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Volume 5: The Early Modern Era, 1500–1750

Yosef Kaplan, *Editor*

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS New Haven and London

The Posen Foundation Lucerne

Designed by George Whipple Design for Westchester Publishing Services.

Set in Bulmer MT type by Newgen.

Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011043318
ISBN 978-0-300-13551-0 (hardcover)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Introduction to Volume 5

Yosef Kaplan

Early, partly, sometimes, maybe modern, early modern is a period for our period's discomfort with periodization.—Randolph Starn[1]

The Birth of the Concept of the Early Modern Period

In 2018, the seventh volume in the multivolume series *The Cambridge History of Judaism* appeared: The Early Modern Period. Forty-one historians from many countries participated in it and contributed articles on a broad spectrum of topics, illustrating the full extent and content of the Jewish world between 1500 and 1815.[2] Behind this publication lies a half century of important developments that produced the concept of an early modern period in Jewish history and culture, and thus, this volume of *The Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization*.

The term *early modern period* is a new creature. In his intellectual autobiography, the English historian John Elliott wrote that, in the early 1960s, he and a colleague, Helmut G. Koenigsberger, submitted a proposal to Cambridge University Press suggesting that they publish a series of books on the early modern period. The idea was rejected out of hand. Even at that renowned press, no one understood what they meant by the term. The very concept was still unclear.[3] However, Elliott and Koenigsberger did not give up, and in 1966 they submitted a second proposal. This time it was accepted. Within a short time, the series came into being, and by the end of the twentieth century it contained nearly fifty volumes, on a variety of subjects.

At first, historians focused mainly on the countries of Europe, and the phrase "early modern period" replaced earlier terms, such as *Renaissance*, *Reformation*, and *Counter-Reformation*—and *Age of Geographical Discovery and Colonial Expansion.* Turning away from Protestant-oriented—and Eurocentric—ways of thinking about history and from the equation of secularism and liberalism with progress, more neutral terminologies were needed, ones that avoided associations with joint mythologies of religious and political "progress." Over time, the concept of the early modern period gradually took root and eventually gained a prominent place for itself in historiography far beyond European history.[4] Looking back, Elliott explained, succinctly and simply, on the essence

of the period to which he had devoted more than fifty years: it was "neither purely medieval nor purely modern, but saw the coexistence of features regarded as characteristic of both epochs . . . a period of three to four centuries in which the medieval and the 'modern' interact in fascinating combination."[5]

Until a generation ago, Jewish historians treated the years between 1500 and 1750 as part of the long Middle Ages. Jewish life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and a good part of the eighteenth century seemed more to belong to the "medieval" than to the "modern" period. First, historians then assumed that most members of Jewish society lived their lives observing the commandments. As in previous centuries, their cultural world was anchored in halakhah, or Jewish law. Second, Jewish religious life continued to be the dominant factor unifying the Jewish people. Third, it was thought that wherever there was a Jewish public capable of existing independently, the Jewish community and its institutions administered Jewish society according to the same basic concepts of Jewish self-rule that had prevailed among the Jews during the Middle Ages. Fourth, Christian and Muslim theology continued to define the place—in particular, the legal status—of Jews within the majority Christian or Muslim society. Fifth, the Jewish family generally remained highly patriarchal, and romantic love was not a determining factor in the arrangement of marriages. Finally, the economic lives of many Jews were dependent on developments in urban centers, which, as communal spaces, also played an oversized role in shaping Jewish culture. From the nineteenth century and the birth of secular historical study of Jews and Judaism until the end of twentieth century, these considerations—generalizations that would later be undercut and replaced by more complex pictures of society, economic functions, gender relations, rabbinic authority, and so on—determined the dominant paradigm among Jewish historians.

Yet change came, albeit slowly and incrementally. In the 1937 first edition of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Salo Baron pointed out that, as early as the seventeenth century, Jews in Italy and Holland showed signs that their attitudes toward secular studies and historical criticism were shifting and hinting at the beginning of the revolt of the individual against the rule of the community. Crucially, as a historian, Baron rooted Jewish intellectual history within the broader demographic, economic, and social realities that were part of European history, broadly understood. Early signs of "enlightenment"—here defined as familiarity with non-Jewish literature and ideas—among Italian and Dutch Jews, Baron noted, could be attributed either to "early capitalism" or, equally, to the Renaissance in Italy and the Protestant Reformation in Holland. Baron, followed by his student Isaac Barzilay, thus regarded what he termed the Italian and Dutch Haskalah (Enlightenment) as a harbinger of some of the changes that were to take place in the modern period.[6]

In the monumental second edition of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Baron devoted nine volumes to what he called the "Late Middle Ages and the Era of European Expansion," a period running from 1200 to 1650. By beginning the modern age in 1650, Baron meant to emphasize that everything after that date was already modern, especially because of the ongoing population shift westward. The effect, however, was to shorten slightly the span of years that in Jewish historiography

was commonly referred to as the Middle Ages.[7] Later historians who wrote comprehensive historical works or historical syntheses followed this structure.[8]

Nonetheless, a significant shift occurred in the mid-twentieth century with the publication of Jacob Katz's classic work, *Tradition and Crisis*.[9] Analyzing Ashkenazic society at the end of the Middle Ages, Katz defined it as "traditional" according to the Weberian sociological typology that guided him. He placed the beginning of the turn to modernity in the mid-eighteenth century, with Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and the Jewish Haskalah in Germany, and Israel Baal Shem Tov and the rise of Hasidism in Eastern Europe. In this influential and trailblazing work, which demonstrated that rabbinic texts could be used as a source for social history, Katz chose not to describe traditional Ashkenazic society during the medieval period. Instead, he narrowed his scope to only 250 years: the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the first half of the eighteenth century. Importantly, Katz explicitly defined this span of time as a "historical period."[10] One senses throughout the book that Katz was considering seriously the changes taking place in traditional society before the transition to modernity.[11] Despite the difficulties, which he fully recognized, in generalizing about the increasingly variegated Jewish world, Katz was aware that the numerous and substantial changes to the fabric of Jewish life justified viewing this period as standing on its own.

While the Israeli historian Ben-Zion Dinur had famously referred to the year 1700 as the beginning of "new times in the history of the Jewish people" as early as 1936,[12] even more instructive is his later, detailed discussion of the changes that, in his opinion, took place in Jewish society during the three hundred years following the expulsion from Spain and Portugal.[13] In his introduction to the 1958 edition of *Israel in Exile*, he proposed an unusual division of the 1,300-year diasporic period, which ran from the Muslim conquest of 636 to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Dinur suggested eight distinct periods, which he organized into pairs: a period of stability always followed by a period of crisis.[14]

According to Dinur, the period between 1496 and 1648 was one of stability, which he called "the stability of protection." He characterized it as "the concentration of masses of Jews in countries where they enjoyed protection provided by the kingdom (Turkey, Poland), the beginnings of recognition of the principle of religious tolerance toward the Jews (Holland), and the active participation of the Jews in the economies of their countries of residence."[15] Dinur attributed a unique role to the exiles from Spain and Portugal in this period. Dispersed throughout many countries, they created a single Jewish world. "The rise of the Land of Israel and Safed, within it, as a center of vital energies in Judaism," and "the tempest of the messianic Kabbalah movement," he noted, managed to produce uniformity in the style and manner of Jewish life. Dinur also highlighted "the internal organization of Polish Jewry" and "the establishment of self-government."[16] The following period, which he saw as lasting until the French Revolution, was one of crisis: "the crisis of atrophy." It was characterized by the undermining of security, economic impoverishment, and the social decline of the Jewish multitudes in the countries where they were concentrated (Poland and the Ottoman Empire), as well as increased security, the political and economic integration of a few Jews (in Western European states), and their social ascent.[17]

Jewish historiography on our period, then, was beginning to show signs of shifting. Another important Israeli historian, Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, had—in two books about the Jews in the Middle Ages—extended the medieval period from the conquest of Islam in the seventh century to the outbreak of the messianic movement of Shabbetai Tzvi in the 1660s.[18] But in 1971, he changed his approach; in his entry "The Jewish People in History" for the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, he characterized the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as "a transition to modern times."[19]

The 1985 publication of Jonathan Israel's *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* marked an important new stage in the approach of Jewish historiography to the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.[20] Although the term *early modern period* appears only a few times in Israel's book, his use of it exerted a great influence on later Jewish historians, who began seriously to treat the period as a distinct era, one with its own identity. Israel was at the beginning of his academic career as a historian of modern Europe when he wrote the book, and although he had already produced two monographs, neither dealt with Jewish history in any way.[21] While he did not regard himself as an expert in Jewish history, Israel had—even before this volume—published a series of insightful articles on the economic and social history of the Sephardic diaspora in Western Europe and the New World as an outgrowth of his extensive work in the archives and libraries of Spain and Holland.[22]

In *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, Israel integrated Jewish history into the overarching processes taking place mainly in Western European history, focusing on political and economic factors, but also including his reflections on European thought and its influence on attitudes toward Jews. A new development in this period was that, as Israel argued, overall structural and external factors came to affect both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews, allowing the historian to discuss them together. And, again characteristic of this period, shifts in the legal status of the Jews allowed them to exert an impact on Western society while remaining a recognizable national group. Some critics objected to his emphasis on Western European Jewry, noting that in this period most Jews lived in Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire. Others criticized the weakness of his discussion of Jewish religious and cultural works and his lack of expertise in Hebrew sources.[23] Nevertheless, most reviewers greeted the book with praise.[24]

What was lacking in Israel's book was amply supplied in 2010 by David Ruderman in his comprehensive survey, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History*.[25] Picking up from a review of Israel's book that he had written nearly twenty-five years earlier, Ruderman sought to balance the historical picture by including the inner life of Jewish communities and the wide-ranging creations of Jewish culture. Ruderman pointed to five areas testifying to the changes that took place at that time. First, increased physical mobility led to reinforced connections among various groups of Jews, despite distance from one another both geographically and culturally. Second, communal institutions in most of the diaspora were strengthened—such as the Council of Four Lands in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—as was the wealthy oligarchy, both linked to a decline in rabbinic authority. Third, the revolution of printing contributed to an unprecedented explosion of accessible knowledge, both general and rabbinic. Fourth, the crisis in rabbinic authority was accelerated by the outbreak of radical messianism and mystical prophecy, sometimes accompanied by heresy. And fifth, traditional

religious identity showed signs of blurring because of the phenomenon of New Christians in Iberia, as they retained elements of their former Jewish identities and the sweeping influence of radical messianism. Ruderman's book is without a doubt the most important contribution in recent years to a panoramic view of early modern Jewish culture.

Among historians of the Jews, then, the early modern period has made a secure and stable place for itself in Jewish historiography. Workshops on this period have taken place every year since August 2004 at various universities in the United States, and an online reservoir of sources has been created in their wake, available to anyone interested.[26]

The question remains, however: Is it in fact *necessary* to separate out the early modern period? Some arguments have recently been advanced against the proposition. I present them here, briefly. First, those who conceived the early modern period placed Europe (mainly Western Europe) at the center of the discussion, wrongly. During this period, in fact, the most important centers of Jewish life—both demographically and culturally—were in Eastern Europe and in the Muslim world. Focusing on those centers instead would show a very different historical progression. Second, these historians were (and are) prisoners of the paradigm of modernization. Their periodization reflects this bias and naturally creates a teleology, in that it assumes that the world was already striding toward modernity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Third, establishing a separate historical period can be justified only if the period can be uniquely characterized by certain phenomena and certain processes: if it has an organic unity extending beyond the boundaries of single nations; if it is possible to prove that a change in historical direction took place that makes it unique; and if there are typical unifying characteristics that apply to it alone.[27] None of these conditions can be definitively shown for the so-called early modern period. Thus runs the counterargument.

Periodization, however, is not an exact science. In fact, it is possible to challenge chronological divisions and the definitions of distinct eras with respect to every period. The Middle Ages is perhaps the most problematic, certainly in reference to Jewish history, and all the foregoing arguments can be raised, even more strongly, against that term as well. In its original sense, is the term *the Middle Ages* appropriate *in any way* to the history of the Jews? Is this concept, invented by humanists in Italy out of a critical and arrogant attitude toward European culture between the fall of the Roman Empire and their time, relevant to Jewish history? Is it valid *in any way* to the world of Islam, and especially to the experience of Jews in Muslim lands, who, in the first five or six centuries of the medieval period, constituted the vast majority of the Jewish people? How radical *was* the change in Jewish self-understanding even from the talmudic period to the medieval period? These questions have never been satisfactorily addressed, let alone answered.

It is important, furthermore, to recall that the concept "modern" is not in fact subordinate to the paradigm of modernization. The connection is, of course, the opposite: the concept of modernization arose from the Latin word *modernus*, meaning "new," "current." The humanists simply called what belonged to their time "modern." It does not necessarily imply superiority over the preceding

period. Inferiority *may* be implied by the term *Middle Ages*, invented as it was to express the disdain of the humanists for the long period that preceded them, which symbolized retreat from the achievements of classical culture, but the term *early modern* does not entail any teleological significance. It does not imply that the world is heading purposefully in a specific direction. And although it is true that the term *early modern* was invented by historians of Europe, this is also true of the term *Middle Ages*. Jewish historians adopted the latter simply for the purpose of maintaining a shared chronological framework, and for identical reasons it is completely justifiable to do the same regarding the early modern period. Jewish historiography must maintain a constant and deep dialogue with general history.

As for the positive requirements for distinguishing a separate period with respect to the history of the Jews—among them organic unity, unique typical characteristics, and a new historical shift—the early modern period does fulfill them, as we will see. To highlight the changes that occurred in Jewish society during the early modern period, I focus on two apparently contradictory trends: the centrifugal and the centripetal. On the one hand, Jews and Jewish communities were scattered farther across the globe and cast into more—and more various—cultural settings than ever before. On the other hand, this geographical mobility—in combination with other, newer factors—served in some ways to unify the Jewish people more thoroughly than ever before. Illustrating these trends and their reciprocal connections will help clarify the uniqueness of the early modern period in Jewish history—and also link it to parallel developments in world history. As it happens, accepting the early modern period as an independent period has already proved extremely fruitful for Jewish historians. As Elliott Horowitz, one of the most brilliant historians of the period, wrote, "Some might rather assert that it is precisely their distinct behavior and modes of response that make Jews most interesting to the historian of early modern Europe. How one relates to 'difference' can sometimes make all the difference."[28]

The Centrifugal Trend

Jews were migrating across the world. Despite many lines of continuity with the medieval period, from the fifteenth century on, Jewish life took place in entirely new areas of residence, sometimes even in places where Jews had never before settled. At the same time, some countries that had been home to Jewish communities for centuries were no longer hospitable to Jews at all.

A New Map of Europe

Were we able to return to Europe at the start of the sixteenth century, it would be clear to us that the map of Jewish settlement had changed beyond recognition. Over the course of the medieval period, some of the largest Jewish centers had died out and lost their Jewish inhabitants. At the beginning of our period, Western Europe, in fact, had been almost completely emptied of Jews. Thousands of

Jews had been expelled from England (1290) and France (1394), and the fifteenth century saw the Jewish presence in Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and Navarre eradicated; those who did not leave converted to Catholicism.[29] Because Sicily and Sardinia were under Spanish rule, the Jews there were also forced to convert or leave. The Jews of Provence were expelled in 1501, and a wave of riots against the Jews of Naples, which began in 1495 following the French conquest, ended only in 1541, when the last Jews were forced to depart.

Similarly, in the 1390s, an unbroken wave of expulsion from German states began, continuing throughout the fifteenth century: from Vienna and Linz in 1421, from Cologne in 1424, from Speyer in 1435, from Mainz in 1438, and from Augsburg in 1439. These were followed by expulsion from Sweden and Franconia. The expulsion from Geneva took place in 1490, and from the duchies of Mecklenburg-Pomerania in 1492, from Halle and Magdeburg in 1493, from Württemberg and the archdiocese of Salzburg in 1498, from Nuremberg and Ulm in the following year. The Jews were expelled from Regensburg in 1519. After the rise of Luther and the wars between Protestants and Catholics, the wave of expulsions from German states and cities accelerated. In 1537, the Jews were expelled from Saxony; in the 1540s they were expelled from Zwickau and Mühlhausen; and from the Duchies of Brunswick, Hanover, and Lüneburg in 1553.[30]

Recent research has shown that the expulsion of the Jews from the cities of Germany did not always and everywhere lead to their absolute removal from German territory. Jews driven out of cities frequently settled in villages close to the urban centers from which they had been expelled. This enabled them to maintain active commercial connections with the Christian population of the cities. For their part, in many cases the Christian burghers continued to make use of the financial services provided by Jews. Sometimes these expelled Jews formed small rural communities made up of Jews from various villages; they pooled their resources and developed new models for maintaining Jewish religious rituals, especially in connection with prayer and burial. These village Jews retained connections with the governments and residents of cities. In Strasbourg, for example, Jews of the surrounding rural area stayed associated with the Christian burghers, in commerce, in moneylending, and sometimes even as physicians.[31] The expelled communities of German Jewry who did leave German territory did not disappear either. Instead, they moved to new areas, first constituting a small and relatively modest Ashkenazic community in northern Italy—mainly in areas where Jews had not previously lived—and then a large and eventually exceedingly important center in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In the words of a colophon of a short chronicle of the Jews of Germany, written by an Ashkenazic Jew who settled in Senigalia, Italy, "There was no disaster after [the Black Plague of 1349] in Ashkenaz until this day, the year 1485. Indeed, there were many expulsions. Blessed be He who changes the times."[32] Unlike previous centuries, when Christians rioted against the Jews of Germany and murdered them, now, according to this contemporary testimony, they only expelled, and expelled again. But the wave of expulsions did not affect only Jews who lived in German states. In the late medieval period, tens of thousands of Jews were forced to migrate

from west to east, from Iberia to Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and North Africa, and from Germany to Poland and Lithuania. "Blessed be He who changes the times," wrote the Ashkenazic Jewish chronicler.

At the same time that Jews were being forced to migrate *from* the Christian countries of Europe, they were being forced to migrate *within* the Ottoman Empire. By order of the Sultan, beginning three years after the conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453, dozens of Jewish communities in areas already conquered by the Ottomans were ordered to resettle in the imperial capital. This strategy of forced migration of populations, called *sürgün*, was standard policy for the Ottoman sultans in the period.

These expulsions and forced migrations must be seen against a broader background. In the medieval period, Jews were expelled from various countries while Christians were not. In the early modern period, however, Jews were not the only ones compelled to migrate because of religious persecution; the issue of refugees and religious persecution was common to the history of many ethnic and religious groups in the early modern period. Diverse religious minorities became refugees, not only in Europe but on other continents as well. The historian Heinz Schilling defined this as "confessional migration,"[33] and Nicholas Terpstra has pointed out that the "language of purification and purgation came out of medicine, but was adopted by religious reform movements. The drive to purge and purify reshaped Europe and the globe throughout the early modern period."[34] The impetus to purify cities and entire states from the "polluting" presence of the threatening religious adversary, according to Terpstra, is one of the outstanding characteristics of the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Refugees from religious persecution were a common sight throughout this period. After the conquest of Constantinople, thousands of Christian Greeks fled to the West, and in 1502, shortly after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, about half a million Muslims were expelled from Castile, and later from Valencia and Aragon as well. Catholics fled from Protestant countries such as England, Scotland, Sweden, and the new Dutch Republic. Conversely, Protestants abandoned countries that remained loyal to the Catholic Church such as Italy and Spain. Italian Protestants of various denominations fled from the threat of the Roman Inquisition in Italy to Switzerland, England, Germany, Transylvania, and Poland. Similarly, between 1567 and 1573, tens of thousands of Protestants fled the southern Netherlands, escaping the iron fist of the Duke of Alba. Nearly 150,000 were driven out of Antwerp when the Spanish army conquered it. On the other side, thousands of Catholics fled from the northern provinces, which swore allegiance to the Calvinist faith. The Moravian Brethren were forced to go underground after their defeat in the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, and many of them dispersed throughout northern Europe and the Netherlands. And French Calvinists, known as Huguenots, undoubtedly the largest and most prominent group of refugees of that time, fled to Geneva, England, and Holland after the massacre in Paris in 1598. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, renewed persecution drove nearly 150,000 of them into exile.

Religious refugees reached Asia, Africa, and the Americas, Mexico and Peru, India and China. Jewish refugees too reached every corner of the earth, sometimes in the guise of a New Christian (Iberian Christians of Jewish origin) or Marrano (Iberian Christians of Jewish origin who retained some Jewish practice in secret). These Jewish exiles, dispersed in many countries on several continents, encountered (and were encountered by) Protestants and Catholics, Moravian Brethren and Socinians (an anti-Trinitarian heresy), Quakers and Huguenots. Their interactions enriched Jewish and European culture in many respects, influenced the formation of Christian Hebraism, aroused vital theological disputes, and even, in some cases, led to productive cooperation between Christians and Jews in advancing shared cultural projects.[35]

Because of these complex processes and phenomena, which transcended the boundaries of individual nations, this period not only differed significantly from the previous one but also was perhaps even unique.

From the Mediterranean to the Coasts of India

Not only persecution and expulsion, but—and this was the case for the medieval period as well—a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors stimulated Jewish geographical mobility. This era has been called the age of mercantilism, and involvement in international trade encouraged Jewish merchants, both individuals and groups, to undertake long journeys by sea and by land. At the same time, being dispersed among many countries and continents gave them advantages over merchants belonging to other ethnicities. Most Jewish international merchants were part of the Western Sephardic diaspora. This diverse group was made up of, on the one hand, Jews, many of whom were descended from those expelled from Spain or were Marranos who had returned to Judaism, and on the other hand, former Jews, converts from Judaism who lived in Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere in Western Europe and the Americas. Family ties, ethnic connections, and common financial interests of Jews and New Christians in this diaspora usually overcame tensions caused by religious differences, allowing them to form wide-ranging and complex commercial partnerships.

One example among many: in the seventeenth century, the Mediterranean port city of Livorno became a vibrant and flourishing cosmopolitan center. After the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I, gave Jews permission to live in Pisa and Livorno in 1593, the embryonic Sephardic Jewish community played a central role in making it one of the most important ports in the Mediterranean.[36] The firm of Ergas and Silvera, owned by Portuguese Jews, exemplifies the dynamic economic activity that took place there. Active between 1704 and 1746, the firm exported to India, by way of London and Lisbon, coral beads that had been manufactured in Livorno. In other words, Jews were involved in international trade even with countries where Jews were forbidden to live. The historian Francesca Trivellato coined the term *communitarian cosmopolitanism* to characterize the experience of the Sephardic merchants who were able to meld multiple traditions and to cooperate with non-Jewish merchants within the framework of a corporatist society.[37]

To Eastern Europe

Between 1500 and 1648, the number of Jews in Eastern Europe grew at a rapid pace, for the most part because of Jewish migration from the cities of Germany, including refugees who fled during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648).[38] They played a key role in colonizing the eastern parts of the Polish kingdom, and in founding new cities and augmenting the population of existing ones in whose reorganization they participated. After settling in existing cities, they moved on toward the eastern regions and ultimately formed new communities in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

At the beginning of our period, the Jewish population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was between 10,000 and 30,000 at most; by the time of the Khmel'nyts'kyi pogroms (during the war between Poland and the Cossacks), it is thought to have been between 200,000 and 450,000. Before 1500, there were only about 50 Jewish communities in Poland, and another 4 in Lithuania. Sixty years later, there were 173 in Poland and in Lithuania nearly 20. After the unification of Poland and Lithuania in 1569, Jews from the cities of northwestern Poland increasingly migrated southeastward, leading to a significant rise in the Jewish population on both banks of the Dnieper River. Dozens of new Jewish communities were established in Ukraine between 1569 and 1648. Before the unification with Poland, there were only 24 Jewish settlements in Ukraine, with a combined population of 4,000. Toward the mid-seventeenth century, there were already 115 communities in that region, with more than 51,000 Jews.[39]

As a result of the Cossack revolt (1648–1649), the Swedish invasions of Poland during the Second Northern War (1655–1660), and the war between Russia and Poland (1654–1667), which sowed destruction in many Jewish communities, for a short while Jews migrated out of the region, to Hungary in the south and to Holland, Italy, and the German states in the west. However, before long the direction of the migration from east to west reverted to what it had been before the pogroms, and at an even larger scale, as many of the emigrants returned to their earlier homes. Toward the mid-eighteenth century, most Jews in Ukraine lived in towns owned by Polish aristocrats, and in 1764, more than 70 percent of the Jewish population of Poland lived in the eastern regions of the kingdom.[40]

Into the Ottoman Empire

Over the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire absorbed thousands of Jewish immigrants from various backgrounds. Ottoman censuses (for taxation) show a swift increase in the first third of the sixteenth century, when the refugees from Spain first appeared. As many as 50,000 Jews from the Iberian Peninsula may have arrived in the Ottoman Empire between 1492 and 1510. In the port city of Salonika, where no Jews had lived before, their number may have been about 17,000 in 1519, and by 1535, Istanbul was home to as many as 40,000 Jews.[41] One needs to be cautious with these figures, however, as there is no way of fixing a precise number for these urban populations. In any case, the population, both Jewish and non-Jewish, fluctuated over the centuries, if only because of the regu-

larly recurring—and quite deadly—outbreaks of the plague. This caveat aside, in some cities, like Salonika and Safed (with a Jewish population of a few thousand), Sephardic Jews actually formed the majority of the total urban population; in most cities around the world, they constituted less than 10 percent.[42] Salonika and Istanbul would represent the largest Jewish communities in the world—by far—well into the nineteenth century. To compare, even the most important Ashkenazic communities, such as Vilna, Kraków, L'viv, Poznań, and Frankfurt, had Jewish populations of fewer than five thousand, even at their peaks during the period. Even the important Sephardic centers of Livorno and Amsterdam were home to Jewish communities that were but a fraction of those in Salonika and Istanbul.

Members of the Sephardic diaspora generally preferred to settle in ports and near administrative and governmental centers. It was a daily struggle to make a living, and they needed support frameworks to survive. From the 1460s, their preferred model was to have separate congregations under a general umbrella organization. In Istanbul, Spanish and Portuguese exiles lived side by side with Turkish- and Greek-speaking Jews who had been resettled in the capital by the Ottomans. Each group of Jews established its own synagogue, with its own administration and institutions, and was regarded as a separate unit by the government. The exiles from Spain adopted this model in other cities as well; it enabled them to maintain the social bonds and particular traditions of their places of origin on the Iberian Peninsula. In the mid-sixteenth century, nearly thirty such congregations were listed in Salonika and nearly forty in Istanbul. These numbers may even have increased toward the end of the century.[43] In addition, each congregation paid taxes separately, and at least at the start, groups may have seen an advantage in collecting their own contributions.

Subsequent internal migration within the Ottoman Empire led to new communities and the creation of new organizations. This internal migration largely built the Jewish community of Izmir, for example, which was established at the end of the sixteenth century. The rise of the city as a flourishing commercial center drew Jews there from Tyre and Manisa (Magnesia), which were close to Izmir, and from Salonika and Istanbul.[44] Marranos, too, immigrated there from Portugal and were able to return to Judaism.

In Ports

Historians introduced the concept of "Port Jews" to highlight the economic, social, and cultural characteristics of Jews living in port cities on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean coasts, especially from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. These Jews have been described as having a flexible attitude toward their religion and observance of the commandments, and as being, in general, more open to the surrounding culture and new ideas.[45] Indeed, a tolerant, pragmatic, and cosmopolitan atmosphere seems to have characterized most of these centers. Strikingly, the tendency of the Port Jews to acculturate appears to have encouraged the authorities to offer civic inclusion to them sooner than they did elsewhere.

Of course, there were more than a few differences among the Jewish communities in Salonika, Izmir, Amsterdam, Livorno, Hamburg, Bordeaux, and London, and in the political and social status of the Jews in each of these port cities. However, despite their differences, some elements in their culture and relation to the Jewish tradition were common to all of them. For example, Port Jews were usually capable of communicating in a number of languages, and they were the first to be exposed to enlightened ideas, both because of their connections with booksellers and also by virtue of the contacts they formed with exiles from other countries. As Lois Dubin writes, "Merchants were often boundary-crossers, and communities of merchants in trade diasporas were often cross-cultural brokers: as they brought goods from one zone to another, they also mediated between one culture and another."[46]

To the End of the West

In the seventeenth century, the Jewish diaspora attained unprecedented geographical dispersal. For the first time, an organized Jewish settlement was established in the New World. The possibilities and challenges offered by the Dutch and English colonies in the Americas attracted Portuguese Jewish merchants. Jews from Amsterdam settled in the Dutch colony of Pernambuco, in northeastern Brazil, an area the Dutch had conquered from Portugal. The first Jewish community in the New World, the Zur Israel community, was established in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, in 1637. The Jews there were joined by quite a few New Christians, who took advantage of the Dutch conquest to return to Judaism. The 1,450 Jews who lived in Dutch Brazil in 1645, who made up around half the white European population there, attained absolute civil equality in relation to the European Christian population there. They received permission to hold Jewish prayers in full freedom.[47] This was the beginning of Jewish settlement in the Americas. But the process was neither smooth nor free of obstacles. The Portuguese reconquest of Pernambuco in 1654 put an end to the Jewish presence in Brazil. The 650 Jews who were residing there when the Dutch colony fell into the hands of the Portuguese scattered in various directions. Some returned to Holland, and others relocated within the Americas, forming new Jewish communities, mainly in the Caribbean. A group of refugees from Recife arrived in New Amsterdam in North America. They were among those who laid the cornerstone for what would be the New York Jewish community, after the Dutch colony passed into English hands in 1664.[48]

In 1659, with the arrival of seventy Sephardic Jews from Amsterdam, the Jewish community of the Dutch island of Curaçao was established. The Dutch West Indian Company granted extensive rights to these Jewish settlers, with the intention of directing them to agricultural pursuits. However, they preferred to continue doing what they were used to: engaging in maritime trade.[49] Some became ship owners and sailed through the Antilles and the Caribbean islands and along the coast of Venezuela. At that time, and throughout the eighteenth century, many ships with names such as *Zebulon and Issachar*, *Bracha and Shalom*, *Mazel Tov*, and the like plied the waters of Central America, their names pointing to their owners' identity.

In the 1660s, Jewish communities arose on the Caribbean islands of Martinique, Barbados, and Jamaica. Sephardic Jewish settlers came not only from Amsterdam but also from Livorno, Hamburg, London, and Bayonne. Some of them found their way to Suriname and joined the Jewish settlement that had begun to flourish there in 1667, after it was captured by the English. Jewish settlers began to clear land that had been granted to them for agriculture; to this day it is called Joden Savanne (the Jews' Savanna). The first synagogue there was established in 1685 and was called Beracha ve-Shalom (Blessing and Peace). In 1694, ninety-two Portuguese Jewish families were living in Suriname, as well as about a dozen Ashkenazic families: in total about 570 people. Jews owned forty sugar plantations and nine thousand slaves, and by 1730, the number of plantations owned by Jews had risen to 115. At that time, however, the Jews began to leave the forested areas in the interior of the country and move to the city of Paramaribo, on the coast, where they became local and international merchants.[50]

Rabbis and Intellectuals in Motion

The migration of rabbis and other intellectual figures, many of whose writings appear in this volume, played an important role in the cultural development of early modern Jewish society. Some of them traveled extensively, wandering among cities and countries. In the words of David Ruderman: "Jewish intellectual life and cultural production were shaped to a great extent by Jewish intellectuals who moved from place to place."[51] In some cases, their travels defined their lives. The list of itinerant Torah scholars and rabbis in this period includes central figures such as Don Isaac Abravanel, Joseph Karo, Isaac Luria, and Israel Sarug.

Some of these rabbis traveled as part of mass migrations and as a direct consequence of expulsions and persecution. Others were motivated by the desire to meet other scholars, to find publishers for their writings, or to obtain a suitable position to support themselves. In some cases, these relocations overlapped with significant transformations in their lives, such as conversion to Christianity or return to Judaism. Intellectuals among the Iberian New Christians were highly mobile. Some of them left Iberia or, conversely, moved back to Spain or Portugal from places where they had lived as Jews. One of the former was the well-known physician Amatus Lusitanus, who studied in Salamanca and worked as a doctor in Lisbon. He moved to Antwerp in 1534 and then to Ferrara, having been invited by the Duke of Este to teach in the local university. After some time, he moved to Ragusa, then to Ancona, in the Papal States. While in Rome, he visited various Italian cities, including Florence, where, in 1551, he published the first volume of his major medical work, *Curationum medicinalium centuriae septem*, which describes a hundred cases of illness he had treated. By 1561, he had published another six volumes and had become known as one of the most innovative physicians of his day. The ascent of the anti-Jewish Pope Paul IV drove him to move to Ragusa, and around 1561 he arrived in Salonika, his final destination. There, apparently, he openly reverted to the Jewish religion. He died of the plague in 1568, after expressing sorrow that he could not be buried in Portugal, his homeland.[52]

The biography of Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591–1655) offers another fascinating example of an itinerant scholar, some of whose travels were driven by a desire to expand his learning. Born in Candia, Crete, in 1591, Delmedigo studied medicine at the university in Padua, where he attended Galileo's lectures in astronomy. He moved to Venice and then returned to Candia. From there he turned to the Near East, first traveling to Alexandria and Cairo and then to Istanbul. Later he visited the Karaite communities (Jewish dissidents that rejected rabbinic authority beginning in the late eighth century) of Eastern Europe. In 1623, he arrived in Amsterdam, and in 1629, he published *Sefer Elim* (*The Book of Elim*; see Numbers 33:5), a scientific and philosophical work. He was a multifaceted writer: scientist, philosopher, and kabbalist, with an impressive knowledge of music. He died in Prague.[53]

The rabbis Isaac Aboab da Fonseca and Moses Raphael d'Aguilar were both born in Portugal to Marrano families. Da Fonseca arrived in southern France with his parents as a child, and in the second decade of the seventeenth century they moved to Amsterdam and the whole family returned to Judaism. In 1626, da Fonseca was appointed rabbi of one of the Sephardic communities in the city, and later, between 1642 and 1654, lived in Recife, Brazil, where he was the first rabbi of a community in the Americas until the Portuguese conquest of the city. D'Aguilar, too, came to Amsterdam from Portugal as a child. He excelled in religious studies and acquired a broad education in classical philosophy as well. He accompanied da Fonseca to Brazil and served there as cantor of the community. Upon their return to Amsterdam, both served as rabbis in the Sephardic community. Da Fonseca was appointed chief rabbi in 1660 and served in that capacity until his death in 1693.[54]

Compared to da Fonseca and d'Aguilar, the life of their colleague in the Amsterdam rabbinate, Jacob Sasportas, was even more marked by extensive wandering. Moving from North Africa to Europe, his career highlights the very different roles of rabbis in North Africa and in the communities of the Western Sephardic diaspora. He was born in Spanish-ruled Oran, North Africa, around 1610, to an aristocratic Sephardic family, in a community of just a few hundred Jews. He passed some of his early years in Tlemcen, where he acquired a talmudic education and bathed in the glory of his lineage as a descendant of the famous Jewish scholar Naḥmanides. There he served as *ḥakham*—rabbi—of the Jews of Oran and Tlemcen, as well as the surrounding area. Sasportas arrived in Amsterdam in 1651 and was first employed as a proofreader in the pioneering printing house of Menasseh Ben Israel, a leading Sephardic rabbi, today primarily known for his role in securing the official return of Jews to England. In 1655, Sasportas moved to Salé, Morocco, apparently as the business representative of a group of merchants from Amsterdam. He remained there until 1664, although in 1659 he had already traveled to Spain as an emissary of the ruler of Marrakech. He returned to Salé, then moved to London, as he was invited to serve as the rabbi of the young Jewish community there. However, his stay in London was cut short by a severe outbreak of the plague. This time he went to Hamburg, where he stayed as the rabbi of the Sephardic community until 1666. He became a fierce opponent of Shabbetai Tzvi and waged an uncompromising campaign against the rabbis who believed he was the messiah, sending ve-

hement letters to them that also circulated very widely. In 1678, he accepted the invitation of the Sephardic community of Livorno to serve as its rabbi, but his relations with local leaders quickly deteriorated, and in 1680 he returned to Amsterdam, his final resting place. He joined the local rabbinic court and, after the death of R. Isaac Aboab da Fonseca in 1693, was appointed chief rabbi.[55]

Travel could be spurred by engaging in trade and facilitated by the personal contacts—both Jewish and non-Jewish—it produced. Printing, like other commercial activities, was part of a larger social context, and printers—who were sometimes also scholars themselves—were often involved in marketing their goods. Jacob Abendana, for example, born in Hamburg, lived in Amsterdam for some time before moving in 1680 to London, where he was invited to serve as rabbi of the Sephardic community. Not coincidentally, Abendana had already visited England, as a bookseller; in 1662, he was in Oxford selling books and manuscripts to a series of Christian Hebraists, with whom he maintained contact over the years. Among his clients were Johann Friedrich Mieg, who taught theology in Heidelberg; Edmund Castell, who taught Arabic at Cambridge; and even Henry Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society in London. The latter introduced him to Thomas Barlow, the librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Jacob Abendana's visits to Oxford also opened the way for his younger brother, Isaac Abendana, who lived there but later moved permanently to Cambridge, where he taught Hebrew. The book trade brought Jacob Abendana to other places, too. In 1659, he sold books in Leiden to Professor Johannes Cocceius and made a close connection with the greatest Christian Hebraist of his generation, Johannes Buxtorf the Younger, at the University of Basel.[56]

In comparison to these Sephardic rabbis, the wanderings of Shabbetai Meshorer Bass and Nathan Hannover were relatively restricted. Their families were murdered between 1648 and 1655 during the Cossack Rebellion and subsequent wars. Shabbetai Bass was born in Kalisz and moved to Prague after 1655. His musical talents and his deep voice led him to the choir of Prague's Altneuschule (Old New Synagogue), where he acquired the surname Bass. Between 1674 and 1679, he passed through Głogów, Krotoszyn, Leszno, Poznań, and Worms, before reaching Amsterdam, in 1679, where he came into contact with both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities. Working as a proofreader in the printing house of Uri Phoebus, in 1680, he published *Sifte ḥakhamim* (*Lips of the Wise*; see Proverbs 15:7), a popularized version of Rashi's commentary on the Torah and the Five Scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther). In the same year he also published *Sifte yesḥenim* (*Lips of the Sleepers*; see Song of Songs 7:9), a list of more than 2,200 books, in alphabetical order, with the authors' names, place of printing, and short summaries of the contents. This book is rightly considered the father of Jewish bibliography. In addition, having wandered on the roadways of Europe, he published a Yiddish guide for travelers, *Masekhet derekh erets* (*Tractate of the Way of the World*). It contains descriptions of the different coinages, weights, and measures in various countries, distances between major cities, and available means of transportation—and, of course, the prayers that a Jew must recite daily.[57]

Nathan Hannover, the author of a well-known chronicle of the pogroms of 1648–1649, *Yeven metsulah* (*Abyss of Despair*) was born in Ostróg, Volhynia. He fled to Lithuania after the Cossack riots, and from there he traveled to Prague, and on to Venice, where he studied kabbalah with Moses Zacuto. He continued to Moldavia and was appointed the rabbi of Iaşi in Walachia. Later he served as a rabbi in Ungarish Brod, where he was killed by Turkish soldiers. While living in Prague, he published *Safah berurah* (*A Pure Language*), a Hebrew-German-Italian-Latin dictionary, for Ashkenazic Jews who were wandering on the trails of Europe.[58]

The Heterodox Challenge

Some early modern Jews went so far as to leave the Jewish community entirely, but it is difficult to find another Jew in this period who withdrew in precisely the way Baruch Spinoza did, by abandoning Judaism completely without converting to another religion. Of course, during this period, numerous Jews cut themselves off from the Jewish people and religion. But all these actions involved conversion. The case of Spinoza is paradigmatic of the attitude of Jews in modern times, who distanced themselves ideologically and socially from the Jewish people and from Judaism but without ever converting to Christianity or Islam.

After being excommunicated by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam in 1656, Spinoza spent the last twenty years of his life without any connection with his native community or with the religious life of Judaism at all. Unlike some who uttered heresies or were accused of heretical writing, Spinoza never retracted his statements or showed any signs of remorse. On the contrary, his 1670 *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*Theological-Political Treatise*), which laid the groundwork for modern biblical criticism, contains the sharpest possible expression of his alienation from Judaism and a penetrating criticism of the "Religion of the Hebrews." Spinoza relates to the Jewish religion in this book out of an absolute emotional distance, as if he were an anthropologist writing about an exotic tribe, and without betraying any connection or emotional closeness to his former community. In the third chapter, where he refutes the idea of the chosenness of the Jewish people, he concludes unequivocally, "In intellect and true virtue no Nation is distinguished from any other; so in these matters God has not chosen one in preference to others."[59]

Unlike other Jewish intellectuals who left Judaism, Spinoza did not relocate to another place. He spent virtually all his life in a single province: Holland, in the heart of the Dutch Republic, seldom leaving it. In 1661, he moved out of Amsterdam, where he was born, to Rijnsburg, a town near Leiden, and after a few years he moved from there to Voorburg, a small town near The Hague, where he spent the last five years of his life. He went to Leiden to hear lectures at the university, and in 1673, when the French army invaded the Dutch Republic and occupied large areas of it, he crossed the lines—a rather daring and adventurous act—and visited the French headquarters, having been invited by the Prince of Condé, commander of the invading French army. Although he never met the prince, his action aroused astonishment and consternation among quite a few Dutchmen.[60]

The Centripetal Trend

While the frequent expulsions and migrations dispersed and divided the Jews of the diaspora, other elements worked to create, if not uniformity, then mutual intelligibility, and even familiarity among the many physically distant Jewish communities and their various traditions and cultures.

Hebrew Printing

Printing, which Jews adopted immediately after its invention, helped to unify far-flung communities. Where previously Jewish learning had been transmitted through the individual copying of manuscripts, the nascent printing industry now made Jewish books widely available. It also, inevitably, led to unprecedented uniformity in fundamental Jewish texts. Most famously, Daniel Bomberg, a Christian printer from Antwerp, established a printing house in Venice in 1516. Employing Jewish proofreaders, he printed two editions of the Hebrew Bible with the principal commentators (known as *Mikra'ot gedolot*) between 1516 and 1526. Even farther-reaching in its consequences was Bomberg's printing of the Babylonian Talmud, with the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot, providing a uniform model of the Babylonian Talmud that was eventually adopted by the entire Jewish diaspora. The first edition, published between 1520 and 1523, comprised forty-four tractates; in later years, Bomberg printed three more editions, all of which were either partial or incomplete. Bomberg established the now-standard layout of the page of the Talmud for the first time.

The *Shulḥan ʿarukh* (*Set Table*), a halakhic code written by a Sephardic rabbi, Joseph Karo, and printed for the first time in Venice in 1565 (in two volumes), was reprinted just a few years later in Kraków; this time, it included the glosses of the Ashkenazic scholar Moses Isserles (1530–1572; the "Rema"), known as the *Mapah* (*Tablecloth*), representing a summation of Ashkenazic practices. In this way, within (and on) the pages of what would soon become the most important and popular halakhic work of the time, the Sephardic and Ashkenazic traditions encountered each other. This book came to be regarded as the supreme halakhic authority, by both erudite scholars and by ordinary readers, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, throughout the diaspora: in the Ottoman Empire and North Africa, in Italy and Northern Europe, in the Land of Israel and Eastern Europe. Printers, many of them Christian, in Venice, Istanbul, Amsterdam, and elsewhere thus played a decisive role in the formation of an interconnected and unified Jewish culture. Another set of strands in this network involves the emissaries sent from Palestine to various cities around the world to collect money for the support of the Jewish communities in Jerusalem and Safed.

In fact, these printers—and the new audiences for their products—reshaped the face of Jewish culture in various, complex ways. Not only halakhic practice, but prayer liturgies too began to be standardized. Although the text of the Hebrew Bible had long been set, so too a standard set of commentaries became attached to it, shaping the "rabbinic Bible." The availability of the biblical text encouraged a wider range of biblical scholarship, and new genres arose while others declined in popularity.

The Rise of Kabbalah

Kabbalah, a system of religious and mystical thought that emerged at the end of the twelfth century in Provence, formed a central feature in the culture of many Jews expelled from Spain. Their dispersal hastened its dissemination, especially among the Jews of the Mediterranean basin and the Near East. Kabbalah came to attain a status in the Jewish world it had never previously achieved. Study of kabbalah, which until then had been restricted to small circles of adepts, began to spread among the Jewish masses. Moreover, the dispersal of the Sephardic Jews brought with it the diffusion of kabbalistic manuscripts, and the study of kabbalah developed more local variants, each depending on which manuscripts were accessible.[61]

The core of kabbalistic learning was the Zohar, a mystical work (made up of several layers and related texts) attributed to the second-century rabbi Shimon Bar Yoḥai but actually composed in thirteenth-century Spain by a circle of scholars associated with Moses de Leon, under circumstances that are still unclear. Before it was printed in Italy in the mid-sixteenth century, there was no uniform text of the Zohar, and zoharic manuscripts, each quite different from the rest, were disseminated without any consensus as to which belonged to authentic source material. During the first generation after the expulsion, however, Jewish centers in North Africa in particular played a pioneering role in collecting and editing these zoharic texts. Among the Sephardic rabbinic scholars who relocated to Morocco were several prominent authors of works closely connected to zoharic literature. One of these, Abraham Ardutiel, while in Fez, wrote an anthology entitled *Avne zikaron* (*Stones of Memory*), containing texts from a number of kabbalistic works, including previously unknown passages from the Zohar.[62]

North African Jewry, especially in the Maghreb, helped to transform the Zohar into a holy book in and of itself. As Lawrence Fine has written, "The Zohar was ever so gradually embraced as an object of veneration and employed for a variety of ritual and devotional purposes by ordinary folk, possibly including women."[63] Groups of Jewish men, including simple people, gathered regularly to study the Zohar, sometimes reading or chanting it without necessarily paying attention to the meaning of the text.[64] Special times were set aside for these practices. The usual time to study devotional or mystical texts might be before or after prayers, late in the evening, on the Sabbath eve or close to the end of the Sabbath, but now reading the Zohar made its way into the liturgical calendar itself. It was studied on the eve of Lag b'Omer (day 33 of the Counting of the Omer, which takes place between Passover and Shavuot), Hoshanah Rabbah (the seventh day of Sukkot), the evening of a circumcision, during shivah (the seven-day mourning period after a death), or as a ritual in the home of someone mortally ill.[65] These customs arose and developed because of a growing popular faith in the sanctity of the Zohar and in its spiritual and magical qualities.

The Zohar thus became a venerated book. In certain communities, possessing a copy of it in one's home was thought to provide protection against the evil eye. Healing powers were attributed to it. Shimon Bar Yoḥai, the "author" of the Zohar, became a revered saint among Jews of North Africa. Endowments for scholarship devoted to his memory were established in various places. For

members of these groups, Lag b'Omer became a special festival, during which the Zohar and its purported author were celebrated with fasts, songs, and dances, as well as study.[66]

The kabbalah struck particularly deep roots among the Jews of Draa in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, who had lived in the area from a very early time and preserved ancient traditions. Influenced by beliefs of the Muslim Marabouts of their surroundings, they developed a kabbalah centered on mystical experiences associated with Elijah the Prophet, based on a strong connection with the holy spirit, and that invoked visions inspired by dreams. Some of the customs of the kabbalists of Draa later reached the kabbalists of Safed, apparently through the influence of Moroccan kabbalists who immigrated to the Land of Israel, such as Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi.[67]

The arrival in Italy of important Sephardic kabbalists, including Judah Ḥayyat, Isaac ben Ḥayim ha-Kohen, and Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi, during the generation of the expulsion from Spain, placed Italy in the center of kabbalistic activity for the following generation. The printing revolution, centered in Italy, also influenced the spread of study of the Zohar. Some kabbalists opposed the publication of the book, arguing that not everyone was worthy or qualified to study the holy work. Nevertheless, between 1558 and 1560, a version of the Zohar based on ten different manuscripts was printed in Mantua, in three volumes. A competing printer in Cremona in 1559/60 published a Zohar based on yet other manuscripts, in one volume. Regarding these two editions, Robert Bonfil has noted that "while the Mantua edition was directed toward the Ottoman markets, the Cremona edition was directed toward those of eastern Europe."[68]

After publication of the Zohar, the study of kabbalah underwent a significant shift: a field that had previously been regarded as esoteric became terrifically popular, even to the extent of competing with traditional rabbinic literature. This situation stimulated Leone Modena to write a vehement polemic against kabbalistic works, called *Ari nohem* (*Roaring Lion*), in which he challenged the antiquity of the Zohar.[69] Opponents of kabbalah could be found in the Ashkenazic world as well. Moses Isserles belittled those who were overly anxious to study it, and later, Jacob Emden questioned its authenticity altogether.

Among the new centers of kabbalah established by the Jews expelled from Spain, the most important arose in Jerusalem and Safed. The center in Jerusalem flourished only in the first half of the sixteenth century but included such prominent kabbalists as Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi and Judah Albotini. However, at midcentury, kabbalists left Jerusalem for other centers, and Safed became a vibrant center whose influence eventually spread through the entire Jewish world. There, central figures such as Joseph Karo, Solomon ha-Levi Alkabetz, his brother-in-law Moses Cordovero, Eleazar Azikri, and Elijah de Vidas spurred flourishing kabbalistic activity.

The Safed kabbalists developed their own, far-reaching kabbalistic theology that centered the concept of exile. As they saw it, the historical exile of the Jewish people reflected the metaphysical exile of the shekhinah (the divine presence), the female dimension of the divinity. They believed that fulfilling religious obligations, and in particular penitence, prayer, and devotion in prayer, had the power to redeem the shekhinah from her exile.

In his *Pardes rimonim* (*Garden of Pomegranates*), Moses Cordovero offered a synthesis between Spanish kabbalah, which focused on the Zohar, and elements of ecstatic kabbalah.[70] Cordovero died in 1570, six months after the arrival of Isaac Luria, known as "the holy ARI" (an acronym of his name, meaning "lion"). Luria was born in Jerusalem and educated in Egypt in the circle of David Ibn Abi Zimra. Upon his arrival in Safed, Luria joined the circle of Cordovero's disciples. Luria died two years later, but during his two years in Safed, he attracted about forty disciples with his charismatic power. While he left almost no writings behind, and his teachings have come down to us only through his disciples, especially Ḥayim Vital, he shaped an important new strain of kabbalah: Lurianic kabbalah.

Prior to Luria, the kabbalah presented the initial, divine act of creation as one of wholeness, which earthly redemption would restore. In contrast, Luria believed that the act of creation began with a kind of rupture in the divine plan, which he called "the smashing of the vessels." So that his disciples could meld their souls with the divinity and repair the breaks, he demanded that they first repair their own souls and purify themselves of their transgressions by means of rituals connected to specifically kabbalistic intentions in performing the commandments. According to Luria, human actions—especially observance of the commandments—play a central role in the cosmos and have cosmic significance. If the individual keeps the commandments with the proper intention, the shekhinah will be redeemed from her exile and reunite with God.[71]

Intense messianic fervor motivated the kabbalists of Safed in their way of life and their pietistic and ascetic customs in particular. Following generations absorbed Lurianic kabbalah, in various guises and forms, into Jewish practice and belief in developments that go beyond the chronological scope of the present volume.

In 1666, an intensely powerful messianic movement shook the Jewish world, centered on the person of Shabbetai Tzvi who claimed to be the messiah—with Nathan of Gaza as prophet and propagandist of the movement. The subsequent upheavals affected nearly the entire Jewish world. News of Shabbetai Tzvi's activities reached almost every country with a Jewish community.

Nathan of Gaza was a kabbalist who drew upon the teachings of Isaac Luria, and many of his writings were permeated with kabbalistic terminology. Scholars debate the significance of Lurianic kabbalah in this messianic movement. Gershom Scholem, in his highly influential study of Shabbetai Tzvi,[72] argued that Nathan's use of Lurianic kabbalah resonated with Jews, encouraging the spread of the belief that Shabbetai Tzvi was the messiah. Moshe Idel, on the other hand, has objected that Lurianic kabbalah was not as generally widespread as Scholem claimed. In his opinion, too, Shabbetai Tzvi was not himself a Lurianic kabbalist.[73] Finally, Matt Goldish has concluded that "the judicious historian should not read the long and complex history of Sabbateanism mainly through a whiggish lens, determining its significance according to its impact on later developments. It should rather be seen as a set of ideas and events that reveal a great deal about its own historical contexts, teaching us about the horizons of Jewish identity in the early modern era."[74]

The kabbalah of Safed penetrated Germany and Eastern Europe. In 1592, Moses Cordovero's *Pardes rimonim* (completed in 1549) was printed in Kraków, only about eight years after it was first published in Salonika. Although this book was not printed again in Eastern Europe until the end of the eighteenth century, other works by Cordovero, intended for a more popular audience, were printed during the seventeenth century in Prague, Kraków, and Fürth.

In Eastern Europe, Isaiah Horowitz had the most influence in introducing the kabbalistic tradition. Born in Prague, he served as the rabbi in several major Jewish communities such as Poznań, Kraków, Frankfurt, and Prague, eventually being appointed rabbi of the Ashkenazic community in Jerusalem in 1621. His most famous work, *Shene luḥot ha-berit* (*Two Tablets of the Covenant*; Amsterdam, first half of the 17th century), is an encyclopedic compendium containing a discussion of almost every topic in kabbalah. The book was reprinted many times, and Horowitz came to be known by the title of his book.[75]

Kabbalah was increasingly popular among the Jews of Eastern Europe—and increasingly available in Yiddish. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, *Kav ha-yosher* (*The Just Measure*; Frankfurt, 1705), was one of the most influential and widely circulated Jewish books on kabbalistic ethics. The author, Zvi Hirsch Koidanover, born in Vilna, later prepared a bilingual, Hebrew-Yiddish edition of the book.[76] Sections of the Zohar even appeared in a Yiddish translation, by Tzvi Hirsh Khotsh, called *Naḥalat tsvi* (*A Goodly Heritage*; Amsterdam, 1711). As Chava Weissler has pointed out, "A dilemma [was] faced by all popularizations of mystical material: How can one make available to the masses a text such as the Zohar . . . which had for centuries been studied only by an elite coterie?"[77] Yiddish translations indicate that these kabbalistic works circulated among a wide readership, one that included women.

Between East and West, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim

Italy, split into various states and regimes, attracted diverse Jewish migrants. In the Papal States, the pope ruled as a kind of secular governor. Ashkenazim and Sephardim encountered one another in Italy after the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. Even later on, the Jews of Italy retained a connection with a variety of Jewish traditions, using several languages, including Hebrew, Yiddish, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

However, not every Italian ruler showed an interest in absorbing Jewish immigrants. For example, the Republic of Genoa did not even permit the presence of Jews until the end of the sixteenth century, and the Duchy of Milan did not allow Jews to settle there until the beginning of the modern period. The attitude of Venice's leaders on this matter fluctuated. Until 1509, the city's governors did not permit a Jewish presence in the city itself. But in that year, in the wake of the Venetian war against the League of Cambrai, a stream of Jewish refugees arrived from settlements that were part of the far-flung Venetian maritime empire, and the Venetians permitted them to remain in the city after the war was over. In the 1530s, Jewish immigrants began to flow into Italy. These included "Levantine" Jews, who came from the eastern Mediterranean and were in fact Ottoman subjects. Most of them

were descended from Sephardim who a generation earlier had moved to the Ottoman Empire, where they found a safe haven after the expulsions from Spain.[78] However, after the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal in 1536, Portuguese Marranos began to slip out of the country. Some who fled directly to Italy returned openly to Judaism. Others, even once in Italy, continued to behave as Catholics but still sought to approach the Jewish communities as much as they could without incurring the danger of being brought before the Papal Inquisition.

The rulers of the Italian states found themselves in an awkward position. On the one hand, from the Catholic Church's point of view, the Marranos who returned to Judaism were Catholic heretics. On the other hand, not all Christian scholars agreed that the mass forced baptism of the Jews of Portugal in 1497 had, in fact, been legal. Some maintained, for example, that forced baptism was inherently invalid. This was the opinion of Pope Clement VII (1478–1534), who agreed to accept Portuguese Marranos in Ancona, a port city within the Papal States, in hopes that they would help develop the economy there.[79] His attitude later influenced secular rulers of Italian cities and states. The rulers of Ferrara, of Tuscany, and, later, Venice began to allow the entry of Jews into their domains.

In 1550, the Venetian Republic renewed the law requiring the expulsion of Marranos to accommodate Venetian merchants, who were apprehensive about potential economic competition. Around this time, anti-Jewish papal policies reached a peak. In 1553, the Talmud was burned, first in Rome and then in Bologna, Venice, and other cities. Twenty-five Jews were burned at the stake in Ancona.[80]

The first ghetto, established in 1516, was located in Venice and remained in existence until the conquest of the city by Napoleon in 1797.[81] Another ghetto, which expanded and contracted over the years at the request of the Jewish population, was established in Rome in 1555. Eventually all Jews in Italy were required to live in ghettos, although it took over a century for this policy to be fully implemented. Jewish quarters, which were simply areas (sometimes fortified) within cities and towns where the Jewish community lived, had been a common sight in medieval Europe, but the ghetto was distinctive in that Jews were *required* to live within it. Similar enclosed or defined areas could be found in early modern Poland and Germany as well, such as the *Judengasse* (Jews' Street) of Frankfurt, instituted in 1462.

Near the end of the sixteenth century, an economic recession in the Ottoman Empire drove more Levantine immigrants toward Italy. At the time, Italy appeared to be the only Western country where it was permitted to practice the Jewish religion openly, attracting more Marranos. In 1589, the Venetian Republic issued a document defining the conditions for residence for the "Ponentini," one of two separate groups of Jewish immigrants. The Ebrei Levantini e viandanti (Levantine and Wandering Jews) were, as noted earlier, former subjects of the Ottoman Empire, while the Ponentini (Western) were descended from the Marranos.[82] The differentiation of these two groups of Jews, both primarily of Sephardic descent but who had followed different historical paths, exerted an enormous influence on Western European Jewry and even beyond.

Throughout most of Europe, including Italy, Jews had often worked as pawnbrokers and were thus sometimes perceived negatively as usurers. This pejorative term, however, was chiefly used

by church officials and was not representative of how Jewish pawnbrokers were regarded by Christian society in general. In addition, this negative stereotype was belied by the reality that the Ponentini mainly engaged in international commerce and financial activity connected with that commerce. They were generally economically, if not socially, integrated into the fabric of their places of residence.[83]

The first Jews to establish synagogues in Venice were Ashkenazim: the Scuola Grande Tedesca dates to 1528, the Scuola Canton to 1532, and the Scuola Italiana, to no later than 1575; three smaller synagogues were the Scuola Coanim (1587), the Scuola Luzzato (sixteenth century), and Scuola Meshullamim (no later than 1635). Sephardic synagogues—such as the Scuola Ponentina and the Scuola Levantin—were established only toward the end of the sixteenth century, but they were often magnificent, probably constructed by Christian architects hired for their expertise in building churches. One of these, Baldassar Longhena, known for his splendid Venetian churches, probably designed the Spanish Scuola.[84]

The Sephardic Jews in Italy played a central role in forming the identity of the Sephardic diaspora in general and particularly in the West. Sephardic communities in Western Europe and the New World adopted communal patterns that developed in Venice at the end of the sixteenth century. For example, the organization of the Sephardic communities of Amsterdam, Hamburg, London, and others in the West was based on bylaws drafted for the first time in Venice. Also, the various charity confraternities were modeled after patterns first established by the Ponentini in Italy.[85]

Another phenomenon entirely anchored in Jewish society of the early modern period is the development of literature in two new Jewish languages: Ladino and Yiddish. Ladino (Judeo-Spanish, also called Judezmo), evolved after the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula among the Sephardic refugees, who began to populate the lands around the Mediterranean, especially the Ottoman Empire. Yiddish followed the mass migration of Jews from the states of Germany. The printing industry played an important role for both nascent languages. A rich corpus of books was published in Yiddish and—in parallel, though far fewer—in Ladino as well.

Ladino

During the medieval period, Jews of the Iberian Peninsula did not have a solid collective identity. As Jonathan Ray has put it: "Sephardic society was more a product of the sixteenth century than of the Middle Ages. Prior to their expulsion, Spanish Jews comprised a loosely associated collection of communities with little cohesive identity. . . . Perhaps the greatest example of Sephardic culture as a product of the post-Expulsion era rather than its medieval predecessor was the development of a shared language."[86] Before the expulsion, Sephardic Jews—like their non-Jewish neighbors—had spoken (and sometimes written, usually in Hebrew characters) the local Iberian dialect. Among the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal who ended up in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin, a Judeo-Spanish koine arose: Ladino. As a result of the dispersion into new lands, this language began to reflect the new linguistic environments, growing increasingly distant from Castilian and the

other Iberian vernaculars. It included Hebraisms and Arabisms from the period before the expulsion and gradually came to include Greek and Turkish influences.

In general, books in Ladino published in the Ottoman Empire were printed in Hebrew letters and reflected a traditionally educated reading public. In Istanbul, for example, the 1547 Ladino translation of the Pentateuch was printed along with the weekly Haftara (passages from the prophets read during the Sabbath service). In 1568, in Salonika, a collection of passages from the *Shulḥan ʿarukh*, translated into Ladino, was published under the title of *Mesa de el alma* (*Table of the Soul*). And a Ladino translation of the eleventh-century ethical work *Ḥovot ha-levavot* (*Duties of the Heart*), by Baḥya Ibn Pakuda, was published in the sixteenth century as well.

Moses Almosnino, active in Salonika during the sixteenth century, left behind many works in Hebrew, Spanish, and Ladino. In 1564, he published his most important work, *Regimiento de la vida* (*Regimen of Living*), on the commandments and Jewish law—this too printed in Hebrew letters. The volume was published together with *Tratado de los sueños* (*Treatise on Dreams*), in which Almosnino discussed the connection between dreams and prophecy.[87] In 1566, when he was in Istanbul, he wrote four historical texts in Ladino on the reign and death of the Sultan Süleyman, as well as on the rise of Selim II. Almosnino also wrote about the city of Istanbul and its characteristics, including the local Jewish community.[88] In the seventeenth century, no Ladino literature was printed, but the works in that language, extant in manuscript only, testify to some continuing literary activity.[89]

One of the most prolific writers in Ladino was Abraham Asá, who lived in Istanbul in the eighteenth century. Among other things, he translated the prayer book into Ladino under the title *Bet ha-tefilah* (*The House of Prayer*; Istanbul, 1739). He also wrote a comprehensive collection of *coplas* (poems in Ladino) entitled *Sefer tsorkhe tsibur* (*The Book of Community Requirements*),[90] in which he set out all the commandments in rhyme. In 1739, he published a Ladino translation (in Hebrew letters) of the Bible, and by 1745 he had completed translations of all the books of the Bible.[91]

The masterpiece of Ladino literature of that time is the encyclopedic commentary on the Bible *Meʿam loʿez* (*From a People of Foreign Tongue*), by Jacob Huli, the first volume of which was published in Istanbul in 1730. After Huli's death in 1732, the project was continued by Isaac Magriso, who completed the commentary on Exodus, published in Istanbul in 1746. Commentaries on Leviticus (1753) and Numbers (1764) followed.[92] This project, which continued until the end of the nineteenth century, became a cornerstone of Ladino culture and of Sephardic Judaism in the East.

Spanish

Sephardic Jews in Western Europe—as opposed to the descendants of the refugees who had settled in the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire—did not write in Ladino. Almost all of them were former New Christians or descendants of New Christians. Instead, they continued using Iberian languages throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They wrote literary works in Spanish and Portuguese—and also in Hebrew, which they specially cultivated.

The members of the Sephardic communities from Italy westward were almost all former *conversos* who returned to Judaism. While living as Christians in Spain and Portugal, they had undergone comprehensive Catholic socialization, and most were well educated in the Iberian languages. Indeed, some of them studied in leading universities such as Coimbra in Portugal and Salamanca and Alcalá in Spain, as well as in Jesuit seminaries and other select Catholic institutions.

When they returned to Judaism in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Livorno, Venice, London, and other cities, they continued to write in the languages of their upbringing, at least until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Portuguese, the mother tongue of most of the Marranos, remained the main language of their daily life, as well as the language used for announcements in the synagogue and for writing in community registers. Spanish was their literary language, used for instructing children and for the Bible translations used in their schools. Naturally, Hebrew words entered their Spanish and Portuguese, mainly vocabulary connected with religious ritual, but in Western Europe, these languages did not become an internal Jewish dialect.

In the sixteenth century, some works were printed specifically to teach former *conversos* how to return to the bosom of Judaism. A few Jewish books in Portuguese were published in the Sephardic center in Ferrara, established during the first half of the sixteenth century, but its pride and glory was the 1553 Spanish translation of the Bible, printed in Latin letters, now known as the Ferrara Bible. This was perhaps the most important literary project of the sixteenth century in Judeo-Spanish.[93] The literal and word-for-word translation was based on the Masoretic text.

A prayer book in Spanish was published in Ferrara as early as 1552,[94] and during the seventeenth century several editions of the daily and holiday prayer books were published by Jewish printing houses in Amsterdam.[95] Religious services in the synagogues of these communities were conducted in Hebrew, but those who had not yet learned Hebrew followed the cantor from prayer books translated into Spanish, which could be found in every single community.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nearly four hundred books were published in Iberian languages in Amsterdam.[96] Some were translations of basic Jewish sources, ethical and philosophical works, but most were original works by members of the Sephardic diaspora such as those by Menasseh Ben Israel, Jacob Judah Leon Templo, Abraham Israel Pereyra, Isaac Cardoso, and others.

A good deal of Spanish poetry (as well as Hebrew) was written by talented poets who sought, with considerable success, to imitate the Baroque style prevalent in the Spanish kingdom. David Abenatar Melo was born in Portugal, imprisoned by the Inquisition in Spain, and returned to Judaism in Amsterdam in 1612. After settling in Hamburg, he published an impressive Spanish adaptation of the book of Psalms.[97] Manuel de Pina, a writer and musician who was born in Lisbon and returned to Judaism in Amsterdam, was a talented poet in both Spanish and Portuguese. His *Chanças del ingenio y dislates de la musa* (*Witty Jests and the Muse's Nonsense*), a 1656 book of Spanish verse, was banned because some of the poems were too risqué and contained vulgar language.[98] Daniel Levi de Barrios, a native of Andalusia who arrived in Amsterdam in 1662, was undoubtedly the greatest poet among the Western Sephardic Jews. He published some poetry under his Christian name, Miguel de Barrios, and several of his works were distributed in Brussels and Antwerp, then under Spanish

rule. He also wrote plays, including religious ones, modeled on Catholic *autos-sacramentales* but with decidedly Jewish content.[99] He published a series of poems about the history of the Sephardic community, its institutions, and its societies entitled *Triunfo del govierno popular* (*Triumph of the People's Government*; 1683).[100] As late as the eighteenth century, a talented poet, David del Valle Saldaña, wrote both religious and secular poetry in Spanish, showing that the language still thrived in the community.[101]

The most important prose writer among the Sephardim in Western Europe was Joseph Penso de la Vega, who wrote stories in Spanish and—in his youth—a play in Hebrew called *Asire ha-tikvah* (*Prisoners of Hope*). He also penned a most original work, *Confusión de confusiones* (*Confusion of Confusions*), in which, with great wit and in a jocular tone, he wrote about the stock exchange in Amsterdam.

Finally, the Sephardic printing house of David de Castro Tartas published a newspaper, *Gazeta de Amsterdam* (Amsterdam Gazette), from 1672 to 1702. This periodical is regarded as the first Jewish newspaper in the world, although it had no explicitly Jewish content. It contained political and economic news of interest to the Sephardic Jewish merchants who were deeply involved in international commerce.[102]

Yiddish

Historians of Yiddish language and literature define the period between 1500 and 1700 as a transitional one, called Mitl-Yidish (Middle Yiddish), which falls between Alt-Yidish (Old Yiddish) and modern Yiddish, known as Nay-Yidish (New Yiddish). During this period, Ashkenazic Jews—both those who moved to northern Italy and those who settled in Poland-Lithuania—used Yiddish as a language of daily communication and for ritual purposes, for Torah study, and for educating their children. In these new lands, Yiddish evolved away from German while absorbing influences of the languages of the new surroundings, mainly Slavic tongues. An eighteenth-century Christian scholar of Yiddish, Wilhelm Christian Chrysander, wrote that Jews in his time would boast that, by means of Yiddish, they could travel anywhere in the world. There were even Yiddish-speaking Jews in Scandinavia; the eighteenth-century Danish-Norwegian playwright Ludvig Holberg placed entire Yiddish sentences into the mouths of his Jewish characters.[103]

One of the outstanding features of this period is the increasing divergence between the language used in printed books and the multitude of dialects in use in daily life. As Jean Baumgarten has written: "The pre-modern era, starting in the mid-sixteenth century, saw an increasing differentiation of the Yiddish dialects, particularly the distinction between western and eastern Yiddish. . . . The vernacular was spoken in Germany, but also in Alsace and Switzerland. It spread into Holland and the communities of northern Germany. The center of gravity of the Yiddish world gradually moved eastward, to what was becoming the central space of Ashkenazic Judaism. Yiddish was used in Bohemia and Moravia; it spread to Courland, Mazovia, Bielorussia, Ukraine, and also to Palestine, where it was spoken in the Ashkenazic community of Jerusalem."[104] Written Yiddish shows a gradual

process of standardization, but its connection with various local dialects is evident in the printed texts. The development of printing at the same time that Yiddish began to be spoken in most parts of Europe required the formation of a literary koine, based on the norms of Western Yiddish, but at the same time meant to be understood by readers who still spoke various dialects.[105]

One of the most important centers of Ashkenazic Jewry—and the Yiddish book—arose in northern Italy. Between 1545 and 1609, thirty-three books were published in Yiddish there, constituting more than a quarter of all Yiddish books printed at the time. Most were the work of the Venetian Christian printer Daniel Bomberg, originally from Antwerp.[106] By the early seventeenth century, Ashkenazic Jews in northern Italy had stopped using Yiddish as their language of daily speech and literature, but during the previous century, those who lived in that region maintained an extensive and intense literary activity in Yiddish, mainly in Padua, Mantua, Venice, Verona, and Cremona.

The Jews of Poland pioneered the printing of Yiddish books. In Poland, where the largest Ashkenazic Jewish center of the early modern period would emerge, the first Yiddish books were printed in Kraków as early as the 1530s. The first of these appeared in Kraków in 1534/5: *Mirkeves hamishne* (*The Second Chariot*), a Hebrew-Yiddish glossary of the Bible.[107] A year later, the first printed book of women's commandments appeared in Kraków, called *Azhoras noshim* (*Warning for Women*), by David Cohen,[108] and by the mid-seventeenth century, we know of at least nine editions of such books in Yiddish.[109] From the 1530s until 1650, approximately two hundred Yiddish books were printed in Poland, including reprintings and short pamphlets.[110] After Yiddish books were published in Kraków in the 1530s, they began to appear in other cities of the Ashkenazic diaspora. In the 1540s, Yiddish books were already being published in Isny and Konstanz, Augsburg, Ichenhausen, Venice, and Zurich. Most of the printing houses that produced these books were short-lived. However, during the sixteenth century, Yiddish books continued to appear in Venice, Basel, Cremona, Mantua, Sabbioneta, Prague, and Verona.

It is no coincidence that prominent among the first Yiddish books printed in Poland were those intended for women. Edward Fram has attributed this to the educational system in Ashkenazic society at that time, which did not teach women how to read rabbinic literature: "Even though universal formal Jewish education for boys was offered in some centers in the sixteenth century, girls did not enjoy the same privilege. Girls who learned to read most likely did so at home and generally did not progress beyond learning the Hebrew letters—all they needed in order to pray and read Yiddish texts."[111] Yiddish books thus came to fill a gap in women's education, since access to rabbinic education was denied to them. Books written in Yiddish or translated from Hebrew sources provided a substitute for the study of canonical rabbinic literature for women. For example, Benjamin Slonik, who studied with the greatest rabbis in Poland in the sixteenth century, published a book of responsa, *Mas'at Binyamin* (*Benjamin's Portion*; Kraków, 1633), as well as a handbook for women in Yiddish, *Seder mitsvot ha-nashim* (*The Order of Women's Commandments*). This handbook went through several editions: Kraków in 1577, 1585, and 1595, and Basel in 1602, indicating its success and wide circulation.[112] As Chava Turniansky has pointed out with respect to wealthy women, "Some Yiddish books

were dedicated to particular women, and others were explicitly intended for women in general; from this and many other sources, we learn that at that time a large number of Jewish women, possibly even the majority, were literate, enabling them to play a considerable role in Yiddish literature as addressees and readers, and in supporting writers and their books."[113]

At the end of the sixteenth century, a Polish Jewish woman, Rebecca Tiktiner, wrote an important ethical work for women entitled *Meneket Rivkah* (*Rebecca's Nursemaid*; Prague, second half of the sixteenth century). The style of her book suggests that she had experience in giving sermons for women. She also wrote a Yiddish poem for Simḥat Torah.[114]

Tekhines, a genre of petitionary prayer for women in Yiddish, which developed in Europe from the seventeenth century on, became very popular throughout the Ashenazic world. "There are two main groups of *tekhines*," writes Chava Weissler: "first, those that appeared in Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and that were probably written or compiled by men for women; and second, those that originated in Eastern Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, some of which were written or reworked by women." Weissler has defined the genre as follows:

> Western European *tekhines* were published in collections addressing many topics, either in small books or as appendices to Hebrew prayerbooks, often prayerbooks with Yiddish translation. By contrast, Eastern European *tekhines* were typically much shorter, published in little booklets addressing one or two topics, usually on inexpensive paper with small, difficult-to-read type. Despite the differences, the Western and Eastern materials constitute a single genre. They use a special variety of Yiddish, sometimes called *tekhine-loshn* ("*tekhine language*"), and do not, as a rule, reflect local dialectical differences.[115]

An important Yiddish book of biblical commentary, called *Tsene rene*, organized according to the biblical portion read in the synagogue each week, was written by Jacob Ashkenazi of Janov, near Lublin, probably at the end of the sixteenth century; it was published for the first time in 1622. The title derives from the Song of Songs: *Come out and see, daughters of Zion* (3:11), implying that the work is intended for women. The author combines homilies, interpretations, and legends from various sources, creating an attractive unity. By 1785, sixty-four editions of the book had been published.[116]

According to Chone Shmeruk, Elye Bokher (known more generally as Elias Levita) was the most important creative figure in the history of Yiddish literature until the nineteenth century. He was born around 1468 in Neustadt, which is near Nuremburg, but he spent most of his life in Italy, mainly in Venice. He is primarily known for his publications in the field of Hebrew grammar and lexicography, and he was well known by virtue of his connections with Christian scholars. His Yiddish translation of the biblical book of Psalms was first published Venice in 1545. He wrote several witty pasquinades in Yiddish, but his main works were *Buovo d'Antona* (*Bovo of Antona*), or *Bovo-bukh*

and *Pariz un Viene* (*Paris and Vienna).* Both books are lyrical or chivalric novels based on Italian texts of stories that had been popular in southern Europe before reaching northern Italy.[117]

The Jewish printing houses in Central and Eastern Europe were destroyed during the Thirty Years' War and the pogroms against the Jews of Poland in 1648–1656. As a result, Amsterdam became the center of Jewish printing in general and of Yiddish books in particular. The Jewish printing houses of Amsterdam supplied Yiddish literature for the entire Ashkenazic world, including many books that were reprinted there after appearing elsewhere. Sometimes, in doing so, they attempted to avoid local idioms, displaying an awareness of developments that were taking place in the spoken language.

In the seventeenth century, in fact, Amsterdam emerged as the most important center of the Yiddish book by virtue of the flourishing of the local printing industry in general—and of Jewish printing in particular. Between 1644 and 1750, a total of 220 Yiddish books were printed in Amsterdam.[118] Two of the most important were new, competing translations of the Bible, one by Jekutiel Blitz and the other by Joseph Witzenhausen.[119] In 1686, the first Yiddish newspaper appeared in Amsterdam. It was published on Thursdays or Fridays, and thus called *Dinstagisje oen Freitagisje Koeranten* (*The Kurant*), and it primarily provided international news.[120] In 1743, Menaḥem Man Amelander published, in Amsterdam, *Sheyris Yisroel* (*Remnant of Israel*), a comprehensive historical work in Yiddish, a sort of continuation of the medieval Hebrew book *Yosifon*, describing the history of the Jews until 1740. In 1725–1729, Amelander, along with his brother-in-law Eleazar Soesman, published *Megishai minkho*, a Yiddish translation of the Bible, with commentary.[121]

The flourishing of Yiddish printing in Amsterdam, which also supplied books to the Jewish market in Eastern Europe, continued at least until the middle of the eighteenth century. Only at the end of that century did the status of Yiddish decline as the primary language of communication for Ashkenazim in Western Europe.

More Linguistic Changes

A large demographic shift was taking place; much of Jewry was moving eastward, Sephardim toward the Ottoman Empire and Ashkenazim toward the Polish Commonwealth (Lithuania). In both cases, Jews spoke languages that they brought with them, Ladino in the first and Yiddish in the second. The result was a linguistic distance between Jews and their host societies that had not existed in the medieval period—and would cease to exist in the modern period. Medieval Jews spoke (including among themselves) the vernacular of whichever country they lived. Jews in the medieval Islamicate world spoke Arabic, and in medieval Europe, Italian Jews spoke Italian, and French Jews spoke French. During the early modern period, however, the vast majority of Jews were speaking languages that few among the host societies could understand, and few Jews were entirely familiar with the languages of the hosts. Even in the German lands, western Yiddish grew apart from local vernaculars at least until the end of the eighteenth century. This phenomenon, which held true for most Jews dur-

ing this period, stands in stark contrast to the increase in cultural interactions between some groups of Jews and the surrounding non-Jewish culture.

One exception was the Italian Jewish communities of Italy, where, beginning as early as the fourteenth century, Italian Jews had written, on occasion, literary works in Italian, sometimes using Hebrew characters. Another form that played with the interaction between two languages—and between two cultures—was macaronic poetry, here written in interspersed Italian and Hebrew. The early modern period saw further experimentation with Italian (and Latin as well) as a literary language by Italian Jews. Though far less extensively used than Spanish or Portuguese, this development resulted in a corpus of Italian translations and of literature—poetry, political discourses, ethics, scientific works, and more—written by early modern Jewish men (and women).

Literary Hebrew itself was not untouched by developments during this period. For example, an elegant and intricate literary form of Hebrew arose, which served as the language of rabbinic correspondence and poetic and liturgical creativity in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and the Western Sephardic communities. Prosodic norms based on Arabic quantitative metrics had governed the composition of nearly all Hebrew verse since the tenth and eleventh centuries; these were giving way to new poetic forms and new Hebrew prosodies, based on the Italian sonnet, for example, or on Spanish and Turkish folk music.

The Contents of the Volume

This volume presents the gamut of Jewish culture—historical writing and religious scholarship, liturgical expression and the written evidence of economic activity, ethics and personal devotion, correspondence and communal regulations, art and music, architecture and poetry—across the globe from 1500 to 1750. It is not an anthology of texts classified by genre alone, but rather it seeks to demonstrate as many aspects of Jewish culture as possible through a great variety of texts: not only literary and philosophical writing by Jews but also diverse expressions of Jewish life itself. The chosen passages show the reader how Jews of this period understood their Judaism, how they led their autonomous Jewish lives, what meaning they gave to their holidays, how they observed them, and what the place of the synagogue was in maintaining their rites. They also give the reader a glimpse into the Jewish home, family life, relations between husbands and wives, and between parents and children, rites of passage, strategies in arranging marriages, dreams, attitudes toward death, and more. Much space is devoted to Jewish economic activity and differences in class, presenting the broad and rich variety of Jewish theological creativity. Special sections focus on education and pedagogy and the place of the printed book in Jewish society.

Great effort was invested in presenting as many Jewish centers as possible, and so the texts (and illustrations) stem from Eastern and Western Europe, from the New World and the Caribbean, from the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, Kurdistan, Persia, Yemen, India, and elsewhere. And although men composed most of the texts written in this period, many written by women—including poetry,

ethical works, letters, wills, and more—appear as well. In addition, the reader will find the place of women in community life, in religious ceremonies, and in family life reflected in many of texts throughout the volume.

The illustrations—both the black-and-white images interspersed among the texts and the color images presented in their own section—are a particularly valuable complement to the texts in this volume. They offer the reader a different perspective on Jewish life during this period. Images of synagogue architecture and the ritual objects that adorned synagogue interiors, for example, illuminate the experience of Jewish communal prayer. Sketches of private homes and portraits of well-to-do Jews and their families open a window onto the lives of these elites. And pictures of manuscripts and printed books testify to their often glorious beauty, which is worthy of appreciation quite apart from their historical significance. The illustrations too represent as many Jewish centers as feasible, in their stunning variety demonstrating how Jewish artists and patrons incorporated local artistic and cultural influences.

Notes

1. Randolph Starn, "The Early Modern Muddle," *Early Modern History* 6 (2002): 296–307, 296.

2. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 7, The Early Modern World, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

3. John H. Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012), 58–59. The first scholars to introduce this concept were economic historians, as early as the 1930s. Elliott himself learned of it by chance, when in 1955 he encountered a book by George Clark, an economic historian who was one of the readers of his doctoral dissertation. The second volume of *The European Inheritance*, ed. Ernest Barker, George Clark, and Paul Vaucher, vols. 1–3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), treats the early modern period, from the beginning of the sixteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

4. See, for example, Evelyne Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia, Cross-Border Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, which began publication in 1991; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, 2011); idem, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Kishwar Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: History, Religion and Architecture in Early Modern Iran* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2010); Abdurrahman Atcil, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

5. Elliott, *History in the Making*, 58.

6. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 2:205–210.

7. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged, vols. 3–18 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957–1983). On Baron's great work in its two editions and on the reactions it provoked among historians, see Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 94–177, 338–359.

8. See Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 56–61.

9. Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, translated from the Hebrew with an afterword by Bernard D. Cooperman (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

10. Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society and the End of the Middle Ages* (1st Hebrew edition, 1958; 1st English edition, 1961; rpt., New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 4.

11. Katz's periodization was challenged by Azriel Shohat, *Im ḥilufe tekufot: Re'shit ha-haskalah be-yahadut Germanya* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1960).

12. Ben-Zion Dinaburg (Dinur), "The Ideological Foundations of the Immigrations of 5500–5600 (1740–1840)" [Hebrew], *Zion* 2 (1936): 93–105.

13. Ben-Zion Dinur, *Israel in Exile* [Hebrew], 2nd rev. ed. (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1948), 9–11, 40–45.

14. Dinur, *Israel in Exile*, 43.

15. Dinur, *Israel in Exile*, 43.

16. Dinur, *Israel in Exile*, 43–44.

17. Dinur, *Israel in Exile*, 44.

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