quite common.[137]

One dispute between a rabbi and his congregation, cited by Beṣal'el Ashkenazi (d. *c*.1594) highlights the differences in perceptions of the rabbinical position between the *parnasim* and congregations on one hand, and the scholars on the other. A congregation hired a rabbi to be its *marbiṣ torah* and guide in various matters. It offered him a contract for several years and pledged to accept his authority. After a while, members grew unsatisfied with him:

> We are thirsty for the words of God, and this *ḥakham* does not know anything, does not preach to us at all, and has no knowledge of law [halakhah] … Then we talked and decided to renew the old days when we had more qualified spiritual leaders [*ḥakhamim shlemim marbiṣei torah*]. But this last guy has settled among us a few years ago, and our souls are now dry: There's no Torah, no yeshivah, and no one preaching the word of God … So we [have decided] to seek a *ḥakham* who will set up a yeshivah and preach every Shabbat, and suggest the right path for us to follow … and for that reason all agreed to get rid of him [*le-salko me-'aleyhem*].

134 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s90, 34a–35a.

135 Ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 2*, s80, 49b–50b.

136 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s205, 35b (page numbers in the edition of this book I'm using revert to 1 at the 107th responsum).

137 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 28, 81–2, and see another example in De-Buton, *Leḥem rav*, s74, 31b.

When people convened to fire him, the rabbi showed up and offered the following words in his defense:

> What is it that you are doing? Know that this is a criminal transgression as you are disrespecting me and violating your own pledges on pain of *ḥaramot* that I have from you in writing that say I may leave when I want, but not like this, in disgrace.

When the congregation's leaders offered to bring the matter in front of a panel of judges who would decide, the rabbi refused, claiming the respect they ought to show him did not permit such a question to be debated.[138] Clearly, the congregation regarded the rabbi as someone they hired to provide them certain services. When he did not meet their expectations, they sought to replace him. Issues of respect or previous pledges, evidently of importance to the rabbi, mattered less to them.

The length of a rabbi's tenure, where official positions existed, varied greatly across the empire, from annual contracts to lifetime appointments with rights to bequeath the position to a rabbi's son.[139] In many places, however, neither contracts nor centuries-long precedents prevented a congregation from dismissing a rabbi, or imposing taxes on him or on other scholars who would otherwise be exempt. Nor did they stop individuals from challenging the authority of the *marbiṣ torah* or from trying to replace him, at times successfully. Thus the Mabit lamented a congregation's decision to dispose of a *marbiṣ torah* who had been serving for over fifteen years and appoint a twenty-six year old rabbi in his stead, whom Mitrani deemed unqualified.[140] Describing a dispute between two rabbis and the factions supporting them, Yom-Tov Ṣahalon admitted that regardless of who deserved the position, the community could effectively dismiss or appoint either one.[141] At times, such disputes escalated to violence even against the rabbis themselves, as in a story cited by Maharashdam, in which followers of one rabbi assaulted and injured the eminent Yosef Taitaṣak (d. 1546) and his sons inside a synagogue. In the end, the resolution of such feuds was the task of the *parnasim*, not of other rabbis.[142] It was the *parnasim*, too, who could decide to impose taxes on students and

138 Ashkenazi, *She'elot u-teshuvot Beṣal'el Ashkenazi*, s24, 189–96, quotations from 189–90.
139 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 34–8.
140 Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, 3:s77, 14b–15a.
141 Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s118, 33–6.
142 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s152, 14a–15a; Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz*, s518, 3:30a–33a.

rabbis. Maharit agreed that ordinary students, teachers, and the *parnasim* were not to be exempt from taxation; but a gifted full-time student, whose life was devoted solely to Talmud studies, should be exempt from all state and communal taxes even before he became deserving of the title *ḥakham*. Apparently, Maharit had to issue this opinion in response to complaints from a community where lay leaders refused to exempt its students.[143] And indeed, we know of at least one other case from eighteenth-century Salonica, where the *parnasim* decided to include the rabbis in the *'arikhah*, the process of computing one's tax burden based on income, meaning that the rabbis, too, were expected to pay. The rabbis protested, but it is not clear if the decision was changed.[144]

Even in communities with a tradition of passing the role of *marbiṣ torah* or *ḥakham* on to the next generation within the same family, and even where such a rabbi also served on the *beit din*, it was apparently lay leaders and the *yeḥidim* in general who had the final word.[145] In the context of the *frankos* dispute, Laniado claimed that *tovei ha-'ir* (literally the "good men of the city," referring to lay leaders) had no authority to settle the disagreement; only the majority of the community did. He explained that "here in the city of Ṣova [Aleppo] … we do not appoint *parnasim* above the city's rabbis and its sages to [administer] the city's business, but rather [we appoint only] one *parnas* and one [person] who is entitled *ḥakham ha-kahal* to judge and instruct."[146] This, too, was wishful thinking: Even contemporary rabbis disputed Laniado's model of one rabbi who ruled alone. After Laniado had outspent his political capital during the *frankos* affair and then insisted on appointing his son, Efrayim, to succeed him, the community's lay leaders and other rabbis moved to end the hegemony of the Laniado family in the city for good. Efrayim was the last of the Laniados to serve as *ḥakham*.[147] Precedent and tradition were important; but the community and the will of *parnasim* appear to have been mightier than both.

If rabbis had little say in their own appointment and in running the community's day-to-day affairs, one would think that at least in the *beit din* their standing was higher. In some places, that was indeed so. Rapha'el Shlomo

143 Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, ḥoshen, s59, 2:108a–b.

144 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 33.

145 In ordinary times, when no conflict occurred between the rabbi and the *parnasim*, the son of the rabbi in some communities had a significantly higher chance of succeeding his father than any other candidate. See ibid., 37–8.

146 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, ḥoshen, s39, 419.

147 For Laniado's version of his attempt to appoint his son, see *Kise Shlomo*, 7. For more details and the consequences of Laniado's defense of his son's appointment, see Har'el, *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah*, 55–7.

Laniado testified that his ancestor, Shmu'el Laniado (d. 1605) "was the cornerstone, a rabbi and a *dayyan*, and a head of *ereṣ* ("land," also an acronym for Aram Ṣova, or Aleppo) … he issued judgments for the people of this city." His son Abraham "took the rabbinate from his father and sat on his father's throne to judge and guide the people of Israel in this city," only to be succeeded by his son Shlomo (the "Elder"), who "inherited the crown of his father, sat on the throne of justice and served as judge for the people of Israel in this city." That Shlomo died childless, and another Laniado continued the tradition of serving as a rabbi and dayyan: Shmu'el Laniado (d. *c.*1740–50), Rapha'el Shlomo's father. The Aleppo community "appointed him to be the head and the judge, and he presided over Israel for 40 years."[148] Even if we doubt Laniado's portrayal of himself and his ancestors as sole judges, it appears that, at least in that city, rabbis – Sephardim and Musta'ribun – served as judges on the *beit din*, and that, from a certain point in the late-sixteenth century, a member of the Laniado family was Aleppo's *av beit din*.[149] The scene in Damascus, Safed, and Jerusalem was similar.[150] Still, even those rabbis whose position combined elements of lay, judicial, and spiritual leadership had a serious limit to their power: Many of their followers did not run a life molded on halakhah as the rabbis expected, and did not feel committed to following their guidance on every matter.[151]

Elsewhere in the empire, it was usually the *parnasim*, rather than the rabbis, who served on the *beit din*. In Istanbul, rabbis seem to have dealt with personal issues, while financial and public matters were tried at the *beit din* by the *parnasim*. Benayahu suggested that originally communities saw the *marbiṣ torah* as their *dayyan*, but this changed over time. In big cities, such as Istanbul and Salonica, the emergence of citywide courts where lay leaders served and to which anyone could turn, led congregational rabbis to limit their judicial

148 Laniado, *Kise Shlomo*, 6–7.

149 Ayalon, "Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes," 52–7, 92–7.

150 Rabbis from the Galante family in Damascus fulfilled functions similar to those of the Laniados in Aleppo; see e.g. Galante, *Berakh Moshe*, s14, 56b, where he is addressed as "ha-ḥakham ha-shalem ha-dayyan ha-meṣuyyan … resh mata damesek"; Galante, *Divre Mordekhai*, introduction, 2a–b, describing another Galante as a judge who adjudicates truthfully (*dayyan she-dan din emet*). For a scholar who served as a rabbi for his congregation and a *parnas* dealing with monetary issues in Safed, see ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, ḥoshen, klal 3, s2, 2:93a. For scholars as *parnasim* or temporal leaders in Jerusalem, see Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century), 16–17, 21.

151 Laniado testified to that effect even when discussing the most mundane matters, such as contributing *terumot u-ma'asarot*, charitable donations from one's crops, which no one other than the rabbis bothered to do; Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s3, 11.

activity to matters of their synagogues and personal issues of their congregants.[152] Whether or not this was so, it is clear that rabbis were unhappy with the ascent of courts headed by lay leaders.[153] Unsurprisingly, this was a source of frequent tensions between rabbis and lay leaders. In Izmir, disagreements between those in favor of the *marbiṣ torah* serving as judge and those championing tribunals of *parnasim* resulted in several changes in the court makeup, eventually settling for one dominated by *tovei ha-ʻir*.[154] For one rabbi, Binyamin ha-Levi of Safed (d. 1676), the failure of *parnasim*-run courts to produce sound judgments based on halakhah was a bit too much. Those judges, he averred,

> lack any education … they judge as they please and not according to the law … One transgression leads to another … In my opinion [these courts] are worse than gentile courts, as at least they [non-Jewish courts] have order, which our verdicts do not: On the same matter, they would sometimes acquit and at other times convict.[155]

One can only imagine the hostility between the rabbi and lay leaders in his community had reached such levels that he expressed preference for turning to Ottoman courts – usually considered a violation of communal rules – over his community's own. This ha-Levi claimed, even though he knew well that Jewish law permitted the appointment of under-qualified lay leaders as *dayanim*.[156]

Eroded by lay leaders and rebellious elements within their communities, the authority of rabbis was sometimes further weakened by the interference of rabbis from other congregations or cities in their decisions. As we will see in Chapter 5, rabbis in the Ottoman Empire ran an extensive scholarly and legal network that drew on living and dead scholars from distant corners of the Sephardic (and sometimes non-Sephardic) world. Rather than by official appointments, it was through one's standing within this network, measured by the frequency with which others quoted him and the number of legal questions addressed to him, that eminence and authority evolved. The discussions

152 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 57–8, 61.

153 Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s197, 178b–179b; Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s66, 27b–29a; Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz*, s503, 3:24b–25b, and s518, 3:30a–33a; Meyuḥas, *Brakhot mayim*, ḥoshen, s7, 157a–159b; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, helek 1, s32, 16a–b.

154 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 62–4.

155 Halevi, *Ḥemdat yamim*, 2:124.

156 The Talmud gave validity to a court run by lay leaders (*beit din shel hedyotot*), in addition to one run by experts, i.e. rabbis (*beit din shel mumḥim*); see BT, Bava Batra, 120b, Bava Meṣiʻa, 32a, Sanhedrin, 3a. Maimonides also permitted such courts: MT, Nedarim, 4:5, Sanhedrin, 5:8.

rabbis had with contemporary and past luminaries inspired the vibrant scholastic atmosphere that continued to produce new scholars and spiritual leaders. But this availability of other sources of wisdom also came at a cost: When members of a congregation, scholars or others, were not content with a rabbi's decision, they could turn to other authorities – in their city or faraway – to obtain a more favorable judgment.

These circumstances undermined one's standing within one's own community. Raphael Shlomo Laniado warned against such an outcome when asserting that a rabbi should not dispute the findings of another congregation's rabbi, even if he is greater in eminence than the rabbi whose judgement he disapproved of.[157] Yet here, too, ideals were one thing, reality another. As we have seen in the *frankos* affair, rabbis from neighboring towns readily provided their opinion and openly contradicted Laniado's. The phenomenon by which members of one *kahal* turned to a rabbi of another to bypass their own rabbi's judgment or extract a more favorable one was quite common.[158] For their part, rabbis who were confronted with a question already addressed by a contemporary, or one that might be otherwise potentially explosive, approached matters with much caution. Shlomo ha-Kohen expressed such a concern when asked to pick sides between the *parnas* and the rabbi in the dispute quoted above, saying that "God knows how many times I have tried to distance myself from this matter, as I have always sought to avoid disputes and controversies. But it appears this issue arrived here from a distant land, and that it has generated a great argument. I do not know either side, neither the *ḥakham* nor Re'uven [the *parnas*]."[159] Similarly, Ḥayim Shabbetai of Salonica (d. 1647), when asked to resolve a disagreement between two factions of the same congregation, complained that members of the allegedly disadvantaged group had been pressing him to intervene:

> I stay away from disputes as I would from a snake … I rejected their calls and told them I was very busy. I thought with time the two groups would somehow compromise. But they have persisted, and I have realized they cannot reach a compromise for many good reasons and that they really need me to address their problem. And even though I have more issues to worry about than hair on my head, so much so that I barely have time to issue halakhic rulings to members [of my own congregation] … I shall

157 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s13, 184.

158 Benayahu, *Marbiṣ Torah*, 68–9.

159 ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 3*, s37, 46a–47a, quotation from 46b.

> write briefly, as much as I can. And I shall note that both parties have submitted their complaints to me.[160]

Our discussion so far points to two key conclusions. One is that rabbinical authority was limited and scholars had only a partial success in molding Jewish life according to the halakhic way. This, of course, does not mean that Jewish communities were chaotic organizations. While scholars might have failed in creating a society that strictly followed Jewish law, the community as an institution did matter to its members, who respected the idea of learning and revered scholars, even when not heeding their advice. Most Ottoman Jews were closely tied to their congregation and the services it, or the greater community in their city, provided. Being involved in communal affairs, even without adhering to all aspects of halakhah or rabbinical advice, imparted a social standing and prestige one could not achieve otherwise. This is evident by the last part of Shabbetai's statement above, whereby both parties in a dispute appealed to him for a ruling, meaning that they trusted him as a reliable and fair arbiter. Furthermore, communal activities, such as education, the collection and dispensation of charity, and members convention at the synagogue to discuss common issues, always took place within a pious context, even when there was nothing particularly religious about them. In this, Jewish practices mirrored Muslim ones at the state level, where anything from endowing property to sending aid to disaster-stricken areas was conducted within a religious framework, despite having little to do with Islamic law (and at times even in direct violation of it). As the late Shehab Ahmed argued, such actions were a part of the Muslim experience, of religion itself, even when contradicting its Orthodox forms and despite the complaints of Muslim scholars throughout the generations.[161] For medieval Christians, Jack Tannous has recently argued, one ought "to think of a continuum or a spectrum of different levels of engagement and understanding existing in Christian communities," extending from the illiterate to the most learned, and signifying great variance in how people understood their religious identity.[162] Comparably, for many Jews the involvement in community affairs did not necessitate heeding of rabbinical advice; challenging the authority of scholars, disrespecting them, turning to state courts instead of the *beit din*, breaking congregations into competing factions, and leading a lifestyle incongruent with Jewish law were all parts of the Jewish experience.

160 Shabbetai, *Torat Ḥayim*, s6, 3:5a–7a, quotation from 5a.

161 Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 5–97.

162 Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 123, and see also 53–80.

The second conclusion is that, with few exceptions, lay leaders were often effectively in charge of all matters communal, from adjudicating cases at the *beit din* to administering communal activities: the collection of taxes, running charitable foundations, maintenance of the synagogue, and the like. The *parnasim* or *tovei ha-ʿir* were in charge of all appointments, directly or indirectly: rabbis, synagogue officers (*gaba'im*), and the assessors of taxes (*maʿarikhim*), among others. The *parnasim* had the authority to make commitments on behalf of the community, negotiate with the Ottoman authorities, and make financial arrangements to the community's benefit. Hardly any direct evidence on the *parnasim*, such as community registries or personal accounts, has survived, and we learn of them either from the responsa, which typically described them as subordinates to the rabbis,[163] or from non-Jewish sources, such as *sharʿi* court records.[164] As already noted, a careful reading of rabbinical works is essential. Thus, when rabbis insisted that lay leaders be at least somewhat learned, and not too tough on their followers,[165] we may perhaps deduce from it that not all *parnasim* were up to the scholarly model, and that some of them were incompetent administrators who treated their people poorly. We may safely assume that those serving as lay leaders were typically wealthy, influential, and well-connected members of their communities, though not necessarily devout followers of Jewish Orthodox principles.

How, then, shall we finally define the role of rabbis, especially of those scholars historians have identified as chief rabbis? Since there was no official ordination (*semikhah*) of rabbis in the Ottoman Sephardic world,[166] most scholars served as unofficial spiritual guides. Some received official appointments and

163 See examples throughout this chapter, and a few others: Musafya, *Ḥayim ve-ḥesed*, s3, 1:10a; Mizraḥi, *Admat kodesh*, s33, 133b; Palachi, *Lev ḥayim*, s24, 2a:72; Navon, *Maḥane Efrayim*, s10, 1:34 and s25, 147; Meyuḥas, *Brakhot mayim*, ḥoshen, s7, 157a–158b; Benveniste, *Baʿei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s2, 1:1b–3a.

164 As the evidence Amnon Cohen has compiled clearly demonstrates: Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (17th century), 1:7–19, 28–47, 50–53; Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century), 9–28.

165 Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s202, 182a–183a; ben Matatyah, *Shut. Binyamin Ze'ev*, s246, 2:229–34; Benveniste, *Baʿei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s2, 1:1b–3a, and s244, 1:299a–300b; Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s224, 115a–116b; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, ḥoshen, s47, 2:67b; Rabbis acknowledged *parnasim* did not always meet the desired qualifications, stating that "even the lightest of the light [i.e. the most uneducated] who was appointed *parnas* of the people we treat as the knight of all knights"; see Mahma, *Shut. Maharif*, s77, 63b and Matatyah, *Shut. Binyamin Ze'ev*, s303, 3:73.

166 Other than the short-lived attempt of Yaʿakov Berab to resurrect the effort in the early sixteenth century; see Ayalon, "Berab, Jacob," 1:428–9.

salaries from congregations, to lead prayers at the synagogue, deliver sermons, adjudicate on matters of personal statue between Jews, sit on the *beit din* alongside lay leaders or with other rabbis, teach Torah and religious law to children and the general public, and execute other administrative tasks. Despite the language in some writs of appointment, rabbis did not typically become political leaders of entire congregations. Naturally, some rabbis exerted more authority over their followers than others, at times superseding that of the lay leaders; this, however, was more a result of personal charisma and local political circumstances than of official appointments. Likewise, in some locales rabbis benefitted from established customs that combined their position with that of a *dayyan*, a *parnas*, or all three. Historians rightly noted that in larger towns citywide rabbinical institutions evolved; but such arrangements hardly impacted on congregational matters, and they lacked a clear leadership structure. The one exception seems to have been seventeenth-century Izmir, where a central rabbinate led by one or two rabbis evolved; yet, there too there are few indications that they managed to mold Jewish society around Jewish law, or that their decisions were binding on all. Scholars whom historians described as "chief" were not absolute rulers of their congregations. Only once, under the brief tenure of Shabbetai Ṣevi as ruler of the Izmir Jewish community (winter of 1665–6) do we hear of a truly autocratic rabbi who instituted a brutal and violent regime that allowed no dissent and had enough followers to sustain such intolerance. Ṣevi's case was so extraordinary that we must treat it as anomaly. Rabbis, so it seems, were part of the leadership stratum of every community; but they were not typically at the head of a hierarchical pyramid, if one existed.

Ottoman Jews before the nineteenth century lived in communities with different leadership structures. Yet some features were common to all of them. Since the state regarded the communities primarily as tax units, all Jews had to belong formally to a congregation in their city of residence. Many, if not most, wanted a close communal affiliation that exceeded this basic function of tax payments. People led a lifestyle that suited their preferences, some strictly following *miṣvot* and the directives of rabbis, others caring little for halakhah; either way, the bulk of them sought a community that provided them with a framework of social affiliation, even if it was not their only social network. The religious community had competing alternatives in different areas, for example in the administration of justice. But it also offered Jews benefits no other organization could match, such as charitable support and Jewish education. The monopoly communities had over these services induced – sometimes even forced – members to accept communal, but not necessarily rabbinical or halakhic authority.

At some point in the seventeenth century, this monopoly began to lose its power. First to appear were charitable societies for burial of the dead, which operated outside the community's purview and distinct from its charitable foundations. By the late eighteenth century, almost every community in the empire had at least one such society. Many had several of them, covering areas which communal charity had previously managed. Non-communal education was slower to evolve: Jews had practically no opportunities for educating their children outside the community before the second half of the nineteenth century. Changes in literacy rates and a proliferation of texts in the eighteenth century, however, exposed many Jews to information previously accessible only to highly educated scholars. These developments gradually offered alternatives to the communal order. I discuss them in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

Poor Relief and Communal Authority

Nothing preserved the social and political cohesion of the Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire more than charity. From the early days of Judaism, indeed of other traditions too, charity was collected and dispensed within the religious community. No matter how givers and receivers understood acts of charity, or how strictly they observed religious law, the context for giving and receiving charity had always been pious. Private giving from one individual to another, donating to communal charity, providing care to needy persons, or endowing property fulfilled religious commitments. The motivations for charity among Ottoman Jews were diverse, from sheer piousness to promoting the donor's social and political standing. For the wealthier members of the community, giving was a prestige builder. Their patronage of others and of communal institutions allowed them to claim leadership positions in their communities, which in turn helped them forge connections outside the community. For all others, giving to charity fulfilled the contract – rarely stated in writing – by which every member helped sustain the community as much as he or she could, for the presumed promise of future assistance if one fell into poverty. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Jewish community had few effective measures to enforce compliance. But supporting communal charity appears to have been common even among those who had little respect for the rabbis or halakhah.

Private and communal Jewish systems of charity had been in place centuries before the Ottoman period. Old practices continued to evolve in Sephardic communities in the empire from the sixteenth century on. At some point, in a process akin to the one Christian European communities had undergone since the Renaissance, private charitable societies emerged in the Sephardic world. At first, these formed as units within communities to help fulfill a function; eventually, charitable societies became exclusive organizations that competed with them. By the early nineteenth century, at least one such society operated in every Ottoman city with a sizeable Jewish community. The proliferation of alternative charitable organizations weakened the authority of communal leaders. And, given that charity was conceived primarily as a religious act regulated by halakhah, such development further eroded rabbinical power.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_006

1 Foundations of Jewish Charity

Giving was designed for relieving miseries, but also as an act of beneficence, supplying funds, food, and services, or forming organizations and institutions to support those in need. The Talmud distinguished between *ṣedakah* and another form of charitable giving, *gemilut ḥasadim* (literally: bestowal of loving kindness). While *ṣedakah* applied to giving money or assets to the living poor, *gemilut ḥasadim* referred to any type of contribution (in cash, kind, or time invested) to all people, including the dead.[1] References to charity, overall, are sparse in the Talmud. The Talmud established some rules, such as that one may not collect charity money from orphans, even not for redeeming captives; that two people were needed to collect *ṣedakah* and three to distribute it; that one was expected to feed the hungry and clothe the poor; and, in general, that one ought to be charitable.[2] But the Talmud offered no systematic discussion of the laws of charity.

Maimonides (d. 1204) was the first to codify such laws comprehensively in his compilation of Jewish law, Mishneh Torah.[3] He presented *ṣedakah* as a commandment one had to follow conscientiously, as failing to give might lead to the death of those who depended on it.[4] In principle, any Jew, rich or poor, was expected to give *ṣedakah*, even recipients of charity.[5] Certain social categories, such as orphans and the utterly destitute, whose giving would jeopardize their own sustenance, were exempt, but were still allowed to contribute if they so wished.[6] The rates of charity, set since Talmudic times and adopted by Maimonides, were to be no greater than one fifth (*ḥomesh*) of one's assets or income, and no less than a third of a *shekel* a year.[7] Beyond the basic obligation, giving *ṣedakah* was considered one of the most rewarding *miṣvot*: Those who made charitable contributions would be blessed with wealth, children, and repute in this world and the hereafter. *Ṣedakah* was also a remedy for illness

1 BT, Sukkah, 49b.

2 BT, Bava batra, 8a–11a; Bava meṣi'a, 38a; Gitin, 7a–b, 52a.

3 Maimonides' discussion of charity appears in MT, Zera'im, Matnot 'Aniyyim.

4 Ibid., 10:1. Later scholars accepted this definition of charity; see AT and ShA, yoreh, 247:1.

5 MT, Matnot, 7:5; see also AT and ShA, yoreh, 248:1.

6 Moshe, *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah*, 62–3, 79–83.

7 Maimonides elaborated on the three levels of giving: Twenty percent was considered the true fulfillment of the idea of charity (*miṣvah min ha-muvḥar*), ten percent was "medium" (*beinoni*), and giving less than that was an evil eye (*'ayin ra'ah*). Whoever failed to give less than a third of a *shekel* a year (*shelishit ha-shekel be-shanah*) was not considered to have fulfilled the *miṣvah*; MT, Matnot, 7:5, and see also JT, Pe'ah, 2b; BT, Ketubot, 50a; Bava batra, 9a; AT and ShA, yoreh, 249:1–2.

and a way to atone for one's sins.[8] It could therefore also be given voluntarily, in excess of the required minimum or the recommended one-fifth ceiling.[9]

Judaism had no clear-cut distinction between mandatory and voluntary giving, unlike Islam, where two different terms denoted the two distinct notions: *zakah* for obligatory alms, *ṣadaqa* for voluntary donations. As one of the five pillars of Islam incumbent upon all believers, *zakah* is regarded as an expression of one's obedience to God, not of beneficence toward or sympathy for other people. It was to be levied by the state, using *zakah* collectors, but by Ottoman times its collection had long fallen out of practice. Many Muslims, however, continued to give *zakah* as a fulfillment of a religious duty, being well aware of the difference between it and *ṣadaqa*.[10] Jews living under Islamic rule developed systems of collection of charity within their communities that simulated those of the early Islamic state to some degree.

A core element of the Jewish and Muslim traditions, charity was ubiquitous in everyday life of Jews and Muslims everywhere. It was given to support various people, needs, and functions. The poor were obvious potential recipients, as were slaves and captives about to be manumitted, the sick, widows and orphans, scholars, wayfarers, travelers to Jerusalem or the Holy Land, foreigners, and others who lacked the means to fund a large project such as a wedding. Institutions that supported any of these causes, and the officials who served in them, were legitimate recipients of charity.[11] Jewish traditions emphasized giving *ṣedakah* before prayers at least once a week as well as during celebrations, after the death of a relative, during fasts, when departing for a long journey, and on every holiday.[12] For Muslims, Friday prayers, weddings, circumcision ceremonies, mourning the death of someone, holidays, and certain important months of the Muslim calendar were all occasions for giving.[13] Charity, and the piety it entailed, was an integral part of the Jewish experience, whether or not one adhered to the rules of halakhah.

In the Ottoman period, rabbis insisted on preserving many of the ideas of charity the Talmud, Mainonides, and other earlier scholars had delineated. Jewish society, from their perspective, was charitable in the sense that charity was everywhere as an inseparable part of people's daily experiences,

8 Moshe, *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah*, 30–5, 83.

9 The rule guiding voluntary *ṣedakah* was that one ought not be risking his own sustenance by giving to others; ibid., 117–21.

10 Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 20, 32–4.

11 Ibid., 51–7; Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 1–5; Moshe, *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah*, 228–64, 283–90.

12 *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah*, 489–509.

13 Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 73–88.

derived from spiritual or religious motivations, and rationalized by reference to halakhic texts.[14] For example, the responsa abounds with questions on the re-appropriation of funds from charity to non-charitable causes, or between two charitable targets. Rabbis repeatedly reminded their followers that congregations and communities were allowed to re-designate funds from one charitable purpose to another. Broadly speaking, this precept of charity meant communities were supposed to be careful with their allocation of funds and not allow those already pledged to charitable causes to be used for areligious ones.[15] A congregation that followed the halakhic principles of charity was not only righteous; it was also one more likely to accept rabbinical authority. As we will soon see, the repeated emphasis on the laws of charity suggests that they were, like other halakhic principles, often violated. This is evident in the three main types of Jewish charity: public, semi-private, and private.

Jewish charity in the empire was not markedly different from Islamic society's approach to poor relief. For much of the period this study covers, charity practices in the Ottoman Empire resembled those of past Islamic and medieval European states,[16] and differed from those observed in many early modern European cities. From the fifteenth century, governments and city councils in central and western Europe were seeking ways to confront poverty and minimize its effect on society. Consequently, poor relief, formerly controlled all but exclusively by the Church, was mostly taken over by laymen and politicians. Poor laws were drafted and new institutions set up to treat those deemed "deserving." The medieval approach, which saw poverty as a virtue, was gradually giving way to intolerance toward anyone who was poor by choice or people considered to be endangering public order, health, and hygiene, such as beggars and prostitutes. In the eighteenth century, poor

14 Marcus, "Poverty and poor relief," 177; Ben-Na'eh, "'Oni ve hitmodedut," 214–8.

15 For origins of the interchangeability between the two institutions of *kuppah* and *tamḥui*, see BT, Bava Batra, 8b; MT, Matnot, 9:7; ShA, yoreh, 256:4. For Ottoman responsa examples, see Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s122, 110a; Matatyah, *Shut. Binyamin Ze'ev*, s172, 2:114, s264, 182, and s296, 3:55; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 3, s9, 128b and s10, 129a; ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 2*, s38, 26b; Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, ḥoshen, s101, 131a; Alashkar, *Shut. Maharam Alashkar*, s70, 125.

16 For Byzantium, see Demetrios Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy*, 25, 68–84. For Medieval Europe, Southern, *Western Society*, 280–3. For the high Middle Ages, Mollat, *The Poor*, 45–52, 128–45. For poverty in early Islam, Bonner, "Definitions of poverty," 335–46. For the Mamluk period, Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*, 9–10, 38–58. Even scholars who rejected the idea that poverty was a desired condition, such as Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200), Ibn Taymiya (d. 1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya (d. 1356), did not suggest a society without paupers; ibid., 24–5.

relief policies throughout the continent reflected the notion that poverty was no longer inevitable.[17]

Ottoman-Islamic charity, while based on the inevitability of poverty, was still not offered unconditionally. It had rules for deservedness of alms, reflected in the rulings of jurists,[18] as well as social norms, which prevented the undeserving from begging for charity.[19] Institutions such as hospitals and soup kitchens (*imaret*s) were not open to everyone. *Imaret*s, for example, fed their employees, Ottoman officials, travelers, and religious scholars before feeding the poor; poor students were given preference over ordinary paupers; and men over women.[20] This sequence reflected the place of the poor in the social order: They were to receive the least amount of alms or food, because that was where they belonged in society and where they ought to remain.[21] Nonetheless, sultans and governors were responsive to complaints about oppression of the poor, perhaps because they perceived themselves as the ultimate patrons, the protectors of all their subjects, including the indigent.[22] As far as we know, this approach did not change much before the second half of the nineteenth century, although modest attempts to regulate street begging by denying the

17 The Black Death and subsequent epidemics were responsible for much of the shift in thinking about poverty and charity in Europe; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 197–215, 221–2; Cavallo, *Charity and Power*, 57–8, 69–75, 117–8, 188; Davis, *Society and Culture*, 17–64; Mollat, *The Poor*, 197–210, 290–3; Jütte, *Poverty*, 100–8. For an overview of social changes also affecting charity practices, and why the Black Death did not generate similar changes in the Middle East, see Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 32–48.

18 Ottoman jurists devoted sections of their fatwa collections to charity. They discussed who was required to give to charity and who should be exempt, what charity money should be used for, and who its legitimate recipients were. The latter included religious students and family members (excluding one's immediate family, which one was expected to support anyway). The jurists also ruled that the poor could not assume that they deserved charity or ask for it; Feyzullah, *Fetava*, 14–16; Yenişehirli, *Behcet*, 30–1; Ramli, *Fatawa*, 16.

19 Public distributions of charity were sometimes held out in the open, under the watchful eyes of others; Hoexter, "Charity," 158.

20 Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence*, 62–4; Ergin et al., eds., *Feeding People*, introduction, 15–6.

21 Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence*, 63; Marcus, "Poverty and poor relief," 177.

22 In 1667, the clients of a few *imaret*s in Damascus complained that they were excessively charged for the services they got there. A decree ordered the *imaret*s to stop abusing them (BOA, Şikâyet, 4:541). In 1743, a complaint was sent to Istanbul about a rich man from Aleppo who lent 600 *gurûş* to poor men and women from villages around Antakya (Antioch), but when they returned the loan, he refused to give them back the property he took as collateral. The Sultan ordered him to do so (BOA, Halep Ahkam, 1:41). In the same year, as the governor of Aleppo and his deputy were taxing the inhabitants of the city excessively, including the poor, the Sultan intervened, reiterating that taxes should only be levied according to his orders (ibid., 1:42).

able-bodied the right to beg were made from the mid-sixteenth century.[23] In this context, Jewish practices of charity presented a middle ground between European and Ottoman Islamic models.

2 Public Charity

Jewish Communal charitable institutions had existed at least since the time of the Mishnah.[24] The Tosefta, a collection of laws complementing the Mishnah, and the Jerusalem Talmud (both compiled *c.*400 CE) speak about two separate institutions: an alms box or basket (*kuppah*, pl. *kuppot*) and an alms tray or soup kitchen (*tamḥui*). The *kuppah*, made up of cash gifts, was intended for the local poor; the *tamḥui*, consisting of food, supported wayfarers and the poor of other cities. Originally, donations for the *kuppah* were collected once a week, and those for the *tamḥui* daily.[25] This structure was outlined in the Jerusalem Talmud, and later in the Babylonian Talmud, and it is somewhat unclear whether it reflected actual practice or the wish of rabbis. By the time Maimonides was writing his *Mishneh Torah* a few centuries later, the distinction between *kuppah* and *tamḥui* had seemingly blurred. Maimonides explained that "we have never seen or heard of a congregation of Israel that does not have a *kuppah shel ṣedakah*, but *tamḥui* was customary in some places and not in others. And the custom nowadays is to simply have the charity officers collect daily and distribute every Friday." Thus it appears that *kuppah* and *tamḥui* had been consolidated into a single institution by the twelfth century or so, and possibly earlier.[26] By the early sixteenth century, congregations in the Ottoman Empire typically maintained one charity alms box (*kuppah shel*

23 Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 26–48. Firmans were issued in Istanbul in 1568 and 1577 prohibiting those who could work from begging. Such initiatives were expanded only in the late eighteenth century, when corporal punishment and other severe measures against begging in public places were introduced and applied outside the capital; Özbek, *Sosyal devlet*, 67–77.

24 I use the term "public charity" to refer to charity provided by the Jewish community, and not to that provided by the state, or by individual initiatives.

25 M, Demai, 3:1; T, Pe'ah, 4:9; JT, Pe'ah, 36b; BT, Bava batra, 8a–b.

26 MT, Matnot, 9:3. See also Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 204–11. Ya'akov ben Asher of Toledo (Ba'al ha-Turim, d. 1340) further explained: "Some argue that all those measurements [which determine who is eligible for charity] were only valid for their days, when they had *ḳuppah* and *tamḥui* and they would distribute the tithe for the poor every year … but now that all of these no longer exist, one may take enough to enable him to make a living"; AT, yoreh, 253:2. For example of a small community that did not maintain any charitable alms box, see Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz mi-ketav yad*, s195, 153–4.

FIGURE 6 The Ibn Ezra synagogue in Cairo. The synagogue was the primary scene of charity collection and distribution in Ottoman Jewish communities

ṣedakah), whence the charity officers (*gabbai*, pl. *gabba'im*) distributed it to specific charitable causes.[27] Ottoman rabbis used *tamḥui* not to denote an institution, but rather to demonstrate that communities were allowed, with some limitations, to re-purpose charitable funds.

Kuppah shel ṣedakah, as it appears, was a collective name for a community's charity services. How communities maintained their collection and dispensation of alms differed from place to place. Few testimonies elaborate on communal charity beyond a general explanation that a *kuppah shel ṣedakah* or *kuppah shel 'aniyyim* (alms box for the poor) existed, that funds were collected at the synagogue, and that members were expected to give and honor previous pledges to support the poor.[28] One testimony from Aleppo in the eighteenth century suggests an elaborate structure for communal charity. There, the *gabba'im* would collect money as "one fund" (*kis eḥad*) and later distribute it to various alms-boxes as they saw fit.[29] The term *kuppah shel ṣedakah* thus referred collectively to five separate funds the community administered: The "Torah study" box (*talmud torah*), which supported those who studied Torah full time and the education of children from poor families; "visiting the sick" (*bikur ḥolim*) fund, allocated for the community's poor who became ill and had no one to care for them; "hospitality box" (*hakhnasat orḥim*), designated for guest visitors and wayfarers; "bestowal of loving kindness" (*gemilut ḥasadim*) paid for the burial expenses of indigenous Jews, local or foreign, who had no relatives around, though this fund occasionally supported the poor in other ways; and the "house maintenance" (*bedek ha-bayit*) box made possible the maintenance of the synagogue, supplying it with running water, cleaning of its toilets, and lighting it up for evening prayers.[30] The *gabba'im* often faced situations where one box was depleted and needed to be replenished by transferring money from another, or by asking people for more donations, which at times they were reluctant to give. Major changes in the allocation of charity funds typically entailed getting the permission of the *ma'amad*.[31]

At another unspecified community, the *kuppah* was a chest found at the synagogue, to which each member was expected to give a fixed sum based on

27 Karo, *Beit Yosef*, yoreh, 256:1–4.

28 E.g. Mizraḥi, *Admat kodesh*, yoreh, s14, 1:36a–b; Azulai, *Ḥayim sha'al*, s36, 2:28a–b; Alashkar, *Shut. Maharam Alashkar*, s70, 224–6; Pardo, *Mikhtam le-David*, oraḥ, s6, 11a–13a.

29 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, ḥoshen, s39, 527.

30 Ibid., yoreh, s1, 112–3.

31 Laniado, *Degel*, yoreh, s1, 58. Rabbis sometimes opposed such changes. Yisrael Sasson of Aleppo ruled against an attempt to use funds contributed to the *kuppah* of *talmud torah* for supporting orphans, and required that the contributors of the money specifically re-designate it to its new purpose; Yisrael Sasson, "She'elot," 149.

financial ability. In addition to contributing to the *kuppah*, wealthy individuals helped sustain a *tamḥui* for the poor. That was typically a large bowl divided into drawers or sections with different types of food for the poor to pick from. It was to be replenished daily.[32] More broadly though, it appears that *tamḥui* was largely out of style by the Ottoman period: Shlomo Amarilio (d. 1720), a prominent Salonica rabbi, explained that

> At our time, the congregation distributes *ṣedakah* daily to [pay for] the burdens of the kingdom [i.e. taxes] and to other needs of the *kahal*, and even for elective matters. And surely during the time of our teacher Re'em [Eliyahu Mizraḥi, d. 1526] there was no *tamḥui* or *kuppah* but rather *kis shel ṣedakah* [a purse for charity] where people placed their pledges, donations, and sacrifices, and that is also our custom nowadays.[33]

It appears communities collected charitable donations for all purposes at once, at the synagogue. On Shabbat, holidays, and other special occasions, people would bring whatever they wished to donate or dedicate to a pious foundation to the synagogue and hand it over to one of the treasurers (*gizbarim*). The treasurers' duty was then to distribute charity to the indigent from week to week. During important prayers, such as *kol nidrei* of Yom Kippur, the synagogue's beadle (*shammash*) would announce an auction for the right to carry the Torah or lead the people in prayer, the proceeds of which would also support communal charity. A pledge of a future giving would be announced from the stage at the synagogue, by the arc where Torah scrolls were kept.[34] On the whole, it seems that public giving in the Ottoman period featured an intricate structure with variances from place to place, rather than consisting solely of two general funds.[35]

Management of communal charity was entrusted in the hands of charity officers, the *gabba'im*, who were appointed by the lay leaders.[36] In distributing funds from the *kuppot*, the *gabba'im* followed certain guidelines that determined who should be given alms and by what priority. Maimonides was the first to outline the rules for distribution of charity; later Sephardic scholars complemented them. Accordingly, the hungry preceded the naked, women

32 Matatyah, *Shut. Binyamin Ze'ev*, s172, 2:114.

33 Shabbetai, *Torat Ḥayim*, 'olelot ha-kerem, s10, 3:181b.

34 Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, s60, 3:11b; Dweck ha-Kohen, *Reaḥ sadeh*, s12, 309.

35 For the Ottoman Empire, see Ben-Na'eh, "'Oni ve hitmodedut," 230–2; Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 167–74. For non-Ottoman examples, see Lowenstein, *Berlin*, 64–5. Toaff, *Nazione ebrea*, 75–82, 253–8; Baron, *Jewish Community*, 2:320–5.

36 The term *gabbai* first appears in M, Demai, 3:1. Literally, *gabbai* means a collector.

had priority over men, and the learned or Torah scholars took precedence over ordinary Jews. Captives who had to be redeemed would come before all of the above. In addition, when considering potential recipients of alms from the *kuppah*, the officers were to weigh assets against needs, and deny support to those with rich relatives. How indigent one had to be to merit communal support changed over time, most rabbis agreed, but the basic principles remained the same from Maimonides to the eighteenth century.[37]

How did the community keep up its charitable institutions and those running them? Historians have suggested that Jewish communities were unique compared to the surrounding Muslim society, in that they had a system of mandatory communal taxation.[38] Minna Rozen found such an arrangement in Jerusalem, where the community was divided into three tax brackets.[39] Ben-Na'eh has argued that "direct and indirect taxes that the *yeḥidim* paid were the community's most significant source of income." He lists two main categories of taxes: *'arikhah* and *gabilah*, and hints that the *'arikhah* was essentially a method of collecting taxes the community owed the state.[40] How financially sustainable were such arrangements, or why would Jews agree to pay their community what would have essentially amounted to a higher tax rate than Muslims, are questions that deserve some attention. They help explain the relative success of public charity in Ottoman Jewish communities.

I shall start by distinguishing between four terms Ottoman Jews used to refer to taxes: *misim ve-arnoniyot* or just *mas* (regular and property taxes, the Ottoman *avarız*); *kesef gulgolta* or *kharga* (poll tax, the Ottoman *cizye* or *jizya*); *gabelah* or *gabilah* (tax on profits from selling meat, wine, cheese, and possibly other products); and charity (*kuppah* or *ṣedakah*). The first two terms referred strictly to taxes the state imposed, the last two to funds the community collected for its own sake.[41] As we have seen, the Ottoman state regarded Jewish

37 MT, Matnot, 7:3, 8:15, 9:13–16; AT, Yoreh, 250:1, 251:7, 9, 253:1–4; Karo, *Beit Yosef* and ShA, same references as AT, and 256:3; Aboab, *Menorat ha-ma'or*, 65, 78–9, 101–3; ha-Kohen, *Me'il ṣedakah*, 1:86, 93–4,420, 2:135. For more on the concept of deserving poor as it evolved in the Middle Ages, see Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 88–101.

38 Baron, *Social and Religious*, 18:31–2; Rosanes, *Korot ha-Yehudim*, 1:186, 191, 199, 3:33, 80, 4:41, 130, 156–7, 227, 375, 5:7, 20; Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 1:274–9; Shmuelevitz, *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 114–27; Marcus, "Poverty and poor relief," 176; Rozen, "Individual and community," 224–30.

39 *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 178–9; one of the two sources Rozen has relied on (Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, 207) did not explicitly state the purpose of communal tax collection.

40 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 140–4.

41 See e.g. Laniado, *Maharash*, s13, 140, who talks about *ha-misim ha-nehugim veha-bilti nehugim* (ordinary and extraordinary taxes); Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, s109, 204; Moshe Galante, *Shut.*, s113, 162–3, defined different criteria for one's need to pay taxes and

communities – as well as Christian ones – primarily as tax-collecting units. Communities and congregations were in charge of collecting taxes from their members and passing them on to the state's tax collectors. Lay leaders were often the ones negotiating the tax rate with the authorities, but once the numbers were set, the state cared about receiving the money rather than how it was collected. This arrangement left lay leaders responsible for distributing the tax burden. While the state determined a community's tax rate by the number of its poor, middle, and rich members, the community could choose to divide up the sum it owed the state differently, charging more from some individuals, and exempting others. Such a system also allowed community leaders to set aside a portion of the revenue they collected for internal purposes.

Communities would typically agree on a tax assessment method – the *'arikhah* – a process that determined how much each head of household owed in taxes to the state.[42] The *yeḥidim* or the *parnasim* could also decide to exempt certain individuals from taxes altogether. One way to avoid inter-communal feuds was to appoint nine tax assessors (*ma'arikhim*), divide them into three groups of three, and task each group with evaluating each member's financials. The effective tax rate for each individual would then be the average of the three independent assessments.[43] Exemption of scholars and students (*talmidei ḥakhamim*) was customary in many places, though who exactly should fall into that category – given the fluid nature of scholarly titles and positions – was unclear.[44] Furthermore, attempts to include scholars in the *'arikhah* and requiring them to pay taxes happened occasionally, as complaints about this issue demonstrate.[45]

---

contribute to charity; Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 152, distinguished between *mas* and *ṣedakah*; Ḥayim Abul'afyah, *Nishmat*, s7, 20a; Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s39, 527. David Azulai (ha-Ḥida, d. 1806) further emphasized the distinction between *kuppah* and *misim ve-arnoniyot* by dealing with a question of a community that wished to draw funds from its *kuppah* to pay for its *misim*, i.e. state taxes. See Azulai, *Ḥayim sha'al*, s36, 2:28a–b. A question sent to Yosef Mitrani clearly distinguished between "taxes such as *kharga* and *arnoniyot* the burden of the state … and charities to the Land of Israel, Talmud Torah, and the redemption of captives"; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, ḥoshen, s61, 2:108b.

42 Ibid., 2:108b. One historian claimed, with little evidence, that in Aleppo individuals paid taxes directly to the state at least until the eighteenth century; see Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-ma'amad ha-politi veha-ḥevrati," 105–6.

43 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, s152, 14a–15a.

44 Maharit argued that not every scholar was automatically exempt, but that full-time students who spent all of their days and nights studying, even if they had not yet reached a high level of scholarship, must be exempt from taxes; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, ḥoshen, s59, 2:108a–b.

45 ha-Levi, *Darkei no'am*, ḥoshen, s55, 274a–275a; Kaṣabi, *Rav Yosef*, s15, 48a; Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s215, 2:212–13.

Whatever methods the *parnasim* used to distribute the tax burden, from increasing some people's tax bill to reporting a smaller number of taxpayers to the authorities,[46] the funds collected in this way transferred mostly to the state and did not adequately support public charity or community functions in general. Thus, many communities imposed a tax – effectively the only internal tax Jewish communities charged – on the profits generated from the sale of certain products, such as wine, meat, or cheese. Communities had levied the *gabilah* before the Ottoman period.[47] In principle, it was collected from local Jewish merchants, though it was common to ask foreigners, especially those who traded in a city frequently, to pay.[48] The *gabilah* could not provide the community with regular income, since it depended on market conditions. Moreover, while in some locales it supported the poor and students, in others the proceeds from it barely covered the salaries of the *gabba'im* who collected it.[49] Benefitting from the social and economic network of the Jewish community, the services it provided, and the spiritual support it offered its members was likely a primary incentive for people to pay the *gabilah*. Yet imposing the tax often led to friction between the *parnasim* and rabbis, and disobedient merchants who refused to pay under various pretexts.[50] In this area too, the *parnasim* proved to have had the upper hand. When the eighteenth-century Baghdadi merchant Matlub Raḥamim arrived in Aleppo on one of his many business trips to the city, rabbis asked him to pay a percentage of his profits as *gabilah*. He agreed, and the arrangement lasted several years until a financial crisis hit the community. The *parnasim* then asked Raḥamim to pay more if he wished to continue doing business with Jews in Aleppo. Raḥamim's attempt to argue that these new taxes were unjust proved futile: The *parnasim* dismissed

46 Laniado et al., *Ro'ey Yisrael*, 2:20; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 116–7.

47 The *gabilah* was levied in Alexandria and communities in Palestine; Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:104.

48 As opposed to asking visitors to pay regular, state taxes with the community. Mordekhai ha-Levi explained such differentiation in his *Darkei no'am*, ḥoshen, s21, 210a. Shlomo Laniado argued that communities were justified in asking itinerant merchants to pay the *gabilah* because the Ottoman authorities did not distinguish between visitors and permanent residents when assessing or collecting a community's tax burden; Laniado, *Maharash*, s8, 103–4.

49 Galante, *Divre Mordekhai*, s19, 156b–157b; Laniado, *Maharash*, s13, 140–1; *Kise Shlomo*, 25–6; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 3, s10, 129a–b; Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 183–4.

50 For examples of merchants and others arguing over their *gabila* assessment or refusing to pay, see: ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 3, s10, 129a–b; Shabbetai, *Torat Ḥayim*, ḥelek 3, s102, 145b–147b; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, ḥoshen, s13, 2:76a–b.

the original agreement with Raḥamim, claiming the rabbis who had negotiated it were incompetent in assessing taxes.[51]

Given the precarious nature of tax revenue, much of which had to be passed on to the state, it was daily or weekly donations by members of the *kahal*, as well as income from foundations (*hekdesh*, pl. *hekdeshim*) the community owned, that sustained public charity. I deal with the institution of the *hekdesh* later in the chapter; for now it suffices to say that some communities owned property, either donated to them by wealthy individuals, bequeathed to them in wills, or abandoned after someone died without heirs, and that the income those properties generated supported charitable needs. These could include the burial of the dead, the maintenance of the synagogue, or supporting poor students. As with other financial matters, the *parnasim* handled the incomes and expenditures of *hekdeshim* and could even borrow money from one *hekdesh* to support other charitable causes.[52] Expectedly, dedicated property could also generate conflict. In 1705, a few houses and land in Salonica were dedicated to the Calabria congregation. The *parnasim* rented these out and used the proceeds to sustain poor students. Problems later emerged when the deceased's heirs claimed their father never intended to donate his houses and land to the *kahal* and asked to regain their family's property.[53]

Beyond these very general outlines of public charity, which took a somewhat different form across the empire's Jewish communities, there is much we still do not know. It is hard to tell even roughly how much charity money communities managed to raise in comparison with the cost of goods or services, or how much people typically gave, if there was even a typical sum. Evidence on this is anecdotal at best, and only suggests the obvious: That the rich gave more than the poor. It is fairly clear that at least the rabbis expected everyone to participate in public charity. One would, however, find it hard to tell whether the majority of members fulfilled that expectation, or just a small number of them. It is likely that, as with other matters hitherto discussed, there were rebellious community members who refused to pay, or did not show up at the synagogue at all. What happened with them? We can assume the consequences were rather mild, but we do not know. There is also little evidence indicating criteria or priorities for the distribution of funds to different purposes. And finally, the rather informal and fluid arrangement of public charity, as that of

51 Galante, *Divre Mordekhai*, s19, 156b–157b.

52 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, s20, 5a–b, yoreh, s171, 21b–22b, and s174, 23b; Palachi, *Ḥikekei lev*, ḥoshen, s4, 3:8a–b; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s132, 92b–94a.

53 Ṣahalon, *Shut. Maharitaṣ*, s211, 165b–167a, and s218, 171b–172a.

the community as a whole, begs the question what incentivized people to give. I shall get to that soon.

3 Semi-public Charity

Giving was not always channeled through communal institutions. Some of it was "semi-public," to wit, charity that the community administered or sanctioned but did not fund directly or regularly. Definitely falling within this category was the appointment of guardians for orphans (*apotropos shel yetomim*), widows, or other vulnerable persons.[54] A child was considered an orphan once his or her father passed away, even if the mother was still alive and able to support her children.[55] The *apotropos* could be the mother's second husband, if he agreed to provide for her children, or another person who volunteered for the task or was appointed by communal officials or the *beit din*.[56] An *apotropos* was responsible for giving his dependents shelter, food, clothes and education, and in the case of orphans, managing their inheritance until they had reached adulthood.[57] A guardian would also represent his protégés

54 The appointment itself was conferred in the Jewish court or the *maḥkama*; Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 161; Cohen, *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat* (18th century), 470–1. Wealthy Muslims filled a similar function, taking in the poor and orphans, who ate and stayed in their homes; e.g. al-Budayri, *Ḥawadith*, 137–8.

55 Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:277–92; Islam's definition of orphans was similar, as reflected in Ottoman court records; Yazbak, "Muslim orphans," 123–38. A comparable interpretation was common in medieval and early-modern Europe; Mollat, *The Poor*, 28, 288–9.

56 Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s49, 45b–46a; Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s136, 1:167a–170b and s212, 2:264b–266b. The term *apotropos* was also used to denote individuals the *parnasim* or the *beit din* entrusted with communal or another person's property; Yisrael, *Ben yamin*, s17, 33–5; Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s164, 2:192a–b.

57 Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 3:207–302. For examples from the Ottoman period, see Sasson, "She'elot," 122–3; Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s49, 45b–46a; Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s120–1, 56b–57b and s133, 64a–b; Berab, *Shut.*, s8, 37–8; Ben Lev, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, s75, 1:220–3, s77, 228–30, s79–80, 232–9, s84, 246–8; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s56, 1:36a–37a, s63, 40b–41a, s90, 57b–58b; Alsheikh, *Shut. Moshe Alsheikh*, s101, 223–5. For an *apotropos* appearing in the *beit din* and responsible for keeping records of income and expenses, see Mitrani, *She'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Mitrani*, s48, 1:13b–14a. Mitrani devoted multiple entries in his responsa to matters related to guardians, including under what conditions an *apotropos* was to release assets to inheritors (s87, 1:25a–b) or what actions required court approval (s94, 1:26b). Mitrani claimed one could only become a guardian of orphans if appointed by their father before his death or by the *beit din* (helek 1, s201, 1a:23a–b); however, he also recognized *de facto* guardians, including women who assumed responsibility for their children once their husbands had died (s122, 1a:1b–2a). The designation of *apotropos* had no legal standing in *shar'i* courts (s227, 3:46b–47a).

in communal affairs, financial transactions, and at court.[58] In most cases, appointing an *apotropos* would relieve the community of the need to support those who would otherwise rely on the *kuppot*. Volunteering to serve as an *apotropos* would therefore contribute indirectly to communal charity, and was a legitimate way to fulfill the *miṣvah* of *ṣedakah*. The acts of giving in this case were essentially private – money, food, clothes and shelter passed straight from a guardian to those under his sponsorship. Because one needed the community's approval to manage the affairs of orphans or widows, this type of charity was semi-public or indirect: The community arranged for the protection of the needy but did not directly pay for their care.

Another form of semi-public charity was sustaining Jews living in Jerusalem or Palestine (Ereṣ Yisra'el) or helping those wishing to travel or migrate there. Prior to the Ottoman period, diaspora communities assisted Jews traveling to Jerusalem on an ad hoc basis,[59] but by the sixteenth century, Jewish attitudes toward settlement in Palestine had changed. The expulsion from Spain, the recurrent harassment of Jews elsewhere in Europe, and the relatively comfortable life Jews had under the Ottomans brought more Jews to Palestine, and especially to Jerusalem. Certain congregations in Europe even established funds that helped defray the costs of travel to Palestine.[60] In the Ottoman period, traveling to or settling in Jerusalem, Hebron, or Safed became more common, as did bequeathing parts or all of one's assets to the poor of a city in Ereṣ Yisra'el.[61] Those who wished to retire in Palestine and could not afford it would petition their community for help, as one seventeenth-century letter demonstrates.[62] By the eighteenth century, retirement in Palestine apparently became common enough to be noticeable even by non-Jewish European observers. In 1760, the chaplain of the English Levant Company in Aleppo

58 Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s36, 1:28b–30a; Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s39, 516–7.

59 Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:135–6, 414–5.

60 Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 274–5.

61 For retirement in Palestine, see Ṣahalon, *Shut. Maharitaṣ*, s211, 165b–167a; Ashkenazi, *She'elot u-teshuvot Beṣal'el Ashkenazi*, s14, 102–3 (for a woman who left Damascus for Jerusalem and dedicated her property to the poor of Safed and Hebron, but who changed her will to solely benefit the poor of Jerusalem after living there eleven years). For dedicating one's property to the poor of Jerusalem or Safed, see Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, s70, 141b; Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s192, 1a:231b–233b; Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, s118, 2:31b–32a; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s39, 1:20a; ha-Kohen, *Maharshakh*, s4, 13–4; *Shut. Maharshakh 2*, s38, 2:26a–b.

62 Na'amiyash, "Ketav bakashah le-'ezrah," 94b.

described Safed as a city inhabited mostly by "Jews, especially of the richer sort, who in their advanced age retire to this place."[63]

The Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities in Jerusalem continued with the old practice of sending emissaries (*shadarim*) to Jewish centers in the empire and in Europe to ask for donations, and stepped up their requests as the material situation deteriorated in the seventeenth century. Both communities, as well as the Jews of Hebron and Safed, seem to have been hit hard by poverty, though the Ashkenazim appear to have been worse off. In the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, Avraham ha-Levi, a rabbi in Egypt, described the dire straits in which the Jerusalem Ashkenazim were found: They could raise very little money overseas, in part thanks to various Sephardi tactics that guaranteed they received more funds than the Ashkenazim.[64] In some places, communities began to levy a special tax for Jerusalem and other Holy Land cities, and even designated *gabba'im* to collect it and transfer the proceeds to the *shadarim* coming from Palestine.[65] And yet communities in Palestine continued to suffer in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth. To address their distress, further exacerbated by a wave of Ashkenazi immigrants around 1700, Jews in Istanbul founded the Committee of Officials for the Land of Israel (*va'ad pekidei ereṣ yisra'el be-kushta*) in 1726. From then until the early nineteenth century, Istanbul functioned as the center coordinating donations for Jerusalem from all over the empire and beyond. Still, communities in Ereṣ Yisra'el, relying primarily on donations coming from abroad, continued to suffer, in part due to social developments in Western Europe that challenged mainstream rabbinical authority there. As a result, the status of Jerusalem in some communities declined as well, and with it the amounts emissaries

63 Thomas Dawes to Charles Lyttelton, letter dated 3 January 1760, Stowe Ms. 754 in the British Library, London, 3:44.

64 Specifically, ha-Levi tells of an Ashkenazi from Hebron who adopted Sephardi customs and later deceived his Ashkenazi hosts in Europe into believing their funds would support Ashkenazim in Ereṣ Yisrael. He then sent the money to the Sephardim in Hebron. The Ashkenazim also accused the Sephardi emissaries of encouraging Jews abroad not to support the Ashkenazim of Jerusalem, as they were "indecent people"; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 3, s9, 2:126b–129a.

65 Among the communities that had such funds by the mid-seventeenth century were Istanbul, Venice, Lublin, and Fez; Rozen, *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit*, 275–81. Some *shadarim* managed to raise considerable sums. One *shadar* from Safed was on the road for 19 years between 1767 and 1786. He raised 1724 *gurûş* in Damascus, and an unspecified large sum in Aleppo. He was still more successful in other communities, such as Izmir; Anonymous, "Pinkas shadar," 40–7.

managed to raise diminished.[66] In the Ottoman Empire, rabbis still encouraged their followers to support communities in Palestine, though not at the expense of giving to one's own congregation.[67]

Redemption of captives or prisoners (*pidyon shevuyim*) was another charitable cause to which Jews were expected to give. It was considered one of the greatest charitable acts a Jew could perform.[68] As the need to redeem captives arose infrequently, most communities did not maintain a regular *kuppah* for this purpose. Funds to such ends were collected ad hoc. Moshe Alsheikh of Safed (d. 1600) explained that people were justified in assuming funds defined as charity supported the ordinary feeding and clothing of the poor, but not *pidyon shevuyim*, a separate category of beneficence.[69] Some communities were especially capable of raising considerable funds for *pidyon shevuyim*. The Jews in Cairo, for example, collected substantial sums for ransoming captives of the 1648–9 Khmelnytsky pogroms in Poland, though even there no special *pidyon shevuyim* fund existed on a permanent basis.[70] Measures to prevent the imprisonment of Jews also fell under the category of *pidyon shevuyim*. This included paying the *jizya* for those who could not afford it, as the inevitable outcome of not paying would theoretically be imprisonment by the Ottoman

66 In response to a request to donate to Jerusalem, one observer in Amsterdam, quoted in Moshe Hagiz's *Sefat Emet* (1707) said: "Everyone in this city says, peace is upon me, for this is Jerusalem to me, and I live in tranquility and free of worries, without the yoke of Torah … How do the worries of Jerusalem concern me?"; Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 119–68 (quotation from 128).

67 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, yoreh, s1–2, 113, 120. This conformed to the principle outlined by Karo: "The poor of the city … precede [in the right to receive charity] the poor who come from other places, and the inhabitants of Ereṣ Yisra'el precede those who live outside it"; ShA, yoreh de'ah, 251:3; see also MT, Matnot, 7:13. Maharashdam called diverting funds already promised to one's own community to Jerusalem or Safed foolishness (*shtut*); de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s174, 23b.

68 BT, Bava batra, 8a–b. Maimonides argued that *pidyon shevuyim* preceded giving to the poor and should be financed even with funds originally intended for the synagogue or other holy purposes. This reflected a very high priority for *pidyon shevuyim*: the Talmud established that receipts from the sale of a synagogue may only be used for holy purposes. Maimonides ruled that *pidyon shevuyim* superseded this principle, as refraining from doing so risked people's lives; BT, Megilah, 26a–b; MT, Matnot, 8:10–11. See also Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 121–3. For a similar Ottoman argument, see Alashkar, *Shut. Maharam Alashkar*, s72, 227.

69 Alsheikh, *Shut. Moshe Alsheikh*, s60, 135. For others voicing a similar argument distinguishing regular *ṣedakah* from *pidyon shevuyim*, see Yisrael, *Kol Eliyahu*, ḥoshen, s6, 2:67b–68b; 'Antebi, *Mor ve-ohalot*, yoreh, s6 (erroneously labeled as s3), 21b–25a; ha-Kohen, *Teshuvot radakh*, s28, 61b.

70 Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 195–6.

authorities.[71] One rabbi ruled that a community may sell synagogue holy artifacts not only to fund captives' redemption, but also to pay debts to the government, as not doing so might result in communal leaders being incarcerated.[72]

4 Private Charity

An elderly Jewish woman of Damascene descent whom I met at a conference over a decade ago told me that in family celebrations in that city, guests would sometimes bring as a gift vouchers indicating the sum of money given to charity on behalf of the hosts. The woman seemed to remember that this had been a custom in her community at least since her grandparents' time. It was a good example of private charity: People donated of their own initiative rather than bring a more conventional gift. They could give to private individuals or communal institutions, but such charitable acts usually went unrecorded, and we know little about the recipient's identity or the sums changing hands. Another example of private charity was handing alms to the poor who loitered outside the synagogue. People coming in for the morning prayer (*shaḥarit*) would give them something, but we know neither what was considered a conventional sum to donate, nor how many givers or receivers would be involved. In fact, we learn of this custom only indirectly, from a rabbi's complaint that people were arriving late for *shaḥarit*, or not at all, so as to avoid the encounter with the poor who would congregate by the entrance to the synagogue.[73] Such acts of charity took place outside the formal processes of giving, were unrelated to communal institutions or the *gabba'im*, and thus were hardly ever documented.[74] With a mere handful of casual references at hand, reconstructing the scene of private charity is inevitably speculative. We may assume, for example, that beggars asking for and receiving alms around the synagogue, on the streets, or by going door to door, was a common sight in Ottoman cities, and among Jews specifically. The mere mention of people in such situations

71 Laniado, *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s2, 119–20; Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz*, s498, 1:82a. Effectively, the risk of nonpayment was assumed by the lay leaders whose job it was to collect it on the community's behalf, as the Ottomans did not levy taxes from individuals.

72 'Antebi, *Mor ve-ohalot*, 22–5.

73 'Antebi, *Ḥokhmah u-musar*, 104.

74 Cairo Geniza documents are exceptional in this. They contain numerous personal petitions of the poor who wrote to ask for assistance, through which one can construct a fair image of private charity for medieval Cairo; Cohen, *Voice of the Poor*, 1–94.

suggests beggary was a reality Jews were familiar with.[75] If evidence from the pre-Ottoman period is any indication, Jews, like Muslims, helped their fellows in need, whether locals or visitors.[76] It might well be that such informal acts of beneficence – performed away from the public eye and rarely recorded – made up the greater share of giving to charity in Ottoman society, Jewish and otherwise.[77]

One cannot discuss private charity without considering foundations of consecrated property (*kodesh* or *hekdeshim*). Originally applied to property dedicated to the Temple, in post-Talmudic times *hekdesh* became a generic term for assets set aside for charitable purposes, namely, assisting the community's poor and Torah students, and sometimes those in Palestine.[78] There were few limitations on what one could dedicate, including immovable and movable property, and cash.[79] As we have seen, many communities maintained property, real estate or other, designated as *hekdesh*, the proceeds of which would sustain certain functions, such as housing and clothing for the poor, the cost of educating full-time Torah students, paying rabbis, and even supporting the poor of another city, usually in Palestine. Special officers or treasurers (*gabba'ei hekdesh* or *gizbarim*) maintained such foundations, known as foundations of the poor (*hekdesh 'aniyyim*). The officers would accept further donations to the foundations from members of the community.[80] Not all *hekdeshim* were

75 The term denoting beggars was *le-ḥazer 'al ha-petaḥim*, literally to pursue the doors. See e.g. ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, ḥoshen, klal 3, s5, 2:96b; Mitrani, *Maharit ha-ḥadashim*, s9, 105; Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz*, s663, 2:13b; Mizraḥi, *Admat kodesh*, even, s35, 1:68b, and ḥoshen, s67, 1:141a; Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s258, 130a, s366, 175a (the exact same question appears also in de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, even, s206, 30a–31a); *Shut. Maharashdam ḥoshen ha-mishpat*, s300, 212a; ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 4*, s49, 82a.

76 Maimonides and others have argued that beggars should be offered support, though at a lower rate than those who received alms from the *kuppah*; MT, Matnot, 7:7; AT and ShA, yoreh, 250:3. For Muslim beggars before and during the Ottoman period, see Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*, 41–68 and Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 214–5.

77 Singer, *Charity*, 91–2.

78 For example, a Jew from Budapest dedicated the income of a fund he established to sustain Torah students in Safed; Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, s101, 191–2.

79 Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundations*, 22–7.

80 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 219–22. A *hekdesh 'aniyyim* could be a physical space, not just a fund to sustain the poor; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, ḥoshen, klal 6, s9, 2:157b–158b; Ashkenazi, *She'elot u-teshuvot Beṣal'el Ashkenazi*, s13, 101–2. Mostly, scholars referred to funds or assets dedicated to supporting the poor when discussing such a *hekdesh* and the rules governing it. See e.g. Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s127, 1:154a–b, s184, 2:216a–218a, s192, 2:231b, s194, 2:235a–236b, s196, 2:238b–242b; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 6, s1, 1:146b–147a; Berab, *Shut.*, s36, 77–8; de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s211, 37a. For an example of a donation intended to become a *hekdesh* for the poor of Safed, see *Beṣal'el Ashkenazi*, s14, 102–3.

established with the community's needy in mind. Some were set up to support the founder's own family members or for other purposes the donor saw fit. Sometimes they were founded as a means to avoid paying debts, since property set aside as *hekdesh* was no longer considered one's own and could not be taxed or confiscated.[81] The donor or his or her designee would typically administer such *hekdeshim* rather than the community's officers, even if parts of the *hekdesh* benefitted the community.[82]

The practice of charitable foundations in Jewish communities resembled that of the Muslim pious endowment (*waqf*, pl. *awqaf*).[83] Like the *hekdesh*, a *waqf* could be land, property, or money, dedicated by individuals in perpetuity. Mosques were often built as pious foundations, as were other institutions connected with them, such as a school (*madrasa*), a soup kitchen, and a hospital (*bimaristan*).[84] Both *waqf*s and *hekdeshim* were supported not only by their founders, but also by later contributions made to such institutions.[85] *Waqf*-making was not restricted to Muslims. In theory, non-Muslims could dedicate property or money as *waqf* to support any charitable goal, as long as its purpose did not contradict Islamic law, as in giving to a Church or a Synagogue. Yet evidence suggests Christians and Jews designated as *waqf* property designed to benefit a Church or a Synagogue.[86] As *waqf*s were registered in the Muslim court, they provided their founders, Jews and Christians included, a safe way to secure their assets against confiscation or creditors

81 MT, Mishpatim, Malveh ve-loveh, 18:12.

82 Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundations*, 37–47; 'Asis, "'Ezrah hadadit," 259–63.

83 Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundations*, 27–36. As Dotan Arad has shown, even the listing of beneficiaries, ending with the "poor of Israel" resembled the formulae used in *waqf* deeds; Arad, "'Edah meyuḥasah berurah,"118–19.

84 A *waqf* is "a pious endowment, established according to the stipulations of Islamic law." Property could be directly designated as *waqf*, which protected it from sale or confiscation. Money could also be designated as *waqf* or contributed to existing foundations. *Waqf*s supported mosques, schools, sufi lodges, soup kitchens, hospitals, fountains, roads and bridges, but also relatives of the founder and other general beneficiaries, like the poor, travelers and orphans; Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence*, 17–22, quotation from 17; Ergin, *İmaret sistemi*, 19–54. When sultans founded *waqf*s, they did so as individuals, not as office holders; Singer, "Charity's legacies," 295–313. On the motives for establishing imperial *waqf*s, see Kaiser, *Stiftungen*, 20–1; Van Leeuwen, *Waqfs*, 97–101.

85 On *waqf*s, see Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence*, 15–37 and *Charity*, 90–100. On *hekdeshim*, see Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundations*, 5–13, 82–7, 102–16.

86 Singer shows that one legitimate way for Christians to give to a church was to designate the beneficiaries of a *waqf* as the poor of the church; Singer, *Charity*, 99. In his list of *waqf*s in Aleppo, al-Ghazzi denoted contributions made by Christians and Jews as intended to benefit a Church or a Synagogue, but it is not clear whether such donations were channeled through the arrangement Singer mentions; al-Ghazzi, *Nahr*, 2:430–56, 482–501.

of all religions. Funds and assets included in a Jewish *hekdesh* were similarly protected from debt collection,[87] although their status as dedicated property was maintained only as far as people respected the community's rules. At any time one could turn to a Muslim court, where the Jewish *hekdesh* had no legal standing, against a debtor. As we have seen, the risk of excommunication was not high, and it is plausible that people would often prefer founding a *waqf*, which offered better protection, to setting up a *hekdesh*, and not only when money was owed to non-Jews. Accordingly, one Jew went to the *shar'i* court and dedicated a number of houses and the land they sat on as *waqf*, specifying that his descendants and their descendants for eternity would benefit from them. If his family line would be cut off, so he ordered, the poor (Jews) of Syria would become the beneficiaries, and after them the poor of Ereṣ Yisra'el.[88] Another approached the *shar'i* court and declared that all the land he owns shall be for his descendants for all generations until his family runs out, upon which time the poor of his congregation would benefit from it. But if there were no needy people in his congregation, the poor among the gentiles would become its beneficiaries.[89] Such formulae of dedication resemble the Muslim practice of drawing *waqfiyya*s, or *waqf* documents, whereby the poor would be mentioned at the end of the list of recipients.[90] That a Jew had to specify non-Jewish targets, as in the second example, also demonstrates the nature of *waqf* as a foundation meant to benefit Muslims. Jewish *waqf* makers apparently had to comply with a requirement to not entirely exclude Muslims if they wished to register their property in the local Islamic court. The apparent frequency of Jews' dedication of property as *waqf* as part of their estate planning led to discussions about the halakhic standing of *waqf* property, and whether receiving it from one's relative constituted a gift or inheritance.[91]

87 Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundations*, 14–5.

88 Mitrani, *She'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Mitrani*, s105, 3:149a–b.

89 Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, ḥoshen, s5, 2:69a–b.

90 The *waqfiyya* for the very large Musa al-Amiri waqf, dedicated in Aleppo in 1763, specified a list of beneficiaries, then their children, and then their children's children (*wa-man ba'adihim li-awladihim wa-awlad awladihim*). When all such future generations would cease, the waqf should support "the poor Muslims who reside in the city of Aleppo" (*al-fuqara' al-muslimin al-muqimin bi-madinat ḥalab*); Tate, *Une waqfiyya du XVIII^e siècle à Alep*, 154 (91–2 in the original manuscript as produced in this work). For other examples from throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see al-Ghazzi, *Nahr*, 2:482–500.

91 Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s32, 65–7. For more cases of property designated as *waqf* appearing in rabbinical works, see Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s106, 97a–b; Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz*, s634, 2:7b–8a; Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, ḥelek 1, s16, 1:12b, and s112, 1:130a.

5 Why Give?

Charity was already widespread in human societies in antiquity. Religions appropriated it, regulating charitable habits as an integral facet of their systems and encouraging practices that might not have been applied otherwise. In Ottoman society, religion and charity were intertwined, and both were deeply rooted in people's life routine whether or not they followed a religious lifestyle. Although communal boundaries may not have been as strict as we used to think, and one's faith was not necessarily the chief determinant of one's socioeconomic status or lifestyle, religion in itself characterized realities in Ottoman cities more than anything else.[92] Its symbols were everywhere: from houses of worship to soup kitchens, from calls to prayer to the manner people dressed and talked. The inhabitants of cities from Istanbul to Damascus and from Salonica to Cairo were immersed in religious practices and symbols wherever they went. As religion was ubiquitous, so was charity. The ultimate incentive for paying *zakah*, giving *ṣadaqa*, or performing *ṣedakah* was the reward of pleasing God and obeying Him, and many believers gave to charity primarily to meet a religious obligation. Like other religious commandments, charity came with rewards for fulfilling it properly and punishments for avoiding it. And since much of our knowledge about charity comes from religious sources, historians have tended to ascribe acts of charity above all to religious sentiments.[93]

Powerful as religion was in Ottoman society, it cannot account for all charitable acts. Sometimes religion was only a means to articulate and implement altruistic behavior which otherwise would have found different channels. This was evident to religious scholars too, who emphasized that it was difficult to ascertain one's true intention (*niyya* in Arabic, *kavvanah* in Hebrew) for giving charity. In Islam, it was for God alone to determine whether one's *niyya* was genuine; if it was not, the donation would not be counted as benefitting the donor. Expecting a reward, bragging about one's contribution, or excluding the better part of one's possessions while giving, were all signs of untruthful *niyya*, which would void the act of giving.[94] Judaism had a slightly different

92 For further discussion of this matter, see Ayalon, *Natural Disasters*, 62–4, 113–18.

93 A few examples: Abrahams, *Jewish Life*, 35–61; Frisch, *Historical Survey*; Baron, *Jewish Community*, 2:290–350; Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 3:42–3; Ben-Na'eh, "'Oni ve hitmodedut," 221–2; Moshe, *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah*, 30–8; Holman, ed. *Wealth and Poverty*; Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 17–26; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 327–55 and elsewhere throughout the book; Mullett, *Reformation*, 104; Cameron, *Reformation*, 258–60; Duffy, *The Stripping*, 357–62; Smith, *The Art*, 248–78.

94 Singer, *Charity*, 55–8.

view on this issue. While a true *kavvanah* was required for one's prayer to be accepted, rabbis differed on whether the lack of *kavvanah* annulled certain *miṣvot*. With respect to charity, most rabbis agreed, giving *ṣedakah* was valid anyway as the recipients benefitted from it regardless of the intention. In one case, the Talmud argued that even giving *ṣedakah* for personal gain was permissible under certain circumstances.[95] These discussions about intention in giving indicate that Muslim and Jewish scholars acknowledged that charity was not always offered out of pure benevolence.

Religious considerations aside, several factors could have motivated charity. Supporting people by providing them a place to stay, food, work, and social status created dependency, loyalty, and patron-client relationships. Those receiving charity were expected to be thankful and loyal to their benefactor, but at the same time they could serve as patrons of others of lower rank whom they supported. The ultimate patron in the Ottoman Empire was of course the sultan, who in the name of the state distributed alms, provided free meals, and sponsored periodic public celebrations. Sultans were also the founders and sustainers of the greatest *waqf*s, impressive architectural complexes that helped the poor through soup kitchens, education, and healthcare, and society at large by providing a spiritual and scholarly gathering place. By displaying generosity, patrons gained influence and prestige that increased with the number of people they sustained. In fact, charity was an essential facet of a ruler's or a wealthy person's biography. People were remembered for their beneficence, and the desire to leave behind such a reputation required giving substantial amounts to charity throughout one's lifetime.[96]

Waqf, again, was one channel that facilitated contribution of virtually any type of property to a wide range of recipients, thereby enabling people to give for reasons other than reaching salvation and elevating the community's social welfare. Thus "each individual *waqf* … constitutes a discrete story of individual intentions and local circumstances."[97] Amy Singer has pointed to various motivations that could lead to the establishment of or contributions to an existing *waqf*. These included urban and rural development; imperial legitimation; the desire for personal prominence; avoiding restrictions on the division of inheritance; the protection of wealth from imperial confiscation; the promotion of

95 The Talmud rabbis argued that a father who gave charity so that his son could live was a righteous man (*ha-omer sela' zo li-ṣedakah bishvil she-yiḥyeh beni … harei ze ṣadik gamur*; BT, Pesaḥim, 8a–b). See also Blumenthal, "Kavvanah," *EJ*, 12:39–40; Moshe, *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah*, 52–3.

96 Singer, *Charity*, 21–2, 81–7, 100–4, 121; Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 185–8.

97 Singer, *Charity*, 96.

community or sectarian interests; and the preservation of social hierarchies and cultural norms.[98] Such incentives, with some variations, existed among Jews as well when founding a *hekdesh* or a *waqf*.[99] They all had one thing in common: The quest for personal or familial gain in some form. From this perspective, no charity was entirely altruistic.

The Jewish community, lacking a comparable hierarchical system to that of the empire, did not have a patron of charity at its helm. If anything, the ultimate patron for Jews was not one rabbi or another, but rather the congregation or the local community that administered public charity and set the tone for semi-public and private deeds. The loose ties of some Jews to their communities, and the extended social and economic networks living in an Ottoman city offered, makes it somewhat challenging to pinpoint the reasons for Jews' giving and their centuries-long commitment to preserving communal charity. There were no doubt those who made daily or weekly donations out of purely pious sentiments, even as these were never utterly selfless. For the rich, such as those who served as *parnasim*, there were further possible incentives to sustain communal *kuppot*. As was the case for Muslims, contributing to communal charity was a prestige builder for wealthy Jews. Members of congregations and rabbis held those who supported communal charity generously in high regard, which in turn offered the *parnasim* further political sway over their congregations.

For those with modest means, giving to the *kuppot* and following the lead of the *parnasim* were aspects of an unwritten deal a community had with its lay leaders, who got to call the shots on most communal matters while funding the greater share of public expenses and negotiating with the Ottoman authorities, at times at great personal risk. This exchange was a major reason why people chose to give to charity. Although making daily and weekly donations to the *kuppot* was required in theory, emphasized time and again in the responsa, there was no mechanism that could enforce it effectively other than such communal conventions. But why would anyone except the rich be interested in giving that would preserve the positions of the powerful? What was in it for the non-rich? Money was an issue for all, and everyone sought to pay less. Indeed, in certain communities, the *parnasim* advocated a limited welfare system, in which paupers relied on begging and private almsgiving rather than on the public *kuppah*. As the *parnasim* were the main funders of the community's alms-boxes, it is easy to see why they opted for the privatization of charity: It would require them to give no more than anyone else. The middle class and the poor, on the other hand, favored an all-embracing system that would minimize

98 Ibid., 104.

99 Gil, *Jewish Pious Foundation*, 5–13.

the need for private charity, and take beggars off the streets.[100] That the social coherence of Jewish communities described earlier persevered despite such differences suggests that certain factors made its maintenance worthwhile to everyone.

Presumably, the *parnasim* benefitted from their leadership positions, which allowed them to develop ties with the Ottoman elite that were valuable for their businesses. The other groups too had a clear interest in upholding the communal balance of power. Instability marked people's economic fortunes in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, and a few months' illness or a sudden rise in the prices of basic staples could quickly relegate one to the indigent class. Unless well-off, people knew with near certainty that at some point in their lifetime someone in their family would need to depend on the generosity of others. Since, as far as we know, Jews hardly ever resorted to Muslim *imaret*s or hospitals, did not attend weekly prayers at the neighborhood mosque, and probably did not hang around its doors where alms were distributed, their own community's ability to help in times of hardship was for most their only hope. Charity thus seems to have promoted segregation rather than pluralism in Ottoman urban society. With few options to obtain charitable assistance outside the community, Jews regarded communal funds as crucial.

This leaves us with the question of the rabbis' interest in maintaining communal charity. Scholars were typically not wealthy, and their prestige and eminence did not usually rely on business transactions, connections with the authorities, or the amounts they contributed to charity; rather, it emanated from their charisma, learnedness, and erudition. Yet rabbis defended communal charitable institutions and giving to charity in general.[101] Beyond a sheer belief in the halakhic commandments of charity, which no doubt motivated scholars to uphold relevant practices, two interrelated interests guided them in doing so. First, almost all rabbinical appointments depended on the will of the *kahal*, the *ma'amad*, or the *parnasim*. Supporting practices that solidified the political standing of lay leaders guaranteed that communal institutions continued to exist. Teaching children, resolving disputes, and delivering sermons at the synagogue were all facets of the institutional community that depended on rabbis. Strong lay leadership therefore ensured rabbis would continue to be sustained through official appointments. Second, since the endurance of

100 'Asis, "'Ezrah hadadit," 268–9.

101 For examples of scholars supporting communal charity, its functioning alongside the synagogue, and the expectation that Jews contribute to it regularly, see Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, oraḥ, s10, 13a–14a; Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s88, 173–4; Mitrani, *She'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Mitrani*, s60, 3:128b–129a; Matatyah, *Shut. Binyamin Ze'ev*, s172, 2:113–4.

communal charity preserved Jews' dependency on their communities, rabbis would align themselves with communal leaders in an effort to maintain a culture of beneficence, through which they could push for a halakhic social order. As we have seen, rabbis were largely unsuccessful in imposing halakhah broadly. But so long as charity was a Jewish community monopoly, rabbis were at least partly successful in promoting a religious lifestyle within their congregations.

6 Charitable Societies and the Weakening of Communal Authority

So far, I have discussed forms of charity practiced within the framework of the community. Soon after the arrival of Jews from Iberia, and possibly earlier, Jews in the Ottoman Empire began to form charitable societies that operated separately from the congregation. Society members belonged to and took up some of the duties communities typically handled. By the late eighteenth century, such organizations operated in most Ottoman communities, big and small, often replacing the functions of the congregation and its *kuppot* in collecting and distributing aid. Although slow in the making, this shift from community to what were essentially private initiatives had a profound effect on the ability of lay leaders and rabbis to assert their authority over their members. Perhaps not surprisingly, the process weakened the standing of scholars more than that of lay leaders, many of whom held positions in those societies that entailed political and economic influence.

The study of Jewish charitable societies (*ḥevrah*, pl. *ḥevrot*) is still in its infancy, with works generally covering Europe rather than the eastern Mediterranean.[102] Only one essay has thus far explored the evolution of the *ḥevrah* within Ottoman Jewry.[103] Charitable societies, or fraternities, first appear in Christian Europe in the High Middle Ages. In Venice, such societies, known as *scuole grandi*, were formed as early as the thirteenth century. Their aim was to aid the poor through providing food, clothes, temporary housing, and other forms of assistance. These were lay societies operating outside the purview of the Church; priests' membership was limited, and they were not

102 For an extensive list of works dealing with *ḥevrot*, see Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 302–3, n. 113. See also Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 123–7, 153–5.

103 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 277–318. For a summary of this article, see *Yehudim*, 207–19. Ben-Na'eh also discussed guilds briefly in his "Kevurah, ḥevrot kevurah," 191–3 and in "'Oni ve hitmodedut," 235. For some details on *ḥevrot* in Egypt, see Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 191–5.

allowed to obtain leadership positions. The context of these societies was still pious: Prayers were held regularly, and so were public processions featuring displays of repentance through flagellation. But institutionalized religion had little role to play in these organizations. By the seventeenth century, the *scuole* developed into political-professional organizations that attracted men into civil service, and that provided a sense of insurance for their members who would rely on it in times of hardship. They were the main channel through which charity was distributed in the city, far superseding the Church that, until the late Middle Ages, had a near monopoly over charity. Similar societies operated in the same period in other Italian cities.[104]

Such groups existed among Christians in medieval Spain, from whom Jews probably borrowed the practice. Jews began forming charitable societies in the late thirteenth century in an attempt to institutionalize poor relief, hitherto limited mainly to private initiatives. By the fifteenth century, almost every congregation in Spain had associations of this kind, including societies of undertakers (*ḥevrat kabbarim*), which took care of burial arrangements for those unable to afford them, and others for Torah study (*talmud torah*), which undertook the education of poor children and orphans.[105] Jewish communities in the Italian peninsula had *ḥevrot* in the sixteenth century, and that is when we first hear of them in Ottoman, Ashkenazi, and Western Sephardi Jewish communities as well.[106]

We know little about Ottoman *ḥevrot* in the first half of the sixteenth century, though the sparse evidence we have suggests they existed in at least the major urban communities of Turkey and the Balkans. *Ḥevrot* in the first half of the sixteenth century were rather general: Their overall purpose seems to have been to advance various charitable causes, from caring for the sick to burial and educating poor children. Unlike the competition and tensions between the *ḥevrah* and the congregation that would emerge later in the century, in the early sixteenth century the two worked in cooperation; indeed, there was some overlap between institutions, as the term *ḥevrah* appears to have been interchangeable with *hekdesh* and *kuppah*.[107] Moreover, if evidence from the

104 Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 33–83, 131, 186–7.

105 'Asis, "'Ezrah hadadit," 263–79; Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 105, 124.

106 Foa, *The Jews of Europe*, 147–9; Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 302.

107 "Bein gildah le-kahal," 303–4. See also Mizraḥi, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, s53, 150, where *ḥevrah* describes groups of people that carry out charitable work such as grave digging and burial, while actually referring to the congregation as a whole. Mizraḥi uses the term *ḥevrah* to mean *kahal*, the subdivision of *kehillah*; to denote the latter, Mizraḥi uses *'ir* (city) rather than *kehillah*.

Sephardic community in Amsterdam is any indication, early *ḥevrot* answered to the leadership of the congregation.[108]

Eliyahu ben Binyamin ha-Levi (d. *c*.1535), a Sephardic rabbi in Istanbul, described in his responsa a group of people (*ḥevrat anashim*) who volunteered to support the poor, the sick, and the dead with burial arrangements. Fundraising for that general *ḥevrah* was performed by its members daily, but also by the congregation's *parnasim*, who understood the importance of the services the *ḥevrah* was providing the congregation. Thus, we learn that the administrators of the *ḥevrah* and the *parnasim* were not necessarily the same people, and that at times there were disputes between the two groups. Ha-Levi was asked to rule whether the *parnasim* had the right to seize some of the *ḥevrah*'s funds and use them to purchase new seats for the synagogue. Justifying his decision to prohibit the practice, ha-Levi explained that the rules governing the changing of purpose of communal charity did not apply here, since the *ḥevrah*, funded privately by individuals, was not the equivalent of a communal *kuppah*. The *parnasim*, he concluded, had no right to administer any of the *ḥevrah*'s funds. According to ha-Levi, therefore, such a society enjoyed a level of independence from the congregation, even as it normally cooperated with it.[109] Elsewhere, ha-Levi pointed to the possibility of confusing the terms *ḥevrah* with *ḥaver* (friend), stressing that a group of people may be identified as a *ḥevrah* simply for being a group of friends and not a society supporting the poor. This suggests *ḥevrot* were rather new institutions in Ottoman Jewish communities in the early sixteenth century since people were not yet familiar with the appropriate terminology for them, even as they fulfilled functions similar to past organizations.[110]

From the second half of the sixteenth century, the number of *ḥevrot* appears to have been on the rise.[111] Communities large and small had them, though until the late eighteenth century this was mostly a Western Anatolian-Balkan phenomenon. We hear very little of *ḥevrot* in the Arab provinces, perhaps with the exception of Cairo, where three burial societies existed from the sixteenth century.[112] Other references from Jerusalem and Syria suggest people carried out the functions of charitable societies, but offered little on whether they operated as a separate group from the congregation. *Ḥevrot* appear to

108 Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 96–7.

109 ha-Levi, *Zakan Aharon*, s55, 44a–b.

110 Ibid., s176, 95b.

111 This conclusion is logical, but it is not as conclusive as Ben-Na'eh claims. See "Bein gildah le-kahal," 308. Note 118 on that page refers mostly to Italy and offers only anecdotal references for the Ottoman Empire.

112 Bornstein-Makovetzky, "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah," 191–2.

have been absent from Damascus and Aleppo before the second half of the nineteenth century.[113] The few mentions of *ḥevrot* there before the nineteenth century do not divulge any details on the operation of such societies. They likely referred to general indications of communal charity rather than the existence of separate groups.[114] The absence of *ḥevrot* in the Arab provinces before the nineteenth century remains something of a puzzle. If they existed at all, we know nothing about them, and can safely assume their role was less central to communal life than it was elsewhere.[115] Why they failed to develop as dominant alternative institutions to the *kahal* as they did in Turkey and the Balkans is unclear at this point.[116] Possibly, just as Arab Jews adopted some Sephardi traditions and rejected others, and just as in Syria Jews continued to speak Arabic rather than adopt Ladino, the model of communal charity based on central funds (*kuppot*) rather than private initiatives prevailed a bit longer.

The arrival in the Ottoman Empire of a great number of *converso* Jews (*anusim*) who returned to Judaism, and the financial crisis of the late sixteenth century, were among the catalysts for the increase of membership in the *ḥevrot*

113 Yaron Har'el has suggested *ḥevrot* were established in Damascus only in the 1870s, and that charitable activity was previously very limited, mainly due to meagerness of resources. He has assumed that Aleppo fared better, thanks to charitable societies the *frankos* established there in the eighteenth century; Har'el, *Sfinot shel esh*, 104–5.

114 Kaṣin, *Maḥaneh Yehudah*, 1:147 talks about the *franko*s who supported the Aleppo community via the *ḥevrot: ḥevrat talmud torah ve gemilut ḥasadim ve bikur ḥolim ve she'ar 'inyanim rabim* (other important matters). On the next page, he refers to *ḥevrat gemilut ḥasadim u-veit ha-ḥayim*. Shlomo Laniado mentioned *ḥevrat gemilut ḥasadim* in his *Beit dino shel shlomo*, s39, 527. Pinto talked about a congregation that had a *ḥevrat kovrim* (burial) and another in charge of lighting candles on Shabbat and holidays (*hadlakat nerot be-shabatot ve-yom tov*), but it is unclear where that congregation operated; Pinto, *Nivḥar mi-kesef*, s10, 13. Not resorting even to this evidence, some simply wrongly concluded that *ḥevrot* operated in Syria as they did elsewhere in the empire; see Luṣki, "Ha-frankos be-Ḥalab," 70–2; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 328.

115 Mark Cohen ascribes the absence of confraternities from Geniza documents to the nonexistence of parallel organizations, such as guilds, in the surrounding Muslim society of the time. He has suggested that charity was dispensed through "private gifts … pious foundations … monies left in wills, and … public charitable distributions," rather than through confraternities. While guilds did exist in the Ottoman period, Cohen's assumption appears to be applicable for Ottoman Arab cities as well (Cohen, *Poverty and Charity*, 197–8, quote from 197).

116 Ben-Na'eh's explanation that the Spanish origin of *ḥevrot* led to their development in Turkey and the Balkans but not in the Arab provinces seems applicable to the first half of the sixteenth century, when most Jews in the Arab provinces still followed Must'aribi traditions. But it does not address the very late coming of such institutions into an area that had been mostly Sephardic in practices and traditions (though mostly not language) since the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. See Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 304.

and the foundation of many new ones. As Jewish communities absorbed more immigrants, and as many were reduced to poverty, the need for charitable support increased, and the ability of communal institutions to provide it diminished. The *ḥevrot* then filled the gap, and as their number increased, they became specialized, focusing on particular aspects of charity work rather than supporting the needy at large.[117] Evidence from Jewish communities outside the empire suggests a similar pattern: A sharp rise in demand for charity, prompted by the arrival of many poor immigrants; a community's inability to address all needs; and the relative anonymity receiving aid from a private society offered, compared with the need to expose one's poverty publicly when seeking communal help, all contributed to the proliferation of the *ḥevrot*.[118] The most common, found in many cities, were the general charitable society (*ḥevrat gemilut ḥasadim*), which supported the poor broadly; the burial society (*kabarim* or *kevurah*), responsible for preparing the dead for burial, digging the grave, and services in the deceased's honor after death; the Torah study society (*talmud torah*), supporting the education of poor children and other charitable endeavors; and visiting the sick (*bikur ḥolim*), which cared for the sick at their homes. Other *ḥevrot* existed here and there for other purposes, such as welcoming visitors who did not have a place to stay (*hakhnasat orḥim*), caring for orphaned girls (*yetomot*), sending contributions to Jews in Palestine (*ereṣ yisra'el*), supporting imprisoned Jews (*beit ha-sohar*), and even sustaining bands of musicians and dancers for entertainment purposes (*menagnim ve-rokdim*). There is so far no evidence, however, for the existence of societies for redemption of captives (*pidyon shevuyyim*).[119]

The mere names of the *ḥevrot* suggest that these were organizations that mimicked the functions and structure of the congregation. On a smaller scale than the congregation and with membership that at times resembled an exclusive club,[120] the *ḥevrah* of the seventeenth century prayed together at the same synagogue, where it also raised money for its activities. It was run by officials with similar titles (*parnasim*, *gaba'im*, who at times served in a dual role in the community and the *ḥevrah*). Members of a society would meet for study sessions, visit the sick, and attend celebrations. In that the *ḥevrah* became an

117 Ibid., 304–5.

118 Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 123.

119 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 309, 311–18. As we have seen (see n. 69 above), redemption of captives was not a charitable cause communities had to face regularly. As such, it did not justify a society dedicated to it. A *bikur ḥolim* society was the first *ḥevrah* established in Amsterdam, in 1609, by the Portuguese Jewish community that absorbed *conversos* from Iberia; Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 108–9.

120 As was the case elsewhere in the seventeenth century; see *Poverty and Welfare*, 107.

alternative to the *kahal*, but it also provided another function congregations did not always offer: Socialization. At least for some members, the social aspect was a *ḥevrah*'s main appeal; for many *ḥevrot*, pious explanations were used to excuse various activities that had little to do with religion or charity.[121] Just like a congregation, the *ḥevrah* had bylaws (*haskamot*) that defined who could join or leave, the role of officials, the people it hired to fulfill certain functions (e.g. a *shammash* or a messenger of sorts, a rabbi to teach and deliver sermons, a *sofer* to do the accounting, a physician), and the amounts members were required to pay in (typically weekly) dues. Many *ḥevrot* asked for strict adherence to their rules. That this issue came up repeatedly in the responsa attests, as Ben-Na'eh rightly noted, "to the weakness of the *ḥevrah*. Just like the congregation, it was essentially a voluntary body, and the problem of enforcing its authority on individuals (*yeḥidim*) occupied it [i.e. its leaders and members in general] quite a bit."[122]

Ben-Na'eh understood *ḥevrot* to have had a hierarchical structure, with a chief bearing the title *başı* (as in *kabar bashi*, i.e. chief undertaker) at its helm, in a manner reminiscent of the structure of guilds. Subordinate to the chief were the *kahya* or deputy, and then next in line, at least in large societies that divided their works into shifts, were the heads of shifts (*rosh mishmarah*). *Ḥevrot* also had their own judicial authority that dealt with transgressors who violated rules or did not pay on time. These could boycott, fine, and even expel a member.[123] Ben-Na'eh notes that the *ḥevrah* was inspired by the organization of congregations and citywide communal structures, but that claim should not lead one to conclude that the *ḥevrah* was hierarchical, any more than the congregation was. Ben-Na'eh points to the position of head of the *ḥevrah*, a possible parallel to the head of a guild, as an indication to its top-down structure. Yet we have little evidence as to the status of the chief undertaker or leader of such societies (*rosh 'al ḥavurah*), or their duties. Thus in the texts of three *haskamot* of *ḥevrot* from Izmir, functionaries such as *kabar bashi*, *kahya*, and *rosh levaya* (head of funerary services) appear several times and described broadly as decision makers. The texts, otherwise quite elaborate on the functions and purposes of the *ḥevrot*, do not define the roles of their leaders.[124] Like

121 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 291–3.

122 Ibid., 280. See 286–8 for the fees associated with membership and the professionals that societies hired in a fashion very similar to congregations. The many reminders to pay on time suggest, as Ben-Na'eh notes, that *ḥevrot* had difficulties collecting the money.

123 Ibid., 284–5.

124 The *haskamot* were originally drafted in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries but were lost due to fires, and reproduced in the nineteenth. Galante reproduced their full text, in Hebrew and Ladino. See Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 3:249–68.

the *marbiṣ torah* for the congregation, the head of the *ḥevrah* seems to have been an appointed official who, regardless of the terms of his appointment, could lose his position at any time; real power lay in the hands of those who appointed him, other members of the *ḥevrah* or its *parnasim*.[125]

One nocturnal affair Me'ir de-Buton (d. 1649) discussed in his responsa demonstrates that the *ḥevrah* would better be described as an authoritarian institution, rather than a hierarchical one. In a small town where all Jews formed only one congregation, de-Buton related, they had a *haskamah* that all matters would be decided with the consent of the lay leaders, the seven *tovei ha-'ir*. When a dispute erupted between a messenger sent on behalf of the *ḥevrat kabarim*, and the son of the *kabar bashi*, a group of apparently influential members of the burial society decided to ostracize the messenger who they believed disrespected the chief undertaker and his son. At midnight following the altercation between the chief's son and the messenger they convened the members of the *ḥevrah* and asked them to sign a document, stating that no one shall ever attend the messenger's celebrations or assist him in times of mourning. Those who refused to sign, the drafters of the document threatened, would be removed from the society. And this is what happened, despite the opposition of the *kabar bashi* and his son, who attested that the messenger had not offended them; and the objection of some members, who found themselves expelled from the *ḥevrah*. When the matter was discovered the next morning, members of the *kahal* asked the initiators of the document why they took such measures so hastily without consulting the lay leaders. Their response: "Because we feel like it" (*kakh anu roṣim*).[126] If anything, this demonstrates that *ḥevrot*, just like the congregations they were modeled after, had informal loci of power that depended on factors unrelated to official appointments. The *ḥevrah* was more successful than the congregation in dictating rules that members

125 In Benveniste, *Sha'ar Yehoshu'a*, 2:s90, 136–41, a group manages to depose the *kabar bashi* despite a life appointment. As Benveniste tells it, the dispute between the supporters and opponents of the chief undertaker was shaped by individuals on both sides, and not the deposed and new chiefs, who were barely involved. In ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 3, s7, 1:125b–126a, members of the *kahal* drive a dispute with the son of a deceased individual who served as *gabbai* of the burial society and head of the *gemilut ḥasadim* society, while the duties of the two positions are never mentioned. And in Salton, *Benei Moshe*, s1, 1, one also finds no details on the role of the *kabar bashi*. Having obtained a contract for twenty years from his society did not deter its lay leaders from appointing someone in his stead as soon as he left town for business. Ben-Na'eh cited these three sources (284, n. 30), suggesting they prove the hierarchical structure of the *ḥevrot*.

126 De-Buton, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, s19, 34:2.

followed, because societies managed to create a desire to comply with their rules that the congregation could not: People had to belong to a congregation at least nominally to pay their taxes, but they *wanted* to join a *ḥevrah* and could be easily removed from it. Unlike the *kahal*, it was a truly voluntary enterprise.

What drew people to the *ḥevrah*? What made membership, which often entailed a great expense, worthwhile? Socializing, as we have seen, was definitely a factor, especially for members of large congregations. There, the *ḥevrah* offered the intimacy, friendliness, and a setting for close interpersonal interactions the *kahal* could not provide. Being part of a *ḥevrah*, as an exclusive club, also entailed an enhanced version of the same benefits one enjoyed when contributing to communal charity. Members of a charitable society counted power and influence in this world and rewards in the next as some of the benefits of their beneficence. Furthermore, people wished to join burial and visiting the sick societies as a form of insurance in a world where one's wealth was shaky: The *ḥevrah* would first attend to the needs of its own members, in life and death, before taking care of the population at large that it was principally in charge of serving. Thus *ḥevrot*, officially charitable societies for the greater good, were a club that above all took care of its own people. Taking part in a *ḥevrah* therefore helped some advance their standing within their communities. To the wealthy already in leadership positions in their communities, it offered a chance to demonstrate that they cared about the wellbeing of their people. To those of modest means, the *ḥevrah* offered a chance for social mobility that the community usually did not. Before the eighteenth century, however, not many among the poor were members of a *ḥevrah*: By preferring the children of members over newcomers, excluding women, imposing membership fees too high for many to afford, and requiring a time commitment impossible for the poor to comply with, *ḥevrot* managed to attract mostly the wealthy to their ranks.[127]

The existence of bodies that competed with the congregation in an essential area as charity led communal leaders, and notably rabbis, to oppose the creation of *ḥevrot* (or support them reluctantly) and try to limit their influence. Communal charity was one of the few services that tied Jews to their communities and made them dependent on the authority of rabbis and the *takanot* of their congregation. Understandably, attempts to undermine communal charity by extracting it from the control of the traditional leadership were met with resistance. Until the 1570s or so, *parnasim* and rabbis throughout

127 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 280–2, 290, 309.

the empire tried to prevent the mere formation of *ḥevrot*. A slew of *takanot* from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century forbade the formation of extra-communal organizations other than the *ḥevrat kabarim*.[128]

From the late sixteenth century, we see a greater involvement of lay leaders and rabbis in overseeing the affairs of the *ḥevrot*. How influential were scholars and lay leaders in shaping the activities of charitable societies they were not members of? On the one hand, claims Ben-Na'eh, rabbis and *parnasim* were often involved in appointments within the *ḥevrah*, and even had the authority to prevent the formation of one or order its dissolution.[129] On the other hand, the example he cites of a congregation's leaders' failed attempt to prevent the split of one society into two suggests the opposite.[130] Ben-Na'eh also sketches the burial society as a politically powerful player in the congregation. The status of this and other *ḥevrot* alarmed the official leadership of the *kahal*. But in many places, they relieved the congregation of the need to provide services, and financial dependency on the *ḥevrot* reached a level at which communities could no longer do without them. Charitable societies depended on the *kahal* too for enforcing regulations, punishing offenders, funding (especially if officers of the *ḥevrah* also served as *parnasim* of the congregation), and legitimacy for their existence that came from lay leaders and rabbis. Thus, rejection of the idea of the *ḥevrah*, and acceptance of and cooperation with it, coexisted. Attempts to fight the formation or operations of a *ḥevrah* were not only futile; they raised fears that members would simply break away and create a new congregation.[131]

From the late seventeenth century, and primarily in the course of the eighteenth, the *ḥevrah* went through a process of specialization, membership growth, and increasing independence that led to the privatization of charity, over which congregations and rabbis had little direct influence by the early nineteenth century. The *ḥevrot* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries oversaw

128 Examples for these are found in the responsa. See Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s116, 55b, s298, 149b; Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s204, 185–7; de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, yoreh, s87, 32b; Mizraḥi and Ben Ḥayim, *Mayim 'amukim*, s71, 2:119b–123a (erroneously numbered as 186a). Opposition to the foundation of *ḥevrot* existed among the leadership of Sephardic communities outside the empire as well, for similar reasons; Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 133–4.

129 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 295.

130 Ibid., 296–7.

131 Ibid., 294. Ben-Na'eh claims those were not unfounded concerns, and that resistance to *ḥevrot* led in some cases to the formation of new congregations; however, the evidence he provides to that effect does not show the breakups of congregations had much to do with opposition to *ḥevrot* (see n. 80 on the same page). For more on tensions between a congregation and a charitable society, see Ben-Na'eh, "Kevurah, ḥevrot kevurah," 192.

a broad spectrum of charitable activities. Societies for *gemilut ḥasadim*, burial, or visiting the sick did a lot more than their titles suggested. For example, the *ḥevrat levaya* (funeral society) of Izmir, headed by a *kabar bashi*, founded some time before 1742, enumerated in its foundation document duties that ranged from caring for the dead, assisting daughters of members with their wedding needs, supporting incarcerated individuals, and sustaining a public kitchen when epidemic outbreaks occurred, in partnership with two other *ḥevrot*.[132] At some point, *ḥevrot* either split or new ones formed with a specific agenda. The burial society that existed in Cairo from the sixteenth century had by the eighteenth split into several sub-societies, each caring for only one part of the burial process.[133] Such changes were hardly introduced to streamline the dispensation of charity. Rather, they were the product of the proliferation of charitable societies as a powerful alternative to the *kahal*. To justify their activities, *ḥevrot* found a matter to care about, but often their official primary concern was so marginal that it is hard to imagine the entire society existed solely to fulfill an essentially nonexistent need. Consider, for example, the society of procurers of willow leaves (*ḥevrat mevi'ei ha-'aravah*) operating in Jerusalem in the eighteenth century, whose duty was to venture outside the city and fetch the leaves, as well as the *lulav* (closed palm tree frond) necessary for the celebration of Sukkot.[134] Presumably, Jews had celebrated Sukkot in Jerusalem for centuries before the existence of this society and managed to find the necessary ingredients to do so. In Aleppo in the early nineteenth century, we find *ḥevrot* for dressing the naked poor (*malbish 'eromim*), and separate ones for distributing flour to the poor, bread to the needy, and *maṣot* during Passover.[135] In earlier centuries, all such functions would be handled by one society, typically the *gemilut ḥasadim* society. *Ḥevrot* in the eighteenth century, therefore, bore a stated charitable goal, which allowed them to conduct social gatherings involving food, drinks, music, smoking, and coffee. The gatherings of a society, closed off to non-members and often conducted secretly, offered an alternative to the congregation's social system, and for some likely replaced it altogether. More than for stepping into the community's role, rabbis protested against the *ḥevrot*'s functions that allowed for socializing to occur outside their purview.[136]

The specialization of *ḥevrot* and the splintering of larger organizations into smaller ones was likely a result of a growth in membership. Ben-Na'eh has

132 Galante, *Juifs de Turquie*, 3:255–8.
133 Ben-Na'eh, "Kevurah, ḥevrot kevurah," 191.
134 Meyuḥas, *Brakhot mayim*, oraḥ, s649, 46a.
135 Har'el, *Sfinot shel esh*, 105.
136 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 279; *Yehudim*, 216–17.

produced evidence that in the eighteenth century membership fees for many *ḥevrot* were nominal, allowing not only the elites to join, and turning membership in charitable societies into a common feature of Ottoman Jewish life.[137] The ubiquity of charitable societies in the eighteenth century (and in Syria, in the nineteenth) made close cooperation between the *ḥevrah* and the congregation inevitable. In some cities, the two institutions became intertwined, officials from one taking part in the administration of the other.[138]

Another factor contributing to the proliferation of the *ḥevrah* at the expense of congregations was the tremendous expansion of guilds in Ottoman society, also in the eighteenth century.[139] The structure and purpose of guilds, known to Jews through their operation in them, either along Muslims and Christians, or in exclusively Jewish setups, may have led to the formation of societies that adopted guild-like features: They operated across congregations, thus no longer committed to benefit the members of one or anyone outside the *ḥevrah*. And some managed to impose a monopoly on trade in the area or commodities they specialized in. A professional rather than charitable unifying element began to appear in *ḥevrot* from the second half of the eighteenth century, and many operated effectively as guilds. Terminologically, too, the two were at times confused.[140]

The emergence of *ḥevrot* that functioned as guilds, crossed congregational lines, and were no longer committed to welfare broadly, intensified the

137 "Bein gildah le-kahal," 283. One should, however, take with a grain of salt his assessment of the gradual social and moral degeneration of societies over time. The one source he uses to sustain this claim complains about the members of the burial society at his time, but scholars' lamentation of their generation's moral inferiority compared with that of their younger years or ancestors was a rather common feature of rabbinical writing that should not be taken literally. For Ben-Na'eh's source, see Modilyano, *Ne'eman Shmu'el*, s96, 124b. For another example of a generational decline argument, see 'Antebi, *Ḥokhmah u-musar*, 31–3.

138 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 297–8.

139 Guilds in Ottoman society fulfilled many other roles that clearly distinguished them from the *ḥevrah*. They have been the subject of much scholarship that goes beyond the scope of this discussion. See, for example: Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 41–112; Yıldırım, "Ottoman guilds."

140 Ben-Na'eh, "Bein gildah le-kahal," 307, and see n. 130 for examples of *ḥevrot* that were effectively guilds. His conclusion that guilds became religiously homogenous in the eighteenth century is incorrect, as entries on guild memberships in the Istanbul *shar'i* court records from the second half of the eighteenth century demonstrate. See e.g. Kal'a, *İstanbul ahkam defterleri*, 2, 7/27/81, 7/96/294a, 7/255/783, 8/11/29, 8/45/141, 8/46/143, 8/328/1076, 9/61/219, 11/180/556 and many more throughout that volume. In the court records of Aleppo, Marcus found Jews mentioned as members of guilds with Muslims, and only one guild that formed along religious lines, that of the Jewish butchers; Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, 159.

competition with the *kahal*. This process meant that for a growing number of people, bonds with the *ḥevrah*/guild, neighborhood, or possibly other organizations and partnerships, were stronger than with their congregation. Lay leaders could mitigate the loss of authority in the congregation by their status in the *ḥevrah*. For scholars, however, such developments signaled further erosion of their authority. With the collection and dispensation of charity no longer the prerogative of the unit over which rabbis at least tried to assert influence, their ability to promote halakhah in their communities diminished further.

CHAPTER 5

Education, Reading, and Rabbinical Authority

The existence of alternative networks to the community and the gradual elimination of charity works from the congregation's direct oversight undermined the status of religious leaders. Rabbis, however, continued to enjoy a special, elevated standing as teachers and educators of children and adults; indeed, until the second half of the nineteenth century Jews had practically no alternative to religious education.[1]

The rabbinical monopoly on the transmission of scholarly knowledge began to weaken in the eighteenth century. While the starting point of this process is hard to determine, the Shabbetai Ṣevi affair clearly contributed to the emasculation of rabbinical scholarly eminence. As we have seen, the proto-populist Sabbatean movement, although ultimately unsuccessful, had managed to challenge rabbinical conventions: If the fulfillment of some *miṣvot* was no longer required, as Shabbetai had argued, the halakhic knowledge underlying them was no longer relevant. In Western Europe, the Sabbatean undercutting of rabbinical authority led to the emergence of two competing forms of Judaism: Orthodoxy, and a heretical trend from which Reform Judaism would eventually rise. In the Ottoman Empire, such changes were slower to take shape, but they were already apparent in parts of the Ottoman Jewish community by the mid-eighteenth century – not in open revolt against rabbis, but rather in the expansion of printing that made books, beyond the basic prayer texts, available to a significantly wider public; and in the appearance of translated or revised halakhic texts in Ladino (though not yet in Judeo-Arabic) written for popular consumption. These were important developments that set the stage for the later appearance of non-religious Jewish education opportunities in the nineteenth century. As I argue in this chapter, the exposure of a growing share of Ottoman Jewry to rabbinical texts did not result in a popular embracing of a halakhic lifestyle, as the rabbis might have wished. Rather, it led to an erosion of the specialized knowledge scholars claimed to have, which in turn resulted in a further decline in their standing within their communities.

1 It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that a modernized Jewish curriculum was offered via the Alliance schools, and non-Jewish education via American (and other) missionary institutions. For the former, see Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, 47–95; for the latter, Tibawi, *American Interests*, 120–87.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_007

1 Education

In the pre-Ottoman eastern Mediterranean, one studied with private teachers rather than in institutions. Those with means hired tutors for their children, and congregations sustained instructors for the rest, including orphans and the destitute, even providing pupils with meals and clothing. Most Jewish boys studied for a few years at least. The main goal of Jewish education was not vocational training, which was typically provided by a master or a father to his son. Jewish education prepared one for participating in synagogue life and, more broadly, in communal life. It included acquaintance with the Torah and the ability to recite and cantillate it properly; readings in the books of the prophets; and, in a society that spoke Arabic or Turkish, a grasp of Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages of Jewish scholarship. For the majority of students, such knowledge was passive; writing was taught to enhance reading, not to equip one with communication skills. As evidence from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries suggests, Jews then still largely relied on scribes to write letters for them and, save for signing their names, were basically illiterate. Some students, however, continued their studies beyond the elementary level, and it was from that group that scholars and teachers emerged. Girls and women were essentially absent from that educational scene.[2] This educational environment, with community-operated institutions alongside private tutors for the better-off, existed in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Spain as well.[3]

With minor variances, this setting remained unchanged in the Ottoman period until the second half of the nineteenth century. Most Jewish children in Ottoman cities attended some form of schooling for three or four years, after which they would move on to learn a trade. There were children who did not receive any form of schooling and remained practically illiterate; Ben-Na'eh believes their share of the overall Jewish population was lower than that among Muslims.[4] For Ottoman rabbis, education was a tool in training children to live a proper Jewish life where one followed the commandments of Jewish law.[5] As we have seen, regularly skipping attendance at the synagogue, following halakhah slackly, or disrespecting rabbis were no less valid ways of being Jewish. Indeed, such recalcitrant behaviors were an integral part of the Jewish experience. For most Jews who did not continue beyond the elementary level, Jewish

2 Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:173–211; Botticini and Eckstein, *The Chosen Few*, 142–8.

3 'Asis, "'Ezrah hadadit," 276–7.

4 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 195.

5 Ibid., 194–5. For more on the goals and purpose of Ottoman Jewish communal educational institutions, see Amarillio, "Ḥevrat talmud torah," 273–308.

education offered an essential skill they would need to make a living: Basic literacy. Jewish learning had "spillover effects on general literacy and education, which in turn increase[d] the productivity of urban skilled workers." In other words, Jewish education had an economic utility beyond what scholars had intended.[6] That was likely a major incentive for parents who continued for centuries to educate their children, at least as much as their desire to ensure that their children would lead a pious lifestyle.

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, wealthy Jews would hire private tutors for their children; middle class people would organize to hire an instructor for a group of pupils; and the congregation would arrange for the instruction of poor and orphaned children. In all of these settings children were taught in the vernacular (Ladino or Judeo-Arabic) to read the Torah in Hebrew and acquire what amounted to a very basic halakhic understanding. Students would translate the texts to their language and memorize them for prayer purposes. Communal educational institutions began to grow in the later decades of the century, as more and more middle-class parents sent their children to the *talmud torah* instead of arranging for a private tutor. Many congregations offered instruction in a rather rudimentary setting: A room adjacent to the synagogue where study was conducted in groups, with the number of students at times exceeding the room capacity or the ability of a single instructor to handle. The *beit midrash* or *talmud torah* thus evolved from an institution serving mostly poor children into one catering to a bigger public, including older students and scholars.[7] By one account, the *talmud torah*, a communal establishment often run by a *ḥevrah* bearing the same name, had become ubiquitous in mid-size or larger Jewish concentrations by the late seventeenth century. Ben-Na'eh suggests that the *talmud torah* "effectively served the majority of the Jewish public, became one of the most typical communal institutions, and its existence was perceived to be essential." His evidence for this claim is a comment by Ḥayim Benveniste of Izmir, according to whom one could not possibly live in a place without a *ḥevrah* of *talmud torah*. By "one" here, however, Benveniste might well have intended someone like himself – a scholar or student – rather than the general Jewish public.[8]

---

6 Botticini and Eckstein, *The Chosen Few*, 150–2, quotation from 150.

7 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 193–5; Hacker, "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki," 257–8. I borrow the term "middle class" here, even though it was never in use in an Ottoman context, to denote people with modest to moderate means who did not see themselves, or regarded by their communities, as poor. Most such Jews would have fallen within the middle (*evsat*) Ottoman tax bracket.

8 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 193. See Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei yoreh de'ah*, s220, 163a for the part Ben-Na'eh refers to.

Whether or not the *talmud torah* served the same purpose in all communities, it seems that Jewish education had transformed from the early sixteenth century to the late eighteenth. While teaching in the earlier period had been conducted mostly in private locations and in small groups, it later became a public function of communal life. One may agree that by assuming a greater role in education through funding a *talmud torah* that served a wider student body, "a congregation's leadership demonstrated the importance it ascribed to fulfillment of the *miṣvot* and the study of Torah by the public as a whole."[9] But the expansion of public communal education also took the responsibility for instruction away from the scholars, who were now under the authority of those administering the *talmud torah*. Most students in these institutions did not become scholars, nor did they continue to higher forms of religious learning (more on that, below). We can therefore assume that children who received Jewish traditional training used the skills they acquired – reading, writing, and sometimes basic arithmetic – to non-religious ends. It is thus less likely that the institutionalization of Jewish education led to the expansion of halakhah as a guiding principle in people's lives. Rather, organized education exposed more Jews to knowledge that freed them from dependency on the rabbis; allowed them to challenge rabbinical authority; and helped them expand personal and business networks outside the community.

From the late sixteenth century, we witness another shift: From congregation-sponsored and managed education to one run largely by private societies, some only loosely under the *kahal*'s authority. In a typical setting, lay leaders of the *ḥevrah* or its *gaba'im* administered a *talmud torah*: They collected tuition, raised funds, paid building and salary expenses, oversaw the level of instruction and curriculum, and supplied students with clothes once a year. Funding for a *talmud torah* originally came from three main sources: an allocation from taxes the community collected; income from *ḥevrah*-owned property, such as real estate that was rented out; and individual donations, bequeathed or contributed to a *talmud torah*. With time, however, the share of the latter grew while that of communal funding declined.[10] This shift meant the appropriation of education by semi-independent societies, with the result that scholars, although still hired to teach, were losing their grip on education in their communities. In some places, the *ḥevrat talmud torah* also sponsored smaller societies, such as *bikur ḥolim* (visiting the sick), and played a role in local and regional trade. In Salonica, the *ḥevrah* took part in the textile industry, and owned property that served manufacturers and merchants. It continued to

9 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 194.
10 Ibid., 194.

amass wealth and political influence even after the decline of that industry in the late sixteenth century. By the eighteenth, it also operated its own printing press, through which it disseminated halakhic works and prayer books.[11] One can sensibly imagine that in the educational institutions run by such a *ḥevrah*, scholars retained only a limited grip on educational policy. Having become tools for spreading knowledge, rabbis came to serve the political and economic interests of lay leaders.

A similar process occurred with higher learning. A student who continued his training beyond the elementary level would move from the *talmud torah* on to the academy (*yeshivah*, pl. *yeshivot*), where his study would earn him the title *talmid hakham*, a communal recognition that would entitle him to exemption from taxes and sometimes to an allowance. Such academies operated in Salonica, Istanbul, and Safed already in the sixteenth century, and their numbers rose in the following two centuries. Many *yeshivot* were rather small, serving only a handful of students.[12] As with the *talmud torah*, for much of the sixteenth century the *yeshivot* were congregational, supported by the *kahal* and serving mostly local students. As the economic crisis of the seventeenth century set in, many congregations could no longer support *yeshivot*. Lay initiatives then took their place. Reportedly, some rabbis were apprehensive about this change and lamented the decline in educational excellence that would inevitably come without their oversight. Nonetheless, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a proliferation of such private initiatives to set up academies throughout the empire. Ben-Na'eh suggests that people chose to set up *yeshivot* to "buy their part in the next world, and to enhance their prestige in this."[13] This was no doubt a valid reason. A quest for power was another: Establishing such institutions gave lay leaders control over the one area in which rabbis had undeniable authority, the teaching of halakhah. Those who set up *yeshivot* or contributed to existing ones did so as part of a foundation (*hekdesh*) that set the conditions for the appointment (i.e. hiring) of the head of the *yeshivah* (a scholar), the selection of students and the support they would receive, the place of instruction, and even the curriculum. Private *yeshivot* attracted students from near and far, further eroding their status as communal institutions.[14]

11 Ibid., 197.

12 Ibid., 196–8; Benayahu, "Le-korot ha-yehudim," 39–41; David, "Kavim li-demut ha-yeshivot," 139–64; Bornstein-Makovetzky, *'Ir shel ḥakhamim*, 125–30.

13 Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 198–9.

14 Ibid., 198–9.

Evidence from the responsa expounds on the shift that occurred from public to private *yeshivot* and, more to the point, from rabbinical to lay control of higher learning. The sixteenth-century Greek scholar Binyamin ben Matatyah discussed the case of one Yiṣḥak Kaṣ, of an undisclosed city within the empire, who donated funds to his congregation designed to pay for oil to light the synagogue and to sustain students in the *yeshivah*. Yiṣḥak ordered that his wife administer the funds and decide about their use, to the dismay of the congregation's rabbi, who insisted that the responsibility for that be his, as scholars were in charge of supporting students in the *yeshivah*. In his reluctant rejection of the rabbi's claim, Ben Matatyah accepted the reality of his time, by which "it all depends on the will of the donor," even if a rabbi's eminence and position should supersede that of a woman. It was thanks to such donors, he explained, that students were able to study in the first place.[15] A *talmud torah* in sixteenth-century Salonica serving orphans was clearly under the supervision of and funded by members of a congregation, not a rabbi.[16] Academies founded in Ottoman Jewish communities and discussed in Shmu'el de-Medina's responsa also seem to have been administered by lay leaders.[17] Throughout the empire in the sixteenth century, *yeshivot* were likewise run by congregations, whose wealthier members provided the necessary funding.[18] From the seventeenth century, however, we find indications of private *yeshivot* founded by wealthy individuals (*gevirim*), not necessarily from the same town, who stipulated the rules for their operations. While the evidence for that is circumstantial rather than statistical, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it clearly indicates a shift from communal to private education.[19]

The growth in private options chipped away at the congregation's control of education. It led to the emergence of learning environments physically removed from the synagogue and other public places such as the *beit midrash*. Responsa evidence on the expansion of learning venues, if typically anecdotal,

15 Matatyah, *Shut. Binyamin Ze'ev*, 2:130–1, quotation from 131.

16 Ben Lev, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, s51, 1:156–7.

17 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam even ha-'ezer*, s195, 25a–b; *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim*, even, s80, 28b–29b, s154, 16b–17a (new pagination begins after 40a), s170–1, 21b–22b.

18 Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, ḥelek 2, s317, 58b; book 2, s66, 13a, s77, 14b–15a, s96, 20b, s101, 21b–22a; ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 2*, s235, 169b–170a.

19 Examples include Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s67, 1:42b and Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s117, 2:30–1. In Laniado, *Maharash*, s8, 98–121, a wealthy man who had received governmental exemption from all taxes wished to move to a new town. Laniado determined that his exemption was valid in his new locale, since he continued to sustain the *yeshivot* there and elsewhere. Another rich man wished to set up a *yeshivah* in Tire; Shabbetai, *Torat Ḥayim*, s53, 1:69a–b.

still allows us to assume that learning in the late eighteenth century occurred in private homes more often than it did in the sixteenth.[20] In the sixteenth century, Yosef Mitrani of Safed and later Istanbul, brought the case of a rabbi who used to pray at home with a group of people and sought to set up a *yeshivah* there. The matter raised objections in his community, apparently revealing that such a setting for studying was not very common at the time.[21] About a century later, the Egyptian rabbi Mordekhai ha-Levi (d. 1685) argued that one who worked for a living and studies in his spare time at home and in the homes of other rabbis qualified as a *talmid ḥakham* for tax exemption purposes. Learning, he explained, had changed since Talmudic times and throughout the generations, as we "do not have in our times a man who by definition is an ideal" *talmid ḥakham*, that is, one devoting his entire time to studying in the *yeshivah*. People had to support themselves, and as a practical matter had to conduct their studies at home.[22] By the early nineteenth century, establishing one's residence as a permanent place of study seems to have been commonplace.[23] Such learning occurred in venues over which communal leaders and a congregation's *marbiṣ torah* had little control.

2 Intellectual Circles

As noted above, the privatization of *talmud torah*s and *yeshivot* in the empire eroded rabbis' domination of Jewish education. Early in the process, in the late sixteenth century, scholars still enjoyed exclusive possession of the knowledge imparted in Jewish schools and could control access to it. It was that knowledge – basic literacy and arithmetic – that made up the essence of training for all Jews, including those who would later turn to trade, medicine, and other vocations and had little interest in halakhah. By holding the key to economic and professional success, rabbis wielded significant influence within their communities.[24] That position had worn away between the late sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries by the quantitative explosion of halakhic texts and their availability in print. Halakhic knowledge became more specialized and required a longer period to study. This led to a steady rise in the number of

20 Ben-Na'eh briefly discussed such informal learning opportunities, but without reference to change over time; Ben-Na'eh, *Yehudim*, 200.

21 Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, s101, 3:148a–b.

22 ha-Levi, *Darkei no'am*, ḥoshen, s57, 207b–211a, quotation from 208b.

23 Palachi, *Ḥikekei lev*, ḥoshen, s20–22, 3:95b–104a.

24 On the connection between Jewish education and economic opportunities, see Botticini and Eckstein, *The Chosen Few*, 128–42.

works one was expected to master to be considered a scholar. While presumably elevating scholars' erudition, this development also spawned a countertrend: The expanding availability and affordability of basic Jewish knowledge reduced the need to rely on rabbis and students. And halakhah, in its more sophisticated and less accessible forms, became increasingly irrelevant to the broader Jewish population.

From a scholar's perspective, knowledge of any value was found in pious or halakhic texts, transmitted from one scholar to another, and taught in institutions the congregation sponsored directly or indirectly. For many Jews, non-religious knowledge – scientific, medical, or business-related – was more relevant. And yet, elementary education, on which professional knowledge would later build, was available to Jews only in a religious setting. This offered the purveyors of Jewish education a sense of authority over those who depended on them, even if that dependency was limited only to the few years one attended communal schooling. Rabbis may have failed in promoting a halakhic lifestyle in their communities; but their teaching was the essential foundation for Jewish life in the empire, and connected Jews to their tradition and communities, however loose that connection sometimes was. Since only the very learned would become teachers, learning and knowledge were in themselves tools to obtain and preserve social standing and prestige.

We may imagine the Ottoman Jewish intellectual world as consisting of two circles. The inner, smaller circle comprised mostly scholars, students beyond the elementary level, and a small number of lay leaders able to create, convey, comment on and interpret halakhic knowledge in languages they typically did not speak and very few outside their circle understood (Hebrew and Aramaic). This Jewish inner intellectual circle was akin to the class of Muslim scholars in the empire, a small literary elite of religious teachers and students who were engaged in the production of knowledge and made extensive use of books and libraries. Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, a period when popular consumption of texts in cities such as Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad increased, scholars often participated in smaller and separate reading and study sessions from those open to the general public. While scholars engaged in larger reading sessions with non-scholars (e.g. merchants and craftsmen), they remained the exclusive authors of texts, including those written with a broader readership in mind.[25] In his monumental work on libraries in the Ottoman Empire, Ismail Erünsal describes an extensive network of mosque, school, and independent neighborhood libraries in major cities throughout

25 Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 17–25, 37–9.

the empire. Their collections varied in size, from a few volumes to larger stocks that took up several rooms. Mostly established as *waqf*s, many such libraries had a chief librarian (*hafiz-ı kütüb*) and other paid employees. Many libraries had regular opening hours and served those who came to read, study, or copy texts; lending out books was quite common.[26] In practice, however, such intellectual institutions were used only by a limited crowd. Until the late eighteenth century, Erünsal explains, students and *'ulama'* were almost the only clients of such libraries: Nearly all books were on such "traditional" topics as religion, philosophy, literature, and Islamic history, and the greater share of them were in Arabic, even in parts of the empire where that language was not spoken. Furthermore, opening hours of many libraries were set up to serve full-time students and scholars, mostly operating during the morning hours and closing before sundown. The *waqfiyya* documents that specified the funds or items dedicated for such libraries typically stated that their main purpose was to support religious students and clerics. While Erünsal found a few libraries that served a somewhat broader reading public, he could not point to a widespread culture of reading in the empire.[27] In the Ottoman-Jewish world too, libraries served scholars almost exclusively, and the production of texts remained for most of the period under study here the pursuit of members of the inner circle.

The outer, larger intellectual circle included those who were not trained as scholars, but had a few extra years of learning, could read more than prayer texts and even write, and sometimes had books in their possession or access to them in some other way. If we accept Hirschler's assumption that literacy was a sliding scale within which people were exposed to texts via reading or oral and aural consumption,[28] we can imagine members of the outer intellectual circle to have been Jews who had general interest in the knowledge found in texts, and regular interactions with the class of scholars. They appear in the responsa typically in disputes involving properties, whose inventories included books.[29]

---

26 Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda kütüphaneler ve kütüphanecilik*, throughout the book and specifically 335–67, 386–95, 436–69.

27 Ibid., 470–1. In this Erünsal disagreed with Hirschler, who claimed that local, smaller endowed libraries that had proliferated in the Arab lands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the Ottoman period served many readers outside the scholarly class. See Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 138–56.

28 *The Written Word*, 12–16.

29 Books also appear as assets used in trade and as collateral for debts. See e.g. de-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam ḥoshen ha-mishpat*, s357, 58a; Alashkar, *Shut. Maharam Alashkar*, s40, 169–71; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s72, 1:57b; Mitrani, *She'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Mitrani*, s212, 1:99b–100a; Mizraḥi, *Admat kodesh*, even, s23, 1:57a; ha-Levi, *Darkei no'am*, ḥoshen, s23, 212b–214b.

A case in point, related by Shmu'el Vital and involving a member of this group, illustrates the world of people who made up this outer circle. Vital told of a woman from Safed who possessed a crate (*argaz*) full of books, who was forced by a raging epidemic to flee to Damascus. Upon returning to Safed she asked a relative of hers to check and verify that none of the books had gotten lost during her absence. While reading out to her the books' titles, the relative discovered a list of all the items in the box and a notebook with a full account of the books and the value of each of them. As one of the books was missing, the woman noticed that its title was crossed out in the list and she suspected that her relative had taken it. An investigation of the matter did not resolve the mystery but revealed more details: A friend of the woman's relative also owned a copy of the same work, and had used to lend it to the relative, who would read and keep it for several days at a time.[30] The story sheds light on Jews who owned books, kept lists of the titles in their possession, regarded them as valuable items, and lent them to others.[31] It further suggests that people in this class could read books in one language (presumably Hebrew), while speaking another (Ladino, as evidenced by a dialogue between the relative of the woman and her friend, which Vital quoted verbatim); and that they interacted with others with similar literary interests. Women, too, could belong to this intellectual circle, unlike the inner, smaller one, that largely excluded them.[32] This broader circle expanded further following the spread of printing, as Jewish books in Hebrew and Aramaic – like non-Jewish works in European languages – became cheaper and more readily available from the late sixteenth century on. Unfortunately, we do not know what the size of the outer circle was; or what proportion of the community (or even only of men) took part in it. One can imagine that a majority of the community operated either within the outer circle, or at its margins, relying on the knowledge found in texts intermittently, via oral or aural exposure. One may further surmise that some people operated at the intersection of those two circles, delivering news and information to neighbors, family members, and business partners who did not share a similar level of literacy and exposure to text, and informing members of the inner circle about the thoughts and desires of the broader community.

30 Vital, *Be'er mayyim ḥayim*, s21, 55.

31 For books as valuable assets in property and inheritance cases, see n. 29 above and Laniado, *Beit dino shel Shmu'el*, s24, 1:261–2, s28, 303–4.

32 At least as far as our evidence goes. For pre-Ottoman times, Hirschler found that women did comprise a small but noticeable group among Muslim scholars, who studied in mixed groups with men, taught at school, and wrote texts; see Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 45.

The outer intellectual circle was hardly a unique Jewish phenomenon; it also existed in the surrounding Muslim societies. There, as in the Jewish communities, data on readers and book buyers outside the inner intellectual circle is scarce, and in both of them it is impossible to assess the size of this group or its share of society. Hirschler's data on non-scholar participants in reading groups in Damascus has shed light on the composition of the outer intellectual circle, made up of craftsmen, traders, military people, and dependents (including children). It suggested that texts were accessible in different formats to a growing segment of the population; that reading groups were largely an urban phenomenon, excluding those from rural backgrounds; and that non-scholarly readers were attracted to texts out of interest in the content and not only as an extension of ritual practices. And yet it does not reveal much about the share of those attending reading sessions out of the general population. It is likely that the few hundred people for whom he found evidence of reading were a fairly small share of the city's population.[33] Still, we have sufficient indications for the very existence of a stratum of readers beyond the class of students and the *'ulama'* from as early as the twelfth century. The proliferation of smaller, privately endowed libraries made books more accessible and supported a growing interest in texts, evidenced also in the large number of book sellers and copiers found in major cities. Literacy rates, at least based on a broader definition that included oral and aural exposure to texts, rose too during the Mamluk period. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a process of diversification of readers' backgrounds and literary types also contributed to the expansion of the circle of readers who were not scholars.[34] In the Ottoman period, Erünsal found that while customers of booksellers were primarily scholars and students, the circle of book buyers was wider and included adherents of dervish lodges (*tekke*s and *zawiya*s), state bureaucrats, and members of the military class (*'askeri*).[35] Estate inventories recorded in the *shar'i* court of Damascus in the seventeenth century reveal books in the possession of ordinary people, including merchants and women. There is no indication whether the books were read or simply collected, but, as in the Jewish community, it is clear that a small, non-scholarly segment of Arab society valued books and had a keen interest in them.[36]

33 Ibid., 37–58.

34 Ibid., 124–56; Erünsal, *Orta çağ İslam dünyasında kitap ve kütüphane*, 464–9; Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans*, 84–91, 107–9; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 136–51.

35 Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda sahaflık ve sahaflar*, 146–8.

36 Establet and Pascual, "Les livres des gens à Damas vers 1700," 143–69.

One may sensibly assume that in the Jewish world, knowledge generally flowed from the inner circle to the outer one, and beyond. Members of the former circle would interpret previous scholarship and produce new ideas and rules via court cases, responsa, and other halakhic instruments. Those of the outer circle would be exposed to such works, by self-reading or through teachers or judges belonging to the inner circle. They would also become acquainted with knowledge produced outside the Jewish world.[37] Over time, developments in Jewish law penetrated instruction in the *yeshivot*, the *beit midrash*, and even basic schools for young boys. Scholars therefore controlled, to a large degree, the creation and dissemination of important Jewish knowledge. To understand how such a social structure allowed rabbis to maintain standing and influence among their followers, one ought to take a closer look at the process of knowledge production among Ottoman Jews.

3 The Inner Circle and Its Library

Rabbinical scholarship had been based, since its early stages, on the precedent of previous works. The Talmuds (Jerusalem and Babylonian) commented on the Bible, Mishnah, and the Tosefta. The works of Rashi, ha-Rif, and Maimonides commented on the Talmud. Certain texts were quoted so often by later generations of scholars that they became part of a rabbinical canon, a corpus of generally accepted authoritative works. Writing his *Set Table* (*Shulḥan ʿArukh*) in the sixteenth century, Yosef Karo addressed the "need for codification and unification of religious practice in the face of Sephardic [i.e. Iberian] mass migration,"[38] effectively defining the canonical works of rabbinical Judaism. His opinion on most matters was derived first from a majority view of the three standard pillars of Jewish law that preceded him: Rif (Yiṣḥak Alfasi, d. 1103), Rambam (Maimonides, d. 1204); and Rosh (Asher ben Yeḥi'el, d. 1327). When such a majority view contradicted common custom, or where many other commentators digressed, Karo resorted to several other works that he deemed

37 I am basing this assumption largely on a model of literacy that developed in the Islamic world and reached a peak in the eighteenth century, when an educated middle class distinct from the formal scholarly circles of the *'ulama* existed. See Hanna, *In Praise of Books*, 48–59; Sajdi, *Barber of Damascus*, 111–19. One historian has suggested that an expansion of literacy and literary production beyond the class of scholars took place already in the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods; Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans*, 81–112.

38 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*, 21.

standard.[39] Despite opposition to Karo's methods from some rabbinical circles, the popularity of his work and its wide acceptance throughout the Jewish world, including in the lands of Ashkenaz (i.e. Germany and eastern Europe) thanks to the commentary of Moshe Iserlish (d. 1572), made such works, and Karo's own, canonical texts which every scholar from the generation of Karo and thereafter could not ignore.[40] The canonization of texts was a tool of inclusion in and exclusion from the inner circle, and signified the social and political power scholars believed they held. It was not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon.[41]

The great migration caused by the expulsions from Iberia disrupted the production of halakhic scholarship among Iberian Jews.[42] By the 1540s, if not earlier, learning was on the rise again: Academies opened and prospered in Istanbul, Salonica, Safed, and other cities, and scholars were producing works at a growing pace.[43] Karo himself must have benefitted from the scholarly atmosphere in Safed, where many of the generation's sages taught and wrote until the 1570s, and to where questions were sent from all over the Jewish world.[44] The prolific scholarship coming out of the Ottoman Empire benefitted from the relatively comfortable material and political conditions under which Jews lived (compared with Eastern and Central Europe). The strong economy of the sixteenth century, the mitigated crisis of the seventeenth century, the recovering economy of the eighteenth, and the relatively inexpensive access to printing, all facilitated high production of rabbinical works in the empire. For rabbis vying to bolster their eminence, these were positive developments. By the eighteenth century, the number of standard works one was expected to study, or consult, before commenting on an issue had come to be markedly higher than it had been in the sixteenth century. A scholar's work thus came to require more specialization, which further limited membership of the inner intellectual circle and increased its exclusivity.

One way to demonstrate the specialization of the inner intellectual circle is by examining the scope and growth of the typical Ottoman rabbis' bookshelf.

---

39 These were: Moshe ben Ya'akov of Coucy (ha-Samag, d. 1250), Moshe ben Naḥman (Nahmanides, d. 1270), Mordekhai ben Hillel ha-Kohen (ha-Mordekhai, d. 1298), Shlomo ben Avraham ibn Aderet (Rashba, d. 1310), and Nissim ben Re'uven Girondi (ha-Ran, d. 1376).

40 On canonical works in Judaism, and Maimonides' and Karo's role in canonizing texts, see Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 72–81.

41 Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhari and Muslim*, 26, 39.

42 For an overview of manuscript and print culture before and after the expulsions (albeit not free of errors), see Schmelzer, "Hebrew manuscripts and printed books," 257–66.

43 Hacker, "Ha-pe'ilut ha-intelectualit," 569–603; Ben-Na'eh, "'Ir ha-torah ve-ha-limud," 60–82.

44 Ayalon, "Safed."

Citation information from responsa collections provides a glimpse into the books rabbis used, either from their own collections or from others' they had access to. Writing their responsa, rabbis cited the works of past and contemporary scholars whom they had read in preparation for commenting on a case, or earlier. The digitization of rabbinical texts through services such as *oṣar ha-ḥokhmah* and HebrewBooks.org[45] allows us to gather citation data, which permit a deeper probe into the makeup of the inner intellectual circle and the pools of knowledge its members tapped in producing new commentaries. Such analysis is easier done on works written from the second half of the seventeenth century onward. Placing an index at the beginning or end of responsa collections was common practice already in the sixteenth century. It was only later that authors, or perhaps publishers, added indices to the works cited in the collection – an incomplete bibliography of sorts – that reveal the broad familiarity of scholars from the inner circle with Jewish texts, and made such texts more accessible to a growing number of readers. Such a development would not have occurred earlier, since there was no need for bibliographies when book circulation was small and readers could scarcely access the sources in the lists. With the wide dissemination of printed rabbinical texts, access to books increased and this made bibliographies more useful to the users of responsa collections. Without such bibliographies in earlier works, evaluating developments through time is only possible by searching for relevant keywords. Changing the method of collecting the evidence perforce leads to some distortion of the data, but, I argue, the exercise is still worthwhile.[46] With the proliferation of artificial intelligence systems that can mine information from and analyze text on a grand scale, broader analysis that measures the dissemination of knowledge in the Jewish world will no doubt be possible in the near future.

In the meanwhile, to make data analysis manageable – there were hundreds of works each citing hundreds of sources – I chose to peek into the inner circle at a few points from the mid sixteenth century to the late eighteenth, by examining the texts a few scholars mentioned (i.e. cited) throughout one or two of their monumental works. This allows one to imagine the library, or corpus of

45 https://tablet.otzar.org/en/pages/ and http://www.hebrewbooks.org/, accessed 19 May 2024.

46 For sixteenth century works that do not have an index, such as Yosef Karo's *Avkat Rokhel* and *Beit Yosef*; Shmu'el de-Medina's *Shut. Maharashdam*; and Yiṣḥak Aderbi's *Divrei Rivot*, I have searched their entire texts for mentions of relevant works using the Bar Ilan responsa database (http://responsa.co.il, accessed 20 May 2024). Even counting multiple citations per question as one, it appears the citation number is higher than that which appears in the (very partial) bibliographies of later centuries. And yet, while the numbers are incomparable, assessing what sources were used and their frequency reveals relevant results in both methods.

texts, a scholar relied on to compile a book, issue rulings, or discuss halakhic matters. As we shall see, we ought to understand "library" as an abstract term rather than imagining a room equipped with physical bookshelves bearing hundreds of volumes that one could access anytime. In a period where manuscripts were pricy and hard to come by, and printed texts had to be imported from Europe, a library could very well consist of a small collection of books one owned, books one consulted at another scholar's house, or texts one memorized.

Several conclusions emerge from the lists of books compiled for this study (see tables 1 to 5, at the end of this section). First, beyond the Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud, whose citations were too numerous to count, the canonical texts of the Middle Ages as defined by Karo dominate the works of all scholars. By the late eighteenth century, a few Ottoman-Jewish scholars had also been informally inducted into the canon. These included Karo himself, Ḥayim Benveniste, Shmue'l de-Medina, and David ibn Abi Zimra. Scholars relied on the works of past "canonized" authors as well as on their contemporaries, notably those close to them geographically. The data so far indicates a significant growth from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century in the number of cited rabbinical works: Karo reported to have relied on the works of 27 scholars in his *Beit Yosef* and his responsa, *Avkat Rokhel*, and Shmue'l de-Medina relied on 31. Benveniste, in the second half of the seventeenth century, cited a total of 44, Avraham ha-Levi (d. 1712) relied on 48 authors, and Rabbi Eliyahu Yisrael of Egypt and Palestine (d. 1784) on 53. This indicates that rabbinical scholarship continued to grow and evolve, and that with time one had to be familiar with a greater corpus of works to be considered part of the inner circle. Two recent studies, one of lists of books drawn by rabbis from Aleppo in the nineteenth century, and another of the books quoted by the Aleppo scholar Gavri'el Ashkenazi (d. 1810), demonstrate the expansion of rabbinical scholarship that had taken place between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[47] The data, while surely not representative of all scholarship conducted by Ottoman Jews, shows a development parallel to that which occurred in Europe after the invention of moveable-type printing: The growing availability of printed rabbinical texts led to a dramatic rise in their production, accessibility to them, and the size of libraries scholars used, at their homes or elsewhere, from the sixteenth century onward.[48]

47 Riegler, "Shalosh sifriyot pratiyot," 55–68; 'Ofran, "Ḥakham eḥad," 69–98. 'Ofran found that Gavri'el Ashkenazi quoted 92 books in his scholarship.

48 For an overview of such developments in Europe following the invention of moveable-type printing, see Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 3–159; Febvre and

A few clear geographical and denominational trends emerge from the data. The literature on which the five surveyed scholars relied in writing their works – presumably reflecting the texts they had read – was produced almost exclusively in the Sephardic world. Of the works Karo canonized in his *Shulḥan ʿArukh* which all five of them used, six were written by Iberian or eastern Mediterranean authors and four by Ashkenazi ones.[49] Once we cross into the sixteenth century, the picture changes dramatically. After the expulsions from Iberia, the rabbinical literature that mattered to Sephardic scholars in the Ottoman Empire was produced largely within the empire. Of the 14 scholars Karo cited who had died post 1500, only one, Meir Katzenellenbogen, worked outside the empire. For de-Medina too, Katzenellenbogen was the only non-Ottoman scholar out of 17 he cited from the sixteenth century. The dominance of Ottoman scholarship increased over time, even as Ottoman rabbis did read, and at times quote, scholars from the Ashkenazi world. By the mid-seventeenth century, Benveniste relied on 30 sources, of which 5 were produced by Ashkenazi scholars. Later, Avraham ha-Levi used 34 sources from the sixteenth century on, of which 6 were written by Ashkenazim; and Eliyahu Yisra'el's ratio was 39 to 5. This data indicates that members of the inner circle relied on an expanding body of scholarship, within which the representation of Ashkenazi works remained small or even declined somewhat over time. It was exposure to and command of works of halakhah written by scholars within the empire that defined membership of the inner circle.

Another spatial feature of Ottoman Jewish scholarship is its regional character. Of sixteenth century texts, Karo relied more on works compiled by scholars from his town of Safed than from any other location. His contemporary, de-Medina from Salonica, cited mostly texts by Jewish-Greek scholars. Similarly, of works written in the seventeenth century, Benveniste used a higher number of texts by Istanbul- and Izmir-based rabbis, and so did Eliyahu Yisra'el of Alexandria with Egyptian and Palestinian authors. This suggests that the scholarship that defined the inner circle of Ottoman-Jewish intellectuals was of two primary types: Works by authors of previous generations, mostly from the Sephardic world, who had made it into the canon that every serious

---

Martin, *Coming of the Book*, 248–332. For the effects of printing on the Jewish world, see Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 99–111; Reiner, "The Ashkenazi elite," 85–98; Teplitsky, *Prince of the Press*, 132–57.

49 Here I count ha-Rosh as an Ashkenazi scholar. Even though he spent his last years in Spain and nearly 90% of his surviving responsa were written there to address questions by Spanish Jews, his answers bear clear Ashkenazi characteristics and some evidence suggests he continued to lead an Ashkenazi lifestyle. See Ta-Shema', "Rabbenu Asher u-veno Rabbi Ya'akov," 76–80.

scholar ought to study; and more recent texts compiled in one's immediate geographical vicinity.

Beyond the growing stock of works that formed the standard library of rabbinical scholarship, the inner intellectual circle also relied on local-living intellectual exchanges. This may be seen by examining whence questions were received, and whose answers rabbis published in their responsa collections. More questions arrived from a scholar's town and nearby areas than from elsewhere. And scholars tended to quote more rulings by local or regional contemporaries, some of whom we know little about, than those farther away.[50] For example, out of all questions in Karo's responsa which he had received from outside Safed, most came from Damascus (7), Jerusalem (3) and Aleppo (2). Questions from remoter cities, such as Istanbul, Salonica, or Sofia, appeared only once each. Responsa by Moshe Mitrani, also of Safed, appeared in Karo's works at least thirteen times.[51] Karo also quoted another contemporary, Yosef ben Avraham ibn Ṣayyaḥ of Damascus, at least twelve times.[52] A century after Karo, Ḥayim Benveniste received questions from a broader area, though nearly all of them arrived from western Anatolia and Greece. Beside questions coming from Izmir, where he resided, they included hundreds of entries from Istanbul, Salonica, Bursa, Tire, and Edirne. I was able to locate only two entries from Jerusalem and one from Damascus; none came from Egypt. Even if Benveniste received more questions from communities which I did not detect, due to search limitations, it is fairly clear that the greater share of questions addressed to him arrived from the Izmir vicinity, not the empire as a whole. Benveniste, too, quoted more rulings by authors of his or neighboring towns, like Aharon Lapapa, Shlomo ibn 'Ezra, Ya'akov ibn Na'im, and

50 This conclusion is based only on the data gathered from responsa collections I examined. It is possible that the geographical span of a scholar's network was wider than is reflected in the responsa. This is a matter for further research.

51 The thirteen instances were Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s7, 6b–7a, s9, 7b–8a, s25, 28a–29a, s80, 69a–73a, s122, 112a–b, s187, 169b; *Beit yosef*, dinei kidushin, s5, dinei ketubbot, s2, s3, s10, s14, din mayim she-ein lahem sof, s1 (2 responsa), and dinei yibum ve-ḥaliṣah, s5.

52 The twelve instances are: *Avkat rokhel*, s10, 8a–12a, s54, 49a–50a, s116, 106a–107a, s122, 109a–112a, s139, 123b–125b, s186, 167b–169b, s188, 169b–173a, s189, s190, 173b–174b; *Beit yosef*, dinei kidushin, s7, dinei ketubbot, s11, dinei gittin ve-gerushin, s10. Ibn Ṣayyaḥ's responsa collection has survived in manuscript; see Ibn Ṣayyaḥ, "She'elot u-teshuvot me-et Yosef ibn Ṣayyah." For a study of Ibn Ṣayyaḥ's life, see Arad, "Li-demuto shel ba'al halakhah," 134–248. Mitrani's and Ibn Ṣayyaḥ's appearances in Karo's works are in addition to other, most likely local scholars, about whom we know little, and who appeared once or twice in Karo's works. They included Shem Tov 'Atiyyah, Avraham Levi Migash, Ḥayim ben Yiṣḥak ha-Ḥaver, Moshe Ṣahalon, Binyamin ben Me'ir ha-Levi, and Zekharyah Ashkenazi, alongside more renowned authors such as Moshe Cordovero, David ibn Abi Zimra (quoted once each) and Ya'akov Berab (quoted twice).

Avraham and Shlomo Elgazi (all of Izmir), David Elgazi of Bursa, and Ḥayim Elgazi of Istanbul. Answers compiled by Benveniste's more remote contemporaries, such as 'Azarya Ye'oshea' (*sic Yehoshea'*) of Damascus or Yehudah Elgazi of Jerusalem, are few.[53]

Ottoman Jewish scholars and their surrounding intellectual circles maintained two trends whose origins lay in medieval Spain: Regionalization, i.e. a limited geographic area from which a rabbi received questions;[54] and a continuous expansion of the library one consulted to produce works of halakhah. As we shall see, the latter played a role in solidifying the status of scholars within their communities, by placing a higher threshold on joining the inner intellectual circle.

TABLE 1 Authors whose works Yosef Karo cited or mentioned in his *Beit Yosef* or *Avkat rokhel*

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak Alfasi (ha-Rif)	1103	Fez, Morocco	41
Shlomo Yiṣḥaki (Rashi)	1105	France	82
Moshe Bar Maimon (Maimonides, Rambam)	1204	Egypt	182
Moshe ben Ya'akov (ha-Samag)	1250	France	30
Moshe ben Naḥman (Nahmanides, Ramban)	1270	Catalonia, Spain	65
Mordekhai ben Hillel (ha-Mordekhai)	1298	Nurnberg, Germany	85
Shlomo ben Avraham ben Aderet (Rashba)	1310	Barcelona, Spain	119
Asher ben Yeḥi'el (ha-Rosh)	1327	Toledo, Spain	119

53 For Aharon Lapapa, see Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s121, 1:147b–148a, s123, 149a–150a. For Shlomo ibn 'Ezra, ibid., s194, 2:235a–236b; Benveniste, *Shut. knesset ha-gedolah*, s4, 5b–6a, s6, 6b–7a. For Ya'akov ibn Na'im, ibid., s34, 25a–26a, s42, 28b–29a. For Avraham Elgazi, Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s82, 1:93a–b, s161, 2:191a–b. For Shlomo Elgazi, ibid., s13, 1:10b, s20, 1:14a, s83–4, 1:93b–94b, s138, 2:171a–b, s193, 2:233b–235a. For David Elgazi, ibid., s65, 1:59a–60b, s71–2, 1:70b–76b, s186, 2:222a–224a. For Ḥayim Elgazi, ibid., s140, 2:172b. For Azarya Ye'oshea', ibid., s131, 1:158b–161a. For Yehudah Elgazi, ibid., s86, 1:95a–96a.

54 In the eighth through the twelfth century, the Geonim in Babylonia received questions, and corresponded with scholars from throughout the Jewish world, and even maintained nominal authority over some regional communities; Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 127–30; Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:8–13. By the fourteenth century, eminent Iberian scholars such as Asher ben Yeḥi'el and his son Ya'akov ben Asher appear to have addressed mostly questions coming from Spain; Ta-Shema', "Rabbenu Asher u-veno Rabbi Ya'akov," 76–80.

TABLE 1 Authors whose works Yosef Karo (*cont.*)

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yaʿakov ben Asher (Baʿal ha-Turim)	1343	Toledo, Spain	79
Nissim ben Reʾuven Girondi (ha-Ran)	1376	Barcelona, Spain	61
Yiṣḥak ben Sheshet (ha-Ribash)	1408	Algeria	61
Yisrael Iserlin (Mahar'i)	1460	Austria	19
Yosef Kolon (Maharik)	1480	Manitoba, Italy	45
Binyamin ha-Levi	early 1500s	Istanbul	1
Eliyahu Mizraḥi (Re'em)	1526	Istanbul	9
Levi ben Ḥaviv (Maharalbaḥ)	1541	Jerusalem	2
Yosef Taitaṣak	1546	Salonica	3
Yaʿakov Berab	1546	Safed	2
Shlomo Serilio	1555	Safed	2
Meir Katzenellenbogen (Maharam Padova)	1565	Padova, Italy	1
Moshe Cordovero	1570	Safed	1
David ben abi Zimra (RadBaz)	1573	Egypt	7
Elisha Galiko	1578	Safed	3
Moshe Mitrani (ha-Mabit)	1580	Safed	24
Yosef ben Lev	1580	Salonica	1
Shmu'el de-Medina (Maharashdam)	1589	Salonica	4
Moshe Alsheikh	1600	Safed	2

TABLE 2 Authors whose works Shmu'el de-Medina cited or mentioned in his *Shut. Maharashdam*

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak Alfasi	1103	Fez, Morocco	308
Shlomo Yiṣḥaki	1105	France	174
Moshe Bar Maimon	1204	Egypt	606
Moshe ben Yaʿakov	1250	France	26
Moshe ben Naḥman	1270	Catalonia, Spain	188
Mordekhai ben Hillel	1298	Nurnberg, Germany	154
Shlomo ben Avraham ben Aderet	1310	Barcelona, Spain	462
Asher ben Yeḥi'el	1327	Toledo, Spain	579
Yaʿakov ben Asher	1343	Toledo, Spain	456
Nissim ben Reʾuven Girondi	1376	Barcelona, Spain	251

TABLE 2 Authors whose works Shmu'el de-Medina (*cont.*)

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak ben Sheshet	1408	Algeria	171
Yisrael Iserlin	1460	Austria	1
Yosef Kolon	1480	Manitoba, Italy	71
Binyamin ha-Levi	early 1500s	Istanbul	2
David ha-Kohen	early 1500s	Corfu, Greece	16
Eliyahu Mizraḥi	1526	Istanbul	24
Levi ben Ḥaviv	1541	Jerusalem	18
Moshe Alashkar	1542	Egypt	5
Binyanim Ze'ev	1545	Arta, Greece	3
Yosef Taitaṣak	1546	Salonica	8
Ya'akov Berab	1546	Safed	5
Shlomo Serilio	1555	Safed	1
Meir Katzenellenbogen	1565	Padova, Italy	1
David ben abi Zimra	1573	Egypt	6
Yosef Karo	1575	Safed	175
Yiṣḥak Aderbi	1577	Salonica	8
Yosef ben Lev	1580	Salonica	9
Shmu'el Kal'ai	1585	Arta, Greece	8
Moshe Alsheikh	1600	Safed	1
Ya'akov Kastro	1610	Egypt	2

TABLE 3 Authors whose works Ḥayim Benveniste cited or mentioned in his *Shut. ba'e ḥayye* or *Knesset ha-gedolah*

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak Alfasi	1103	Fez, Morocco	113
Shlomo Yiṣḥaki	1105	France	86
Moshe Bar Maimon	1204	Egypt	218
Moshe ben Ya'akov	1250	France	28
Moshe ben Naḥman	1270	Catalonia, Spain	107
Mordekhai ben Hillel	1298	Nurnberg, Germany	99
Shlomo ben Avraham ben Aderet	1310	Barcelona, Spain	152
Asher ben Yeḥi'el	1327	Toledo, Spain	185
Ya'akov ben Asher	1343	Toledo, Spain	103
Nissim ben Re'uven Girondi	1376	Barcelona, Spain	80

TABLE 3 Authors whose works Ḥayim Benveniste (*cont.*)

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak ben Sheshet	1408	Algeria	109
Yisrael Iserlin	1460	Austria	46
Yosef Kolon	1480	Manitoba, Italy	128
Moshe Mintz	1480	Hungary	12
David ha-Kohen	early 1500s	Corfu, Greece	10
Eliyahu Mizraḥi	1526	Istanbul	22
Levi ben Ḥaviv	1541	Jerusalem	1
Moshe Alashkar	1542	Egypt	13
Binyanim Ze'ev	1545	Arta, Greece	20
Ya'akov Berab	1546	Safed	17
Meir Katzenellenbogen	1565	Padova, Italy	28
Moshe ben Yisrael Iserlish	1572	Poland	3
David ben abi Zimra	1573	Egypt	64
Yosef Karo	1575	Safed	246
Yiṣḥak Aderbi	1577	Salonica	77
Elisha Galiko	1578	Safed	12
Moshe Mitrani	1580	Safed	86
Yosef ben Lev	1580	Salonica	101
Shmu'el Kal'ai	1585	Arta, Greece	1
Shmu'el de-Medina	1589	Salonica	113
Beṣal'el Ashkenazi	1594	Egypt, Jerusalem	4
Moshe Alsheikh	1600	Safed	32
Shlomo ha-Kohen (Maharshakh)	1602	Monastir, Salonica	134
Moshe Galanti	1612	Safed	16
Eliyahu Ben Ḥayim	1613		93
Yehoshua Falk Kaṣ	1614	Poland	59
Meir mi-Lublin	1616	Lublin	5
Aharon Sasson	1626	Istanbul	84
Yosef Mitrani (Maharit)	1639	Safed, Istanbul	17
Yo'el Sirkis	1640	Poland	84
Ḥayim Shabbetai (Maharshaḥ)	1643	Salonica	47
Yosef Iskapa	1662	Izmir	13
Aharon Lapapa	1667	Izmir	17
Shlomo 'Ezra	1688	Izmir	13

TABLE 4 Authors whose works Avraham ha-Levi cited or mentioned in his *Shut. ginat veradim*

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak Alfasi	1103	Fez, Morocco	98
Shlomo Yiṣḥaki	1105	France	135
Moshe Bar Maimon	1204	Egypt	250
Moshe ben Yaʿakov	1250	France	21
Moshe ben Naḥman	1270	Catalonia, Spain	74
Mordekhai ben Hillel	1298	Nurnberg, Germany	84
Shlomo ben Avraham ben Aderet	1310	Barcelona, Spain	178
Asher ben Yeḥi'el	1327	Toledo, Spain	208
Yaʿakov ben Asher	1343	Toledo, Spain	175
Nissim ben Re'uven Girondi	1376	Barcelona, Spain	70
Yiṣḥak ben Sheshet	1408	Algeria	77
Yisrael Iserlin	1460	Austria	5
Yosef Kolon	1480	Manitoba, Italy	55
David ha-Kohen	early 1500s	Corfu, Greece	10
Levi ben Ḥaviv	1541	Jerusalem	8
Moshe Alashkar	1542	Egypt	16
Yosef Taitaṣak	1546	Salonica	2
Yaʿakov Berab	1546	Safed	11
Shlomo Serilio	1555	Safed	2
Meir Katzenellenbogen	1565	Padova, Italy	4
Moshe ben Yisrael Iserlish	1572	Poland	27
David ben abi Zimra	1573	Egypt	70
Yosef Karo	1575	Safed	347
Yiṣḥak Aderbi	1577	Salonica	11
Moshe Mitrani	1580	Safed	59
Yosef ben Lev	1580	Salonica	61
Shmu'el de-Medina	1589	Salonica	133
Beṣal'el Ashkenazi	1594	Egypt, Jerusalem	6
Moshe Alsheikh	1600	Safed	17
Shlomo ha-Kohen	1602	Monastir, Salonica	28
Yaʿakov Kastro	1610	Egypt	140
Moshe Galanti	1612	Safed	3
Eliyahu Ben Ḥayim	1613		6
Yehoshua Falk Kaṣ	1614	Poland	22

TABLE 4 Authors whose works Avraham ha-Levi (*cont.*)

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Meir mi-Lublin	1616	Lublin	4
Aharon Sasson	1626	Istanbul	26
Yom Tov Ṣahalon (Maharitaṣ)	1638	Safed	6
Yosef Mitrani	1639	Safed, Istanbul	70
Yo'el Sirkis	1640	Poland	62
Ḥayim Shabbetai	1643	Salonica	46
Shabbetai bar Me'ir ha-Kohen	1663	Poland	47
Aharon Lapapa	1667	Izmir	1
Ḥayim Benveniste	1673	Izmir	49
Mordekhai ha-Levi	1684	Egypt	3
Moshe Galanti	1689	Jerusalem	2
Moshe ben Ḥaviv	1696	Jerusalem	23
Ya'akov Pragi	1730	Egypt	20

TABLE 5 Authors whose works Eliyahu Yisra'el cited or mentioned in his *Kol Eliyahu* or *'Ugat Eliyahu*

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Yiṣḥak Alfasi	1103	Fez, Morocco	108
Shlomo Yiṣḥaki	1105	France	130
Moshe Bar Maimon	1204	Egypt	198
Moshe ben Ya'akov	1250	France	13
Moshe ben Naḥman	1270	Catalonia, Spain	78
Mordekhai ben Hillel	1298	Nurnberg, Germany	45
Shlomo ben Avraham ben Aderet	1310	Barcelona, Spain	168
Asher ben Yeḥi'el	1327	Toledo, Spain	182
Ya'akov ben Asher	1343	Toledo, Spain	131
Nissim ben Re'uven Girondi	1376	Barcelona, Spain	90
Yiṣḥak ben Sheshet	1408	Algeria	61
Yosef Kolon	1480	Manitoba, Italy	11
Moshe Mintz	1480	Hungary	2
David ha-Kohen	early 1500s	Corfu, Greece	4
Levi ben Ḥaviv	1541	Jerusalem	3
Moshe Alashkar	1542	Egypt	12

TABLE 5 Authors whose works Eliyahu Yisra'el (*cont.*)

Author	Death year	Primary location	Mentions
Ya'akov Berab	1546	Safed	5
Moshe ben Yisrael Iserlish	1572	Poland	8
David ben abi Zimra	1573	Egypt	70
Yosef Karo	1575	Safed	241
Yiṣḥak Aderbi	1577	Salonica	3
Moshe Mitrani	1580	Safed	25
Yosef ben Lev	1580	Salonica	8
Shmu'el de-Medina	1589	Salonica	48
Beṣal'el Ashkenazi	1594	Egypt, Jerusalem	3
Moshe Alsheikh	1600	Safed	5
Shlomo ha-Kohen	1602	Monastir, Salonica	8
Ya'akov Kastro	1610	Egypt	20
Yehoshua Falk Kaṣ	1614	Poland	19
Aharon Sasson	1626	Istanbul	4
Shmu'el Eli'ezer Eidels	1631	Poland	3
Yom Tov Ṣahalon	1638	Safed	8
Yosef Mitrani	1639	Safed, Istanbul	16
Yo'el Sirkis	1640	Poland	4
Ḥayim Shabbetai	1643	Salonica	6
Yom Tov Lipman	1654	Prague, Krakow	8
Shabbetai bar Me'ir ha-Kohen	1663	Poland	4
Ḥayim Benveniste	1673	Izmir	52
Ya'akov Alfandari	1678	Istanbul	20
Mordekhai ha-Levi	1684	Egypt	7
Shlomo Ezra	1688	Izmir	1
Moshe Galanti	1689	Jerusalem	2
Yosef Kaṣabi	1691	Istanbul	2
Moshe ben Ḥaviv	1696	Jerusalem	15
Aharon ha-Kohen Peraḥyah	1697	Salonica	9
Avraham ha-Levi	1712	Egypt	14
Ya'akov Pragi	1730	Egypt	1
Ya'akov Reischer	1733	Germany	1
Yehoshua' Shababo Yadia'	1740	Egypt	1
Yehudah 'Ayyash	1760	Algiers	4
David Pardo	1790	Split, Belgrade	1
Yom Tov Algazi	1802	Jerusalem	3

4 The Value of Books

Using such a variety of texts to create scholarship necessitated access to a large library. From the early sixteenth century on, printing rabbinical and other works in Hebrew was on the rise.[55] Books, cherished items whose possession signified a respected social status, became a common commodity in Jewish homes.[56] In the early sixteenth century, books – it is not clear whether printed or manuscripts – were at the center of a divorce dispute case, with a man refusing to return to his ex-wife books he had received from her mother upon their marriage. The mother testified that she had meant to lend him the books only temporarily and then to sell them to feed herself, as she was poor.[57] Selling books to pay for other expenses when one ran out of money, or as collateral for a debt, was apparently a common practice, meaning at least some books, presumably even printed ones, carried substantial monetary value.[58] Disputes over books bequeathed in one's estate likewise suggest they were valued items. In one instance, presumably in a small town in Salonica's vicinity in the late sixteenth century, two brothers fought over a lot of 200 or more books. One of them had already sold or given a few of them to the *ḥevrat talmud torah*. As the society no longer existed, his brother claimed, they needed the books to support their sister's daughter, who was about to get married.[59] Beyond their monetary worth, books were regarded as articles people were eager to possess and as items that could be given to the poor on a par with clothing and food.[60] One purpose of an eighteenth-century *haskamah* prohibiting the export of

55 Ya'ari, *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta*, 59–238; *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-arṣot ha-mizraḥ*, 17–28, 38–52, 57–63; Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 99–111.

56 For examples of books mentioned in the homes of Jews, see: Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s6, 5b; Mitrani, *She'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Mitrani*, s91, 2:43b, s182, 2:84a–b; Alashkar, *Shut. Maharam Alashkar*, s40, 169; ha-Kohen, *Shut. Maharshakh 4*, s25, 42b–43a; de-Buton, *Leḥem rav*, s92, 37b; Aderbi, *Divrei rivot*, s115, 69a.

57 Mizraḥi, *Admat kodesh*, 1, even, s23, 57a. The man's claim was that since he had meanwhile bought so many books of his own, it was no longer possible to distinguish the mother-in-law's books from his.

58 For a widow who sought to dispose of her deceased husband's books to sustain herself, see Alsheikh, *Shut. Moshe Alsheikh*, s133, 289–90. For books as collateral, see Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s6, 5b; ha-Levi, *Darkei no'am*, ḥoshen, s23, 212b–214b.

59 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam ḥoshen ha-mishpat*, s357, 58a. The two brothers lived in a town where a *talmud torah* society operated, yet the location is not provided. For other examples of inheritance disputes involving books, see: Alashkar, *Shut. Maharam Alashkar*, s40, 169–71; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, s72, 1:47b–48a.

60 Mizraḥi, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, s53, 153; Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s3, 3a; Yisrael, *'Ugat Eliyahu*, s38, 53a.

books from Jerusalem was to ensure poor people would have sufficient access to them.[61]

What explains the special value books carried in Jewish society? The type of evidence we use seems to offer some clues. It is possible that the importance of books was inflated by the very medium that provided us the evidence, i.e. the responsa, given that the scholars who wrote them, for whom books were objects of vital consequence, read books more than the average person. If so, we should perhaps look at Jewish society not as one that cherished books universally but as one in which highly educated people of the middle class and above – members of the two intellectual circles – owned, read, and valued books of particular genres, such as halakhah, *musar* (ethics), *midrash* (biblical exegesis), and commentaries, regarded them as signifiers of learnedness, and expected others to appreciate them just as well. In that, they did not differ much from their Muslim counterparts: Research into book ownership and libraries among Muslims in eighteenth-century Istanbul, Syria, and Egypt has shown that people other than the *'ulama'* or the wealthy owned and traded in books, were able to read them, and used libraries (their own or others'); some non-scholars even wrote books.[62]

Unlike for Muslims, who bought and sold books largely in a manuscript market and hired scribes to produce books for them, halakhic works were amply available in print by the second half of the sixteenth century. They were considerably cheaper than manuscripts, thus allowing more people to access rabbinical texts. Rabbis writing after the mid-sixteenth century commented on the affordability of books, their wide availability, and, most significantly, the effect this had on writing scholarship and on the stature of rabbis. Printing provided Jews, and especially members of the outer intellectual circle, with access to halakhic knowledge previously only available to scholars. While helping disseminate texts rabbis authored, printing also reduced others' dependency on them in the long run, prompting some rabbis to long for the times before the invention of print. Moshe Mitrani noted that "in our days (i.e. when Mitrani was writing, mid-sixtenth century) books are found in everyone's possession, as they are printed and cheap." People who had books consulted them first, and only turned to a scholar for advice if they were not satisfied.[63] The Aleppo rabbi Shmue'l Laniado (d. *c.*1750) apologized for writing short answers to a few

61 Benayahu, "Ha-takanah she-lo le-hoṣi sefarim," 226–34.

62 Hanna, *In Praise of Books*, 79–86; Sajdi, *Barber of Damascus*, 111–17; Hitzel, "Manuscrits, livres et culture livresque à Istanbul," 19–38; Establet and Pascual, "Livres des gens à Damas," 143–69.

63 Mitrani, *She'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Mitrani*, 3, s93, 20a.

of the questions sent to him, explaining that the *Shulḥan ʿArukh* and other texts already provided the answers and that they were widely available for anyone to consult.[64] And his contemporary Shimʿon Dweck ha-Kohen lamented the decline in the status of scholars ever since books had become so common. In the times of the Talmud, he claimed, people used to rely on scholars; now, they consult books on their own.[65] The Egyptian rabbis Yosef Nazir (d. *c.*1713) and Yisraʾel Eliyahu excused a shorter response to one question by explaining that one does not need to repeat the arguments made by recent scholars, as nearly everyone had their books.[66] Printing had positive side-effects for rabbis too: It allowed them to promote their own works and recommend others use them, knowing that they would be relatively easy to obtain. Ḥayim Benveniste, for example, used a responsum to promote his *magnum opus*, *Knesset ha-Gedolah*, suggesting that the person he was addressing purchase a copy.[67] The itinerant scholar Ḥayim Yosef David Azulai (ha-Ḥida, d. 1806) praised printing as a technology that allowed the publication of many new works alongside rare books that were previously hard to come by. Printing, according to Azulai, dramatically increased a scholar's library to the extent that one had many books he never got around to reading.[68]

Despite the growing ubiquity of books in print, the rabbis managed to preserve, at least for most of the sixteenth century and possibly the early seventeenth, their standing as the learned elite who could write, read, and comprehend texts. Scholars and advanced students distinguished themselves from the average Jew, who may have owned a few books, by having access to a large body of literature of the type required to produce rabbinical works. Many scholars had their own library at home, typically containing the canonical works and other texts, in print and manuscript (see the examples in Table 1–5, above). Such private collections offered them an exposure to texts significantly broader than most educated Jews had.[69] Yosef Karo apologized for losing a question sent to him after he had left the piece of paper tucked in one of his books while working on ridding his collection of *ḥameṣ* (food prohibited during the week of Passover) – an indication that his personal library was quite

64 Laniado, *Beit dino shel Shmuʾel*, s2, 1:23, s14, 1:77, s26, 1:286.

65 Dweck ha-Kohen, *Reaḥ sadeh*, s20, 405–6.

66 Nazir, *Mateh Yosef*, s9, 44b; Yisrael, *Kol Eliyahu*, 1, even, s10, 60b.

67 Benveniste, *Baʿei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, s22, 15b. For another example of a scholar promoting his work, see Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s125, 2:48.

68 Azulai, *Ḥayim shaʾal*, s33, 1:33a, s38, 1:38b.

69 The study of private book collections among Jews is still in its infancy. See Gris, *Ha-sefer ke-sokhen tarbut*, 65–72; articles in Kaplan and Sluḥovsky, eds., *Sifriyot ve-osafei sefarim*; and Teplitsky, *Prince of the Press*, 22–55.


שלחן ערוך
מטור חושן המשפט הנקרא בית יוסף
חברו הגאון מופת הדור החכם השלם מהרר יוסף קארו נרו בן מהרר אפרים קארו
זצל אשר אור תורתו זורחת כאור היום בעיר צפת תוב ב ומעיני תורתו נפוצות
ביהודה ובישראל נודע שמו : וחבר הספר הזה קיצור מחיבורו הגדול
אשר עשה על הארבעה טורים אשר קראם בית יוסף אשר
בם כח מעשיו הגיד וכל יקר ראתה עינו כדי שכל
מבקש ה׳ ימצא מבוקשו בנקל כל דין ודין על
מתכונתו באין אומר ואין דברים והכין
לכל מטה ושלחן וכסא ומנורה
אשר לאורו ילכו בטח : כי כן משנת רבי יוסף קב ונקי

ותהי ראשית מלאכתנו ו׳ חשון שכ״ו לפ״ק פה וויניציאה הבירה:

FIGURE 7 Title page of the first printed edition of Yosef Karo's *Shulḥan ʿArukh* (Venice, 1565)
PUBLIC DOMAIN

substantial.[70] When Shmu'el de-Medina was asked a question while traveling, he noted in his response that he could not copy relevant passages from another work, since he did not have his books with him, thus implying that he relied on physical access to them in compiling his responsa.[71] Other scholars,

70 Karo, *Avkat rokhel,* s50, 47b.
71 De-Medina, *Shut. Maharashdam oraḥ ḥayim,* yoreh, s62, 22a–b.

such as Avraham de-Buton and Avraham Allegri (of Istanbul, a contemporary of Ḥayim Benveniste) also reported consulting a large body of books in their possession.[72] A study of the books available to the Aleppo scholar Gavri'el Ashkenazi demonstrates this as well.[73] Scholars did not necessarily rely only on their personal libraries. At times, they consulted books found at the home of another scholar, or at a library in another town they were visiting.[74]

Access to books was often virtual rather than practical. Books were not always available: In locales with small or poor Jewish communities, books were hard to come by, and scholars visiting such places complained about the inadequacy of their libraries. But while lamenting the scarcity of sources and the inability to quote from them in their responsa, scholars time and again did exactly that: Addressing the question they were asked with ample references to halakhic works even when these were unavailable to them at the time. Thus, Karo claimed that the evidence to support his view on a certain matter was found "in the responsa of ha-Rosh … but I cannot quote it because I do not have ha-Rosh's responsa, nor any of my other books, with me … and most of what I have written is from what I remember."[75] On several occasions Yosef Mitrani provided detailed answers with references while noting that he was away from home and had none of his books with him.[76] Likewise, Yom Tov Ṣahalon apologized in one instance that "just like a bird wandering away from its nest, so I wander like a lonely bird, and therefore could not comply with the wishes of the asker as I had wanted … the books I have with me are few."[77] Curiously, the answer he provided was neither particularly short nor devoid of references. Later in his life, Ṣahalon himself recognized that he could do without his books if needed, and explained that "even though I am traveling between villages [without my books], and I'm practically on my death bed (*'al 'eres devai*) – still, the matter is clear and there's no need for books."[78] Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ottoman rabbis continued to regret not having sufficient books at their disposal, and to write elaborate

72 De-Buton, *Leḥem rav*, s184, 73a; Benveniste, *Ba'ei ḥayyei ḥoshen*, 1, s59, 52a–54a. See also Almosnino, *'Edut be-yehosef*, s12, 2:35a.

73 'Ofran, "Ḥakham eḥad," 96–8.

74 See e.g. Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s23, 26a; Harari, *Zakhor*, s56, 91a.

75 Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s99, 93a.

76 E.g. "I am poor and without books, [so] I replied as I saw fit and according to what the fork of my mind (*mazleg da'ati*) grasped"; Mitrani, *Shut. Maharit*, 2, s7, 2:2a. See also ibid., ḥoshen, s20, 2:81b ("that is all I could write … as I am in exile and have no books with me, though what I have written is sufficient to prove [my argument]") and s63, 1:41a.

77 Ṣahalon, *Shut. Maharitaṣ*, s141, 116a.

78 Ṣahalon, *Maharitaṣ ha-ḥadashot*, s125, 48.

responsa nonetheless.[79] To be a scholar meant memorizing a great deal of the literature, entire sections of canonical works. Access to a rich library of halakhic works, even if irregular, coupled with the ability to memorize a large corpus of texts, were sufficient to induct one into the inner intellectual circle. Rabbis who served smaller communities that lacked large libraries, or those who were constantly on the move, could also belong to this limited group.

While the linguistic barrier limited the number of Jews who could read halakhic and other Jewish texts, printing made such works cheaper, more abundant, and hence easier to access. This would undermine rabbis' exclusive control of knowledge. The standard assumption, that Ottoman rulers' objection to printing was responsible for the absence of Arabic and Turkish printing presses in the empire until the eighteenth century, has in recent years been debunked. More likely, cultural reasons accounted for the late adoption of this technology in the empire.[80] Printing in Latin or Hebrew characters, however, was available in the empire since the sixteenth century. Books in Aramaic and Hebrew played a prominent role in the spread of halakhic literature and the expansion of intellectual networks among Jews from the sixteenth century on. As with any new technology, printing had its critics, and Ottoman society was likely no exception in that. The differences between Ottoman society at large and Ottoman Jews in their attitude to printing is yet to be investigated. We know, however, that rabbis normally did not object to this technology; on the contrary, they strove to raise the funds necessary to ship their manuscripts to a press and have its copies disseminated. Here and there, a rabbi would voice criticism of the implications of printing. Thus, as we have seen, Moshe Mitrani in the second half of the sixteenth century lamented the proliferation of printed works, which led people to consult books and rely on their own judgement instead of turning to a rabbi for advice. Mitrani noted that the quality of halakhic interpretation depended on the number of books one could consult and that such quality was evident in one's writing.[81] Half a century later, Ḥayim Shabbetai of Salonica made a clear distinction between printed volumes and manuscripts. Writing away from home, he explained that "in this town [that he was visiting] there are no printed responsa books [*sefarim me-ha-poskim*], let

79 For more examples, see Dweck ha-Kohen, *Reaḥ sadeh*, s6, 242; Yisrael, *Kol Eliyahu 2*, yoreh, s15, 101; Pardo, *Mikhtam le-David*, ḥoshen, s19, 2:211b; Azulai, *Ḥayim sha'al*, s36, 1:34b, s10, 2:11a.

80 Ayalon, "Richelieu," 158–60; Ayalon, *Arabic Print Revolution*, 5–17. For examples of scholars perpetuating the old explanation that the Ottomans prohibited printing in Arabic or Turkish, see Borovaya, *Beginning of Ladino Literature*, 50–1; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 366–8, and a more extensive list of such sources in Ayalon, *Arabic Print Revolution*, 7, n. 21.

81 Mitrani, *Shut. ha-Mabit*, s93, 3:20a.

alone manuscripts as we have in my land and at my home."[82] For Shabbetai, basic knowledge could be found in printed books, and the town in which he was staying lacked even those. More advanced understanding of halakhah, however, required the study of manuscripts, which only large cities (i.e. Salonica) and the homes of scholars (i.e. Shabbetai's) possessed. Such a differentiation between the printed and the hand-written word reflected a distinction – one clear to Shabbetai and possibly other rabbis – between the readers of halakhic texts and those who were qualified to create and teach them to others.[83]

One may think of Shabbetai's preference for manuscripts as a way to retain control over knowledge at an age when more and more books were being printed. There was another method rabbis used to that end: Control over book publication and dissemination. Printed and manuscript texts, whether responsa collections, Torah scrolls, or prayer books, would undergo a process of proofreading (*hagahot*) before they were used or disseminated.[84] We know proofreading was very common, though how it worked exactly, who would qualify to serve as proofreaders, what they would look for, and on whose authority they operated, is not entirely clear. As the presses in the empire and Europe were producing more works, the process expanded to include an inspection of halakhic texts, and not only for simple typos: The ideas found in new texts mattered too. Debates about the acceptability of religious texts were not new in the Jewish world. But in the age of printing it was difficult to control the spread of ideas; no text, however harmful or egregious, could be entirely eliminated. The Egyptian rabbi Avraham ha-Levi recounted the story of one such attempt to control the spread of knowledge which rabbis regarded as inappropriate: When Ḥizkiyah de Silva published his book *Peri ḥadash* (a new fruit), rabbis in Amsterdam, Jerusalem, and Hebron allowed their followers to read it, but those in Egypt claimed it was too critical of the Talmud and decided to ban it and discard all extant copies into the genizah. De Silva accepted the verdict of the Egyptian rabbis. While in Egypt all known copies of the book were presumably destroyed, there were still a few in circulation in other parts of the empire and elsewhere. After De Silva had died, a number of scholars who had managed to obtain copies of the book came to ha-Levi and argued that reading it was in fact beneficial. A discussion in the rabbinical court ensued, at the end of which the rabbis decided to undo the ban and allow the reading and reprinting

82 Shabbetai, *She'elot u-teshuvot even ha-'ezer*, s18, 124b.

83 Shmue'l Laniado of Aleppo also treated halakhic discussions found in manuscripts on a higher level than those appearing in print. See Laniado, *Beit dino shel Shmu'el*, s6, 1:47, s7, 1:54.

84 ha-Kohen, *Batei kehunah 3*, s21, 41b–44b.

of the book.[85] Despite its criticism of Maimonides and Karo, *Peri ḥadash* later became a foundational text in halakhah, and sections from it were printed on the margins of newer editions of Karo's *Shulḥan 'arukh*.[86] As this story reveals, there was little that rabbis could do beyond discouraging others from reading a book. Once printed, Jewish texts – orthodox or heterodox – circulated freely throughout the Jewish world.

Access to information was also limited naturally, through the absence of public readings. Presumably, since Jewish texts were written in a language most people did not read and dealt with issues that mostly did not relate to people's daily activities, a public reading scene did not develop for them. The fairly limited phenomenon of group reading of texts (usually using one copy of a manuscript) – in coffee- and drinking-houses, street corners, houses of worship, and private residences – is well documented for the early modern world, in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere. A literate person, scholar or not, would read a text to a crowd that was largely (though not solely) illiterate and could not otherwise be exposed to it; sometimes, a discussion would ensue.[87] We can safely assume some Jews also attended such sessions from time to time, given the common practice of frequenting coffeehouses alongside Muslims and Christians.[88] Testimonies provided to the rabbinical court in Cairo in spring 1684 suggest Jews frequented the Maḥmuriyya coffeehouse (*kahawat al-maḥmuriyya*), where people used to tell stories: "and the custom of those sitting in that coffeehouse was that each person brought a story and would discuss a certain matter."[89]

Still, I have found no evidence for public reading solely among Jews. Some Jews studied together at the *beit midrash* and the *yeshivah*, and some held private study groups at homes with a scholar. Those participating in such activities were already members of the outer or inner intellectual circle. They possessed a higher level of literacy in Hebrew and Aramaic than the general

85 ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, yoreh, klal 3, s3, 1:122b–123b.

86 David, "Hezekiah ben David da Silva," 91–2.

87 The *'ulama'* would attend such public readings in mosques and other religious institutions rather than in coffeehouses, but the function of public reading as a medium for transmitting information was similar. See e.g. Ibn Kannan, *Yawmiyat*, 196–7 for a public reading of a medical text in a mosque in Damascus in 1712. For the clergy's attitude toward coffeehouses, see Sajdi, *Barber of Damascus*, 74–6. For reading in coffeehouses, see Grehan, *Everyday Life*, 144–6; Özkoçak, "İstanbul kahvehaneleri," 17–35. For a broader discussion, see: Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 92–130. For reading groups before the Ottoman period, see Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 37–58.

88 See e.g. Ben Abi Zimra, *Shut. ha-RadBaz*, s1062/637, 3:65b; Yisrael, *Kol Eliyahu*, oraḥ, s13, 2:9a.

89 *kol eḥad mevi sipur*; ha-Levi, *Ginat veradim*, even, klal 3, s10, 37b.

Jewish population, and thus their discussions did not represent an expansion of the knowledge found in texts into a wider audience. Furthermore, there is plenty of evidence for reading as an individual, private experience, usually of scholars consulting books on their own in their libraries or on the road.[90] Granted, this evidence may not reveal much about reading habits outside rabbinical circles or of non-rabbinical materials; how much *reading* as we understand it today, rather than brief consultation of a text to find a reference, took place; or whether rabbis or anyone else read for pleasure rather than for work. Yet it suggests that the population that tended to read or regularly consult texts did so either alone or at most in small groups of people of similar backgrounds. Before the emergence of the popular Ladino press of the eighteenth century, the circle of Jewish readers and writers was quite limited, and the practice of reading for pleasure seems to have been uncommon.

The discussion so far offers but a glimpse into the world of local and regional intellectual exchanges, the greater share of which were conducted orally or in personal correspondence that have not survived. What emerges clearly from the data is that only the most learned took part in such intellectual communities; they seem to have been largely closed off – by linguistic and literacy barriers – from the rest of the community. It is that exclusive status that lent their members the prestige needed to preserve their standing as leaders of their congregations and communities. Developments in the eighteenth century, however, would gradually erode the exclusivity of intellectuals, and hence the status of scholars overall.

5 The End of Knowledge Monopoly

The period from the early sixteenth century to the early eighteenth was one of a dramatic increase in the composition and publication of works of halakhah, philosophy, and kabbalah. Literature in Hebrew had a relatively small readership, as most Ottoman Jews possessed only a rudimentary level of reading of the language. Printing of religious texts in Hebrew or Aramaic contributed to the growth of intellectual circles, as texts became more readily available and affordable.

90 Rabbis referred to the action of reading by noting one has "consulted the books" (*binoti ba-sefarim*). See e.g. Karo, *Avkat rokhel*, s150, 132a; ha-Levi, *Darkei no'am*, yoreh, s15, 33a; Ṣahalon, *Shut. Maharitaṣ*, s119, 99b; ha-Kohen, *Maharshakh*, s187, 2:201a; Laniado, *Beit dino shel Shmu'el*, s1, 1:11.

Initially, however, printing expanded only existing networks of scholars writing and reading Hebrew and Aramaic and their intellectual circles; it did not create new ones. The readership, even with the increase in the number of students in the *yeshivot*, was still small enough to allow such networks to rely on manuscripts. As we have seen, manuscripts were highly valued in rabbinical circles even as more works were being printed. The data on the makeup of local scholarly networks shows a large number of lesser-known scholars, whose works have survived only in manuscript, or not at all. There may also have been many others whose eminence derived from their oral, rather than written, contributions, who did not compose responsa or other works and whose names are unknown to us. In such a setting, the wider circulation of rabbinical works thanks to printing at first did little to jeopardize the political standing of scholars in their communities, and in the Ottoman Jewish world broadly.

The publication of a small number of books in Judeo-Spanish in the sixteenth century also did little to change the position of rabbis. Olga Borovaya has argued that, even though Ladino as a language evolved in the latter part of the sixteenth century and until then Iberian Jews spoke and read several dialects, such sixteenth-century printed literature should be considered the beginning of a wider Ladino print culture that would emerge later, in the eighteenth century.[91] Be that as it may, the main purpose of Ladino printed texts in the sixteenth century was to re-integrate *converso*s arriving in the Ottoman Empire into the Jewish community. Many *converso*s knew little about Judaism and could not read Hebrew (though they could presumably read Ladino once they learned the Hebrew alphabet). Such literature, made up mostly of religious or linguistic texts (such as a Hebrew-Spanish lexicon), had a very limited readership. With the decline in the number of arriving *converso*s in the empire in the early seventeenth century, and the advent of a global climatic crisis, what Borovaya has called the "first wave" of Ladino printing came to an end.[92]

The resumption of Ladino publishing in the first half of the eighteenth century launched a new culture of reading among Ladino speakers (but not yet among Arabic speakers, as we will soon see). Matthias Lehmann has shown that there was little value to manuscripts in Ladino, because Ladino books – even those dealing with religious topics – were for general consumption in a vernacular, a literature which typically relies on mass dissemination to succeed, unlike a limited elite culture that consumed books in Hebrew.[93] The modest beginnings of Ladino printing in the first half of the eighteenth century

91 Borovaya, *Beginning of Ladino Literature*, 35–42.

92 Ibid., 43–50, 55–8.

93 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*, 40.

eventually "opened the world of traditional knowledge to a broader audience than manuscript or Hebrew print culture ever could have done." The number of texts published in Ladino by Jewish presses saw a dramatic rise by the end of the eighteenth century.[94] Vernacular print culture, explains Lehmann, made rabbinical knowledge accessible to more people, including segments of the population that could not have accessed it before, such as women. This meant people gradually became less dependent on oral traditions and on the rabbis, and consequently the central rabbinical authority weakened: "The decentralization of rabbinic control over the communication of knowledge is among the most important consequences of Ladino print culture."[95]

This emerging literary culture involved two important developments. One was the rise of a new class of authors, who were not highly educated in halakhah and did not hold rabbinical positions as did the authors of responsa; neither did they engage in lengthy legal discussions. Such writers produced texts, initially of a religious nature, for popular consumption, reaching a far wider audience than the authors of halakhic works in Hebrew ever did. Traditional scholars did not take them seriously and mocked them.[96] In this, the Ottoman Jewish world mirrored developments that reportedly took place in non-Jewish society. According to historian Dana Sajdi, scholars (the *'ulama'*), the traditional authors of texts, looked down on common people who interacted socially in barbershops and coffeehouses, where popular culture developed. It was from such places that a new group of Arab authors emerged in the eighteenth century, made up of literate yet not religiously trained individuals, who adopted new literary styles and employed spoken language (*'amiyya*) in their texts, perhaps to appeal to a wider readership.[97] In various lodges (sing. *tekke*) throughout Istanbul, smaller libraries serving a diverse public emerged in the early eighteenth century, indicating a rise in readership and access to books, though their collections were still mostly limited to manuscripts of religious texts.[98] Unlike Jewish authors, however, those writing in Arabic or Turkish for Muslim readers lacked the engine of the printing press to disseminate their texts. Before the second half of the nineteenth century, therefore, the effect of such literary changes in Ottoman-Muslim society must have been more limited than it had been for Jews.

94 According to Ya'ari, in the presses of Istanbul alone, 5 books in Ladino were printed between 1710 and 1740, while 29 were printed between 1740 and 1778; Ya'ari, *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta*, 159–223.

95 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*, 43.

96 Ibid., 43–5.

97 Sajdi, *Barber of Damascus*, 74–7, 111–12.

98 Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda kütüphaneler ve kütüphanecilik*, 473.

The second development was the realization of traditional scholars that Jewish texts in the vernacular, by virtue of having a wider readership than those printed in Hebrew, enabled them to shape and standardize popular religious practices more effectively than before. When preparing translations of works into Ladino, scholars translated what they thought people needed or wanted to know.[99] From the second half of the eighteenth century, and even more so in the nineteenth, literary power was vested in those who prepared Ladino editions of Jewish texts, such as Yaʿakov Khuli (d. 1732, first author of the anthology *Meʿam loʿez*) and Yehudah Papo (d. 1873, translator of his father's *Pele yoʿeṣ*). Such translations, often reflecting the general spirit of a text rather than its exact words, represented what the literary elite believed was appropriate for the non-learned public that was to read them.[100]

As more books were being printed in the vernacular, readership developed in ways that the scholars did not intend. At first the rabbis thought of translating such literature as *musar* as a means to shape socio-religious practices among a larger audience not previously exposed to their writings. Ladino versions of Jewish texts recognized individual and collective learning, while still insisting on the importance of the medium, the *talmid hakham*, who provided the translation and by so doing, effectively controlled the narrative. By the second half of the nineteenth century, reading practices deviated from the model the scholars had envisioned, in part due to the appearance of newspapers and magazines in Ladino, and in other part because more and more women were reading too. Before this Ladino printing revolution, women received knowledge primarily through men, not by self-reading. From the nineteenth century, scholars who were producing works for broader consumption considered women as part of their audience. Indeed, women were encouraged to learn how to read and write not only for studying but for other purposes as well. Traditional scholars criticized this trend, claiming that women had no time to read because of their domestic duties, but the new class of educated Jews, including a few rabbis, opposed such claims, even if they never truly challenged traditional gender roles.[101] Thus, what began as modest attempts to publish religious texts in Ladino in the first half of the eighteenth century, unleashed cultural and scholarly shifts among Ottoman Jews by the mid-nineteenth that diminished the power of traditional rabbinical leadership.

All of this applies to Ottoman Jews who spoke and read Ladino. It appears that no comparable literary developments took place among Arabic-speaking

99 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*, 51.
100 Ibid., 55–60.
101 Ibid., 51, 68–9.

Jews before the late nineteenth century, a period that falls outside the scope of this book. Ever since Sa'adya Gaon translated the bible into Arabic in the tenth century, Arabic editions of the book, or parts of it, circulated among Arabic-speaking Jews (and non-Jews) in manuscript form. Newer translations into Judeo-Arabic existed from at least the second half of the sixteenth century, in manuscript only. Printed translations of the bible and other books into Judeo-Arabic appeared only in the second half of the nineteenth century or the early twentieth. Yiṣḥak Avishur traced the earliest printed translations of the Book of Psalms into Judeo-Arabic to one press in Cairo in 1865 (a partial edition), another in Livorno (1871), and yet another in Jerusalem (1882).[102] Before the nineteenth century, Jews in the Arab provinces launched sporadic attempts at printing. These were all short-lived and produced books in Hebrew only. Scholars and authors from such places as Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad mostly shipped their manuscripts to be printed in the Jewish printing presses of Istanbul, Izmir, or Livorno. The latter did not appear to produce any work in Judeo-Arabic though they did, as we have seen, print in Ladino. Ya'ari found evidence for one *haggadah* for Passover printed in Judeo-Arabic in Livorno in 1844.[103] The evidence for early printing in Judeo-Arabic is still lacking; yet, it is fairly clear that the intellectual efflorescence reflected in the sharp rise in Ladino printing arrived much later in the Arabic-speaking Jewish world.

Why was the difference between Ladino and Judeo-Arabic in the development of print culture so substantial? The potential exposure of one group to European culture more significantly than the other cannot fully account for this difference: Jews in the Arab parts of the empire too had close contacts with European merchants and diplomats. As we have seen, a large segment of the Jewish community in Aleppo was involved with the *frankos* one way or another, and hence with Livornese, French, and British merchants. Furthermore, in the western and eastern parts of the empire alike, Jews lived among a largely illiterate society that had little or no access to printed books. As an integral part of Ottoman society, Jews operated within a network of manuscript knowledge dissemination, which entailed oral, aural, or textual exposure to information. Ottoman rabbis did acknowledge a certain rise in the Jewish public's exposure to printed texts from the sixteenth century on; but

102 Avishur, *Tergumei ha-tanakh*, 107, 122–3, 151–62.

103 For Jewish presses in the Arab countries before the nineteenth century, see Ya'ari, *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-arṣot ha-mizraḥ*, 1:9–35, 53–5, and 2:100–2 for the *haggadah* printed in 1844 and Baghdadi Jews sending manuscripts overseas to be printed. No books in Judeo-Arabic appear in Ya'ari's list of books printed in Istanbul in the eighteenth century; see *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta*, 159–223.

those were mostly in Hebrew. While there were Hebrew printing presses in Istanbul, Salonica, and Izmir, and Hebrew books printed elsewhere in Europe made their way into the empire, non-Hebrew print culture was limited to the few mostly non-Jewish readers and foreign residents who brought with them, imported, or sold printed books in European languages.[104] There was no print culture among Jews in Judeo-Arabic or Ladino before the eighteenth century. If so, what accounted for Ladino print culture emerging at least a century earlier than that in Judeo-Arabic? Could it be, as one historian suggested that, unlike Hebrew or Ladino, Judeo-Arabic was made up of so many local dialects spoken over vast distances that one's version of the language would be incomprehensible to another?[105] Was it due to the diglossic nature of Arabic, and the existence of multiple Judeo-Arabic*s* based on local vernacular rather than the written, literary language, that there was no market for printing? Or perhaps like Arabic itself, Judeo-Arabic lived better in the manuscript world of which the language was an intrinsic constituent, whereas Ladino, with its Spanish roots, could more easily follow the European model of leaping into print? Recent research into the late coming of printing to the Middle East supports such an assumption.[106] If true, we might well be asking the wrong question. Why, we should perhaps ask, did Ladino print culture emerge *only* in the eighteenth century and *not* in the fifteenth or sixteenth? This would be more pertinent than asking why Judeo-Arabic did not catch up until the second half of the nineteenth century, when printing in Arabic took off too. I have begun to address the answer to *that* question earlier in this chapter: It had to do with the lack of one unified Ladino language and readership; Iberian Jews arrived in the empire in the sixteenth century speaking and reading several dialects that only unified into what we now call Ladino toward the end of that century. Then, the crisis of the seventeenth century, and the decline in migration of *converso* Jews into the empire, stalled the development of a market for printed books beyond the limited readership of Hebrew texts.[107]

To understand why the transformation in Jewish-Ladino printing and book consumption only began in the eighteenth century, one ought to consider several developments. Parts of European society adopted printing soon after its invention in the mid-fifteenth century. Some urban areas witnessed a stark rise in literacy rates in the decades after, while in other parts of the continent this process took much longer. Historians have linked such dramatic

104 Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities*, 11–14, 70–1, 90–8.
105 Tsur, *Gevirim ve-yehudim aḥerim*, 52–4.
106 Ayalon, *Arabic Print Revolution*, 3–17.
107 Borovaya, *Beginning of Ladino Literature*, 39–42, 55–8.

developments as the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution to the invention of the printing press.[108] The Ottoman Sephardic world too began to use printing fairly quickly. There were already a few presses operating in the empire and adjacent territories and producing mostly halakhic texts by the mid-sixteenth century.[109] But the Jewish press did not transform society as its counterparts did in Christendom. In its first two centuries, Jewish printing in the empire produced almost exclusively rabbinical works intended for consumption by members of the intellectual circles. In 1529, rabbis in Salonica threatened with excommunication anyone who published books without their approval, a measure possibly intended to stifle printing of popular literature.[110] This indicates that there was some interest in non-religious texts, apparently on a limited scale given that so far we have no evidence of more such rabbinical initiatives or of such books published in the sixteenth century. Printing in the vernacular included a handful of books produced to inculcate *converso*s into Jewish life. Meanwhile, the educated elite that became part of the international mercantile scene could read scientific and other literature in European languages. Rabbis benefitted from controlling the spread of written information. That was still true when printing of Jewish texts in Ladino resumed in the eighteenth century.

Circumstances had changed by then, however. We may assume that intellectual curiosity developed as Jews became increasingly involved in the Ottoman, Mediterranean, and global economy. A small but growing segment of the Jewish population was becoming increasingly cosmopolitan soon after the expulsions from Iberia. As we have seen, Jews in Salonica and Safed led the cloth industry throughout most of the sixteenth century. Participating in this trade entailed ties with merchants throughout the Mediterranean, in and outside the empire and in Europe, and with the Ottoman authorities. Jews continued to be involved in international commerce after the collapse of that industry in the 1590s. Many developed partnerships with the English Levant Company that had taken over much of the trade in cloth. Others formed trade relations with Sephardim in Italy, Amsterdam, and later, the New World.[111]

---

108 Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 3–42. For a discussion of the different approaches to the effects of printing on European society, see Grafton "How revolutionary was the print revolution?"; Eisenstein, "An unacknowledged revolution revisited"; and Johns, "How to acknowledge a revolution."

109 Ya'ari, "Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-Izmir," 97–108; *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta*, 17–58; *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-arṣot ha-mizraḥ*, 1:9–56.

110 Borovaya, *Beginning of Ladino Literature*, 51–2.

111 Trivellato, "Port Jews of Livorno," 37–43.

While few Ottoman Jews (or "eastern Sephardim," as historians have called them) were directly involved in international commerce, western Sephardim operating in the empire and their local counterparts supported and were supported by many in the middle and lower classes. The latter were affected at least to some degree by the many cross-cultural networks some Sephardim maintained within and outside the empire.[112] The *frankos* episode discussed in Chapter 3 is a case in point: While only wealthy European and Sephardi merchants benefitted from commerce directly, many in the Aleppo community obtained lucrative positions thanks to their ties with the *frankos*, and artisans and servicemen likely saw more business thanks to increased economic activity in the area. We can imagine that greater exposure to the world beyond one's immediate surrounding bred curiosity and motivation to obtain knowledge. Furthermore, by the eighteenth century the role of the religious community and of rabbis in people's lives had weakened, for the many reasons I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4. Thus, the emergence of Ladino print culture in the eighteenth century facilitated the creation of a reading public independent of the rabbinical establishment by the mid-nineteenth century. A similar process occurred among non-Jews as well. For example, Nelly Hanna found that in Egypt, the growing involvement of the wealthy in international commerce affected the middle-class. A segment of the middle class had more money and free time, some of which were spent on cultural and literary consumption, developing new intellectual interests, and even on writing books, before mass printing was available in Arabic.[113] Dana Sajdi has traced similar trends in Damascus, where intellectuals not associated with the religious establishment appeared as authors of works of new genres.[114] The emergence of a similar class among Jews – those indirectly involved in international commerce – meant the potential readership for Ladino and Judeo-Arabic works had already existed, or was developing concurrently with Muslims' potential for Arabic readership.

In its first two centuries, Hebrew print culture served and was controlled by the rabbinical class. For a non-Hebrew print culture to emerge among Jews, there had to appear enough authors and a mass audience; both publishers and readers had to be ready to challenge the establishment, its rules, and conventions. If in Europe the Protestant Reformation proved that a critical mass of Christians were willing to go against Catholic conventions, the Sabbatean crisis did the same for Ottoman Jews. The effects of the Sabbatean episode lasted far beyond Shabbetai Ṣevi's lifetime. As we have seen, in Western Europe in

112 Lehmann, "A Livornese 'port Jew'," 70–1; Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 127–8, 155–6, 198.
113 Hanna, *In Praise of Books*, 31–49.
114 Sajdi, *Barber of Damascus*, 74–7.

the eighteenth century, tensions heightened between rabbinical Judaism and reform forces that sought to defy orthodoxy, among them many with Sabbatean tendencies. For Ottoman Jews, such tendencies are hard to trace due to the systematic effort to expunge any mention of Shabbetai from memory, and given that no comparable reform movement emerged to challenge rabbinical authority in the empire. Perhaps there was no need for one: The growth in extra-communal forms of charity and education, and the spread of kabbalah as a type of popular religion, signified a shift in Jews' disposition toward halakhah and rabbinical authority.

With conditions ripe for a change, the Ottoman Jewish world witnessed "a prolonged period of a flourishing literary creativity in Ladino" from the early eighteenth century onward. Ya'akov Khuli's *Me'am lo'ez*, an encyclopedic commentary on the book of Genesis and the first part of Exodus, was published in Istanbul in 1730 (with subsequent sections written by other authors through the 1890s). Publishing mostly translations from Hebrew and some original works between the 1720s and 1760s, Avraham Asa managed to present elements of Judaism to a large Ladino-speaking and reading audience that could not access that literature in Hebrew.[115] Together, the two represent the emergent literary Ladino movement that resulted in dramatic cultural changes by the first half of the nineteenth century.

Lehmann has already recounted the progression of Ladino print culture. Of significance for our discussion is the effect such developments had on rabbinical authority. As I have argued earlier, the standing of rabbis in their communities, weaker than we had previously assumed to begin with, had further eroded by the second half of the eighteenth century. The surge in the production of books in Ladino, which made popular halakhic knowledge previously accessible only to scholars, curtailed the main source of political capital rabbis had: Their monopoly on knowledge. As more halakhic works became available, albeit in amended and simplified editions, to the general non-Hebrew reading public, rabbinical control of the dissemination of knowledge diminished. While the greater share of rabbinical texts did not appear in translation, and scholars continued to enjoy exclusive access to the library of Jewish treasures, for the average Ottoman Jew the value of the knowledge found in such unpublished and printed works declined. Developments I have considered earlier, which had given Jews opportunities outside the community and away from the purview of rabbis, rendered much of the vast rabbinical literature

115 Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature*, 33–35, quotation from 34.

that remained in Hebrew gradually less relevant to the greater majority of Ottoman Jews.

And what about the reputation of scholars as creators of rabbinical knowledge? Rabbis continued to hold a place of eminence in their communities, and people continued to apply to them for advice and adjudication of disputes. In the nineteenth century, scholars were still revered for their erudition and intellectual and judicial acumen. But they were no longer alone: The rise of Ladino printing, and later newspaper culture, allowed authors not of the rabbinical class or the inner circle of intellectuals to have their voice heard in the public domain. These were highly literate individuals of the middle class who did not work as full-time scholars, whose works circulated in far greater numbers than rabbinical works printed in the Hebrew presses of the previous two hundred years ever did. This process – the entry of non-scholars of the middle class into the world of text writing and dissemination – might have had less to do with printing and more with the emerging global economy that trickled down to the middle and even lower classes, increased incomes, enhanced curiosity, and left people with more free time to pursue leisure activities, among them reading and writing. Like changes in the collection and dispensation of charity and in education, the beginning of the spread of literacy and printing in the vernacular further eroded the already precarious position of rabbis as leaders of their communities. In the nineteenth century, a true explosion of printed texts, a flourishing print culture (finally, in Judeo-Arabic too) distinct from the old manuscript one and, later, the advent of educational opportunities thanks to the efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and other organizations, would generate profound changes in the Ottoman Jewish community.

Conclusion

In November 1659, the French merchant, traveler, and diplomat Lauren d'Arvieux and his company arrived in Gaza. On their fourth day in town, the local governor threw a feast in honor of his French guests. Invited to join the pasha in his garden by the sea, d'Arvieux recounted,

> We rode horses with fifteen other people, Christians, Turks, and Jews, and smoked and ate there. There was excellent wine, and meats and fish that were prepared according to the customs of the land. [There were also] fruits, confitures, and pastries; in short, anything one could expect in a grand meal. The one thing that could have bothered us was that we were seated in the Levantine way [on the floor], and that happened for two reasons: One, there were no chairs in that house. And two, a large number of the invitees were not used to sitting with their legs straight, just as we were not used to sitting with them crossed. During this feast, which lasted about six hours, we were treated to a well-done concert of [musical] instruments. All that happened with much politeness, joy, and pleasure. It was particularly at an event such as this that I was reminded how advantageous it has been for me to become familiar with the Oriental languages: I understood and spoke perfectly well the three languages that they were speaking [at the feast], that is, Turkish, Arabic, and Greek.[1]

D'Arvieux's description of the feast was not out of the ordinary for European guests hosted by Levantine officials. What drew me to it was the author's casual mention of the guests. The Jews in attendance rode horses (in apparent violation of Islamic law), seemingly drank non-kosher wine, ate non-kosher meat, might have consumed dairy and meat products or meat and fish at once, and interacted with, and appeared to feel comfortable in the presence of, many non-Jews. This description caught my attention also because of its fairly reliable nature. D'Arvieux spent decades in the Levant and was considerably more familiar with local customs and languages than other European visitors.

What does it tell us that Jews joined a party with non-Jews and possibly engaged in activities that Jewish law proscribed? This anecdote is indicative of the broader conclusion emerging from this book, that there were multiple ways of being Jewish in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Jewish

1 D'Arvieux, *Mêmoires*, 2:55.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004711976_008

experience – or perhaps we should say experiences – was one characterized throughout the period covered in this book by constant tensions between the traditional-rabbinical and lay leadership, communal structures and individuals, segregation and integration, and forces promoting a lifestyle based on halakhah and those rejecting it. The multiple ways of being Jewish, of experiencing Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire, were clearly visible once Sephardic-Ottoman identity emerged in the second half of the sixteenth century. Because almost all Ottoman Jews lived in cities, and because so many of them took part, directly or indirectly, in a social and economic scene that transcended their immediate surroundings, Ottoman Jewry never formed an isolated world such as the one rabbis imagined so well in their responsa.

This book challenged the role and power of institutions and functionaries within the Ottoman Jewish community, and the historiography that has allotted them that much authority. It also raised the question about halakhah as a guiding principle in the life of Ottoman Jews. As we have seen, the multiple ways of being Jewish translated into a wide spectrum of lifestyles, some more observant than others. This did not, in general, lead to an uncritical acceptance of rabbinical leadership. The updated narrative of Ottoman Jewish history, and the questions this book explored about leadership, poor relief, and education, have revealed a Jewish community that was integrated within broader Ottoman society, regularly challenged its leaders, and was open to and accepted change. It was also a community that embraced charisma and intellectual eminence as desirable leadership qualities. Questions this book dealt with only perfunctorily – e.g. women's status in Ottoman Jewish society and social relationships among them; dress; and food – may further support this conclusion, as some evidence already suggests.[2]

In this book, I used the term the Sephardi Revolution to describe the rebirth of Iberian, eastern Mediterranean, and Arab Jewry in the decades following the expulsions from Spain and Portugal. It was in the Ottoman Empire, where in the sixteenth century favorable environmental conditions and political stability created fertile ground for new social experiments, that different components of the Jewish experience assembled to create a new type of Jewish identity. Ottoman Judaism was dynamic, adaptive, constantly evolving, and in constant discourse with the Jewish world outside the empire and with non-Jewish society. It was precisely in such a setting, within this type of Judaism, that many of the foundations of halakhah, indeed of Orthodox Judaism, emerged. That is, the constant challenges to rabbinical authority that rabbis complained about

2 See examples in Lamdan, *A Separate People*; Daccarett, "Food and drink – Ottoman Empire."

time and again were the very foundation upon which their scholarship was created, and, one may surmise, would not have been able to develop otherwise. The urge to respond to constantly evolving social and religious realities, and to challenges to the place of the community and of halakhah in the lives of Jews, shaped the scholarship of Yosef Karo, Moshe Mitrani, RadBaz, and Shmu'el de-Medina in the sixteenth century; Ḥayim Benveniste and Avraham ha-Levi in the seventeenth; and David Pardo, Ḥayim Azulai, and Shlomo Laniado in the eighteenth. The trends rabbis protested against, from defying their leadership to private charity and educational initiatives, were in fact a necessary backdrop to the scholarship they created. It is not hard to imagine that the prolific production of rabbinical works in the Ottoman world would have been rather underwhelming without the constant challenges to their authority, which fueled thousands of pages of halakhic responsa and *musar* discussions. Collectively, the works of Ottoman rabbis contributed a significant share of ideas and rules to what later became Orthodox halakhah.

This, then, brings one back to a fundamental question this book has dealt with: Did acts and customs that rabbis and lay leaders consider rebellious, or inherently not in line with communal or halakhic expectations, form a significant part of the Jewish story, of the Jewish experience? Did they too define what it meant to be Jewish? The day will come when a comprehensive study addresses this question for the Jewish world more broadly, across centuries and continents. For Ottoman Jewry between the mid-sixteenth and the early nineteenth century, the answer is yes.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival Documents

Istanbul, Türk Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivleri (Presidential Ottoman Archives; formerly the Prime Minister's archives, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri) (BOA)

Ahkâm Defterleri: Help 1, 2, 3; Şam-ı Şerif, 2.

Başmuhasebe Muhallefât Halifeliği (D.BŞM.MHF.): 53/9.

Cevdet series:

Adliye (C. ADL.): 1533.

Belediye (C. BLD.): 146.

Darphâne (C. DRB.): 15, 17, 438.

Hatt-i Hümayun (HAT): 1386/55002.

Maliyeden Müdevver Defterleri (MMD): 1215, 1292, 3782, 4439, 9849.

Şikâyet Defterleri, vols. 2, 4.

London, National Archives (NA)

State Papers (SP): 110/57, 110/67, 110/68.

Marseille, Archives de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie (ACCM)

G5.

J900, 901, 1586.

Foundational Jewish Texts

Mishnah (M): Demai.

Tosefta (T): Pe'ah.

Babylonian Talmud (BT): Bava Batra, Bava Meṣi'a, Gittin, Ketubot, Megilah, Pesaḥim, Sanhedrin, Sukkah.

Jerusalem Talmud (JT): Pe'ah.

Mishneh Torah (MT): Malveh ve-Loveh, Matnot 'Aniyyim, Nedarim, Sanhedrin.

Arba'ah Turim (AT).

Shulḥan 'Arukh (ShA).

Published and Unpublished Texts

Abravanel, Yiṣḥak. *Naḥalat Avot: Perush rabbenu Don Yiṣḥak Abravanel 'al masekhet avot*. Ashkelon: Oren Golan, 2013.

Aboab, Imanuel. *Nomologia, o discursos legales*. Amsterdam: Costa, 1628.

Aboab, Yiṣḥak. *Sefer menorat ha-ma'or*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Midrash ha-Mevo'ar, 1988.

Abulʿafyah, Ḥayim. *Ḥanan elohim*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ma'or, 1993.

Abulʿafyah, Ḥayim. *Shut. nishmat ḥayim*. Monroe, NY: Y. Brakh, 1991.

Aderbi, Yiṣḥak ben Shmuel. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot ha-nikra divrei rivot*. Venice: 1587.

Alashkar, Moshe. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot Maharam Alashkar*. Jerusalem: Safra, 1959.

Almosnino, Yosef. *Sefer 'edut be-yehosef*. Istanbul: 1711–33.

Alsheikh, Moshe. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot Moshe Alsheikh*. Safed: Sifriyah Toranit Beit Yosef, 1975.

Anonymous. *Anonim Osmanlı tarihi* (1099–1116/1688–1704). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000.

Anonymous. "Pinkas shadar," Ms. F36782 in the National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

Anonymous. *Salname-i vilayet-i Halep*. [Istanbul]: Matbaʿa-i Vilayetinde, 1875.

Anonymous. *Salname-i vilayet-i Suriye*. [Istanbul]: Matbaʿa-i Vilayetinde, 1872.

ʿAntebi, Avraham. *Sefer ḥokhmah u-musar*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 2000.

ʿAntebi, Avraham. *Sefer mor ve-ohalot*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 1983.

ʿAntebi, Avraham. *Sefer yoshev ohalim*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 1981.

Arvieux, Laurent d'. *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux*. Paris: C.J.B. Delespine, 1735.

Asher ben Yeḥi'el. *She'elot teshuvot leha-Rosh*. Istanbul: 1517.

Asher ben Yeḥi'el. "Recueil," Ms. Hébreu 421 in the Bibliothèque National de France, Paris. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b107201407, accessed 20 May 2024.

Ashkenazi, Beṣal'el. *She'elot u-teshuvot shel ha-rav ha-gadol sinai ve-ʿoker harim kemoharar Beṣal'el Ashkenazi*. Jerusalem: Orot Maʿarav, 1994.

Ashkenazi, Beṣal'el. *She'elot u-teshuvot*. Jerusalem: 1968.

Azulai, Ḥayim Yosef David. *She'elot u-teshuvot Ḥayim sha'al*. Jerusalem: Lamberg, 1886.

Ben Lev, Yosef. *She'elot u-teshuvot sefunot va-ḥashuvot*. Benei Berak: s.l.a., 1988.

Benaim, Annette. *Sixteenth-Century Judeo-Spanish Testimonies: An Edition of Eighty-four Testimonies from the Sephardic Responsa in the Ottoman Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Benveniste, Ḥayim. *Baʿei ḥayyei: Mi-shut. ḥelek ḥoshen ha-mishpat ḥelek aleph*. Thessaloniki: 1788.

Benveniste, Ḥayim. *Sefer baʿei ḥayyei mi-shut. ḥelek yoreh deʿah nikra ʿetṣ ha-daʿat*. Thessaloniki: Rapha'el Ḥayim Alfandari, 1791.

Benveniste, Ḥayim. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot knesset ha-gedolah*. Istanbul: 1743.

Benveniste, Yehoshuʿa. *Shut. Shaʿar Yehoshuʿa*. Husyatin: 1904.

Berab, Yaʿakov. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot*. Jerusalem: s.l.a., 1988.

Browne, William. *Travels in Africa, Egypt, and Syria, from the Year 1792 to 1798*. London: T. Cadell Junior and W. Davies, 1799.

al-Budayri, Aḥmad. *Ḥawadith dimashq al-yawmiyya*. Cairo: Al-Jamʿiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1959.

Burayk, Mikha'il. *Ta'rikh al-Sham*. Damascus: Dar Qutayba, 1982.

Buton, Me'ir de. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot*. Istanbul: Avraham Gabbai, 1660.

Capsali, Eliyahu. *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institue veha-Makhon le-Ḥeker ha-Tefuṣot, 1976.

D. Andreasyan, Hrand. *Polonyalı Simeon'un seyahatnamesi, 1608–1619*. Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1964.

Dayan, Moshe ben Abraham. *Sefer yashir Moshe: perush le-shir ha-shirim*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 2004.

Devezin, Michael. *Nachrichten über Aleppo und Cypern*. Weimar: Verlage des Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1804.

De-Buton, Avraham. *Sefer leḥem rav*. Jerusalem: 1981.

De-Medina, Shmu'el. *She'elot u-teshuvot Maharashdam ha-shayakhot be-tur even ha-'ezer*. Lviv: P.M. Balaban, [1862].

De-Medina, Shmu'el. *She'elot u-teshuvot Maharashdam ha-shayakhot be-tur ḥoshen ha-mishpat*. Lviv: P.M. Balaban, [1862].

De-Medina, Shmu'el. *She'elot u-teshuvot Maharashdam ha-shayakhot be-tur oraḥ ḥayim*. Lviv: P.M. Balaban, [1862].

Düzdağ, Mehmet Ertuğrul. *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi fetvaları ışığında 16. asır Türk hayatı*. Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1972.

Dweck ha-Kohen, Shim'on. *Shut. reaḥ sadeh*. Monroe, NY: Y. Brakh, 1990.

Egmond, Johannes Aegidius van. *Travels through Part of Europe, Asia Minor, the Islands of the Archipelago; Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Mount Sinai, &c*. London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1759.

Feyzullah, Seyit. *Fetava-yı feyziye ma'an nükul*. [Istanbul]: Dār ü-Ṭıbā'at ül-Âmire, 1850.

Galante, Mordekhai. *Sefer divre Mordekhai*. Livorno: Eliyahu ben Amuzag, 1859.

Galante, Moshe. *Shut. berakh Moshe*. Monroe, NY: Y. Brakh, 1990.

Galante, Moshe. *Shut. ha-ram Galante*. Benei Berak: S.L.A., 1987.

al-Ghazzi, Kamil bin Ḥusayn. *Kitab nahr al-dhahab fi ta'rikh ḥalab*. Aleppo: Dar al-Qalam al-'Arabi, 1992.

ha-Kohen, David ben Ḥayim. *Sefer teshuvot radakh*. Ostroh: Eli'ezer Feibel, 1834.

ha-Kohen, Eliyahu. *Me'il ṣedakah*. Jerusalem: H. Koperman, 1989.

ha-Kohen, Shlomo. *Sefer ḥelek revi'i mi-she'elot u-teshuvot*. Thessaloniki: Moshe Kanpiliyash, 1691.

ha-Kohen, Shlomo. *Sefer ḥelek sheni mi-she'elot u-teshuvot*. Venice: Joan Dinara, 1592.

ha-Kohen, Shlomo. *Sefer shelishi mi-she'elot u-teshuvot*. Thessaloniki: 1730.

ha-Kohen, Shlomo. *She'elot u-teshuvot Maharshakh*. Jerusalem: Defus ha-Teḥiyah, 1961.

ha-Kohen, Yiṣḥak. *Sefer batei kehunah ḥelek shelishi*. Izmir: Eliyah ha-Levi, 1736.

ha-Levi, Avraham. *Sefer ginat veradim*. Istanbul: Defus Yonah [ben] Ya'akov mi-Zlozits, 1716.

ha-Levi, Eliyahu. *Sefer zakan Aharon*. Istanbul: Yonah ben Ya'akov, 1734.

ha-Levi, Mordekhai. *Sefer darkei no'am*. Venice: Defus ha-Aḥim Viṣinṣo Valvizi Bragdon, 1697.

ha-Levi, Shlomo ben Binyamin. *Shut. Lev Shlomo*. Monroe, NY: Y. Brakh, 1990.

Halevi, Binyamin. *Sefer ḥemdat yamim*. Benei Berak: Makhon Ḥemdat Yamim, 2011.

Harari, Yiṣḥak. *Shut. zekhor le-Yiṣḥak: 'al shulḥan 'arukh oraḥ ḥayim*. Jerusalem: Mekhon Aram Ṣova, 1993.

Ḥuṣin, Ṣadkah. *Sefer ṣedakah u-mishpat: She'elot u-teshuvot 'al oraḥ ḥayim yoreh de'ah ḥoshen mishpat*. Jerusalem: Keren Hoṣa'at Sifrei Rabbanei Bavel, 1926.

Ibn Kannan, Muḥammad. *Yawmiyat Shamiya*. Damascus: Dar al-Tabba', 1994.

Ibn Ṣayyaḥ, "She'elot u-teshuvot me-et Yosef ibn Ṣayyah," Ms. Heb. 4 °1446 in the National Library, Jerusalem, Israel.

Jellinek, Aharon. *Kontras Gzeirot 1096*. Leipzig: J.M. Goldberg, 1854.

Jesuits. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères*. Lyon: J. Vernarel, 1819.

Kal'ai, Barukh. *Sefer Makor Barukh*. Izmir: Avraham Yedidyah Gabbai, 1659.

Kal'a, Ahmet, ed. *İstanbul ahkam defterleri: İstanbul'da sosyal hayat*. Istanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1998.

Karo, Yosef. *She'elot u-teshuvot avkat rokhel*. Leipzig: Leopold Shenvais, 1859.

Karo, Yosef. *She'elot u-teshuvot beit yosef*. Jerusalem: Siaḥ Yisrael, 1992.

Karo, Yosef. *She'elot u-teshuvot beit Yosef*. Jerusalem: Tif'eret ha-Torah, 1960.

Kaṣabi, Yosef. *Rav Yosef*. Istanbul: Defus Yonah ben Ya'akov, 1736.

Kaṣin, Yehudah. *Sefer maḥaneh Yehudah*. Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1989.

Labaton, Ḥayim Mordekhai. *Nokhaḥ ha-shulḥan: teshuvot ve-ḥidushim be-arba'ah turim ve shulḥan 'arukh*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 2000.

Laniado, Efrayim. *Degel maḥaneh Efrayim*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 1984.

Laniado, Rapha'el Shlomo. *Beit dino shel Shlomo: she'elot u-teshuvot be-arba'ah ḥelke shulḥan 'arukh*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 1986.

Laniado, Rapha'el Shlomo. *Kise Shlomo: she'elot u-teshuvot*. Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ktav, 1983.

Laniado, Rapha'el Shlomo. *She'elot u-teshuvot Maharash Laniado ha-ḥadashot*. Jerusalem: Mekhon Bet Aharon, 1997.

Laniado, Rapha'el Shlomo. "Shut," F 46144 in the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (IMHM), the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

Laniado, Rapha'el Shlomo, Yehudah Kaṣin, and Efrayim Laniado. *Sefer Ro'ey Yisrael*. Jerusalem: Sh. Kaṣin, 1897.

Laniado, Shmu'el. *She'elot u-teshuvot beit dino shel Shmu'el*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2017.

Mahma, Ya'akov Pargi. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot Maharif*. Alexandria: Faraj Ḥayim Mizraḥi, 1901.

Matatyah, Binyamin ben. *She'elot u-teshuvot Binyamin Ze'ev*. Jerusalem: S.L.A., 1988.

Melamed, Me'ir. *Sefer mishpat ṣedek, she'elot u-teshuvot*. Thessaloniki: 1615.

Menteşizade, Abdürrahim. *Fetava-yi Abdürrahim*. Istanbul: Darüttıbaat ül-Ma'muret üs-Sultaniye, 1827.

Meyuḥas, Rapha'el. *Sefer brakhot mayim*. Thessaloniki: Mordekhai Naḥman, 1789.

Mitrani, Moshe. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot ha-Mabit*. New York: Grossman's Publishing House, 1861.

Mitrani, Moshe. *She'elot u-teshuvot me-ha-rav ha-gadol Moshe Mitrani*. Venice: Yoani Kalyoni, 1630.

Mitrani, Yosef. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot Maharit*. Lvov: Flekir Salat Goldberg and Stand, 1861.

Mitrani, Yosef. *Teshuvot u-fiskei maharit ha-ḥadashim*. Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 1978.

Mizraḥi, Eliyahu. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot rabbi Eliyahu Mizraḥi*. Jerusalem: Darom, 1938.

Mizraḥi, Eliyahu, and Eliyahu Ben Ḥayim. *Sefer mayim 'amukim la dalu lanu shenei ha-me'orot ha-gedolim*. Venice: Francisco Vitsiyeri, 1647.

Mizraḥi, Nissim Ḥayim Moshe. *Sefer admat kodesh*. Istanbul: Defus Binyamin Moshe Rushi, 1742.

Modilyano, Shmu'el. *Sefer ne'eman Shmu'el*. Thessaloniki: Avraham Naḥman and Moshe Kanfiliyash, 1723.

Moshe, Avraham. *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah: hilkhot ṣedakah u-ma'aser kesafim*. Jerusalem: Sefer ahavat ṣedakah, 2008.

Musafya, Ḥayim Yiṣḥak. *Sefer ḥayim ve-ḥesed*. Livorno: Eli'ezer Menaḥem Ottolengi, 1844.

Na'amiyash, Yiṣḥak. "Ketav bakashah le-'ezrah," Ms. F 7746 in the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

Navon, Efrayim. *Sefer maḥaneh Efrayim*. Warsaw: Feybush Bernstein, 1878.

Nazir, Yosef Halevi. *Sefer mateh Yosef*. Istanbul: Yonah Ben Ya'akov, 1717.

Palachi, Avraham. *Sefer Avraham ezkor*. Izmir: Ḥayim Avraham de-Sigura, 1889.

Palachi, Ḥayim. *Sefer ḥikekei lev*. Thessaloniki: Sa'adi Levi, 1840.

Palachi, Ḥayim. *Sefer lev ḥayim*. Jerusalem: Siaḥ Yisra'el, 1996.

Pardo, David. *Sefer mikhtam le-David*. Thessaloniki: Rapha'el Yehudah Kala'i u-Mordekhai Naḥman, 1772.

Pinto, Yoshiyahu. *Nivḥar mi-kesef: She'elot u-teshuvot 'al seder arba'ah turim*. Aleppo: A. Sasson, 1869.

Pococke, Richard. *A Description of the East: and Some Other Countries*. London: 1743.

Ramli, Khayr al-Din. *Al-fatawa al-khayriya li-naf' al-bariya*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1974.

Raşid Mehmet Efendi. *Tarih-i raşid ve zeyli*. Istanbul: Klasik, 2013, 3 vols.

Russell, Alexander. *The Natural History of Aleppo*. London: G.G. & J. Robinson, 1794.

Russell, Alexander. *The Natural History of Aleppo*. London: A. Millar, 1756.

Ṣahalon, Yom Tov. *She'elot u-teshuvot Maharitaṣ le-rabbenu Yom Tov Ṣahalon*. Jerusalem: 1984.

Ṣahalon, Yom Tov. *She'elot u-teshuvot maharitaṣ Ṣahalon ha-ḥadashot*. Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1981.

Salton, Moshe. *Sefer benei Moshe ve-hu she'elot u-teshuvot*. Istanbul: Yonah ben Ya'akov, 1713.

Sambari, Yosef. *Sefer divrei yoseṭ*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1993.

Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i vekayiat: Tahlil ve-metin* (*1066–1116/1656–1704*). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995.

Sasson, Yisrael. *Knesset Yisra'el: she'elot u-teshuvot 'al arba'ah turim*. Livorno: Shlomo Bilforti, 1856.

Sasson, Yisrael. "She'elot," Ms. 7140 in the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, New York.

Shabbetai, Ḥayim. *She'elot u-teshuvot bet ha-shayyakhot le-tur even ha-'ezer*. Thessaloniki: Avraham Hagar, 1651.

Shabbetai, Ḥayim. *Torat Ḥayim*. Thessaloniki: 1713–22.

Shama', Eliyahu. *Sefer korban isheh: she'elot u-teshuvot be-arba'ah ḥelke shulḥan 'arukh*. Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Ahavat Shalom, 1985.

Tawtal, Ferdinan. *Watha'iq tarikhiya 'an Ḥalab*. Beirut: al-Matba'a al-Kathulikiya, 1958–63.

Teixeira, Pedro. *The Travels of Peter Teixeira from India to Italy by Land*. [London]: 1710.

Thévenot, Jean de. *l'Empire du Grand Turc, vu par un sujet de Louis XIV*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1965.

Thomas Dawes to C. Lyttleton, letters from 1760–62, Ms. Stowe no. 754, in the British Library, London.

Vital, Shmu'el. *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot be'er mayim ḥayim*. Benei Berak: Vider ve-Hershkowits, 1966.

Yenişehirli, Abdullah. *Behcet ül-fetâva ma'a nükul*. [Istanbul]: Matba'a-yı Âmire, 1872.

Yisrael, Eliyahu. *Sefer kol Eliyahu*. Livorno: Eli'ezer Sa'adon, 1792.

Yisrael, Eliyahu. *Sefer shut. 'ugat Eliyahu*. Livorno: Yehudah Yosef Ḥayim ve-Eli'ezer Rapha'el Sa'adon, 1830.

Yisrael, Eliyahu. *Shut. kol Eliyahu ḥelek sheni*. Jerusalem: Makhon Tov Miṣrayim, 2006.

Yisrael, Raḥamim Yehudah. *Shut. ben yamin*. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 2000.

Zimra, David ben Abi. *Shut. ha-RadBaz*. Warsaw: Mordekhai Kalinberg, 1882.

Zimra, David ben Abi. *Shut. ha-RadBaz mi-ketav yad*. Benei Berak: 'Et Sofer, 1982.

Secondary Sources

Abu-el-Haj, Rifaat Ali. A review of Stanford Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. 1, *American Historical Review* 82 (1977), 4:1029.

'Asis, Yom Tov. "'Ezrah hadadit ve-sa'ad bi-kehillot yisrael bi-sefarad" in Ḥayim Beinart, ed. *Moreshet Sefarad*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992.

Abdel Nour, Antoine. *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècle)*. Beirut: Université Libanaise, 1982.

Abrahams, Israel. *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1896.

Ackerman-Lieberman, Phillip. *The Business of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and Economic Life in Medieval Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Ackerman-Lieberman, Phillip. "The muḥammadan stipulations: *Dhimmī versions of the Pact of 'Umar*" in Arnold Franklin et al., eds. *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, 197–206.

Ahmed, Shahab. *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Akyılmaz, Gül. "Osmanlı devletinde reaya kavramı ve devlet-reaya ilişkileri" in Güler Eren, ed. *Osmanlı*. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999, 4:40–54.

al-Qattan, Najwa. "Across the courtyard: residential space and sectarian boundaries in Ottoman Damascus" in Molly Greene, ed. *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2005, 13–45.

al-Qattan, Najwa. "The Damascene Jewish community in the later decades of the eighteenth century: Aspects of socio-economic life based on the registers of the *sharī'a* courts" in Thomas Philipp, ed. *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century: The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992, 197–216.

al-Qattan, Najwa. "Litigants and neighbors: the communal topography of Ottoman Damascus," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002), 3:511–33.

Amarillio, Avraham. "Ḥevrat talmud torah ha-gadol be-saloniki," *Sefunot* 13 (1978), 3:273–308.

Ambraseys, Nicholas. *Earthquakes in the Mediterranean and Middle East: A Multidisciplinary Study of Seismicity up to 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Arad, Dotan. "'Edah meyuḥasah berurah: Ha-Musta'arvim be-Damesek ba-me'ah ha-shesh 'esreh" in Yaron Har'el, ed. *Yehudei Suryah: Historyah, tarbut, u-zehut*. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2015, 95–130.

Arad, Dotan. "Li-demuto shel ba'al halakhah musta'arvi ba-me'ah ha-shesh 'esreh: R. Yosef ibn Ṣayyaḥ," *Shalem: Meḥkarim be-toldot ereṣ yisra'el ve-yishuvah ha-yehudi* 8 (2008), 134–248.

Arad, Dotan. "'Aravit yehudit ve-'ivrit be-kerev yehudei suryah, ereṣ yisra'el, u-miṣrayim ba-me'ah ha-ḥamesh 'esreh veha-shesh 'esreh," *Pe'amim* 121 (2009): 101–29.

Arad, Dotan. "Ha-kahal ke-guf kalkali: Hekdesh ha-Musta'arvim be-kahir le-or te'udot min ha-genizah," *Ginzei Kedem* 7 (2011), 25–69.

Ashtor, Eliyahu. *The Jews of Moslem Spain*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973–84.

Ashtor, Eliyahu. *Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Miṣrayim uve-Suryah taḥat shilton ha-mamlukim*. Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1944.

Aubin, Jean. A review of Stanford Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. 1, *Revue Historique* 258 (1977), 2:503–6.

Avishur, Yiṣḥak. *Tirgumei ha-tanakh be-'aravit yehudit ba-mizraḥ: Sekirot ve-'iyunim*. Tel Aviv: Merkaz Arkhi'ologi, 2001.

Aviṣur, Shmu'el. "Ṣefat merkaz le-ta'asiyyat arigei ṣemer ba-me'ah ha-15," *Sefunot* 6 (1962), 41–69.

Aviv, Efrat, et al. "Ottoman Empire" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Ayalon, Ami. *The Arabic Print Revolution: Cultural Production and Mass Readership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Ayalon, Yaron. "Berab, Jacob" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 1:428–9.

Ayalon, Yaron. "From Spain to Syria: A Jewish scholar from Aleppo studies his family history" in Julia Cohen and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, eds. *Sephardi Lives: A Documentary History, 1700–1950*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Ayalon, Yaron. "Laniado family" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 3:208–10.

Ayalon, Yaron. *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, and Other Misfortunes*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Ayalon, Yaron. "Plagues, famines, earthquakes: the Jews of Ottoman Syria and natural disasters." PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2009.

Ayalon, Yaron. "Poor relief in Ottoman Jewish communities" in Arnold Franklin et al., eds. *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, 67–82.

Ayalon, Yaron. "Richelieu in Arabic: The Catholic printed message to the Orient in the seventeenth century," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 19 (2008), 2:151–65.

Ayalon, Yaron. "Safed" in *EJIW* online edition, https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/EJIO/SIM-000739.xml, accessed 20 May 2024.

Baer, Gabriel. "The administrative, economic and social functions of Turkish guilds," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1 (1970), 1:28–50.

Baer, Marc. "The Great Fire of 1660 and the Islamization of Christian and Jewish space in Istanbul," *IJMES* 36 (2004), 2:159–81.

Baer, Marc. *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Baer, Marc. *Sultanic Saviors and Tolerant Turks: Writing Ottoman Jewish History, Denying the Armenian Genocide*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020.

Baer, Marc. *The Ottomans: Khans, Caesars, and Caliphs*. New York: Basic Books, 2021.

Baer, Yiṣḥak. *A history of the Jews in Christian Spain*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961–6.

Bareket, Elinoar and Racheline Barda, "Egypt" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 2:126–42.

Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Barkey, Karen. *Empire of Difference: the Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Barnai, Jacob. "The development of community organizational structures: The case of Izmir" in Avigdor Levy, ed. *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002, 35–51.

Barnai, Jacob. *Ha-mar'ah shel Eiropa: Perakim be toldot ha-kehillah ha-yehudit be-Izmir ba-me'ot ha-17 veha-18*. Jerusalem: Karmel, 2014.

Barnai, Jacob. *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: Under the Patronage of the Istanbul Committee of Officials for Palestine*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1992.

Barnai, Jacob. "Organization and leadership in the Jewish community of Izmir in the seventeenth century" in Avigdor Levy, ed. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1994.

Barnai, Jacob. *Shabta'ut: hebetim ḥevratiyim*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2000.

Barnai, Jacob. "Yahadut ha-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-17 veha-18" in Ḥayim Beinart, ed. *Moreshet Sepharad*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992, 479–502.

Baron, Salo. *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942.

Baron, Salo. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 18 volumes, 1957–76.

Bashan, Eli'ezer. "Ḥayye ha-kalkalah ba-me'ot ha-16–ha-18" in Jacob Landau, ed. *Toldot Yehude Miṣrayim ba-tekufah ha-'Othmanit (1517–1914)*. Jerusalem: Misgav, 1988.

Beinart, Ḥayim. *Gerush Sefarad*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994.

Beinart, Ḥayim. "Gerush Sefarad – gormim ve-toṣa'ot" in Ḥayim Beinart, ed. *Moreshet Sefarad*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992, 384–407.

Beinart, Ḥayim. "Ha-Shemad ha-gadol, ba'ayat ha-anusim ve-goralam ba-me'ah ha-15" in Beinart, ed. *Moreshet Sefarad*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992, 280–308.

Ben Menaḥem, "Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta me'et Avraham Ya'ari," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 10 (1973–4), 3:109–20.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Bein gildah le-kahal: ha-ḥevrot ha-yehudiyot ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-17–18," *Zion* 63 (1998), 277–318.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Caro, Joseph Ben Ephraim" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 1:579–80.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Igeret bilti yedu'ah shel Shabbetai Ṣevi 'al shabbat ha-gadol – ḥag ha-me'orot," *Tarbiz* 80 (2012), 1:89–103.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Irgun ha-kahal ha-yehudi ve-hanhagato ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-17 ve-ha-19" in Avraham Grossman and Yosef Kaplan, eds. *Kehal yisra'el 2: Ha-shilton ha-'aṣmi ha-yehudi le-dorotav, yemei ha-beinayim ve-ha-'et ha-ḥadashah ha-mukdemet*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2004, 341–68.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "'Ir ha-torah ve-ha-limud: Saloniki ke-merkaz torah ba-me'ot ha-16–17," *Pe'amim* 80 (1999), 60–82.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Kevurah, ḥevrot kevurah ve-ketovot mi-bet ha-kvarot shel kehillat yehude kahir," *Pe'amim* 98–99 (2004), 187–224.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Migdar nashi ve-hagbalato be-takanot be-'inyanei musar shel yehudei ha-imperyah ha-'othmanit," *Pe'amim* 105/6 (2006), 127–49.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Moshko the Jew and His Gay Friends: Same-Sex Sexual Relations in Ottoman Jewish Society," *Journal of Early Modern History* 9 (2005), 1:79–108.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "'Oni ve hitmodedut 'imo ba-ḥevrah ha-yehudit ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit," *Sefunot* 23 (2003), 195–238.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. "Sürgün," in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:421–2.

Ben-Na'eh, Yaron. *Yehudim be-mamlekhet ha-sultanim*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006.

Ben-Ur, Aviva. *Jewish Autonomy in a Slave Society: Suriname in the Atlantic World, 1651–1825*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Benayahu, Meir. "Ha-takanah she-lo le-hoṣi sefarim mi-yerushalayim ve-hishtalshelutah," in S. Assaf et al., eds. *Minḥah le-yehudah: Mugash le-harav Yehudah Leib Zelotnik*. Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1950, 226–34.

Benayahu, Meir. "Le-korot ha-yehudim be-tiriya," *Zion* 12 (1946), 1–2:37–48.

Benayahu, Meir. *Marbiṣ Torah: Samkhuyotav, tafkidav, ve-ḥelko be-mosdot ha-kehillah bi-Sefarad, be-Turkiyah, u-ve-arṣot ha-mizraḥ*. Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1953.

Benbassa, Esther, and Aron Rodrigue. *Sephardi Jewry: a History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th–20th Centuries*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Benedictow, Ole. *The Black Death, 1346–1353: the Complete History*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2004.

Ben Menaḥem, Naftali. "Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta me'et Avraham Ya'ari," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 10 (1973/4), 3–4:109–20.

Bibliothèque Nationale de France. *Manuscrits orientaux: Catalogues des manuscrits hébreux et samaritains de la Bibliothèque impériale*. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1866.

Bonner, Michael. "Definitions of poverty and the rise of the Muslim urban poor," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 3 (1996), 335–46.

Bornstein-Makovetzky, Leah. "Cooperation and conflict between the religious and political leadership: Relations between parnasim and rabbis in the communities of

the Ottoman Empire during the 16th and 17th centuries," in Eliezer Don-Yehiya and Stuart Cohen, eds. *Conflict and Consensus in Jewish Political Life*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 1986, 15–30.

Bornstein-Makovetzky, Leah. "Ha-kehillah u-mosdotehah" in Jacob Landau, ed. *Toldot Yehude Miṣrayim ba-tekufah ha-'Othmanit* (*1517–1914*). Jerusalem: Misgav, 1988, 129–216.

Bornstein-Makovetzky, Leah. "Ha-Ma'amad ha-politi veha-ḥevrati shel yehudei Ḥalab ba-shanim 1517–1800" in Yom Tov 'Asis et al., eds. *Ereṣ u-melo'ah: meḥkarim be-toldot kehillat aram ṣova* (*ḥalab*) *ve-tarbutah*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2013, 2:99–125.

Bornstein-Makovetzky, Leah. *'Ir shel ḥakhamim ve-soḥarim: Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit be-aram ṣova, 1492–1800*. Ariel, Israel: Ha-Merkaz ha-Universita'i Ariel ba-Shomron, 2012.

Borovaya, Olga. *The Beginning of Ladino Literature: Moses Almosnino and His Readers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

Botticini, Maristella and Zvi Eckstein. *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70–1492*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Boxer, C.R. A review of Stanford Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. 1 in *Journal of Asian History* 11 (1977), 2:157–8.

Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet. *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Braude, Benjamin. "Foundation myths of the millet system" in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 1:69–88.

Braude, Benjamin. "International competition and domestic cloth in the Ottoman Empire, 1500–1650: A study in undevelopment," *Review* (*Fernand Braudel Center*) 2 (1979), 3:437–51.

Braude, Benjamin. "The rise and fall of Salonica woollens, 1500–1650: Technology transfer and western competition," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), 2:216–36.

Breuer, Yoḥanan. "Gadol mi-rav rabi, gadol mi-rabi raban, gadol mi-raban shemo," *Tarbiz* 66 (1996), 1:41–59.

Brown, Jonathan. *The Canonization of al-Bukhari and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Ḥadith Canon*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Cameron, Euan. *The European Reformation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Campbell, Bruce. *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Carlebach, Elisheva. *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Casale, Giancarlo. *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Cavallo, Sandra. *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin, 1541–1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Chamberlain, Michael. *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Cohen, Amnon. *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat ha-muslemi: ḥevrah, kalkalah ve-irgun kehillati bi-yerushalayim ha-'othmanit, ha-me'ah ha-shesh 'esreh*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1993.

Cohen, Amnon. *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat ha-muslemi: ḥevrah, kalkalah ve-irgun kehillati bi-yerushalayim ha-'othmanit, ha-me'ah ha-sheva'-'esreh*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2010.

Cohen, Amnon. *Yehudim be-vet ha-mishpat ha-muslemi: ḥevrah, kalkalah ve-irgun kehillati bi-yerushalayim ha-'othmanit, ha-me'ah ha-shmoneh 'esreh*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1996.

Cohen, Amnon, and Bernard Lewis. *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Cohen, Julia Phillips. *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Cohen, Mark. *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt: The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, ca. 1065–1126*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Cohen, Mark. *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Cohen, Mark. *The Voice of the Poor in the Middle Ages: an Anthology of Documents from the Cairo Geniza*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Cohen, Mark. "What was the Pact of 'Umar?: A literary-historical study," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999), 100–57.

Cohen, Mark. "Communal self-government: The genizah period" in Miriam Frenkel, ed. *The Jews in Medieval Egypt*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021, 72–85.

Cohen-Tawil, Avraham. *Yahadut Ḥalab bi-re'i ha-dorot*. Tel Aviv: ha-Merkaz ha-'Olami le-Moreshet Aram Ṣova, 1993.

Coller, Ian. "East of enlightenment: Regulating cosmopolitanism between Istanbul and Paris in the eighteenth century," *Journal of World History* 21 (2010), 3:447–70.

Constantelos, Demetrios. *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1968.

Daccarett, Paula. "Food and drink – Ottoman Empire" in *EJIW* online edition, https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/EJIO/SIM-000803.xml, accessed 24 May 2024.

Daccarett, Paula. "Jewish social services in late Ottoman Salonica (1850–1912)." PhD Dissertation, Brandeis University, 2008.

Danon, Dina. *The Jews of Ottoman Izmir: A Modern History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.

David, Avraham. "Hezekiah ben David da Silva" in Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, eds. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007, 9:91–2.

David, Avraham. "Kavim li-demut ha-yeshivot u-vatei ha-midrash bi-yerushalayim ba-me'ot ha-15 veha-16," *'Iyunim be-ḥinukh* 34 (1982), 139–64.

David, Avraham. "The Lutheran Reformation in sixteenth-century Jewish historiography," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10 (2003), 2:124–39.

David, Avraham. "Yeshuvei ha-Yehudim ba-Me'ot ha-16 veha-17" in Jacob Landau, ed. *Toldot Yehude Miṣrayim ba-tekufah ha-'Othmanit* (*1517–1914*). Jerusalem: Misgav, 1988, 13–26.

Davis, Natalie. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975.

Davis, Robert and Benjamin Ravid. *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Díaz-Mas, Paloma. *Sephardim: The Jews from Spain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. "An unacknowledged revolution revisited," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1:87–105.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe, Volumes I and II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Elbendary, Amina. *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2015.

Eldem, Edhem, et al. *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Elkayam, Avraham. "Kivru emunati: Igeret me-'et Shabbetai Ṣevi mi-mekom galuto," *Pe'amim* 55 (1993), 4–37.

Ener, Mine. *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Epstein, Mark. "The leadership of the Ottoman Jews in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 1:101–16.

Epstein, Mark. *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1980.

Erbahar, Aksel. "Capsali, Moses Ben Elijah," in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 1:570–1.

Ergin, Nina, et al., eds. *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*. Istanbul: Eren, 2007.

Ergin, Osman. *Türk şehirlerinde imaret sistemi*. Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1939.

Ergül, F. Aslı. "The Ottoman identity: Turkish, Muslim, or Rum?," *Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (2012), 4:629–45.

Eroğlu, Ahmet Hikmet. *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Yahudiler*. Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2013.

Erünsal, Ismail. *Orta çağ İslam dünyasında kitap ve kütüphane*. Istanbul: Timaş, 2018.

Erünsal, Ismail. *Osmanlılarda kütüphaneler ve kütüphanecilik: Tarihi gelişimi ve organizasyonu*. Istanbul: Timaş, 2015.

Erünsal, Ismail. *Osmanlılarda sahaflık ve sahaflar*. Istanbul: Timaş, 2013.

Establet, Colette and Jean-Paul Pascual. "Les livres des gens à Damas vers 1700" in Frédéric Hitzel, ed. *Livres et lecture dans le monde ottoman: Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée 87–88*. Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1999, 143–69.

Faroqhi, Suraiya. "Ottoman population" in Suraiya Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, eds. *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 356–403.

Faroqhi, Suraiya, et al. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire: Volume Two, 1600–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Febvre, Lucien and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800*. London: N.L.B., 1976.

Finkel, Caroline. *Osman's Dream: the Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.

Fishbane, Simcha. "Is it a crime to be interdisciplinary? A different approach to the study of modern Jewish law" in M. Despland and G. Vallée, eds. *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992, 145–56.

Foa, Anna. *The Jews of Europe After the Black Death*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Franco, Moïse. *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*. Paris: Librairie A. Durlacher, 1897.

Frisch, Ephraim. *An Historical Survey of Jewish Philanthropy*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.

Galante, Abraham. *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie*. Istanbul: Isis, 1984.

Ghobrial, John-Paul. *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Gibb, Hamilton and Harold Bowen. *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Muslim Culture in the Near East, Volume One: Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century, Part 1*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950.

Gil, Moshe. *Documents of the Jewish Pious Foundations from the Cairo Geniza*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Gil, Moshe. *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Ginio, Alisa Meyuhas. *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem: History, Identity and Memory of the Sephardim*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Goffman, Daniel. "Jews in Early Modern Ottoman Commerce" in Avigdor Levy, ed. *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: a Shared history, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002, 15–34.

Goffman, Daniel. *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Goitein, S.D. *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 5 volumes, 1967–88.

Goitein, S.D. and Mordechai Akiva Friedman. *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ('India Book')*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Goldberg, Jessica. *Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Geniza Merchants and Their Business World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Goldish, Matt. *Jewish Questions: Responsa on Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Gottfried, Robert. *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe*. New York: The Free Press, 1983.

Graetz, Heinrich. *History of the Jews*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 6 volumes, 1891–8.

Graetz, Heinrich. *Sefer divre yeme Yisra'el: Mi-yom heyot Yisra'el le-'am 'ad yeme ha-dor ha-aḥaron*. Warsaw: Alexander Z. Cohen, 1898.

Grafton, Anthony. "How revolutionary was the print revolution?," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1:84–6.

Grehan, James. *Everyday Life & Consumer Culture in 18th-Century Damascus*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.

Gris, Ze'ev. *Ha-sefer ke-sokhen tarbut ba-shanim 1700–1900*. Benei Brak: Ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uḥad, 2002.

ha-Kohen, Dov. "Torat ha-te'arim: Misud ha-te'arim shel talmidei ha-ḥakhamim be-izmir" in Yaron Ben-Na'eh et al., eds. *Asufa le-Yosef: Koveṣ meḥkarim shay le-Yosef Hacker*. Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2013, 503–27.

Hacker, Yosef. "Gevulotehah shel ha-otonomyah ha-yehudit: Ha-shiput ha-'aṣmi ha-yehudi ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-16–ha-18," in Shmu'el Almog et al., eds. *Temurot ba-historyah ha-yehudit ha-ḥadashah: koveṣ ma'amarim shay le-Shmu'el Etinger*. Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1987, 349–88.

Hacker, Yosef. "Ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-saloniki ve-agapehah ba-me'ot ha-15 veha-16: Perek be-toldot ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit ve-yaḥasehah 'im ha-shiltonot." PhD dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978.

Hacker, Yosef. "Ha-irgun ha-kehillati bi-kehillot ha-imperyah ha-'othmanit (1453–1676)," in Avraham Grossman and Yosef Kaplan, eds. *Kahal Yisra'el: Ha-shilton ha-'aṣmi ha-yehudi le-dorotav*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2004, 2:287–309.

Hacker, Yosef. "Ha-pe'ilut ha-intelectualit be-kerev yehudei ha-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-shesh 'esreh ve-ha-sheva' 'esreh," *Tarbiz* 53 (1984), 4:569–603.

Hacker, Yosef. "'Ha-Rabanut ha-rashit' ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-15 veha-16," *Zion* 49 (1984), 3:225–55.

Hacker, Yosef. "Ottoman policies toward the Jews and Jewish attitudes toward the Ottomans during the fifteenth century" in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 1:117–26.

Hacker, Yosef. "Shitat ha-surgun ve-hashpa'atah 'al ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit ba-me'ot ha-16–17," *Zion* 55 (1990), 27–82.

Hacker, Yosef. "Yoṣ'ei Sefarad ba-imperyah ha-'Othmanit ba-me'ah ha-15 – kehillah ve ḥevrah" in Ḥayim Beinart, ed. *Moreshet Sefarad*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992, 460–78.

Hakkı Kadı, İsmail. *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century: Competition and Cooperation in Ankara, Izmir, and Amsterdam*. Leiden: Brill, 2012, 29–64.

Halbertal, Moshe. *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Hanioğlu, M. Şükrü. *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Hanna, Nelly. *In Praise of Books: A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Har'el, Yaron. *Bi-sfinot shel esh la-ma'arav: temurot be-yahadut suryah bi-tkufat ha-reformot ha-othmaniyot 1840–1880*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2003.

Har'el, Yaron. *Bein tkhakhim le-mahapekhah: minui rabanim rashiyim ve-hadaḥatam be-bagdad, damesek ve-ḥalab*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2007.

Har'el, Yaron. "Maḥloket ve-haskamah: Sefaradim u-musta'rvim be-Ḥalab" in Judith Dishon and Shmu'el Rapha'el, eds. *Ladinar: Meḥkarim ba-sifrut, ba-musikah, uva-historyah shel dovre ha-Ladino*. Tel-Aviv: ha-Makhon le-Ḥeker Yahadut Saloniki, 1998, 119–38.

Har'el, Yaron. *Sifrei ereṣ: Ha-sifrut ha-toranit shel ḥakhmei Aram Ṣova*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1997.

Hathaway, Jane. *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1800*. Second edition. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Hattox, Ralph. *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985.

Heyd, Uriel. "The Jewish communities of Istanbul in the seventeenth century," *Oriens* 6 (1953), 2:299–314.

Hirschler, Konrad. *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Hitzel, Frédéric. "Manuscrits, livres et culture livresque à Istanbul" in Frédéric Hitzel, ed. *Livres et lecture dans le monde ottoman: Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée 87–88*. Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1999, 19–38.

Hoexter, Miriam. "Charity, the poor, and distribution of alms in Ottoman Algiers" in Michael Bonner et al., eds. *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2003, 145–62.

Holman, Susan, ed. *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.

Idel, Moshe. *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Imber, Colin. "The legend of Osman Gazi" in Colin Imber, ed. *Studies in Ottoman History and Law*. Istanbul: Isis Press, 1996, 323–32.

İnalcık, Halil. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire: Volume One, 1300–1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

İnalcık, Halil. "Foundations of Ottoman Jewish cooperation" in Avigdor Levy, ed. *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002, 3–14.

İnalcık, Halil. *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*. New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1973.

Israel, Jonathan. *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World of Maritime Empires (1540–1740)*. Boston: Brill, 2002.

Johns, Adrian. "How to acknowledge a revolution," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1:106–25.

Jordan, William. *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Jütte, Robert. *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Kafadar, Cemal. *Between Two Worlds: the Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Kahana, Ma'oz. "Shabbetai Ṣevi ish ha-halakhah," *Zion* 81 (2016), 3–4:391–433.

Kaiser, Annette. *Islamische Stiftungen in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Syriens vom 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1999.

Kaplan, Yosef and Moshe Sluḥovsky, eds. *Sifriyot ve-osafei sefarim*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2006.

Kasaba, Reşat. *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009.

Katz, Jacob. "Maḥloket ha-semikhah bein rabbi Ya'akov Bi Rav veha-Ralbaḥ," *Zion* 16 (1951), 3–4:28–45.

Katz, Jacob. *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Lamdan, Ruth. *A Separate People: Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt in the Sixteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Lamdan, Ruth, Yoram Erder, and Joseph Drory. "Palestine" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:5–34.

Laniado, David. *La-kedoshim asher ba-areṣ*. Jerusalem: Y.'A. Itaḥ, 1952.

Lauer, Rena. *Colonial Justice and the Jews of Venetian Crete*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.

Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel. *Histoire humaine et comparée du climat: Canicules et glaciers XIIIe–XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.

Lehmann, Matthias. *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Lehmann, Matthias. *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Lehmann, Matthias. "A Livornese 'port Jew' and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Social Studies* New Series, 11 (2005), 2:51–76.

Lellouch, Benjamin. "Les Juifs dans le monde musulman du XVe au milieu du XIXe siècle" in Antoine Germa, Benjamin Lellouch, and Évelyne Patlagean, eds. *Les Juifs dans l'histoire: De la naissance du Judaïsme au monde contemporain*. Seyssel: Camp Vallon, 2011, 261–90.

Levie Bernfeld, Tirtsah. *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam*. Portland, Or.: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011.

Levy, Avigdor. "Hakamat mosad ha-ḥakham bashi ba-imperyah ha-'othmanit bi-shnot 1835–1865," *Pe'amim* 55 (1993), 38–43.

Levy, Avigdor. *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992.

Levy, Avigdor, ed. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994.

Levy, Avigdor, ed. *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth Through the Twentieth Century*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Lewental, Gershon. "Ṣarfati, Isaac" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:261.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong?: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Lieberman, Julia, ed. *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Diaspora*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011.

Littman, Michael. "Ha-mishpaḥah ha-yehudit be-miṣrayim" in Jacob Landau, ed. *Toldot Yehudei Miṣrayim ba-tekufah ha-'Othmanit* (*1517–1914*). Jerusalem: Misgav, 1988, 217–44.

Lowenstein, Steven. *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770–1830*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Lowry, Heath. *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2003.

Lowry, Heath. *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: the Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*. Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, 2008.

Lowry, Heath. "When did the Sephardim arrive in Salonica?," in Avigdor Levy, ed. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton, Nj: Darwin Press, 1994, 203–13.

Luṣki, Alexander. "Ha-frankos be-Ḥalab ve-hashpa'at ha-kapitulaṣyot 'al toshavehah ha-yehudim," *Zion* 6 (1941), 1–2, 46–79.

Luterbacher, J., et al. "The Late Maunder Minimum (1675–1715): A key period for studying decadal scale climatic change In Europe," *Climate Change* 49 (2001), 441–62.

Maciejko, Paweł. *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Mann, Jacob. *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs: A Contribution to Their Political and Communal History Based Chiefly on Genizah Material Hitherto Unpublished*. London: Oxford University Press, 1920.

Marcus, Abraham. *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Marcus, Abraham. "Poverty and poor relief in eighteenth-century Aleppo," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée: villes au Levant* 55–56 (1990), 171–9.

Masters, Bruce. *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1918: A Social and Cultural History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Masters, Bruce. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: the Roots of Sectarianism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Masters, Bruce. *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Mays, Devi. *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020.

Mazower, Mark. *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430–1950*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

Mehlman, Israel. "Perakim be-toldot ha-defus be-Saloniki," *Sefunot* 13 (1978), 215–72.

Ménage, V.L. A review of Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, *vol. 2* in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978), 1:160–2.

Mihajlovski, Robert. *The Religious and Cultural Landscape of Ottoman Manastır*. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

Mikhail, Alan. *God's Shadow: Sultan Selim, His Ottoman Empire, and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2020.

Mikhail, Alan. *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: an Environmental History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Mollat, Michel. *The Poor in the Middle Ages: an Essay in Social History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Moshe, Avraham. *Sefer ahavat ṣedakah: hilkhot ṣedakah u-ma'aser kesafim*. Jerusalem: Yad Mikhal, 2008.

Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Müller, Jan-Werner. *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Mullett, Michael. *The Catholic Reformation*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Naar, Devin. *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.

Nehama, Joseph. *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*. Thessaloniki: Librairie Molho, 1935–9.

'Ofran, Ḥagit. "Ḥakham eḥad be-'ir shel sofrim ve-ḥakhamim: haṣaṣah le-ḥayav shel Gavri'el Ashkenazi u-le-sifriyato" in Yom Tov 'Asis et al., eds. *Ereṣ u-melo'ah: meḥkarim be-toldot kehilat aram ṣova* (*ḥalab*) *ve-tarbutah*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2013, 2:69–98.

Özbek, Nadir. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda sosyal devlet: siyaset, iktidar ve meşruiyet 1876–1914*. Istanbul: İletişim, 2002.

Özkoçak, Selma Akyazıcı. "Kamusal alanın üretim sürecinde erken modern İstanbul kahvehaneleri," in Ahmet Yaşar, ed. *Osmanlı Kahvehaneleri: Mekân, sosyaleşme, iktidar*. Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2009, 17–35.

Papademetriou, Tom. *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

Pfeiffer, Helen. "Encounter after the conquest: Scholarly gatherings in 16th-century Ottoman Damascus," *IJMES* 47 (2015), 2:219–39.

Philipp, Thomas. "French merchants and Jews in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century" in Avigdor Levy, ed. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1994.

Prawer, Joshua. "Minzar ha-Franṣiskanim be-har ṣion ve-Yehudei Yerushalayim ba-me'ah ha-15," *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society* 14 (1948), 1–2:15–24.

Pullan, Brian. *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: the Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Ray, Jonathan. *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Raymond, André. "Une communauté en expansion: les chrétiens d'Alep à l'époque ottomane (XVI^e–XVII^e siecles)" in his: *La ville arabe, Alep, à l'époque ottomane* Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1998, 353–72.

Raymond, André. *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane*. Paris: Sindbad, 1985.

Reiner, Elchanan. "The Ashkenazi elite at the beginning of the modern era: Manuscript vs. printed book" in Gershon Hundert, ed. *Jews in Early Modern Poland* (*Polin 10*). London: Liverpool University Press, 1997, 85–98.

Repp, R.C. A review of Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. 2, *IJMES* 11 (1980), 2:273–5.

Riegler, Michael. "Shalosh sifriyot pratiyot shel ḥakhamim me-aram ṣova: 'al pi reshimot sefarim she-nimṣe'u be-khitvei yad she-hayu be-va'alutam" in Yom Tov 'Asis et al., eds. *Ereṣ u-melo'ah: meḥkarim be-toldot kehillat aram ṣova* (*ḥalab*) *ve-tarbutah*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2013, 2:55–68.

Ringer, Joseph. "Aydın" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 1:297–8.

Rios, José Amador de los. *Historia social, política y religiosa de los Judíos de España y Portugal*. Madrid: T. Fortanet, 1876.

Rivlin, Eli'ezer and Yosef Rivlin. *Le-korot ha-yehudim be-Damesek ba-me'ah ha-revi'it la-elef ha-shishi*. Jerusalem: Dvir, 1926.

Rodrigue, Aron. *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Rosanes, Salomon. *Korot ha-Yehudim be-Turkiyah ve-arṣot ha-kedem*. 6 vols. Sofya: ha-Mishpat, 1934–38.

Roth, Cecil. *The Duke of Naxos of the House of Nasi*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948.

Rothman, Natalie. "Interpreting dragomans: Boundaries and crossings in the early modern Mediterranean," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009), 4:771–800.

Rozen, Minna. *Ha-kehillah ha-yehudit bi-Yerushalayim ba-me'ah ha-17*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Misrad ha-Bitaḥon, 1984.

Rozen, Minna. *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul: The Formative Years, 1453–1566*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Rozen, Minna. "Individual and community in the Jewish society of the Ottoman Empire: Salonica in the Sixteenth Century" in Avigdor Levy, ed. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1994, 215–74.

Rozen, Minna. "The Ottoman Jews" in Suraiya Faroqhi, ed. *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Volume 3, The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 256–71.

Rozen, Minna. "Salonica (Thessaloniki; Selanik)" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:219–32.

Rozen, Minna. "Sephardim/Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:306–14.

Rozen, Minna. *Studies in the History of Istanbul Jewry, 1453–1923: A Journey through Civilizations*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015.

Ruderman, David. *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Rustow, Marina. *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Rustow, Marina. *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Rustow, Marina and Moshe Ma'oz, "Syria" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:432–43.

Sabra, Adam. *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Şahin, Kaya. *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Şahin, Kaya. *Peerless among Princes: The Life and Times of Sultan Süleyman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Sajdi, Dana. *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Sajdi, Dana. "Decline, its discontents and Ottoman cultural history: By way of introduction" in Dana Sajdi, ed. *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007, 1–40.

Sauvaget, Jean. *Alep: essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIX^e siècle*. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1941.

Schmelzer, Menahem. "Hebrew manuscripts and printed books among the Sephardim before and after the expulsion" in Benjamin Gampel, ed. *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 257–66.

Scholem, Gershom. "Reshimot mi-Italyah 'al ha-tenu'ah ha-shabta'it bi-shnat 426," *Zion* 10 (1945), 55–66.

Scholem, Gershom. *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1973.

Scholem, Gershom. "Te'uda ḥadashah mi-reshit ha-tnu'ah ha-shabta'it," *Kiryat sefer* 33 (1958), 532–40.

Scholem, Gershom. "Te'udot shabta'iyot ḥadashot mi-sefer to'ei ruaḥ," *Zion* 7 (1942), 172–96.

Scholem, Gershom. "Vital, Ḥayim ben Joseph" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 20:546–9.

Schorsch, Jonathan. *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Semerdjian, Elyse. "Naked anxiety: Bathhouses, nudity, and the dhimmī woman in 18th-century Aleppo," *IJMES* 45 (2013), 4:651–76.

Sharkey, Heather. *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Modern Middle East*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Shaw, Stanford. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Vol. 1, Empire of the Gazis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Shaw, Stanford. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*. New York: New York University Press, 1991.

Shaw, Stanford, and Ezel Kural Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Vol. 2: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Shepkaru, Shmuel. "Vital, Ḥayyim" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 4:602.

Shmuelevitz, Aryeh. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 1984.

Shmuelevitz, Aryeh. "Yaḥasei yehudim-muslemim be-khitvei Rabbi Eliyahu Kapsali," *Pe'amim* 61 (1994), 75–82.

Simonsohn, Uriel. *A Common Justice: the Legal Allegiances of Christians and Jews under Early Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Simonsohn, Uriel. "Overlapping jurisdictions: confessional boundaries and judicial choice among Christians and Jews under early Muslim rule" PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2008.

Simonsohn, Uriel. "Bein hipardut le-hitam'ut: ḥozeh 'Omar be-heksherav ha-tarbutiyyim veha-ḥevratiyyim," *Historiah* 35 (2015), 31–64.

Singer, Amy. *Charity in Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Singer, Amy. "Charity's legacies: A reconsideration of Ottoman imperial endowment-making" in Michael Bonner et al., eds. *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2003, 295–313.

Singer, Amy. *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: an Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem*. Albany: SUNY, 2002.

Şişman, Cengiz. *The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Sloan, Dolores. *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal: Survival of an Imperiled Culture in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009.

Smith, Joanna. *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Sorkin, David. *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Southern, R.W. *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*. London: Penguin Books, 1970.

Stillman, Norman. "Academic study of Islamicate Jewry" in Norman Stillman, ed. *EJIW, online edition*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Stillman, Norman, ed. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Stillman, Norman. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979.

Sutton, David. *Aleppo: City of Scholars*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2005.

Ta-Shema', Yisrael. "Rabbenu Asher u-veno Rabbi Ya'akov ba'al ha-turim: Bein ashkenaz le-sepharad," *Pe'amim* 46/47 (1991), 75–91.

Tannous, Jack. *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Tate, Jihane. *Une waqfiyya du XVIII^e siècle à Alep: La waqfiyya d'al ḥagg musa al-amiri*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1990.

Teller, Adam. *Rescue the Surviving Souls: The Great Jewish Refugee Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.

Teplitsky, Joshua. *Prince of the Press: How One Collector Built History's Most Enduring and Remarkable Jewish Library*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Tezcan, Baki. *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Tibawi, Abdul Latif. *American Interests in Syria 1800–1901: a Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

Toaff, Renzo. *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)*. Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1990.

Trépanier, Nicolas. *Foodways and Daily Life in Medieval Anatolia: A New Social History*. Austin, TX: Texas University Press, 2014.

Trivellato, Francesca. *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Trivellato, Francesca. "The port Jews of Livorno and their global networks of trade in the early modern period" in David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds. *Jews and Port Cities 1590–1990: Commerce, Community, and Cosmopolitanism*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006, 31–48.

Tsur, Yaron. *Gevirim ve-yehudim aḥerim ba-mizraḥ ha-tikhon ha-'othmani, 1750–1830*. Jerusalem: Mosad Biyalik, 2016.

Tucker, Judith E. *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Udovitch, Abraham. "The Jews and Islam in the high middle ages: A case of the Muslim view of differences," *Settimane di studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 26 (1980), 655–83.

Van den Boogert, Maurits. *Aleppo Observed: Ottoman Syria through the Eyes of Two Scottish Doctors, Alexander and Patrick Russell*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Van den Boogert, Maurits. *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beratlis in the 18th Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Van den Boogert, Maurits. "Millets: Past and present" in Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofijie Roald, eds. *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*. Leiden: Brill, 2012, 27–45.

Van Leeuwen, Richard. *Waqfs and Urban Structures: the Case of Ottoman Damascus*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Verskin, Alan. *Diary of a Black Jewish Messiah: The Sixteenth-Century Journey of David Reubeni through Africa, the Middle East, and Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023.

White, Sam. "Climate change in global environmental history" in J.R. McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin, eds. *A Companion to Global Environmental History*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

White, Sam. *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Wilkins, Charles. *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640–1700*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Wittek, Paul. *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*. London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1938.

Ya'ari, Avraham. *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-arṣot ha-mizraḥ*. Jerusalem: Ha-ḥevrah le-hoṣa'at sefarim, 1937.

Ya'ari, Avraham. "Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-Izmir," *Areshet: Sefer shanah le-ḥeker ha-sefer ha-'ivri* 1 (1958), 97–222.

Ya'ari, Avraham. *Ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta: Toledot ha-defus ha-'ivri be-kushta mi-reshito 'ad peroṣ milḥemet ha-'olam ha-sheniyyah u-reshimat ha-sefarim she-nidpesu bah*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967.

Yazbak, Mahmoud. "Muslim orphans and the *sharī'a* in Ottoman Palestine according to *sijill* records," *JESHO* 44 (2001), 2:123–40.

Yerasimos, Stéphane. "La communauté juive d'Istanbul a la fin du XVI[e] siècle," *Turcica* (1995), 25:101–30.

Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. "Exile and expulsion in Jewish history" in Benjamin Gampel, ed. *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 3–22.

Yıldırım, Onur. "Mardin" in Norman Stillman, ed. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 3:342.

Yıldırım, Onur. "Ottoman guilds in the early modern era," *International Review of Social History* 53 (2008), 73–93.

Yi, Eunjeong. *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Ze'evi, Dror. *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.

Zinger, Oded. *Living with the Law: Gender and Community Among the Jews of Medieval Egypt*. Philadelphia: Penn University Press, 2023.

Index

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES 12

This book is a history of Ottoman Jews that challenges prevailing assumptions about Jews' arrival in the empire, their relations with Muslims, and the role of religious and lay leaders. The book argues that rabbis played a less prominent role as communal and spiritual leaders than we have thought; and that the religious community was one of several frameworks within which Ottoman Jews operated. A focus on charitable and educational communal practices shows that with time Jews preferred to avoid the scrutiny of rabbis and the community, leading to private initiatives that undermined rabbinical and lay authority.

Yaron Ayalon, Ph.D. (2009), Princeton University, is Associate Professor at the College of Charleston. He has written many articles on Jewish and Ottoman history, and a monograph, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, and Other Misfortunes* (Cambridge, 2014).

ISBN 978-90-04-71196-9

9 789004 711969

ISSN 2212-5523

www.brill.com/cjms