

Edited by
Francesca Bregoli,
Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti,
Guri Schwarz

ITALIAN JEWISH NETWORKS

from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century

**BRIDGING EUROPE AND
THE MEDITERRANEAN**



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*Francesca Bregoli, Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti,
and Guri Schwarz*

This volume focuses on the intricate, interwoven sets of ties that connected Jews in the Italian peninsula with other Jewish groups in wider European and Mediterranean circles from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. It originates from an international conference held in New York City in March 2015, and cosponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies at Columbia University, and other institutions,¹ which aimed to

¹School of European Languages, Culture and Society (SELCS), UCL; Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Ebraici (CISE), Università di Pisa; Institute for Sephardic Studies and Renaissance Studies Program, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Queens College, CUNY. We would especially like to thank David Sorkin for his support.

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examine early modern and modern Italian Jewish history in a transregional and transnational context. The eight American and European scholars featured in this collection move beyond a geographically bound approach to the history of the Jews of Italy to explore a variety of contact situations between Jews living in Italy and other Jewish groups, institutions, and communities. They illustrate, from diverse perspectives, the sophisticated networks of familial, economic, institutional, and cultural ties that connected Italian Judaism to Europe and the Mediterranean.

The chapters present specific case studies that address rabbinic connections and ties of communal solidarity in the early modern period; the circulation of Hebrew books as a vehicle of connectivity, and the complex overlap of national and transnational identities after emancipation; the Italian side of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the impact of foreign, German-educated rabbis on the Italian intellectual debate; the role of international Jewish agencies in providing assistance in the years of Fascist racial persecution; the interactions between Italian Jewry, Jewish Displaced Persons, and Zionist envoys in the aftermath of World War II; and the impact of Zionism in transforming modern Jewish identities.

This selection, which highlights the mobility of ideas and people, the role of the Tuscan hub of Livorno as a crossroads of interactions, and Jewish solidarity networks across the ages, reflects our aim to study the history of Italian Jews not in isolation, but within a broader Mediterranean and European framework, highlighting the circuits of exchange that shaped its experience. By doing so, we situate the Italian Jewish trajectory within a transregional and transnational context that is mindful of the complex, at times conflicting, and certainly evolving set of networks, relations, and loyalties that characterized diasporic Jewish life from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. By tracing developments in translocal relations over a period of four centuries, at the same time the volume seeks to problematize the passage from early modern transregional ties to modern transnational relations, illuminating whether new contact opportunities arose and how existing ties evolved—were they maintained over time or rather eroded as different priorities took center stage? An important question that needs to be addressed is how traditional diasporic connections rooted in early modern practices of commerce, communal solidarity, and the circulation of legal and religious knowledge changed as a result of the end of the *ancien régime* corporate states and the creation of the unified Italian kingdom, with its powerful sense of nationhood. Can we speak of any continuities between the practices and ideals that connected Jewish

subjects in the old Italian states with their coreligionists across the Mediterranean and in northern Europe, and those that connected Italian Jewish citizens to other Jews in modern nation states?

I EXCEPTIONAL AND REPRESENTATIVE, LOCAL AND GLOBAL

By focusing on transregional and transnational diasporic relations it is possible to nuance the dichotomy of “exceptionality” and “representativeness” engrained in dominant historiographic narratives on Italian Jewry, and to offer alternative ways of conceptualizing its experience. While the Italian Jewish settlement has been the object of important research—examining cultural, socio-economic, and institutional aspects—it has at times been considered as a peculiar and often isolated case. Indeed, Italian Jews have always been a very small fraction of the world Jewish population.² But despite their small number, the history of this community has long fascinated Jewish historians, with the Renaissance, the process of ghettoization, and the Fascist period receiving the most sustained scholarly attention among Italian and non-Italian specialists.

The notion that the trajectory of Italian Jewish history was somewhat atypical can be most prominently associated with the formulation by Salo Baron in the 1937 edition of his pioneering *Social and Religious History of the Jews*. There he argued that the Jews of Italy had experienced an early “economic emancipation,” together with an “intellectual emancipation” that anticipated the Berlin and Eastern European Haskalah (the same phenomenon was also ascribed to seventeenth-century Sephardic Jews in the Netherlands).³ Italian Jewry was, in other words, both unique and exem-

² At the beginning of the sixteenth century there were approximately 50,000 Jews living in the Italian peninsula, which amounted to approximately 0.5% of the general population. With a sharp decline, their number dropped to about 20,700 by 1600 (0.15% of the population), but grew slightly to 26,800 by 1700 (0.2% of the population). From the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century there were between 30,000 and 40,000 Jews living in Italy. Throughout these centuries Jewish presence was concentrated in the central and northern regions; its distribution started to shift after emancipation with a tendency to move to the largest urban centers. See Sergio Della Pergola, “La popolazione ebraica in Italia nel contesto ebraico globale,” in *Storia d'Italia. Annali XI: Gli ebrei in Italia*, vol. 2, ed. Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 896–936: 905.

³ Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), vol. 2, 164.

plary *avant la lettre*. A different take on Italian Jewish uniqueness had been expressed by Isaiah Sonne in a 1924 essay in which he argued that Italian Judaism, throughout its history, had not developed an independent, indigenous tradition, but had rather been a vessel for Jewish influences that had first originated in distant communities and later been transported to the Italian peninsula. As a result of this atypical development, Italian Jewry lacked, according to Sonne, a clear profile and character. Italian Jews were supremely tolerant of diverse cultural forms, but they had not been able to leave a distinctive mark on world Judaism.⁴

An approach that highlights the peculiarity of the Italian Jewish case is still common when it comes to early modern studies, although Sonne's negative evaluation has been rejected.⁵ For instance, elaborating on Baron's claim, David Myers has recently represented the Italian Jewish experience as both an extraordinary case apart from the better known Ashkenazic and Sephardic examples and as a model of general Jewish history on a small scale, because its pre-emancipation social dynamics anticipated questions and problems of acculturation that would become evident later on among other, numerically more influential, European communities.⁶

The rhetoric of uniqueness has also been incessant and widespread in the representation of the modern period, with different figures such as Arnaldo Momigliano,⁷ Antonio Gramsci,⁸ Cecil Roth,⁹ and Attilio

⁴ Isaiah Sonne, *Ha-yachadut ha-italkit: demuta u-mekoma be-toledot 'am yisrael* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ben Tzvi, 1961; first ed. 1924).

⁵ See David Ruderman's criticism in his "At the Intersection of Cultures: The Historical Legacy of Italian Jewry," in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, ed. Vivian B. Mann (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1989), 1–24: 20–21.

⁶ David N. Myers, "Introduction," in *Acculturation and its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience between Exclusion and Inclusion*, eds. David N. Myers, Massimo Ciavolella, Peter H. Reill, and Geoffrey Symcox (Toronto: University of Toronto Press/UCLA, 2008), 3–15: 4–8.

⁷ Arnaldo Momigliano, "A Review of Cecil Roth's *Gli Ebrei in Venezia*," in idem, *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, ed. Silvia Berti (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 225–227.

⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. D. Boothman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 104.

⁹ Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946). It should be noted that, while he celebrated the extraordinary success of the integration process in Italy, Roth was also the first to notice that the Fascist racial laws were in several ways more severe than contemporary Nazi anti-Jewish laws.

Milano¹⁰ all placing a particular emphasis on the extraordinary speed and quality of the integration process in unified Italy and on the virtual absence of anti-Semitic prejudice. The representation of a country in which modern anti-Semitism did not take root gained traction after World War II, as the “good Italian” became a counter image to that of the “evil German.” The “myth of the good Italian” was coherent with the general anti-Fascist narrative that lay at the foundation of the Italian Republic, centered on the representation of Fascism as a betrayal of the authentic spirit of the nation, and offered reassurance to the former victims of persecution in their search for reintegration in the post-war order.¹¹ Such a simplistic representation certainly contributed to set the Italian case aside; it had significant echoes also in scholarly circles, finding support in Renzo De Felice’s pioneering attempt to write a history of the Jews in Fascist Italy,¹² and then enjoying a long-lasting success in international historiography, only to be challenged by scholars since the late 1980s. A lively season of original research has developed since then, leading to the publication of several novel contributions and to an overall reassessment of the history of the Jews in Italy both in the age of emancipation¹³ and during the Fascist period.¹⁴

¹⁰ Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1963).

¹¹ See Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013); Guri Schwarz, “On Myth Making and Nation Building: the Genesis of the ‘Myth of the Good Italian’ 1943–1947,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 1 (2008): 111–143.

¹² Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei nell’Italia fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961).

¹³ For an overview of the new approaches to the history of Italian Jewry in the age of emancipation see Paolo Bernardini, “The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Italy: Towards a Reappraisal,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 2 (1999): 292–310; Guri Schwarz, “A proposito di una vivace stagione storiografica: letture dell’emancipazione ebraica negli ultimi vent’anni,” *Memoria e Ricerca* 19 (2005): 123–154; Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, “Gli ebrei nell’Italia contemporanea,” *Nuova Informazione Bibliografica* 4 (2013): 827–840. Among the few attempts to offer an overall picture of that period see: Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy, 1848–1915: Between Tradition and Transformation* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010); Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews: Family, Gender, Religion and the Nation 1861–1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017 [2011]).

¹⁴ On the evolution of historiography concerning Fascist anti-Semitism see Mario Toscano, *Ebraismo e antisemitismo in Italia. Dal 1848 alla guerra dei sei giorni* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003), 208–243; idem, “Il dibattito storiografico sulla politica razziale del fascismo,” in *Leggi razziali. Passato/Presente*, eds. Giorgio Resta and Vincenzo Zeno-Zencovich (Rome: RomaTre-Press, 2015), 9–42. Numerous volumes and articles have been dedicated to analyzing aspects of the Fascist anti-Semitic policies, considering the ideological origins, the implementation of the norms, the social, cultural, and economic consequences. The most relevant attempts to draw an overall picture are Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*:

A focus on local contexts has additionally characterized Italian Jewish studies both in Italy and abroad. In recent years, in particular, much historiography on early modern Italian Jews has concentrated on the topic of acculturation, investigating intellectual and social relations, tensions, and conflicts between Jews and Christians, and their institutions, within their immediate regional context. Within the corporate society typical of early modern Europe, Jews living in the Italian states expressed clear local allegiances—social, political, and intellectual—which historians have investigated with detailed studies.¹⁵ Such a sustained local attention proceeds also from understandable historiographic caution, given the political fragmentation of the pre-unitary Italian peninsula and its uneven Jewish geographical distribution—after the expulsion from the Spanish-dominated southern areas and with the start of ghettoization, Jewish life concentrated in selected areas of central and northern Italy. For the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the exploration of Jewish reactions to the processes of nation building and nationalization similarly points to a fundamental emphasis on relational aspects of the Jewish experience on Italian soil. These approaches attest to a generalized tendency to investigate the Italian Jewish reality primarily alongside and within its Italian non-Jewish environment.

Such a focus has greatly expanded our understanding of the early modern regional specificities of Italian Jewish history, such as the power dynamics between Jewish communities, state authorities, and the Church, and the intense, uneven, and always complex social and intellectual

From Equality to Persecution (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2006 [2000]); Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie Fasciste et la Persécution des Juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007); Michael A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy. Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938–1943* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁵ The literature on Jewish acculturation in early modern Italy is too vast to give an exhaustive list here. For some representative examples see David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Kenneth Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Lois Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Marina Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria* (Turin: Einaudi, 2012); Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

relations that took place between Jews and their neighbors.¹⁶ For the modern period, careful studies have illuminated the nuances of the process of nationalization of the Jewish minority, reframing the issue of anti-Semitism in unified Italy and, most of all, emphasizing the originality, autonomy, and the serious implementation of Fascist persecutions. Yet, as a result of the intense scrutiny of the local/national contexts, the parallel and at times competing axis of bonds and exchanges in which Jews living in Italy participated—those that involved other, non-Italian Jewish groups to the south, the east, and the north of the peninsula—has been relatively neglected.¹⁷ By so doing, historians may risk losing track of the diasporic entanglements that connected the small Italian Jewish minority to the rest of the Jewish world, as well as ignoring possible parallels between the experiences of this group and those of other Jewish communities. This is especially true for the study of the modern era, a period when the nation becomes an unavoidable and omnipresent heuristic and interpretive category that can be deconstructed and analyzed but not ignored.

2 ITALIAN JEWS AND TRANSLOCAL TIES

Italian Jewry was embedded in webs of supra-regional and transnational relations articulated at the individual, familial, and communal level, which resulted in overlapping identities, tested internal and external bonds of social and political allegiance, and provided outlets for border-crossing opportunities, whether cultural, thanks to the spread of ideas, rituals, and practices from Jewish center to Jewish center, or physical, through the actual movement of people from region to region. While it is certainly true that the complex upheaval determined by the first (1790s) and second emancipation, along with the nationalization of the Jewish minority,

¹⁶For a recent overview see Francesca Bregoli, “The Jews of Italy (1650–1815),” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 7: *The Early Modern World, 1500–1815*, eds. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 864–893. Two recent attempts at a long-term synthesis geared towards a lay public are Riccardo Calimani, *Storia degli ebrei italiani. Dal XVI al XVIII secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2014); Marina Caffiero, *Storia degli ebrei nell’Italia moderna. Dal Rinascimento alla Restaurazione* (Rome: Carocci, 2014).

¹⁷An important exception is Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

transformed some of these bonds, it is also true that—as some of the essays in this volume illustrate—new types of connections were created.

In the early modern period, because of Italy's geographical location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, its Jewish communities or, in some cases, certain prominent Jewish individuals, served as nodes in vast networks connecting disparate poles of the Jewish world. Merchants, rabbinic scholars, medical students, and refugees arrived to the Italian peninsula from North Africa, the Ottoman Levant, and German and Polish areas, passing temporarily through Italian centers or settling down permanently. In the sixteenth century, some Iberian conversos joined established communities attracted by economic prospects and the freedom to practice Judaism, while others transited through the peninsula on their journey to their final destination, the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸ Scholars eager to bring manuscripts to the press traveled from Poland and the Levant to Venice, the prime center of Hebrew publishing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁹ Sabbatean believers gravitated to Livorno around the figure of Moses Pinheiro, and from there they spread their doctrines to other Italian and Mediterranean centers.²⁰ In the seventeenth century, Venice served as a crucial node for transregional networks of Jewish charity, such as rescuing captives and organizing support for settlements in Palestine. Livorno took over this role in the eighteenth century, and fundraising emissaries began making the long trek from the Holy Land to the Tyrrhenian coast

¹⁸ Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 45–47, 72–73; Renata Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographical Survey,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 112–137. There are numerous individual studies on the formation of Sephardic settlements in Italy. See for example Benjamin Ravid, “A Tale of Three Cities and their Raison d’Etat: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 138–162; Aron Di Leone Leoni, *La nazione ebraica spagnola e portoghese negli stati estensi, per servire a una storia dell’ebraismo sefardita* (Rimini: Luiss editore, 1992); Federica Ruspio, *La nazione portoghese. Ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani editore, 2006); Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki editore, 1990).

¹⁹ Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear, “Introduction,” in idem, eds., *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 1–16: 8–9 and references therein.

²⁰ Matt Goldish, “Sabbatai Zevi and the Sabbatean Movement,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 7: The Early Modern World, 1500–1815*, eds. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 491–521: 511.

to collect monies for their communities.²¹ Throughout the early modern period, long-distance traders based in Italian ports such as Ancona, Venice, and Livorno wove connections with Jewish business associates across the Adriatic or Tyrrhenian seas, whether by means of correspondence, dispatching their sons abroad to apprentice with trusted Jewish business partners, or marrying off their daughters to cement business alliances.²² All of these movements created new avenues of cultural and material exchange, but gave also rise, in some cases, to social and political conflicts, and tensions among Jews of different social and ethnic backgrounds.²³ The contributions of Goldish and Lehmann in this collection demonstrate well the individual and institutional nature of ties (and possible sources of friction) that linked different parts of the Jewish world to Italy, while highlighting two of the most significant avenues of contact between early modern Italian Jews and “Jewish others”: the circulation of rabbinic personnel and scholarly knowledge, and networks of solidarity.²⁴

In turn, alongside ties to their local environment, many Jews who lived on Italian soil simultaneously maintained active bonds with other Jewish worlds through individual and communal links. Jews from Italian mercantile centers such as Livorno, Ancona, or Venice moved in search of business

²¹ Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 19–20, 37–38.

²² Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676–1814)*, 3 vols. (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1988), esp. vol. 1: 115–169, vol. 3: 1–357; Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Viviana Bonazzoli, *Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale: una dinastia mercantile ebraica del secondo ‘600: i Costantini* (Trieste: LINT, 1998); Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Luca Andreoni, “Doti e imprese ebraiche mercantili nel Medio Adriatico. Famiglie, capitali, litigi (XVII–XVIII secolo),” in *I paradigmi della mobilità e delle relazioni: gli ebrei in Italia. In ricordo di Michele Luzzati*, ed. Bice Migliau (Florence: Giuntina, 2017); Francesca Bregoli, ““Your Father’s Interests”: The Business of Kinship in a Trans-Mediterranean Jewish Merchant Family, 1776–1790,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108.2 (2018), 194–224.

²³ Kenneth Stow, “Prossimità o distanza: etnicità, sefarditi e assenza di conflitti etnici nella Roma del sedicesimo secolo,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 58 (1992): 61–74; Bernard D. Cooperman, “Ethnicity and Institution Building among Jews in Early Modern Rome,” *AJS Review* 30 (2006): 119–145.

²⁴ On the exchanges between European Jews and their Jewish (and non-Jewish) others see now Francesca Bregoli and David B. Ruderman, eds., *Connecting Histories: Jews and their Others in the Early Modern Period* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

opportunities to North African and Ottoman ports such as Tunis, Salonika, and Smyrna, a process that continued into the nineteenth century, or to northern European hubs such as London, where they maintained active and idealized cultural and linguistic bonds with their regions of origin, even after many generations.²⁵

In the modern period, such pre-existing links started to waver. While emancipation changed the legal status of the Jews, the process of nationalization that started long before 1861 altered the modes of self-representation of the Jewish minority. The nation was not an abstract concept, but a true passion that stirred the hearts of many, and Jews—especially the young—were no exception. New opportunities and a new mindset meant, for many, a shift in occupational strategies, with a tendency to move from commerce to employment at various levels as officials of the newly formed state, be it in the military, the university, or local and national bureaucracy. Furthermore, the newfound freedom of movement and the will to start afresh led to significant internal migrations, with a gradual movement of population to the largest cities. In this sense it is significant to note how coastal cities like Livorno gradually lost attractiveness in the post-emancipation era.

The case of the Franchetti family is in many ways exemplary. They had been long-distance merchants for generations, conducting a profitable trade business built on family connections in Livorno, Tunis, and Smyrna. In the late eighteenth century the entire family relocated to Livorno, but following emancipation they left the port city, moved inland, and invested in a large estate. They would eventually acquire a noble title, and the heir to the dynasty—Leopoldo (1847–1917)—would make a brilliant career as a politician and public official. In this process the ancient family links to the other banks of the Mediterranean were, at least apparently, severed;

²⁵ On the Italian *grana* in Tunisia see Yitzhak Avrahami, *Pinkas ha-kehilah ha-yehudit ha-Portugezot be-Tunis, 1710–1944* (Lod: Orot ha-Yachadut ha-Maghreb, 1997); Jacques Taïeb, “Les juifs Livournaise de 1600 à 1881,” in *Histoire communautaire, histoire plurielle: La communauté juive de Tunisie. Actes du colloque de Tunis organisé le 25-26-27 Février 1998 à la Faculté de la Manouba* (Tunis: Centre de publication universitaire, 1999), 153–164; Elia Boccara, “La comunità ebraica portoghese di Tunisi (1710–1944),” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 66 (2000): 25–98; on the Italian *francos* in the Ottoman Empire see Anthony Molho, “Ebrei e marrani fra Italia e Levante ottomano,” in *Storia d’Italia. Annali XI: Gli Ebrei in Italia*, ed. C. Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 2: 1009–1043; Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 34, 46, 74–79.

Jewishness acquired a secondary and possibly minor role while Italian identity gained center stage.²⁶ But just as we stress the relevance of this process we must at the same time be extremely careful in evaluating its rapidity and the extent to which it developed: pre-Unification transregional ties, as the contributions by Boulouque and Reiman illustrate, did not vanish abruptly after emancipation and the creation of the Italian kingdom.

Moreover, other forces coming from Europe led to the development of new or renovated intra-Jewish and supra-national connections. International institutions such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* organized Italian branches in the 1860s and towards the end of the nineteenth century Zionist ideals started to emerge, while translations of texts coming mainly from the French- and German-speaking worlds circulated through the Italian Jewish press.²⁷ As Facchini illustrates, foreign rabbis, typically educated in Germany, arrived to hold chairs in several important cities, bringing with them fresh ideas and, in some instances, helping stimulate a reaction to what was perceived as the threat of assimilation and to sow the seeds of a religious-Zionist awakening.²⁸

The scenario in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was marked by a structural tension between the anxiety to constantly reassert an unquestioned allegiance to the nation-state, and the need to reinterpret and find room for Jewish particularism. Two competing and partially contradictory preoccupations dominate the internal debates of the small Italian Jewish world: the fear that assimilation would lead to the disappearance of the community and the terror that efforts to resist that process—via education or the institution of Jewish social and philanthropic networks (both national and transnational)—would stimulate adverse reactions

²⁶ Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Gli ebrei e l’attività economica nell’area nord-africana,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 7 (1999): 131–149; Mirella Scardozzi, “Una storia di famiglia: i Franchetti dalle coste del Mediterraneo all’Italia liberale,” *Quaderni storici* 38 (2003): 697–740; Amedeo Spagnoletto, “Nuove fonti sulla famiglia Franchetti a Tunisi, Smirne e Livorno fra XVIII e XIX S.,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 76 (2010): 95–113; Bregoli, “Your Father’s Interests.”

²⁷ There is no detailed study on this point. For some notes on the literary texts published by Italian Jewish periodicals see Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, “Sperimentazione e normatività. Periodici ebraici italiani e letteratura fra Otto e Novecento” in “The New Italy and the Jews: From Massimo d’Azeglio to Primo Levi,” eds. Scott Lerner and Jonathan Druker, special issue of *Annali d’Italianistica* 36 (2018), forthcoming.

²⁸ The case of Samuel Hirsch Margulies in Florence is particularly striking. See Schächter, *The Jews of Italy*, 173–176.

from the majority society and jeopardize the positions conquered in the post-emancipation scenario. The intense conflicts that, since the 1890s and through the Fascist period, opposed a tiny but very active and determined Zionist minority—inspired more by Ahad Ha'am than Herzl—to other segments of the Italian Jewish communal world, reflect those tensions.²⁹

As this brief survey illustrates, both in the early modern and modern periods, the small but lively Italian communities constituted a hub for Jewish networks across the Mediterranean and between the Mediterranean and northern Europe. By deliberately reinserting the Italian Jewish experience within this broader diasporic matrix, yet without ignoring the fundamental role of local contexts, it is possible to bypass the paradigms of “exceptionality” and “representativeness” and instead examine supra-local commonalities with other Jewish groups while being mindful of Italian specificities.

Before proceeding to an examination of recent trends in approaches to Jewish transregional and transnational links, a few words are in order about two additional topics: the impact of distinct national academic traditions and that of disciplinary boundaries on the study of translocal Jewish relations. Approaches to supra-local relations and exchanges, both in the early modern and in the modern age, have been profoundly informed by the distinctive trends and modes of analysis characteristic of Italian and non-Italian research. A survey of historiography shows that there tends to be a difference in the way in which Italian and non-Italian scholars approach these topics, even in recent times. While the former focus mostly on analyzing Italian Jewish history as part of *Italian* history and culture, examining the relationship with non-Jewish society and with political authorities, the latter often see it as a piece of a broader *Jewish* history where the specificities of the local context can become blurred, which makes it possible to identify larger patterns and models and to draw comparisons between different times and geographical areas. These approaches have been too often deemed incompatible and the discrepancies have generated misunderstandings and, sometimes, even academic feuds. Instead, they should be seen as complementary. Both bring important insights and raise crucial methodological and interpretive questions, and should be combined as often as possible.

²⁹ For the Liberal age, see Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews*, 182ff.; for the Fascist period, see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, *passim*. See also Simon Levis Sullam, *Una comunità immaginata. Gli ebrei a Venezia 1900–1938* (Milan: Unicopli, 2001).

Finally, it is relevant to consider that, in recent decades, coherently with a growing specialization, scholarship on the early modern and the modern periods has developed in different and autonomous directions. This is in part a logical and unavoidable reflection of the different issues raised by the sources. Indeed with emancipation and nationalization, two processes that in the Italian case were intertwined, the scenario changed, and so have the scholarly questions and the methods used to answer such queries. In recent years, with few exceptions geared towards the lay public, Italian Jewish historians have shied away from sweeping diachronical accounts providing an overarching narrative of the entire Jewish experience on Italian soil. We do not propose to return to such all-encompassing modes of historical writing, yet we believe that framing the Italian Jewish experience in a way that allows for better appreciation of continuities and discontinuities between the early modern and the modern period would be beneficial.

3 HISTORIOGRAPHIC TURNS

This collection's focus on connections and webs of intersecting allegiances resonates with current historiographic concerns about early modern trans-regional circuits of exchange and the transformations of Jewish identity that developed after emancipation. Scholars of early modern Jewry increasingly emphasize the connectedness of Jewish groups, a turn that has recently given rise to a number of important studies which, while paying attention to local contexts, underscore diasporic connections and parallels. Jewish economic historians have been especially influential in illuminating questions of mobility and connectivity. Pioneering research on the commercial and familial networks that undergirded the vast Sephardic diaspora has highlighted its networked experience,³⁰ as has recent work on long-distance Ashkenazic trade.³¹ (As already anticipated, in the Italian case the important role of trading enclaves, such as Venice, Livorno,

³⁰ Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires, (1540–1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Ray, *After Expulsion*. On the networked nature of the Sephardic diaspora see the important remarks in Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries," *Jewish Culture and Society* 7 (2004): 61–76.

³¹ Cornelia Aust, *The Jewish Economic Elite: Making Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

Ancona, and—from the second half of the eighteenth century—Trieste, has received sustained attention.³²)

But circulation was not exclusive to early modern Jewish merchants, although the historiography has tended to focus on this group as naturally mobile and connected. Significant attention has been devoted to the role of print in the faster diffusion of legal, philosophical, and kabbalistic knowledge among the rabbinic elites and the so-called secondary intelligentsia, enabling the transfer of knowledge from Sephardic to Ashkenazic milieus, and vice versa.³³ The mobility of Palestinian emissaries and rabbinic personnel facilitated new encounters between segments of the Jewish world that were previously not in touch, creating bonds of solidarity, but also misunderstandings and tensions, as Matthias Lehmann further elaborates in this collection.³⁴ The heightened circulation of unorthodox religious ideas and their opponents in the long post-Sabbatean period generated heated transregional religious controversies, which can be interpreted as a sign of a besieged rabbinate that attempted to organize across regional borders to protect its eroding authority against perceived heresy and secularizing processes.³⁵ Similarly, scholars who have explored circulation caused by persecution, such as the expulsion from Spain or the 1648 Chmielnicki massacres, have emphasized the paradoxical creation of new communities and ties, straining existing relations but also generating new ones.³⁶

David Ruderman's recent reinterpretation of early modern Jewish culture, informed by the notions of cultural exchange and connected histories advocated by Jerry Bentley and Sanjay Subrahmanyam,³⁷ has provided

³² Arbel, *Trading Nations*; Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana*; Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*; Bonazzoli, *Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale*.

³³ David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 99–132, and references therein.

³⁴ Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*; Matt Goldish, "Hakham Sasportas and the Former Conversos," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 44 (2012): 149–172.

³⁵ Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

³⁶ Ray, *After Expulsion*. Adam Teller has been working on a forthcoming study on refugees from the Chmielnicki massacres.

³⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 735–762; 745; Jerry H. Bentley, "AHR

a groundbreaking synthesis of these historiographic trends. Emphasizing increased exchanges between different parts of the Jewish world (as well as between Jewish and non-Jewish societies) as a unifying trait of the early modern Jewish experience,³⁸ Ruderman points in particular to accelerated mobility, a knowledge explosion thanks to the printing press, and a blurring of religious identities as overarching factors common to disparate Jewries, facilitating unprecedented connections while simultaneously introducing new challenges generated by the increased circulation of people and ideas.³⁹

Historiography on the Jewish experience in the age of modern nation-states has, on the other hand, been unavoidably centered on the interconnected issues of emancipation and integration, and on the resistance—be it from Jewish or non-Jewish circles—to such processes. A generalized trend in historiography has led scholars to reconsider the categories of assimilation and integration, which had been portrayed in a negative light after the Holocaust.⁴⁰ Influenced by international debates, a new generation of Italian scholars has proposed new readings of modern Italian Jewish history, with a focus on social, cultural, and also religious dynamics.⁴¹

More limited has been the echo of the studies dedicated to the development of wide-ranging transnational philanthropic networks. The efforts made in the nineteenth century by British and French Jews who aimed not only at offering support to persecuted Jews abroad but also at exporting the Western model of civilization did not and could not find a

Forum: Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 749–770.

³⁸ Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, esp. 1–21 and 220–226.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23–56, 99–132, 159–190.

⁴⁰ David Sorkin, “Emancipation and Assimilation. Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 35 (1990): 17–33; Jonathan Frankel, “Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?,” in *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1–37.

⁴¹ For social history see Barbara Armani and Guri Schwarz, eds., *Ebrei Borghesi: identità familiare, solidarietà e affari nell'età dell'emancipazione*, special issue of *Quaderni Storici* 3 (2003); Barbara Armani, *Il confine invisibile. L'élite ebraica di Firenze 1840–1914* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2006); for cultural history see Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews*; for intellectual and religious history see Cristiana Facchini, *David Castelli: ebraismo e scienze delle religioni tra Otto e Novecento* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005).

replica in the Italian setting.⁴² Italian Jews were not insensitive to the plight of other less fortunate communities, but the Italian Jewish world was probably too small and culturally fragmented—not to mention the fact that it lacked a central coordinating body⁴³—to be able to effectively project its energies abroad.⁴⁴

Italy was not hit by the major migrations from the Russian Empire that shook and transformed other Western European Jewish contexts in the early twentieth century, a factor that also contributed to keep it at the margins of the major transnational upheavals of the time. Only in a later period would significant numbers of foreign Jews migrate to Italy, in three different phases. First, about 20,000 German Jews found temporary refuge from Nazism in the peninsula.⁴⁵ Then, in the immediate post-war period (1945–1948), between 30,000 to 50,000 Jewish Displaced Persons, fleeing Eastern Europe and without a home to return to, resided temporarily in various camps before most of them migrated to Eretz Israel or the Americas.⁴⁶ Finally, after the establishment of the State of Israel, thousands of Jews expelled from Arab and Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa would reach Italy, settling mainly in Rome and Milan.⁴⁷

⁴² Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Lisa M. Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁴³ On the organization of Jewish institutions in Liberal Italy and the difficulty in reaching some form of national coordination among the different, often rival, communities see Tullia Catalan, “L’organizzazione delle comunità ebraiche italiane dall’Unità alla prima guerra mondiale,” in *Gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Vivanti, 1265ff.; Stefania Dazzetti, *L’autonomia delle comunità ebraiche italiane nel Novecento. Leggi, intese, statuti, regolamenti* (Turin: Giappichelli, 2008). A central unifying body was created only in 1930.

⁴⁴ There is still limited research on this topic. See Cristiana Facchini, “Luigi Luzzatti and the Oriental Front: Jewish Agency and the Politics of Religious Toleration,” in *The Jews and the Nation-States of Southeastern Europe from the 19th Century to the Great Depression: Combining Viewpoints on a Controversial Story*, eds. Tullia Catalan and Marco Dogo (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 227–245; Tullia Catalan, “Le reazioni dell’ebraismo italiano all’antisemitismo europeo (1880–1914),” in *Les racines chrétiennes de l’antisémitisme politique (fin XIXe-XXe siècle)*, eds. Catherine Brice and Giovanni Miccoli (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2003), 137–162.

⁴⁵ Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933–1945* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993).

⁴⁶ Mario Toscano, *La Porta di Sion: l’Italia e l’immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina, 1945–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

⁴⁷ The major communities came from Libya, Iran, Egypt, and Lebanon. There is limited scholarship on this issue. On the fate of Libyan Jews—Libya was an Italian colony from 1911 to 1947—see Barbara Spadaro, “Across Europe and the Mediterranean Sea. Exploring

These migrations did not only contribute to alter the internal makeup of Italian Jewish communities, but also—as Catalan and Marzano suggest in this volume—to strengthen the interest and involvement in Italian affairs by foreign and international Jewish bodies. Various institutions—in the first phase the AIU, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint), then mostly the WJC and the Joint—would start exerting a relevant influence on Italian communities that were more and more dependent on foreign aid, be it to help refugees coming from abroad or, in the post-war period, to rebuild communal institutions.⁴⁸ Renovated and more intense transnational connections at an institutional level, together with a new enthusiasm for the Zionist cause following the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel, on which Simoni sheds light with her essay, contributed to transform Jewish life in post-war Italy.⁴⁹

To properly frame the Italian Jewish experience in the modern and late modern period such processes need to be studied in greater depth. It will be crucial to not simply analyze each phase or migration pattern, but to look more generally at the shifting equilibria that they generated, both in terms of everyday Jewish life, identity, and culture, as well as in terms of growing connections with other Jewish worlds. Moreover, following Sarah Stein's critical insight, the meaning and articulation of citizenship for modern Italian Jews—in terms of legal possibilities as well as self-awareness—should be explored and reassessed taking into account also those who did not live on Italian soil.⁵⁰

Jewish Memories from Libya,” *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 50 (2014): 37–52; Renzo De Felice, *Jews in an Arab Land: Libya 1835–1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ See for the Fascist period Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 281–285; for the post-war see Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (London-Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013 [2004]), 35–39.

⁴⁹ As elsewhere in the West, after the war Jewish communal institutions—generally quite tepid if not hostile to Zionism—became fervently pro-Zionist: Schwarz, *After Mussolini*, 47–68.

⁵⁰ Sarah A. Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

4 NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ITALIAN JEWISH CONNECTIONS

The essays gathered in this volume intervene at various levels in the broader historiographic discourse about translocal networks and the place of Italian Jews in them. As seen above, the increased rate of Jewish mobility has been interpreted as one of the distinctive traits of early modern Jewish communities.⁵¹ Mobility was not only a result of the waves of forced migrations and dislocations that affected Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in the early modern period, but also an organic part of the rabbinic experience. Rabbis, teachers, and preachers crossed borders on a regular basis to pursue advanced study and professional opportunities. The heightened circulation of rabbinic personnel resulted in exposure to new ideas and mores, with several rabbinic figures located in Italy acting as intellectual magnets and generous patrons for their visitors.

Matt Goldish offers a re-examination of the list of visitors of one such figure, rabbi and secret Sabbatean Abraham Rovigo (ca. 1650–1714), in his northern Italian hometown of Modena. The list helps recreate a spiritual map of late seventeenth-century rabbinic and Sabbatean relations and reflects the shift of the Sabbatean center from the Ottoman Empire to Europe. In light of contemporary network studies, Goldish shows how Rovigo's home played the role of a hub in a complex web that connected not only some of the main geographic poles of the early modern Jewish world (Jerusalem, Amsterdam, Salonika, Poland-Lithuania), but also Jews of different social classes (such as itinerant Palestinian emissaries and learned physicians) and of diverse religious leanings ("orthodox" rabbinic Jews versus Sabbatean loyalists). By linking Jews of disparate origins, classes, and beliefs, and by enabling the exchange of information, Rovigo's home is representative of the kind of network node whose impact on Jewish life greatly expanded in the early modern period. The city of Modena itself emerges as a crossroads of widely diverse parts of the Jewish world.

Matthias Lehmann's essay brings us from northern Italy to the Tuscan port city of Livorno, widely recognized as an influential early modern Sephardic hub. The city's Jewish community was a central node in the larger circuit of communication connecting Sephardic centers in northern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and North Africa, as well as Jewish communities in Italy. Livorno's role as a leading connector of Jewish centers

⁵¹ Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 23–56.

features in three essays in this collection, starting with Lehmann's study of fundraising networks.

The mobility of fundraising emissaries (*shadarim*) created a web of connections across geographical borders, testing local loyalties and identities while shaping supra-regional ideals of Judaism.⁵² Livorno, because of its strategic location, was central in facilitating fundraising efforts organized by Ottoman Jewish officers. Lehmann's examination of Livornese fundraising on behalf of both Palestinian settlements and needy diasporic communities underscores the importance of studying local contexts within a web of transregional relations to fully understand the multiple forms of allegiance held by early modern Jewries. In the case of Livorno, shared Sephardic ethnicity, shared languages (Spanish and Judeo-Spanish), and the reliable circulation of information, characterized the interrelated networks in which it was embedded. Fundraising, Lehmann shows, was conducted through avenues relying not only on ideal values of "pan-Jewish solidarity," but, more pragmatically, on face-to-face encounters and reciprocal communication, which reinforced the networks' trustworthiness. Operating outside such established webs of trust—as in the case of Ashkenazic emissaries visiting Livorno—might instead raise suspicions and entail the failure of the fundraising mission.

Hebrew printing and Jewish publishing in the vernacular also contributed to shape networks of communication and exchange, creating new ties and simultaneously taking advantage of existing ones. Another of the complex circuits of exchange in which early modern and modern Livorno was embedded, alongside (and at times overlapping with) relations of solidarity, was indeed the Hebrew printing business. As Clémence Boulouque shows, this endeavor served as a conduit for Sephardic transnational relations even after the establishment of the unified Italian state in 1861.

Boulouque turns to the publishing activities of Elia Benamozegh, a rabbinic scholar best known for his interventions in the realm of Jewish-Christian dialogue and his detachment from the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Benamozegh's printing endeavors took place at a time of inexorable decline for the commercial reach of the Livornese hub, a decline that affected also Western Sephardic networks as a whole. Based on his imprints, heavy on liturgical and legal texts catering to Jews in North Africa and the Middle East, the Benamozegh press and thus Livorno itself appear at the

⁵² Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*.

periphery of Italian Jewish modernity. At the same time, the resilience of traditional Jewish Mediterranean connections comes to the fore.

Alyssa Reiman's essay on the Moreno family provides an apt segue to Boulouque's, depicting another facet of the resilience of Mediterranean networks, this time not solely Jewish, and raising questions about the place of citizenship for diasporic Italian Jews after Unification. One of the most influential vectors of Jewish exchanges in the western Mediterranean was the connection between Livorno and Tunis, articulated along commercial, familial, and communal lines. In Tunis, a flourishing Italian community known as *grana*, distinct from the indigenous, Arabic-speaking *twansa* Jewry, developed from the seventeenth century.⁵³ In the late nineteenth century, the new status and ideals of Italian citizenship created intersecting transnational and national demands that *grana* had to navigate, as Reiman demonstrates. Even as Livorno's commercial power was on the wane, Livornese Jews living in imperial Tunis as Italian citizens, like the Morenos, maintained multiple identities, as well as complex ties of affection and patriotic loyalty to their fatherland across the Mediterranean Sea. As bourgeois entrepreneurs committed to shaping a diasporic Italian nation, they expressed a cultural and linguistic affinity with Italy, supporting Italian charitable, educational, and cultural efforts in Tunis. Simultaneously, the Morenos took advantage of their Tunisian local context, one that offered them exceptional commercial opportunities thanks to its heterogeneous state power.

Looking away from the Mediterranean and towards northern Europe, Cristiana Facchini presents the circulation of rabbis and ideas linked to the Italian reception of, and contribution to, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* from the 1890s to the 1930s. In these years marked by the crisis of Positivism and the faith in progress that culminated with the rise of Fascist dictatorship, a group of Galician rabbis—notably Samuel Hirsch Margulies, Hirsch Perez Chajes, Israel Zoller, and Isaiah Sonne—moved to Italy where they operated in two, only partially connected, dimensions: the life of the local Italian Jewish community where they resided, and a transnational network of scholars. In the same years Italian Jewish scholars such as Giorgio Levi Della Vida, Umberto Cassuto, and Arnaldo Momigliano contributed to the Italian version of contemporary European debates on the origins of Christianity and the historical Jesus. The transnational nature of this conversation was partly responsible for its survival

⁵³ See above, note 25.

during the Fascist period: “When it came to the study of religions [Fascism] was unable to control the output of different scholarly traditions.”⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the impact of the persecution on the lives of these scholars was deep and transforming.

When Fascist racism and anti-Semitism developed during the 1930s to produce the racist laws of 1938, foreign national and international Jewish associations analyzed the evolution of the regime’s ideology and tried to find ways to help Italian Jews and especially the thousands of foreign Jews living in the peninsula and in the colony of Rhodes, as shown by Tullia Catalan who focuses on the Joint Foreign Committee (UK) and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. Two different sets of existing networks were exploited: the links—both institutional and personal—between the associations and Italian Jews, and the established communications between the JFC and the AIU at European and transatlantic level. Among the key protagonists of these networks on the British side we find, unsurprisingly, Cecil Roth. To the overall widespread incredulity with which French and British Jews met the onset of the anti-Semitic persecutions, Italian Jews often reacted by trying to halt international mobilization for fear of reprisals.

After the end of the war, Italy temporarily hosted thousands of Jewish Displaced Persons directed towards British Palestine or the United States. Arturo Marzano analyzes the “multilateral encounter” that was shaped by the interactions between the survivors, UNRRA, the Joint, a plethora of voluntary associations, representatives of the Yishuv, Italian Jews, and the Italian institutions. In this maze of communication and sometimes miscommunication and misunderstandings, Italian Jews often acted as mediators with the Italian authorities, while the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities’ focus was mainly on internal, national dynamics.

Finally, Marcella Simoni’s contribution zooms in on a group of Italian Jews she calls “generation 1948”: born around 1930, these young men and women committed to Zionism and *‘aliyah*, driven by a desire to overcome their parents’ alleged passivity vis-à-vis the Fascist persecution. They founded the movement “Hechalutz” in 1946 and established their own *hakhsharah* in 1947, to train for life in a kibbutz. Influenced by the activity of the Jewish Brigade, the Joint and some Italian emissaries coming directly from Palestine/Israel, they became a small junction of an international and transnational network, using correspondence between the

⁵⁴ See the essay by Cristiana Facchini in this volume, 126.

members and the movement's journal as the two main means of communication. Analyzing their enthusiasm and political training, which in some cases developed into a disappointment so bitter that it generated a wish to return to Italy, this chapter reconstructs a piece of Italian, Zionist, and Israeli history and sheds new light on the multifaceted aspects of the reconstruction of an Italian Jewish identity in the immediate post-war period.

5 CONCLUSION

The essays gathered in this volume offer a bird's-eye view of the evolution over the course of four centuries of the supra-local systems in which Italian Jews operated—commercial and family networks, intellectual and rabbinical exchanges and the circulation of texts, philanthropic and solidarity networks—with an important coda on political networks, examining the role played by Zionism and the birth of the State of Israel in the transformation of Italian Jewish identity and Italian Jews' relationships with other Jewish groups. This evolution underscores the complex transformations that took place in the transition from the *ancien régime* to the “age of emancipation,” the period of racial persecution, and into the post-war years. The movement of people and the circulation of ideas between different and distant Jewish groups and communities underwent significant changes in the transition from the early modern to the modern era, yet they still played a relevant role in shaping the Italian Jewish experience. In different ways, Italian Jews were embedded—both before and after emancipation—in their immediate local surroundings but also in a broader web that crossed state boundaries and cultural divides.

An important development that we can detect through a *longue durée* approach is an apparent geographic shift from “south” to “north” when it comes to the zones of interaction and the diasporic nodes (both ideal and actual) that connected Jews living in Italy with their coreligionists abroad. While in the early modern period networks crisscrossing the Mediterranean Sea appear especially prominent, as the nineteenth century progressed new centers of gravity emerged, which reflect broader developments in the Jewish world: the Italian Jewish intellectual horizon expanded northward as a result of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and of emancipation, and new institutional contacts developed, for example through the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*.

However, the legacies of early modern Mediterranean trading and family networks did not simply vanish with modernity; in fact they were still relevant in the 1930s, being considered by the Italian authorities of the time as a valuable asset to exert influence in the region.⁵⁵ And we cannot forget that Italian colonial expeditions in Libya, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia opened new doors for economic and cultural exchanges with North Africa and created new avenues for Jewish public engagement in support of the nation's imperialistic aspirations but also of coreligionists living in the newly acquired colonies. The "discovery" of the Falashas generated massive interest among Italian Jews, as the amount of ethnographic articles that filled the pages of the main periodicals shows: an interest not immune from a deep sense of Western and white superiority.⁵⁶ The ideal and ideological centrality of the Mediterranean region for many Italian Jews, finally, came back to the fore forcefully with Zionism, especially after World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel.

The dynamics and implications of these shifts are thus more complex and nuanced than what we are used to believe and deserve further attention from scholars. A perspective that privileges a long-term investigation, assessing changes and continuities from the early modern to the modern period, and that takes advantage of the complementary strengths of Italian and non-Italian historiographies is a first step towards a reassessment.

⁵⁵ Simonetta Della Seta, "Gli ebrei nel Mediterraneo nella strategia politica fascista sino al 1938: il caso di Rodi," *Storia Contemporanea* 6 (1986): 997–1032. In August 1940, some senior members of Italian Diplomacy were still musing on how to restore the damages done in the relationship between Fascist Italy and Mediterranean Jewish communities with the introduction of the anti-Semitic legislation; on this see Vincenzo Pinto, "L'Italia fascista e la "questione palestinese"," *Contemporanea* 1 (2003): 102–125.

⁵⁶ Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *Allo specchio dei Falascià. Ebrei ed etnologi durante il colonialismo fascista* (Florence: Giuntina, 1987).



CHAPTER 2

Rabbi Abraham Rovigo's Home as a Center for Traveling Scholars

Matt Goldish

In 1961 Isaiah Sonne published a study called “Visitors to the House of R. Abraham Rovigo.”¹ Sonne had discovered that this distinguished northern Italian rabbi had jotted down the names and a few comments concerning traveling scholars who had visited his home in Modena, Italy, during the years 1679–1694 and 1698–1699. Sonne recognized that this seemingly trivial record was in fact a singularly precious document for early modern Jewish historiography. He faithfully transcribed Rovigo’s almost illegible scrawl and then offered a series of comments about the list, which could only have been penned by a scholar of Sonne’s breadth. He reported on the background of almost all the visitors and what the purpose of their travel was. Sonne took particular interest in identifying those guests who were adherents of the messiah Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676)—a faith secretly shared by Rovigo.

¹ Isaiah Sonne, “Ovriv ve-shavim be-veto shel Rabi Avraham Rovigo,” *Sefunot* 5 (1961): 275–295 (hereafter: “Visitors”).

Dedicated to the memory of Isaiah Sonne.

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The goal of the present chapter is to revisit the Rovigo guest list with an additional set of questions supplementing those asked by Sonne, and thereby to squeeze yet a bit more meaning from this source. The overall aim here will be to expose what Rovigo's home reveals about the Jewish map during the late seventeenth century. Rovigo was at a crossroads of multiple networks or circles that connected East and West and North and South in the Jewish world. As David Ruderman has pointed out, increased mobility is one of the hallmarks of the early modern Jewish community.² Rovigo's list helps us understand some aspects of this phenomenon. It also gives us clues about certain types of Jewish travelers, why they were traveling, their itineraries, their routes, and their institutional support frameworks. The visitor list is, furthermore, interesting from the perspective of network studies because we rarely have the perspective of a network *node*, which is what Rovigo gives us. Many of the individual visitors are fascinating figures in their own right, and Rovigo himself is a character worthy of further attention.

1 RABBI ABRAHAM ROVIGO

Rabbi Abraham ben Michael Rovigo (ca. 1650–1714) was born into a wealthy Modenese Jewish family. He was sent to study with the most renowned Italian Jewish scholar and kabbalist of the day, Rabbi Moses Zacuto, in Venice. There he met his fellow student, Benjamin ben Eliezer ha-Kohen Vitale (later rabbi of Reggio), and the two were among Zacuto's outstanding pupils. Rovigo and Vitale also became lifelong friends and shared each other's greatest spiritual secrets, including a belief in Sabbatai Zevi's messiahship. This belief was not shared by their teacher after the initial phase of the movement in 1665–1666.³ Rovigo moved back to

² David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 23–56.

³ On Zacuto and the Sabbatean movement see Gershom Scholem, "Rabbi Moses Zacuto's Relationship with Sabbateanism," in Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, ed. Y. Liebes (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1991), 510–529. On Rovigo see inter alia (all in Hebrew): Meir Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement in Greece* (= *Sefunot* 14/NS 4) (1977): passim; idem, "Sabbatean Rumors from the Notebooks of Rabbi Benjamin ha-Kohen and Rabbi Abraham Rovigo," *Michael* 1 (1972): 9–77; Jacob Mann, "The Stay of Rabbi Abraham Rovigo and his Entourage in Jerusalem in 1702," *Zion* 6 (1934): 59–84; Gershom Scholem, *Chalomotav shel ha-shabta'i R. Mordecai Ashkenazi: 'Al devar pinkas ha-chalomot shel R. Mordecai Ashkenazi, talmido shel R. Avraham Rovigo* (Leipzig: Schocken, 1938); Isaiah Sonne, "On the History of Sabbateanism in Italy," in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*,

Modena where he operated the family business together with his brother while devoting all his available time to study.⁴

Rovigo was an enthusiastic supporter of Torah scholarship, Jewish settlement in Palestine, Kabbalah, and especially the underground network of Sabbatean believers. He is most known to scholars, however, for hosting a series of men in his home over several decades who were understood (by him, themselves, and others) to be prophets. The mode of prophecy prevalent in this group was the presence of a *magid*, a sort of heavenly mentor that appeared to—or through—the prophet and revealed knowledge from the divine realms.⁵ Rovigo was an eager participant in these divination activities as—by turns—a client, sponsor, mentor, teacher, and supplicant of the *magidim*. While these activities are not the focus of this study, they do give us a sense of Rovigo. He maintained a successful business in an environment often unfriendly to Jews, and he was renowned for his scholarship, but in private he was the generation's leading Jewish patron of prophecy.

In 1702 Rovigo took his most devoted student and prophet, the Polish visionary Mordecai Ashkenazi, and moved to the Land of Israel. There he joined the large group that had recently arrived under the leadership of another secret Sabbatean believer, Judah Hasid. Hasid, however, had expired almost upon his arrival in Palestine, leaving the group in disarray and debt.⁶ Rovigo established a yeshivah in Jerusalem but was soon asked by the community to travel back to Europe as a fundraiser. Before he could return, Rovigo needed to clear up a conflict which his departure had

Hebrew section (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1943), 89–103; idem, “New Material on Sabbatai Zevi from a Notebook of R. Abraham Rovigo,” *Sefunot* 3–4 (1961): 39–70; Isaiah Tishby, “R. Meir Rofe's Letters of 1675–80 to R. Abraham Rovigo,” *Sefunot* 3–4 (1961): 71–130; idem, “The First Sabbatean ‘Magid’ in the Study Hall of R. Abraham Rovigo,” in idem, *Paths of Faith and Heresy: Essays in Kabbalah and Sabbateanism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 81–107. On Benjamin ha-Kohen see Meir Benayahu, *Shu”t ha-Raba”kh* (Jerusalem: Bet Midrash le-Rabanim u-le-Dayyanim Press, 1970), Introduction.

⁴In his *EJ* article Scholem, oddly, states that Rovigo's independent wealth allowed him to “devote himself exclusively to his studies.” From the dream notebook of Mordecai Ashkenazi, however, it is clear that Rovigo was deeply involved in business. This is a text to which Scholem devoted a monograph.

⁵The most detailed discussion of the *magid* phenomenon in English remains R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980). See also *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Matt Goldish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

⁶On this see Meir Benayahu, “The ‘Holy Brotherhood’ of R. Judah Hasid and their Settlement in Jerusalem,” (in Hebrew) *Sefunot* 3–4 (1961): 131–182.

created with the inquisitional office of Pisa. Rovigo had been caught in Livorno with some prohibited books and was therefore under investigation on the eve of his move to Palestine. As a subject of inquisitional scrutiny he owed over 300 scudi to the Pisa inquisitor's office, which he had not paid. As he prepared to return to Italy, Rovigo wrote to the Inquisition in Venice to request a reprieve from this debt so he could travel in Venice and Modena unmolested. This request was granted and he made his return.⁷ He would later embark on a second such fundraising journey.

We can get an idea of the type and scope of Rovigo's support for the poor of the Holy Land from a recently discovered archival source.⁸ There we learn that Rovigo's son had converted to Christianity. In 1725 he sued the Modena Jewish community for 12,000 scudi, which his late father had donated to create a sort of charitable cartel back in 1711. Apparently the idea was that several dozen wealthy Jews from around Europe and the Mediterranean would invest money in an enterprise that would produce a profit. The profit would be used to benefit the indigent Jews of the Holy Land. The younger Rovigo, now called Antonio Felice Fiori, claimed that he could no longer stand the Jews' fraternization and philanthropy. He wanted the large sum back for himself.

Just before his death in 1713 Rovigo became involved in the controversy in Western Europe over the Sabbatean adventurer Nehemiah Hiyya Hayon. Rovigo opposed the position of his senior colleague, Rabbi Judah Briel, who was very strongly opposed to Hayon.⁹ While Rovigo had kept his Sabbatean faith well hidden until that point, this position must have tipped his hand, at least to some of his colleagues. It mattered little, for Rovigo expired in Italy in the course of his second fundraising trip.

2 VISITORS

Modena itself, though not one of the largest metropolises of Jewish life, was a regional center under the rule of the House of Este. Though their homes were confined to a ghetto, the Jews enjoyed favorable conditions

⁷ I am deeply indebted to my colleague, Francesca Bregoli, for this important information derived from her archival researches.

⁸ ACEMO, Filza n. 52 Neofiti. Recapiti riguardanti a medesimi dall'anno 1570 all'anno 1727, Fascicolo n. 15, Felice Fiori (1726–1727). I am extremely grateful to my colleague, Professor Federica Francesconi, who shared this reference with me.

⁹ On this controversy and the roles of Briel and Rovigo in it see Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

under these rulers and there were about a thousand Jews in the town. It was known for both a good business atmosphere for Jews and for several major Jewish scholars in this period, including Abraham Joseph Solomon Graziani and Aaron Berachiah of Modena, as well as Rovigo himself.¹⁰

Rovigo's largesse and interest in all areas of Jewish scholarship, mysticism, Sabbateanism, and settlement in Palestine made his home in Modena a regular stop for Jewish travelers of all sorts. It is not clear why it occurred to him to keep a list of his visitors, or why the list was kept during those specific years and not others. It is also unclear why he chose to record the particular details he did and not others. It appears that he saw utility in keeping track of his donations to particular recipients and noting the purpose of each one's journey, but this does not seem to be a typical kind of record for a private individual to preserve in that period. Certainly he was interested in recording the visits of his fellow Sabbatean believers, but—as far as modern scholarship can determine—these are only a minority of the ones he records.

Sonne's excellent contribution transcribes Rovigo's very sloppy script and provides background about the visitors. His interests, however, mainly center on two topics: the visitors with Sabbatean proclivities and the visitors who were Palestinian emissaries. Other questions we might ask about the document concern the various networks of which Rovigo's house was a node: How did those networks overlap and connect, and what can we learn from that? What is the significance of the geographical origins and itineraries of the visitors? We may also ask what Rovigo derived from his role as host, and what he offered to his guests besides money: How does this role as host relate to Rovigo's own vision of the world and the future of the Jewish people? While the current study can only hope to begin this further inquiry, some basic information about the list will be useful to start.

There are 42 total entries on the list. A few of them refer to two visitors rather than just one. They cover a period of approximately sixteen years: 1679–1694 and 1698–1699.¹¹ Sonne proposes a theory about the gap—that Rovigo was busy with his prophet, Mordecai Ashkenazi, during the

¹⁰ *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 12: 201–202.

¹¹ Meir Benayahu, "Sabbatean Rumors," 11, mentions other possible visitors to Rovigo's home noted in different parts of the manuscript from which Sonne drew his material, but there is some question about whether these are indeed part of the same visitors' list so I will not deal with them here.

intervening years—but this seems questionable. It also seems highly unlikely that this list is complete. It was not recorded as events occurred but copied from another notebook, which is no longer extant. It is also important to keep in mind that the categorization of the visitors is tricky. While the paragraphs below do group them according to what appears to be each one's main purpose for travel, many had multiple purposes. One figure might be an emissary for Safed, for example, but is also bringing a manuscript to publish in Salonika or Amsterdam, and is meanwhile disseminating the Sabbatean faith.

The single most prevalent group among the visitors was in fact Palestinian emissaries. These were, like Rovigo himself later in his life, rabbis sent by Jewish communities in the Land of Israel to collect money for their needs. Not only did the Palestinian Jews require funds for food and shelter, they often also had to pay exorbitant taxes demanded by their rapacious Ottoman governors.¹² Some 22 out of the 42 visitors were such emissaries, comprising over half the total. Of these, 13 were collecting for Jerusalem, three for Hebron, and six for Safed. Rovigo's records indicate that four sources of funding were available to emissaries: the main Modena community; small surrounding communities; the Sephardic community of the city; and Rovigo himself.

A significant number (six) were collecting for the redemption of captives. Most of these were coming from Europe rather than from the Land of Israel. Many of the captives for whom these people collected were travelers, including Palestinian emissaries, captured by the Knights of Malta. Others were captured in the 1688 Holy League siege of Belgrade or other conflicts in Eastern Europe. This was, unfortunately, a widespread problem at the time, and a topic that crops up regularly in rabbinic literature.¹³

Three of the visitors were specifically on their way to publish books. One, an Ashkenazi, was coming from an unknown location and on his way to Sulzbach; a second, also an Ashkenazi, came from Hebron on his way

¹² On the system of emissaries see Matthias B. Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Abraham Yaari, *Sheluche Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1951).

¹³ On this, see Eliezer Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom in Mediterranean Jewish Society (1391–1830)* (in Hebrew) (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1980). On the more general phenomenon of taking captives in the Mediterranean see Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

to either Mantua or Venice; the third, a Sephardi, also from Hebron, was on his way to an unknown location, probably Venice. This was a common sort of mission requiring travel because there were only a handful of Hebrew presses.

Five visitors appear to have been on missions specifically connected with the spreading of Sabbateanism, the secret conviction that the disgraced Sabbatai Zevi would still return from the dead to bring redemption. The Sabbatean faith was strictly forbidden by the Jewish communities, which considered it a heresy.¹⁴ Thus, though Rovigo gives hints about who is and who is not a Sabbatean, it is not always clear. Still, a total of 18 out of the 42 visitors are identifiable as Sabbateans. These cross all the boundaries. They include Ashkenazim, Italians, and Sephardim; emissaries, collectors for captives, and those on other kinds of missions.

Eight visitors were either on missions for other purposes or the purpose of their travels is not mentioned. Some of these are particularly interesting cases. An example is the well-known Ashkenazi physician, Tuviah ha-Kohen (1652–1729), then in the middle of his studies at Padua, who passed through with his companion and fellow medical student, Gabriel Ashkenazi (spring 1682), for unknown reasons. Another is Joseph de Lita (autumn, 1692), a physician of a different type: he was a *ba'al shem* (mystical healer) from Poland who performed a healing ceremony on a woman (apparently from Rovigo's household) while he was there. Then there was Mordecai the Shtadlan (intercessor), a wealthy Polish Jew, who came not to collect money but to *deposit* money with Rovigo as he moved to the Land of Israel, wishing Rovigo to send it by a safe route later.

Some 18 of the guests are identifiable as Sephardim or Ottoman Jews, and 16 as Ashkenazim; there are 11 whose background I could not identify. Some of these entries are noteworthy as well, such as Ephraim Kohen of Ostrov. He was a Sabbatean who had studied at the yeshivah of Rabbi Isaac Yahya in Salonika, a leading Sabbatean theologian. This gives us some of the flavor on what Matthias Lehmann calls the development of “pan-Judaism,” meaning the partial breakdown of intra-Jewish ethnic distinctions.¹⁵

¹⁴See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah (1626–1676)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*; Paweł Maciejko, *Sabbatean Heresy* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017); Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁵Lehmann, *Emissaries*, 3–5, Chapter 4 and Epilogue.

We can learn a number of things from an examination of certain specific visitors. For example, entry 14 contains a laconic mention that before Hannukah in 1685 Hakham Eliezer Tatzi, an emissary of Jerusalem, passed through Modena and stayed with Rovigo for several days. He received a donation from the community and went on his way. Sonne comments that Tatzi is previously known neither as a Palestinian emissary nor as a sage of Jerusalem. But Tatzi appears again as entry 29 on the list on the eve of Yom Kippur in 1691, at which time he stays for a longer period, until after the Sukkot festival. In this later entry we learn that his home is actually in Hebron rather than Jerusalem; that his previous visit had been at the *end* of his earlier collecting mission; that after leaving Rovigo's home he had been taken captive at sea; and that he was now apparently traveling as an independent Sabbatean advocate rather than a communal charity emissary. Rovigo, in his standard cryptic language, says that he shared all his Sabbatean secrets with Tatzi, who left his home full of joy. Tatzi's is the kind of complex and harrowing Jewish traveler's tale whose details might be revealed by chance in a quick scrawl on a notebook page.¹⁶ It makes one wonder what fascinating stories of other visitors remain forever untold.

Entries 37 and 40, from 1694 and 1698 respectively, describe visits by Rabbi Simeon ben Jacob, an emissary of Safed. Entries 10 and 39, from 1683 and 1698 respectively, describe visits of Jacob ha-Levi, collecting for the Hebron community but a resident of Jerusalem. In the latter entries from 1698 of both Simeon ben Jacob and Jacob ha-Levi, Rovigo notes, "I had wanted to go to Jerusalem with him." It appears that these two travelers came to Rovigo specifically to help him prepare for his planned move to Jerusalem, and perhaps to accompany him as well. I would add that this indicates a specific connection between such emissaries who were residents in Palestine and the sweeping movement of Rabbi Judah Hasid that was already underway at this time. That wave would ultimately bring hundreds of Jews to Jerusalem in 1700. Rovigo clearly saw himself as part of this movement so we have at least one link of what may have been many between the emissary network and the Hasid group.¹⁷ We also know from Rovigo's notebooks why he was not yet prepared to make his move to the Holy Land at this time. He was deep in the throes of his work with his closest student, Mordecai Ashkenazi, whose kabbalistic interpretations,

¹⁶ Sonne, "Visitors," 282 (#14) and 289 (#29).

¹⁷ Benayahu, "Holy Brotherhood."

revealed to him in dreams, were published in 1701 in Fiorda. Rovigo and Ashkenazi viewed this work as so important that they put off their *'aliyah* in order to see it through the press. They arrived in Jerusalem in 1702.¹⁸

Entry 21 reports the visit of Hakham Solomon Ayllon, emissary of Safed, after Shavuot of 1688.¹⁹ Sonne expresses amazement at the laconic nature of this entry. We know from elsewhere in the Rovigo notebooks and other sources that the connection between Ayllon and Rovigo was long and meaningful. Ayllon communicated important teachings of Nathan of Gaza at Rovigo's home and apparently wrote or passed along his single known treatise on Sabbatean Kabbalah there.²⁰ Ayllon was later recruited by representatives of the London Sephardic community as that city's Chief Sephardic Rabbi. Rovigo remained in touch with Ayllon's throughout the latter's ten-year tenure in London, and then during Ayllon's move to the chief Sephardic rabbinate of Amsterdam in 1700, until Rovigo's death in 1714. Ayllon is a singularly important figure in the history of Western European Jewry at this time, combining a background as a Sabbatean propagandist and possible convert to Islam with a distinguished rabbinic career in two major Western Sephardic centers. In the course of his forty-year service in the professional rabbinate he participated in some of the major controversies and intellectual shifts of the day.²¹

During Ayllon's period as chief Sephardi rabbi of Amsterdam he clashed sharply with the chief Ashkenazi rabbi there, Hakham Zvi Ashkenazi, an avowed opponent of the Sabbatean movement.²² Ironically, the uncle and close friend of Hakham Zvi, Rabbi Judah ha-Kohen, was a dedicated Sabbatean. He showed up at Rovigo's home in 1688 on his way from

¹⁸ Scholem, *Chalomotav*, Chapter 1.

¹⁹ Sonne, "Visitors," 284–286.

²⁰ See Yael Nadav, "A Kabbalistic Treatise of R. Solomon Ayllion," (in Hebrew) *Sefunot* 3–4 (1961): 301–347.

²¹ See Nadav, "Kabbalistic Treatise"; Carlebach, *Pursuit*, 114–116; Benayahu, *Sefunot* 14 (Book of Greek Jewry 4) (1971–1977): 147–160; Matt Goldish, "An Historical Irony: Solomon Aailion's Court Tries the Case of a Repentant Sabbatean," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 27.1–2 (1993): 5–12; idem, "Jews, Christians and *Conversos*: Rabbi Solomon Aailion's Struggles in the Portuguese Community of London," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45.2 (Fall, 1994): 227–257; idem, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in the 1689 London Sermons of Hakham Solomon Aailion," in *Tradition, Heterodoxy and Religious Culture: Judaism and Christianity in the Early Modern Period*, eds. C. Goodblatt and H. Kreisel (Be'er Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2007), 139–165.

²² See Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 114–116.

Jerusalem to Europe to deal with family matters and to print his father's famous book, *Sha'ar Ephraim*.²³ Judah ha-Kohen was involved with Rovigo over a long period. He sold Rovigo the Sabbatean work *Derush ha-Taninim* by Nathan of Gaza. In 1697 he helped Rovigo prepare for his move to the Holy Land. In 1702 he actually accompanied Rovigo to Jerusalem.²⁴ Ha-Kohen exemplifies the long-term, involved relationships maintained by Rovigo, which could intertwine in unexpected ways. He is also an exemplar of the multi-tasking traveler, combining family affairs, book printing and selling, and Sabbatean promotion.

The picture that emerges from Rovigo's list of visitors is that he was part of a large, complex network of learned Jews. His home served as a way station between Jerusalem and Amsterdam, between Salonika and Lublin, between wealthy and poor, between learned and ignorant, and between the Sabbatean faithful and their opponents. While Rovigo's hospitality and generosity were undoubtedly a strong reason for travelers to come to Modena, it seems clear that Rovigo himself—scholar, mystic, Sabbatean mainstay—was a draw of at least equal attraction. There may have been homes in many towns where travelers regularly lodged or scholars gathered, but few if any turn up in the rabbinic correspondence of the day as often as that of Rovigo. In the thought of modern network studies he constitutes a major “hub.”²⁵

3 ROVIGO'S NETWORKS

Malcolm Gladwell, in a famous thesis about the spread of ideas and trends, identifies the most active members of social networks as mavens, connectors, and salesmen. These are the people at the center of a network, those who participate in a degree highly disproportionate to their numbers.

²³ Sonne, “Visitors,” 283–284.

²⁴ All this is explored by Jacob J. Schacter, “Motivations for Radical Anti-Sabbatianism: The Case of Hakham Zevi Ashkenazi,” in *The Sabbatian Movement and its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, ed. Rachel Elior, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem Institute for Jewish Studies and Gershom Scholem Center for the Study of Jewish Mysticism and Kabbala, 2001), 31–49. Schacter proposes the idea that many virulent anti-Sabbateans like Hakham Zvi were motivated by the presence of Sabbateans in their own families.

²⁵ Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: How Everything is Connected to Everything Else and What it Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), Sixth–Seventh Links, 25–92.

(The incommensurate influence of a few individuals in a network is called “Pareto’s Rule” or “The 80/20 Rule.”)²⁶ Rovigo appears to me to be all three of Gladwell’s highly influential people. He is certainly a *connector*, the person who knows a great many people, combines numerous disparate interests, and constantly forges relationships between others. He is thus, in Albert-László Barabási’s terms, a *hub* rather than just a network node.²⁷ He is also, however, a *maven*—the expert to whom others turn for information and advice. Finally, when he feels he has the right prospect on hand, he is a consummate *salesman* for Sabbatean beliefs, for the veracity of his prophetic companions, and for Jewish mystical ideas more generally.²⁸ Rovigo indeed plays the parts of connector, salesman, and maven in multiple networks, if we continue to think in terms of travelers with specific purposes as being united in distinct networks.

From the point of view of Rovigo’s visitors’ log, which reveals his home as a busy hub, speaking of a distinct network of Palestinian emissaries or of Sabbatean recruiters or charity collectors can appear odd. Many of these travelers, as we have seen, had multiple simultaneous purposes for their travels. Others passed through for one purpose on one occasion and for a different purpose or purposes on another. This suggests that, though there is great utility in thinking of individuals as elements in networks with one defining purpose (Palestine emissaries, Sabbatean propagandists), it can create a kind of essentialism about people. It is therefore worthwhile to change the perspective occasionally and think of people as vectors or agents or nodes with multiple identities, who act, interact, and travel sometimes in one capacity and sometimes in another. These nodes—whether they are themselves well connected or not—always connect others and act as links in a network simply by traveling from one place to another and meeting numerous people on the way. Another way to think of the Rovigo “circle” is simply as all the people who connect with him for any reason. This is more consistent with the way network studies operate.

One of the most famous ideas in forensic science is Locard’s Exchange Principle, which states that the perpetrator of a crime never arrives at the crime scene without bringing something into it and never leaves without

²⁶ Barabási, *Linked*, Sixth Link, 65–78.

²⁷ Barabási, *Linked*, Fifth Link, 55–64.

²⁸ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: Why Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Little, Brown, 2000), Chapter 2, “The Law of the Few,” 30–88.

taking something away.²⁹ This principle certainly holds true for the exchange of ideas between scholars when a traveler arrives at a network hub. Rovigo's home was one of the most vibrant spots on the Jewish spiritual map of the late seventeenth century. Those who passed through always came away with new information, ideas, or inspiration; and Rovigo and his long-time guests were of course constantly enriched with incoming knowledge and news.

At the same time, however, the importance of the location of Rovigo's home in northern Italy becomes obvious. A town that size, even with a wealthy donor in it, could not be such an active network hub if it were in Eastern Poland or North Africa. Italy was essentially geographically near the crossroads of Jewish travel. Anyone coming from North Africa or Palestine to Europe or vice versa almost inevitably came through northern Italy. Anyone traveling between the Jewish centers in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, or Prague and those in Salonika and Constantinople typically traversed the area as well. Perhaps most important was the fact that northern Italy itself was a destination. It boasted many significant Jewish communities, scholars, merchant centers, and printing presses. There were obviously cities larger than Modena in wealth and Jewish populations. These were destinations for many travelers, but Modena drew a very specific sort of visitor and guest. For the Sabbateans it was like Sundance: information, texts, and theological ideas were exchanged and passed along through Rovigo to the entire Sabbatean network, or at least the part of that network that revered Nathan of Gaza. And of course, new prophecies were also produced there.

All this may seem somewhat trivial, but as Albert-László Barabási points out, when the sort of web in which Rovigo participates—a scale-free network operating according to power laws—it is “nature’s unmistakable sign that chaos is departing in favor of order.”³⁰ We may be accustomed to the idea that there were always Jewish travelers and networks, and that Jews and their communities were always in touch with each other, and this is not an entirely false impression. It was, however, mainly in the early modern period, with its improved sea transportation, new print technology, Atlantic awareness, and political consciousness, that true networks of Jewish scholarship, trade, and politics developed. (It was, needless to say, a time of advancement for all kinds of human networks.)

²⁹ <http://www.forensichandbook.com/locards-exchange-principle/>.

³⁰ Barabási, *Linked*, 77.

Matthias Lehmann explains this in the context of the Palestine emissary network, which he says became fully operational only in the eighteenth century.³¹ The roots of that network, however, were certainly forming in the seventeenth century if not earlier, and Rovigo's home is a primary example of how that occurred. Jewish mercantile networks, long active in limited circumstances in the Mediterranean, expanded greatly beginning in the sixteenth century. They came to encompass more nodes and more varied types as well as more locations. The Jews of Eastern Europe established the Council of Four Lands during this time in order to deal with the common welfare of their communities. These coherent and often self-conscious networks facilitated a sense of pan-Judaism, as Lehmann discusses. More generally, they helped turn disparate individuals—travelers, Sabbateans believers, merchants, solitary communal leaders—into coherent groups. Each new node and tighter connection added power to the entire structure. This “chaos departing in favor of order” was a significant factor in the development of Jewish modernity.³²

4 OTHER LESSONS OF THE ROVIGO CIRCLE

Rovigo's home and visitors' list constitute primary evidence for the shift of the Sabbatean center from the Ottoman Empire to the European continent in the period after Sabbatai's death in 1676. While Sabbatean activism in cities such as Salonika, Constantinople, and Hebron remained strong into the eighteenth century, these centers were on the wane. This was especially true after the death of Nathan in 1680 and that of the second great Sabbatean theologian, Abraham Miguel Cardoso, in 1706. Both figures were active almost exclusively in the Ottoman Empire. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, two of the most important disciples from Nathan's school, Solomon Ayllon and Elijah Muchachion, were both involved with Rovigo as they moved to Europe. Ayllon spent time with Rovigo on his way to important rabbinic positions in London and Amsterdam, and kept in contact by post. Muchachion, while not in the visitors' log, is known from other sources to have been a member of the Rovigo circle. He became chief rabbi of Ancona following the death of his predecessor, the outspoken Sabbatean Mehalalel Hallelujah.³³ The major

³¹ Lehmann, *Emissaries*, Introduction.

³² See Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 23–56.

³³ On Muchachion see Benayahu, *Sefunot* 14: 136–144.

Sabbatean prophets in Rovigo's home were Ashkenazim. His home thus bears witness to the important shift of the movement eastward and northward.

This trend underscores the place of Rovigo's home at the intersection of Jewish worlds. The almost even numbers of Ashkenazim and Sephardim to visit Rovigo similarly enhance the sense of northern Italy as a physical hub connecting the parts of the Jewish world to each other and mixing them. This happened throughout the early modern period by means of two other sorts of vectors as well: letters and books. Rovigo was active in the creation and distribution of these as well. In the sixteenth century the cities of Venice and Safed were pioneers in the population-mixing of Ashkenazim, Italians, and both Levantine and Ponentine Sephardim. In the seventeenth century this phenomenon spread through networks and vectors.

While Rovigo's notes on visitors reveal a *tefach* and conceal two *tefachim*, what they do reveal is very significant for understanding the early modern Jewish world. As Sonne explains, we learn a great deal about the worlds of Palestine emissaries and Sabbatean activists from the guest list. The list is also rich in information on other topics: relationships between disparate people, shifting centers of Sabbateanism, routes of Jewish travel, the place of Italy in the changing dynamic of Jewish life, and the workings of Jewish networks as well as human networks more generally.



La Puerta de la Franquía: Livorno and Pan-Jewish Networks of Beneficence in the Eighteenth Century

Matthias B. Lehmann

In March 1743, Abraham ben Asher, emissary from Jerusalem, appeared in front of the *senhores governantes*, the members of the lay council governing the Livorno community. The emissary (*shadar*, in Hebrew) was equipped with the customary letter of introduction from the Officials for the Land of Israel in Constantinople, a group of Jewish notables in the Ottoman capital who had been overseeing the fundraising efforts on behalf of the Jewish communities in the Holy Land since the 1720s. They appealed to Livorno to “set an example for other communities, because the Holy Land has always found in you [the Livornese Jews] a good beginning regarding its sustenance.” The letter proceeded to explain that, ten years after the visit of the previous *shadar*—Moshe Israel, in fact the first emissary to be dispatched by the Officials in Constantinople to Europe—the dire situation in Jerusalem had not improved and that its Jewish community continued to suffer from crushing debt. Emphasizing what was at

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stake, the Officials in Constantinople warned that, “if this mission fails to bring relief we will not be able to continue in our role as their representatives and will have to leave our post, and then [the Jerusalem community] will be defenseless and the oppression of the Arabs (*la opresión de los arabos*) will overwhelm them, and we will lament the loss of the memory of our Sanctuary, and all we can do is to ask God that he may hasten his redemption for us to see it liberated.”¹

When they gathered to discuss the request, the lay leaders of the Livorno community first heard from Abraham ben Asher, and the letters he brought from Jerusalem and from Constantinople were read. The members of the *governo* argued that it would not be appropriate to divert funds already collected for other purposes and allocate them for the support of the Holy Land. They were, however, mindful of the fact that other communities would look to the example set by Livorno and recognized the need not to hurt the prospects of the emissary’s mission that would lead him through Italy and Western Europe in the following years. They agreed, therefore, to authorize a public fundraising appeal (*publica ned-abà*), to be held the following Sabbath in Livorno’s synagogue.²

The fundraising effort to support the Jewish communities and yeshivot in the Holy Land was one of the early modern networks in which the Tuscan port city of Livorno featured prominently.³ Networks such as this illustrate why early modern Jewish communities are best understood within a complex web of trans-regional connections and provide a useful corrective to what Moshe Rosman has called, in his book *How Jewish is Jewish History?*, the new “‘multicultural’ narrative [of Jewish history] which posits that the local context was always determinative of Jewish

¹ Archivio della Comunità Ebraica, Livorno (henceforth, ACEL), Filza de Minutas 3 (1740–1746), documentation for the meeting on 13 March 1743 (all documents are unpaginated).

² ACEL Filza de Minutas 3 (1740–1746), documentation for the meeting on 13 March 1743.

³ On the fundraising network for the Holy Land and the role of the emissaries, see Abraham Yaari, *The Emissaries of the Land of Israel* (Hebr.) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, 1951); Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Israel Bartal, “Les émissaires d’*Erets Yisra’el*: entre la réalité d’un lien et l’abstraction d’une vision,” in *La société juive à travers l’histoire*, ed. Shmuel Trigano (Paris: Fayard, 1992), vol. 4, 107–121.

culture and identity.”⁴ Similarly, David Ruderman lamented in his *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* that, for much of recent scholarship, the Jewish experience in the early modern period “can only be reconstructed on the microlevel. Its variegated histories are radically singular, diverse, and heterogeneous.”⁵

Once-influential models, for example the Germano-centric focus on the Berlin Haskalah which long shaped historians’ understanding of the genealogy of Jewish modernity, have lost their plausibility,⁶ and sweeping narratives treating Jewish history as a unified whole—especially the telos of Zionist historiography—have been displaced by an approach that emphasizes the diverse, hybrid, and discontinuous nature of Jewish history best understood within its ever-varying contexts.⁷ Models that challenge formerly-dominant paradigms include David Sorkin’s and Lois Dubin’s concept of “port Jews.”⁸ These Jewish communities, presumably marked by the cosmopolitan environment of early modern port cities, especially in Italy and along the Atlantic seaboard, are seen as offering an alternative path to modern Jewish identity, Enlightenment culture, and civic inclusion. As Evelyne Oliel-Grausz has noted, however, “the sum of local micro-analyses of port-Jewries does not equal the total history of that diaspora,” and she points to the lack of “a fundamental dimension” of early modern Sephardic history that has been missing in the scholar-

⁴ Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 18.

⁵ David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 9.

⁶ For challenges against the centrality of the Berlin Haskalah in the telling of Jewish history in the eighteenth century see Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979); Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and more specifically on the case of Livorno, Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

⁷ See David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: a New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002).

⁸ An extensive literature has emerged about communities of “port Jews.” For a concise formulation of the model see David Sorkin, “The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1999): 87–97.

ship on port Jews: “that of communication, of relations, connections, conflicts and more generally circulation between the various poles and port Jewries.”⁹

In fact, what do we mean when we speak of the “contexts” of Jewish history? Following Rosman and Ruderman, I suggest that it is indeed possible to tell an early modern Jewish history that moves beyond the idiosyncrasies of the local. Like Oliel-Grausz, I argue that the way to do so is to embed the study of local Jewish communities within the wider networks that linked individuals and communities, transcending political and geographic boundaries. This is not to underestimate the importance of local patterns of Jewish/non-Jewish interaction, or the significance of the state and local authorities in shaping the contours of different Jewish communities. But early modern Jewish history cannot be properly understood if we ignore one of the most distinct features of the period, that of intense mobility.¹⁰

Connectivity and networks have featured most prominently in studies of the early modern Sephardic diaspora.¹¹ Most historians have also tended to focus on commerce and trade, neglecting other ways in which Jewish communities participated in trans-regional networks.¹² Here I suggest that early modern Jewish history in general—not only the Sephardic diaspora, and not only the world of Jewish merchants—is best conceptualized as a series of overlapping, but also distinct, networks. These networks were

⁹ Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, “Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries,” *Jewish Culture and History* 7 (2004): 61–76: 62. Other scholars have pointed out the limited applicability of the alleged characteristics of “port Jews” in some port cities of the early modern Sephardic Mediterranean. See Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*; Matthias Lehmann, “A Livornese ‘Port Jew’ and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire,” *Jewish Social Studies* 11:2 (2005): 51–76.

¹⁰ Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 23–55.

¹¹ Jonathan Ray, “New Approaches to the Jewish Diaspora: The Sephardim as a Sub-Ethnic Group,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (2008): 10–31; as an example of the extensive scholarship on the early modern Sephardic diaspora see Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World of Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For a literary-cultural approach see David Wacks, *Double Diaspora in Sephardic Literature: Jewish Cultural Production Before and After 1492* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). Oliel-Grausz, “Networks and Communication,” 72, even suggests explicitly that “the interaction between these various agents and levels of communication” should be seen as “a specific feature of the Sephardi diaspora.”

¹² Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora*; the most influential work of recent years is Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

often the result of the patterns of migration and displacement in the late medieval, early modern period, and they rested more often than not on ethnic identity, linking Sephardic Jews in London with those in Curaçao, Amsterdam, and Venice, or Ashkenazi Jews in Prague with those in Frankfurt, Verona, and Jerusalem. Often, however, these networks also came to overlap or interact with one another, and it is precisely at those intersections that we learn about the extent and limitations of connectivity in a larger, pan-Jewish diaspora, and about the valiance of a pan-Jewish sensibility in the early modern Jewish imaginary.¹³ Particularly instructive in this regard are cities that were home to *both* Ashkenazi and Spanish-Portuguese communities, like Amsterdam and Hamburg, where both operated within the same local socio-political environment but also participated in distinct trans-regional networks that pulled them in very different directions.¹⁴

Commercial networks operated side by side with other, for example rabbinic or philanthropic, networks, and extending the analysis to the latter raises questions that are marginalized when we privilege the perspective of merchants. As Francesca Trivellato has shown in her seminal work on eighteenth-century Livorno, Jewish merchants did not interact with one another primarily qua Jews, and neither kinship nor religion or ethnicity alone were sufficient to establish relations of trust between the participants in networks of long-distance trade, but notions of ethnic identity and solidarity were very much at the center of the philanthropic networks operating at the time.

Several different networks intersected in Livorno, home to one of the largest Jewish communities in eighteenth-century Europe and dominated by the Portuguese Jewish merchant elite first attracted to the city under the terms of the *Livornina*, the charter granted by the Medici in the 1590s.¹⁵ Livornese Jewish merchants maintained commercial ties with

¹³ See Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, esp. 169–214.

¹⁴ It is telling that much of the existing scholarship on Amsterdam and Hamburg is compartmentalized into separate histories of its Spanish-Portuguese and its Ashkenazi communities.

¹⁵ On Jewish Livorno in the eighteenth century see Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*; on Livorno more generally, Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676–1814)*, 3 vols. (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998); for the early history of the community in Livorno see Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: L. S. Olschky, 1990); for the Napoleonic period and the nineteenth century, see Ulrich Wyrra, *Juden in der Toskana und in Preussen im Vergleich: Aufklärung und Emanzipation in*

Jewish traders in the Ottoman Empire and in North Africa, but also operated within complex networks including Christian and Hindu merchants extending to Portugal in the West and Goa in the East.¹⁶ Rabbis from all over Italy, North Africa, and Ottoman lands were drawn to Livorno as a center of rabbinic learning and, especially from the late eighteenth century on, as a center of Hebrew printing.¹⁷ Livorno similarly served as a crossroads of early modern philanthropic networks, from redeeming Jews fallen captive to the corsairs roaming the Mediterranean and ensuring support for the Jews in the holy cities in Palestine, to responding to the requests for help received from Jewish communities around the Mediterranean and in Europe.¹⁸ The Tuscan port played an important role as a hub connecting different regions, linking Ottoman communities to those in Europe and in North Africa. It served as an interface between philanthropic and

Florenz, Livorno, Berlin und Königsberg i. Pr. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebek, 2003); on the relations between Livorno, Amsterdam, and Tunis see Lionel Lévy, *La nation juive portugaise: Livourne, Amsterdam, Tunis, 1591–1951* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999).

¹⁶ Francesca Trivellato, "Juifs de Livourne, Italiens de Lisbonne, Hindous de Goa: Réseaux marchands et échanges interculturels à l'époque moderne," *Annales HSS* 58:3 (2003): 581–603.

¹⁷ Francesca Bregoli, "Printing, Fundraising, and Jewish Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Livorno," in *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman*, eds. Richard Cohen, Natalie Dohrman, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner (Pittsburgh and Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press – University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 250–259.

¹⁸ Jewish communities around the Mediterranean had long dealt with the challenge of rescuing Jews who were taken as captives. Also in Livorno, the ransom of captives—*pidyon shvuyim*—was an important task that the community took on, both as an expression of Jewish solidarity and charity but also responding to what must have been very pragmatic considerations in a city thriving on overseas trade. By the turn of the nineteenth century, though, the priorities of the community seem to have shifted, as its lay council informed the rabbis of Tunis, who had appealed for help to Livorno, that the rescue fund for captives had "ceased to exist already quite some time ago" (ACEL Filza de Minutas 18 (1820–1825), 14 December 1823). On the history of ransoming Jewish captives in the early modern Mediterranean see Eliezer Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom in Mediterranean Jewish Society, 1391–1830* (Hebr.) (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1980). For the involvement of Livorno in assisting other communities in need see, for example, the international mobilization to ward off the expulsion of the Jews from Prague in the 1740s: Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Les communautés séfarades d'Europe occidentale et l'expulsion des juifs de Prague en 1745," *Yod* 1–2 (1995–1996): 49–58. Other examples of philanthropic networks in which Livorno played a role include the provision of dowries for poor and orphaned girls. Livorno had operated a special fund for this purpose since the 1650s. See Miriam Bodian, "The Portuguese Dowry Societies in Venice and Amsterdam: A Case Study in Communal Differentiation within the Marrano Diaspora," *Italia* 6 (1987): 30–61.

commercial networks, which allowed for the investment of endowed funds and facilitated the transfer of money collected among Jews in North Africa or Europe to Constantinople, and from there to the Land of Israel.¹⁹

In what follows I will explore the activities of emissaries who arrived in Livorno on a frequent basis from across the Jewish diaspora. I will begin with the *shadarim* from the Holy Land, who operated within an ongoing and stable network of information exchange and fundraising throughout the eighteenth century (and beyond), and I will then turn to emissaries representing Jewish communities elsewhere. I will ask, in particular, what the visits of these emissaries can tell us about the place of Livorno in the early modern Jewish world (and thus cycle back to the question of the “contexts” of Jewish history), how emissaries and their hosts in Livorno went about establishing relations of trust to foil possible impostors, and why, despite the difficulties, significant costs, and delays involved, communities in distress continued to rely on the dispatch of emissaries. In considering these questions, I am drawing on material preserved in the minute books of the Livornese Jewish lay council, the *governo*, which oversaw the community affairs.

Emissaries from Palestine were equipped with extensive documentation issued by their home community in the Holy Land as well as letters and credentials provided by the Officials for the Land of Israel in Constantinople. The purpose of these documents was two-fold: first, to serve as a call for action to potential donors, engender empathy, and convey a sense of urgency; second, to establish the trustworthiness and bona fides of the emissary and avoid falling victim to impostors.²⁰ From a review of the documents in the Livorno archives it does not seem that fraudulent emissaries were a particularly widespread phenomenon, but it was a problem to reckon with. The geographic distance from the Holy Land and the slow pace of communication meant that communities needed essentially to decide on the spot whether or not to trust an emissary. Only those emissaries dispatched by their home communities in Palestine on an official mission were entitled to collect funds set aside for the support of the Holy Land. Thus they presented letters of introduction and often quite elaborate documentation that spoke to their personal integrity and certified the official nature of their mission.²¹

¹⁹ Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 35–40.

²⁰ For one example of an impostor posing as a *shadar*, see Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 88–90.

²¹ See Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 75–81.

Letters of introduction were provided by the rabbinic court and other dignitaries of the community in Palestine that was requesting the money. Even more important was the endorsement of the Officials for the Land of Israel in Constantinople. The Ashkenazi community in Amsterdam, for example, adopted a ruling in 1769, reaffirmed in 1789, that it would “not give a single coin ... to any emissary, unless ... the Officials of Constantinople have sent an authorization and certification.”²² The letter from Constantinople would explain why funds were needed and introduced the emissary to his hosts. These letters were always written in Hebrew and often printed for wider distribution, but the Officials in Constantinople also addressed the individual communities directly, frequently in a shared language other than Hebrew. In the case of Livorno, Spanish—written in Latin characters—was the usual language of communication. (In their correspondence with the lay leaders of Jerusalem and with other Ottoman communities, the Officials in Constantinople used Ladino, written in Hebrew characters.) Hebrew documentation that appears in the minutes of the Livornese *governo* is generally accompanied by a translation prepared by the secretary of the community, but we know that the Spanish letters from Constantinople are originals because they carry the signatures of the Officials (in Hebrew) at the end of the document.

An example of such an appeal to the *nazione ebraica* in Livorno concerns the mission of Abraham Ceror, emissary for Hebron in 1739.²³ In their letter, written in Spanish, the “Deputies of Hebron” in Constantinople admonished their counterparts in Livorno:

Our obligation to sustain our brethren who reside in the Holy Land is very clear. Because of our sins the residents of the holy city of Hebron are burdened by exorbitant debts, especially since the Muslim rulers (*los moros comandantes*) of those places are divided among themselves, and our nation suffers many grievances and endures so much suffering, all for the sake of the divine glory. And as they have gotten to the limits in their misery, not being able to leave their homes because of the fear that they suffer, they were obliged to reach out to us regarding their anguish, for us to provide them with some relief for their ills. Considering their bad affliction, and that of the poor students of our holy law, we have raised contributions in our city, as well as from other places in Turkey, well beyond our obligation and ability.

²² Jozeph Michman, “The Emergence of ‘Pekidim and Amarcalim’ of Amsterdam” (Hebr.), *Cathedra* 27 (1983): 69–84: 73.

²³ Little else is known on this emissary: Yaari, *Emissaries*, 499.

But because the ills are too many we are obligated to have recourse to our European brethren (*nuestros Ermanos Europinos*), and because, thank God, we know that your city has always been splendid [i.e., generous] in similar pious works, we have appointed the Haham [rabbi] Abraham Ceror to go on a mission for this charitable work. Since it has been some time that no emissary has gone out from Hebron we appeal to your goodness to assist him so that he may collect a good sum [of money] from the community (*del kolel*) as well as from private benefactors (*como de amigos voluntarios*), as we know well that the children of Israel are merciful. We expect that you will act according to your good practice, and that everything that will be collected, with the help of God, you should send in the best way that you can into our hands, with agreement from the abovementioned emissary and taking from him a receipt, as is the usual practice.²⁴

The letter for Abraham Ceror contains in a nutshell the main elements that characterized most such appeals presented on behalf of the emissaries from the Holy Land in the eighteenth century: the emphasis on suffering from unjust and tyrannical rule, the crushing burden of debt, and a general sense of the insecurity and precariousness of the Jewish settlement in the Holy Land (oftentimes, in fact, the letters from Constantinople equate the Jewish residents of Palestine with “captives” (*shvuyim*), as providing for the ransom of captives was a generally accepted mandate of Jewish law). Rhetorically, the letter established ties of solidarity by referring to the Jews of Hebron as “our brethren” and by stressing the obligation, which was by no means universally accepted, that communities abroad had to assist the Jews residing in the Land of Israel. In practical terms, the letter requested contributions both from the coffers of the community and from individual donors, and it instructed the Livornese *governo* to submit their pledge to the emissary (whose own payment depended on the amount he raised during his mission), but to forward the actual funds directly to Constantinople “in the best way possible”—usually, as we learn from the correspondence of the Officials in Constantinople, through bills of exchange.²⁵

A common feature of these fundraising letters was the idea that one community would set an example, or serve as a model, for others. The “Jewish geography” that emerged was one that radiated out from Constantinople, first to other communities “in Turkey” (i.e., Western

²⁴ ACEL Filza de Minutas 2 (1730–1740), letter dated 11 January 1739.

²⁵ See Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 60–69.

Anatolia and the Balkans), from there to port cities around the Mediterranean, and further on from there—in the case of Livorno, around Italy and into Western and Northern Europe. The network was thus predicated on a chain linking Jewish communities with one another through the emissary, whose reputation and thus success in his mission rested on the initial support from Constantinople and the subsequent, cumulative endorsements from additional communities along the way.

The letter furnished to the emissary Abraham ben Asher of Jerusalem, mentioned earlier, and the deliberations of the Livornese *governo* about his mission, made this dynamic explicit. Whereas the Officials in Constantinople had appealed to the Tuscan community to set “an example for other communities, because the Holy Land has always found in you [the Livornese Jews] a good beginning,” the members of the *governo* themselves acknowledged their obligation to provide the emissary with support, “especially because of the example that the other holy congregations, where the emissary will continue his mission,” would take from their action.²⁶

Their reliance on the cooperation of Livorno does not mean, however, that the Officials in Constantinople accepted the leaders of the Livornese *nazione ebrea* as their equals, and they were careful to centralize the philanthropic network under their own auspices. Thus in June 1747, when Abraham ben Asher was in Livorno again during his return trip back to Jerusalem, the emissary challenged the manner in which the Livorno community had been handling the funds that were raised, since 1655, on an annual basis to support the Holy Land. He argued that the moneys were invested in a way that involved lending on interest prohibited by Jewish law, as well as a number of other concerns. Eventually, the *governo* agreed to transfer the funds to the Officials in Constantinople, who would find it easier to disburse them to the four holy cities in Palestine. Although not all details of the disagreement, and its subsequent resolution, are clear from the existing documentation, it is noteworthy that ultimately the community in Livorno reaffirmed and acknowledged the central role of the Officials in Constantinople as the main administrators of all financial support for the Jews in the Holy Land.²⁷ At the same time, the Officials in Constantinople could not help but recognize that any fundraising mission

²⁶ ACEL Filza de Minutas 3 (1740–1746), 13 March 1743.

²⁷ ACEL Filza de Minutas 4 (1747–1751), 22 June 1747.

that did not get off to a good start in Livorno, which they referred to as “the gateway to Europe (*la puerta de la Franquía*),” was doomed to fail elsewhere as well.²⁸

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of Livorno was not limited to the fundraising on behalf of the Jews in the Holy Land. Throughout the eighteenth century, Livorno attracted emissaries and requests for support from individuals and communities around the Mediterranean, but also from Central and Eastern Europe. Unlike the fundraising for the Holy Land, these were ad hoc responses to specific crises and did not lead to the formation of a permanent network like the one set up by the Officials in Constantinople. Still, there were certain well-trodden paths of communication, overlapping with existing commercial or kinship networks, which facilitated the exchange of information and philanthropic support.

The story of David Florentin and Joseph Beraha, emissaries on behalf of the Jewish community of Salonika in 1758, is a case in point. The letter that they presented to the Livornese *governo*, written in Spanish, employed language that was very similar to that of documents carried by emissaries from the Holy Land. In Salonika, the letter maintained, both individuals and community suffered from financial troubles, so that assistance to the poor, which “thank God had never ceased to be forthcoming,” as well as support for the city’s yeshivot, had dried up. In the Talmud Torah, serving some 2000 Jewish pupils, the community could no longer offer subsidies, and the support of orphaned girls could not be kept up—all because of the “tyranny of the *uma ha-ra’ah* (the evil nation).” The leaders of the Salonikan community thus appealed to their counterparts in Livorno, emphasizing once again its role as a beacon and model for other communities: “for this holy community is the pride of the entire diaspora (*la Gloria de la golah toda*), and one can say that *all eyes of Israel are upon it*...”²⁹

In June 1750, a letter arrived in Livorno from Baron Diego de Aguilar of Vienna, a Sephardic notable who repeatedly acted as an intermediary between Livorno and Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe. On this occasion, Aguilar sent a recommendation for the mission of Isaac

²⁸Letter from the Officials in Constantinople to Mordecai Rubio and Abraham Israel, emissaries to Europe, 15 Heshvan 1750. Pinkas of the Officials in Constantinople, Jewish Theological Seminary, ms. 4008 = National Library of Israel, microfilm collection, F 29813, 58b.

²⁹ACEL Filza de Minutas 5 (1752–1758). “The evil nation” and “all eyes of Israel are upon it”: Hebrew, in Spanish original.

Tsedaka (Sedak, in the letter), an emissary from the holy city of Hebron. Though writing in support of the *shadar*, Aguilar noted that dispatching emissaries was, in his view, a wasteful way of raising money for the Holy Land and that only “a little more than half” of the collected funds ever reached the Jews of Palestine (something that is borne out by the surviving correspondence of the Officials in Constantinople).³⁰ Instead, he suggested, it would be better if communities like Livorno collected funds unprompted on a regular basis and forwarded them on to Palestine, without the need for emissaries to go out on missions that often took them away from their homes for several years.³¹ On another occasion, Baron Aguilar sent a letter on behalf of “our poor brethren in Belgrade,” suffering from the devastation caused by a major fire. Emphasizing the imperative of avoiding the expense of dispatching a special emissary, he appealed for assistance by letter.³²

Indeed, the Livorno community tried—more than once, and always in vain—to curb the practice of sending emissaries. In December 1774, for example, the *parnasim* of the community voted to reaffirm an ordinance dating back to 1693, according to which funds were to be raised annually on the second day of Passover for the benefit of the communities in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed. They further decided to “inform these communities not to send emissaries to this city [Livorno] to request help for any cause whatsoever, for they will not accomplish anything beyond collecting the regular contributions, and nothing else.”³³ The frequent arrivals of emissaries following this decision—and the support that the Livornese community continued to provide—illustrate the futile attempt to circumvent the practice of relying on emissaries for fundraising.³⁴

³⁰ Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 73–74.

³¹ Letter from Aguilar to Livorno, dated Vienna, 18 June 1750. ACEL Filza de Minutas 4 (1747–1751).

³² Letter from Aguilar to Livorno, dated Vienna, 24 July 1752. ACEL Filza de Minutas 5 (1752–1758).

³³ ACEL Filza de Minutas 8 (1769–1775), 25 December 1774.

³⁴ Other communities likewise tried to limit or abolish the visits of emissaries. See Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 95–102. This was only successful in parts of Europe (England, France, Germany, Netherlands, as well as North America), when a new fundraising mechanism was set up in Amsterdam in the 1820s. Even there, however, the ban on emissaries only applied to the Ashkenazi, not to the Sephardic, communities, and *shadarim* continued to be a frequent presence in Italy, Eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East thereafter. Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 217–225. On the *Pekidim ve-Amarkalim* in

The continued importance of using emissaries, rather than relying on the long-distance exchange of letters, invite some further comment on the nature of the ties binding Jewish communities of the eighteenth century together. One way to think about these networks is through the analytical distinction between solidarity-based and reciprocity-based relationships as developed in Seth Schwartz's *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?*³⁵ Letters from Jewish communities in Palestine and their supporters in Constantinople emphasized a sense of pan-Jewish solidarity, and so did rabbis publishing and preaching on the imperative of providing assistance to the Holy Land. As Schwartz defines them, solidarity-based groups are "bound together not by personal relationships but by corporate solidarity based on shared ideals ... or myths..."—like Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" in the age of nationalism. By way of contrast, reciprocity-based groups "are bound together by densely overlapping networks of relationships of personal dependency constituted and sustained by reciprocal exchange," that is, relationships that are facilitated by the face-to-face encounter of individuals.³⁶

In the case of early modern Jewish networks of philanthropy, we see how the two ideal-types of "solidarity" and "reciprocity" were intertwined in practice. On the one hand, networks like the fundraising for the Holy Land assumed a pan-Jewish community based on mutual solidarity, spanning vast geographic distances, crossing political boundaries and ethnic and linguistic divides, and linking individuals who would never meet in person. This impersonal, solidarity-based community, however, continued to be mediated through the reciprocal relations created by the circulation of traveling emissaries and by the network relations between individuals (the Officials in Constantinople, the members of the *governo* in Livorno) who communicated with one another on a regular basis. Notions of pan-Jewish solidarity as an ideal and the reciprocity of the personal encounter

Amsterdam, see Arie Morgenstern, *Return to Jerusalem: The Renewal of Jewish Settlement in the Land of Israel in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Hebr.) (Jerusalem: Shalem, 2007).

³⁵ Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For a compelling application of Schwartz's argument in the context of Jewish history in the medieval Mediterranean, see Marina Rustow, "Patronage in the Context of Solidarity and Reciprocity: Two Paradigms of Social Cohesion in the Premodern Mediterranean," in *Patronage, Production, and Transmission of Texts in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Cultures*, eds. Esperanza Alfonso and Jonathan Decter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 13–44.

³⁶ Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?*, 14–15.

between emissaries and host communities were thus closely linked, and one could never substitute for, and displace, the other.³⁷ In this sense, the dynamics of eighteenth-century trans-regional philanthropy belie the idea of reciprocity as a feature of the *ancien régime*, versus solidarity as inherently modern. Instead, both were necessary ingredients in the complex system of connectivity that characterized the early modern Jewish world.³⁸

One of the places that appear frequently in the minutes of the Livornese *governo* was Tétouan, on the northern Moroccan coast. At times, calls for help for the Jews of North Africa were received by letter, in which case Tétouan often served as the link (those letters were written in Spanish, in Latin characters). On other occasions, emissaries were dispatched from North Africa and they invariably made Livorno a stop on their itinerary. Livorno also served as a hub for collecting the contributions from other communities and for transferring them to their destination. Thus in 1750, when the Jews of Tétouan, Fez, Salè, and Meknès sent letters asking for help, Livorno received contributions from other cities in Tuscany and elsewhere in Italy, but also from Amsterdam and London, and forwarded them to North Africa.³⁹

Not every request for help was granted. In 1770, the *governo* discussed a letter received from Tétouan, which lamented that the community was crushed by the burden of irregular taxes. The Livorno lay council declined to provide assistance after a close vote.⁴⁰ A few years later, Tétouan once

³⁷ For an analysis of the reciprocal relationship between emissaries from Israel and their hosts in the diaspora, see David Malkiel, "The Shadar-Host Economy in Early Modern Italy: New Perspectives on the Travels of Emissaries from the Holy Land," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 15:3 (2016), 402–418. The example of the emissary Haim Moda'i and his fundraising effort in Bordeaux in the 1760s illustrate the importance of the personal encounter with the *shadar*: at first, the community of Bordeaux resolved that the emissary should refrain from coming to the city and decided on the basis of the letter they had received from their counterparts in Amsterdam that they would award a sum of 700 *livres* for the city of Safed. Moda'i ignored the request, however, showed up in person, and despite the previous warning, the Bordeaux community raised its pledge to 1200. Simon Schwarzfuchs, ed., *Le Registre des délibérations de la Nation juive portugaise de Bordeaux (1711–1787)* (Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1981), 334. Moda'i also visited Livorno, in 1763: ACEL Filza de Minutas 7 (1763–1768), 8 February 1763. See Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, 95–96.

³⁸ Rustow, "Patronage in the Context of Solidarity and Reciprocity," 18–19, building on Schwartz, convincingly challenges the pre-modern/modern juxtaposition of reciprocity and solidarity.

³⁹ ACEL Filza de Minutas 5 (1752–1758), 25 October 1750 and 13 December 1750.

⁴⁰ ACEL Filza de Minutas 8 (1769–1775), 26 July 1770.

again turned to several Sephardic communities in the West, including Livorno, explaining that it was unable to pay the imposts that were laid upon the community by the Moroccan rulers. This time the Livorno *governo* decided unanimously to provide help, but deferred its decision on how much support to offer until receiving information about what Amsterdam and London would give, and then matching that commitment.⁴¹ These examples illustrate the central role played by Livorno in a circuit of communication that linked the Tuscan port city as part of the Western Sephardic diaspora to Amsterdam and London in Northern Europe, as well as across the Mediterranean to North Africa.

In November 1782, the situation in the Maghreb had become dire enough for the communities of Tétouan, Mogador, and Salè to dispatch an emissary, Isaac Nahon, to visit Italy as well as the Sephardic communities of Amsterdam and London. Nahon's letter of introduction explained how the community of Tétouan was suffering from its debts as well as from years of scarcity and famine. At first, the Livorno lay council denied the request, as it had done twelve years earlier. It appears, though, that either the situation in North Africa got worse, or that the emissary decided to give it another try. As a result, in April of the following year, the *governo* convened to discuss a new petition from Isaac Nahon, in which he explained how the communities of the Maghreb not only chafed under their ever-growing debts, but that because of their inability to pay off their Muslim creditors, the latter had taken several Jewish families as hostages. It was arguably because now the issue had come to involve the ransom of captives that the Livorno *governo* changed its mind. "Considering the great calamity in which these communities find themselves, and notwithstanding that our community is already burdened by many poor," they decided to award 500 pieces of eight in response to Isaac Nahon's appeal, as well as 20 pieces of eight to defray the emissary's travel expenses.⁴²

Appeals for assistance reached Livorno from communities throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, though especially from three areas: first, as we have seen, the Maghreb. Second, and not surprisingly, from elsewhere in Italy, for example in 1747 when the Jews of Urbino sent two emissaries to collect funds in Livorno, Venice, Mantua, Ferrara, Ancona, and Pesaro—thus operating within an entirely regional network.⁴³ A third

⁴¹ ACEL Filza de Minutas 9 (1776–1781), 25 August 1776.

⁴² ACEL Filza de Minutas 10 (1782–1788), 26 November 1782 and 13 April 1783.

⁴³ ACEL Filza de Minutas 4 (1747–1751), 26 October 1747.

area included the communities of the Ottoman Empire, such as the port city of Izmir. In 1745, for instance, the Jews of Izmir sent an emissary to Livorno in the wake of a major conflagration. The Livornese *parnasim* proposed to hold a public fundraising (*nedavah*) in the main synagogue, but the suggestion was rejected by the *governo*. Instead, it was agreed that the community borrow the significant sum of 1000 pieces of eight from the *pidyon shvuyim* fund (which raised money for the ransom of captives), and to lend, rather than donate, this amount to assist the Jews of Izmir in rebuilding. The money was to be paid back over four years, but to protect the communal finances, the *governo* insisted that guarantors for the loan be found among the merchants of Livorno.⁴⁴

If the *shadarim* from the Holy Land were embedded in a network overseen by the Officials in Constantinople, emissaries from other communities who came to Livorno had to establish their bona fides in other ways. They, too, would carry letters of recommendations, of course, but without the kind of institutionalized and ongoing close interaction that tied the *nazione ebrea* to the Officials in Constantinople, verifying their credentials was not always easy. It was through parallel or overlapping networks of commerce and kinship that the trustworthiness of an emissary or the legitimacy of a request for assistance was established, and ongoing relations such as the one between Livorno and Tétouan were crucial to facilitate the exchange of information. Thus, when an emissary arrived from Tripoli (Libya) in March 1749 to collect the funds necessary for the rescue of five Jews who had fallen into captivity, the emissary's letter of introduction from the rabbis of Tripoli was authenticated by the rabbis of Algiers and Tunis—both communities with close ties to Livorno—as well as by Livornese Jews who recognized the signatures.⁴⁵

Problems arose, however, when letters and emissaries came from outside established networks and circuits of communication. This was true in particular with Ashkenazi communities and emissaries, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe. If Livorno, Constantinople, and Tétouan all exchanged information in a shared language—Spanish/

⁴⁴ ACEL Filza de Minutas 3 (1740–1746), 2 August 1745.

⁴⁵ A similar procedure of verification was followed when another emissary arrived from Macedonia in December 1750. His credentials were certified by the communities in Amsterdam and The Hague, which he had visited earlier on, and some Livornese Jews went on record to note that they had at one point lived in Salonika and the Levant, where they had known the family of the emissary and thus could testify to his trustworthiness. ACEL Filza de Minutas 4 (1747–1751), 25 March 1749; 6 December 1750.

Ladino—crossing the divide between the Ashkenazi diaspora and the Sephardic/Mediterranean world was more complicated. Even Hebrew, which ostensibly served to tie Jewish communities everywhere, marked differences as much as commonalities: Hebrew letters received from Germany or Eastern Europe were either translated for the benefit of the members of the lay council, and even when no translation was deemed necessary, the secretary of the Livorno community carefully transcribed the letters into Sephardic handwriting.⁴⁶

The case of Israel Pollacco, who claimed to be an emissary on behalf of Jews held captive in Poland in 1795, raised a number of problems that illustrate the difficulties that arose when transcending the established networks and when Livorno found itself at the periphery, rather than the center. The fact that Pollacco did not move within an existing network means that questions arose about the legitimacy of his mission and that it proved impossible to verify his bona fides. The emissary provoked suspicion when the scribe (*sofer*) of the Livorno community noted an odd uniformity of handwriting in all the signatures adorning one of the emissary's documents. Moreover, the Livorno *massari* expressed doubts about the *misteriosa storiella* (mysterious story) that Pollacco presented before the lay council. According to the emissary, the Russians had taken a number of Jews as prisoners when they invaded Poland and advanced on Warsaw. Pollacco claimed that he had served as interpreter and liaison with the Russian commander and that the latter had allowed him to leave so he could raise a rather sizeable ransom. Pollacco subsequently had made his way to Copenhagen, London, and Hamburg. One of the Livorno *massari* questioned Pollacco's account, however, suggesting that given the dates on the documents he had presented, he must have left Poland in late 1792, "well before the recent Polish Revolution."

When he was called back to explain, Pollacco claimed that he had been referring to earlier events—presumably the Polish–Russian war of 1792, which led to the second partition of Poland, rather than the events precipitated by the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794 that led to yet another Russian invasion and to the third, and final, partition of Poland. We cannot say for sure whether Pollacco had been inventing or embellishing his account, or whether there had simply been a misunderstanding. The *massari* continued to be concerned and pressed Pollacco on the issue of the signatures.

⁴⁶ See, for example, the letters received from Lazzaro Uffenheim in Austria in the 1790s: ACEL Filza de Minutas 11 (1789–1793).

They suggested he should send his documents back to Poland to have them verified, to which he responded that people would indeed not recognize the rabbinic signatures affixed to his credentials as they had been written in a “simplified form,” rather than in Ashkenazi script, so that the Sephardic communities could read them. Again, the Livorno lay leaders were not convinced by this explanation.⁴⁷

Whether Pollacco really was an impostor or not, what his case illustrates is the difficulty of creating and maintaining relations of trust in the absence of already established channels of ongoing communication. Had he been a participant in one of the regular philanthropic networks that tied Livorno to Constantinople or to Tétouan, asserting his trustworthiness would have been straightforward (even if time-consuming). But the fact that he hailed from Poland meant that several barriers had to be overcome before trust could be established: there was the issue of language and, indeed, handwriting, as well as the difficulty of double-checking an emissary’s claims if doubts arose.

Despite the negative example of Israel Pollacco it should be pointed out, though, that the Livornese community *did* provide assistance to Ashkenazi emissaries as well—and did not necessarily treat their requests with less sympathy than those of others. When discussing the cases of Jacob Seleg, an emissary from Poland, together with the appeal from David Hassan, an emissary from the Holy Land en route to North Africa, the *governo* approved a proposal to hold a public *nedavah* and distribute two-thirds of all funds collected to Seleg, one-sixth to Hassan, and one-sixth to rabbi Jacob Lusena, the head of Livorno’s own yeshiva.⁴⁸

Livorno thus functioned as a hub for permanent as well as intermittent networks, illustrated by the case of its relation to the Officials in Constantinople and their emissaries on the one hand, the exchange of information with Tétouan on the other hand. In the absence of such network embeddedness, however, eighteenth-century philanthropy quickly reached its limits, as demonstrated by the case involving Israel Pollacco. Livorno was part of overlapping networks that linked it to other communities in Tuscany and Italy more broadly; to Constantinople and other Ottoman communities, and, mediated through Constantinople, to Palestine; to North Africa, mediated through Tétouan and Tunis; and, finally, to the centers of the Western Sephardic diaspora in northern

⁴⁷ ACEL Filza de Minutas no. 12 (1794–1799), 7 May 1795.

⁴⁸ ACEL Filza de Minutas 6 (1758–1763), 16 March 1760.

Europe, Amsterdam, and London. Thus, when we situate Livorno in a larger context, what emerges is not a broader history of a generic “Jewish diaspora,” nor a series of disaggregated stories that can only be understood on a local level. Instead, we see a community that operated within the context of interrelated networks that were marked by a shared ethnicity (Sephardic), connected through a shared language (the common recourse to Spanish/Ladino, even when other languages dominated locally), and facilitated by the ongoing circulation of people (for example, the emissaries) and information.



Elia Benamozegh's Printing Presses: Livornese Crossroads and the New Margins of Italian Jewish History

Clémence Boulouque

“Here lethargy reigns and whoever has less chloroform in their body is declared crazy—and maybe they are.”¹ On a number of occasions the thinker, theologian, and publisher Elia Benamozegh (1823–1900) lamented the apathy of his native city of Livorno, especially in his correspondence with the towering figure of nineteenth-century Italian Judaism Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865), known by his acronym, Shadal. Both men expressed a sense of deep isolation² and sought out intellectual

¹ Benamozegh to De Gubernatis, June 19, 1867: “qui è letargia, e chi ha meno cloroformio in corpo lo gridano matto, e forse lo è.” Cited in Liana Funaro, *Un Tempio nuovo per una fede antica. A cinquant'anni dall'inaugurazione del Tempio ebraico di Livorno* (Livorno: Belforte, 2012), 57.

² In fact, this trope of isolation appears in the writings of other key figures in nineteenth-century Italy. In the town of Gorizia, north of Trieste and under Habsburg rule, the scholar and rabbi Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784–1855), known as the Yashar, did not write otherwise.

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exchanges with a variety of interlocutors beyond their place of residence. These shared sentiments could have provided a bond between the two thinkers. Nonetheless, their differences were irreconcilable: each man's particular sensitivities and networks mirrored the irreducible differences in Italian cultural geographies and the respective spheres of influence towards which they gravitated—and tried to weigh in.

Samuel David Luzzatto had scant esteem for Benamozegh and more broadly for Jewish life in Livorno, an entry port for the Maghreb and the Levant where he saw no sign of enlightenment: he chose his own interlocutors in the orbit of the Habsburg Empire and of the Haskalah. Benamozegh—who never left Livorno—critically engaged with them, but charted a more unusual synthesis of ideas both in his writings and in the net he cast for his various activities.³

True or exaggerated, the sense of a “holy apathy”⁴ certainly arose from witnessing the growing indifference of most Jewish communities in Italy, whose increasing lapse in observance did not lead to any reform movement nor collective engagement with the challenges of political modernity: correspondence, writings, and publishing networks proved a remedy out of their perceived isolation. Elia Benamozegh, a man of many trades and multiple facets, was at odds with his environment.

Born in 1823 in Livorno to Moroccan parents of distinguished lineage,⁵ he was raised by his widowed mother and maternal uncle, the noted rabbi

³ *Mazkeret Yashar: Teshurah le-ohavav* (Vienna: F.E. von Schmidt, 1849), 8–9. “I live in a small town, far from the domiciles of the world-renowned greats (Ps. 16:3) and lacking those resources required by the lovers of scholarship. Few in my area were involved in the subjects I desired to pursue. I, therefore, found it impossible to consult anyone first, or to hear his opinion of my ideas, or to present my work to him before publishing it. Instead, I remained totally alone in my room day after day, with no companionship but the books before me.” Translation by David Malkiel in “New Light on the Career of Isaac Samuel Reggio,” in *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity*, eds. Bernard D. Cooperman and Barbara Garvin (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2000), 276–303.

⁴ Benamozegh to Luzzatto, cited in Alessandro Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 175.

⁵ In his autobiographical sketches, Benamozegh mentions his discovery of an ancestor called Jehoshuah Ben Amozegh who was granted the title “Prince of the Nation” for having supported “materially and morally” the king during hardship in the seventeenth century. Benamozegh’s maternal great-grandfather, Yehuda Coriat, a renowned *dayan* (judge) active in Tétouan, appears in Samuel Romanelli’s *Masa be-‘Arav* (Travail in an Arab land), a best-selling travelogue of the eighteenth century. His son, and Benamozegh’s grandfather, Avraham Refael, had moved to Essaouira, adjacent to Mogador, a few years after its establish-

and kabbalist Yehuda Coriat. At age 16, he penned a short preface to *Maor va-shemesh*, a collection of kabbalistic texts edited by his uncle.⁶ The core of his later writings highlights a theological and intellectual turn whereby concepts found in kabbalah may serve to frame and fathom religion at large. He predicated his embrace of other faith beliefs on a creative examination of the universal aspects contained in Judaism and especially in mystical sources as he interpreted them: in his view, Jewish history had only been enriched by the absorption of non-Jewish elements, and Jewish tradition had always made room for polyphony. It is on these premises that he staunchly defended kabbalah; this, in addition to his convoluted style, alienated him from the traditional proponents of the Enlightenment and the Science of Judaism, Luzzatto included. Beside the interactions with his students at the Livorno seminary and his public lectures, Benamozegh maintained an intensive writing schedule, both through his networks and in contributions to a number of journals in Italy and in France. In the second half of his life, he turned to Paris to participate in the intellectual life of the late nineteenth century: the urgency of a message geared toward Jews and non-Jews alike and his eagerness to gain a broader audience convinced Benamozegh to write his most ambitious works in French rather than Italian or Hebrew.

Persuaded that the demise of religion could only jeopardize a good society and lead to “the subversion of law, justice, moral beauty, virtue, freedom, heroism and sacrifice, which are nothing but applied metaphysics,”⁷ he envisioned Judaism as a “humanitarian duty.”⁸ Even

ment around 1788. Essaouira's Livornese Jews subsequently offered him the position of dayan in the Tuscan port, where he also co-directed the Accademia Franco. Avraham died in 1805. According to a family tradition recounted in the preface of *Berit Avot* by Elia Benamozegh, his father, Avraham, was a student of his great-grandfather. Benamozegh traces his paternal ancestry back to Fez. On the autobiography, see *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel. Scritti scelti* XX.3 (1954): 17–23. The name appears in Basnage's history of the Jews, of which Benamozegh was aware: Jacques Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à présent, pour servir de continuation à l'histoire de Joseph*, nouvelle édition augmentée, volume IX, seconde partie (La Haye: Chez Henri Scheurleer, 1726), 827; Samuel Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land*, Norman A. Stillman and Yedida K. Stillman, eds. and trans. (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

⁶ Yehuda Coriat, *Maor va-shemesh* (Livorno: Ottolenghi, 1839).

⁷ Elia Benamozegh, *Israel and Humanity* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995), 42.

⁸ Letter to the Prefetto Cornero, 1881, quoted by Guglielmo Lattes, *Vita e Opere di Elia Benamozegh. Cenni, Considerazioni, Note con ritratto dell'illustre Rabbino* (Livorno: Belforte, 1901), 31: “l'Israelitismo è un compito umanitario che impone ai suoi seguaci di promuovere la giustizia nel mondo, specialmente fra le nazioni” (“which forces its followers to promote justice in the world, especially between nations”).

though he never left Livorno, he was in conversation with prominent figures ranging from the leading Jewish thinkers of his time to the members of the Pacifist League, soon to be awarded the First Nobel Prize for Peace. He arguably foreshadowed the figure of the religious man qua intellectual. And he received assistance through the endeavors of his Christian disciple, Aimé Pallière, who edited his posthumous masterwork, *Israel and Humanity* (1914). Benamozegh significantly influenced Christian–Jewish dialogue in Europe in the early twentieth century, including, arguably, Vatican II.⁹

It is primarily from the vantage point of his legacy as a thinker that his writings have been examined. In addition to his numerous articles, Alessandro Guetta wrote the first—and only—monograph on Benamozegh. He also coordinated a volume of contributions based on a conference held in Livorno in 2001—the first ever dedicated to the rabbi. A handful of articles have reflected on various aspects of Benamozegh’s work, mostly variations on his ardent defense of the values of Judaism and more specifically of Jewish universalism.¹⁰

⁹ See the role of his Christian disciple, “Aimé Pallière: Elie Benamozegh et la solution de la crise chrétienne,” *L’Univers israélite* 48 (August 15, 1902): 691–695; 49 (August 22): 724–727; 50 (August 29): 752–756; 51 (September 5): 778–782; 52 (September 12): 813–818. Pallière (alias Loetmol), “Lettre d’un chrétien à un israélite sur la réforme culturelle,” in *L’Univers israélite* January 15–27, 462–466; January 3, 654–658; February 24, 750–755; March 20, 12–17; April 17, 141–145. On Pallière, see Catherine Poujol, *Aimé Pallière (1868–1949). Un Chrétien dans le Judaïsme* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2003). See also Clémence Boulouque, *Elia Benamozegh: Kabbalah, Tradition and the Challenges of Interfaith Encounters*. PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2014. Additionally, Benamozegh’s attempt to promote new paths of understanding seems to have inspired the efforts of the former chief Rabbi of Romania, Safran (1910–2006). His use of Kabbalah strikingly resembled Benamozegh’s. Safran participated in the 1947 Seeligsberg conference that lay the ground for renewing relations between Judaism and Christianity. On his participation and his subsequent dialogue with John Paul II, see Carol Iancu, *Alexandre Safran. Une vie de combat, un faisceau de lumière* (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry-Montpellier III, 2007), chapter XIII. Close to Roncalli, who would become Pope John XXIII, he published *La Kabbale* (1960) with his daughter, Esther Safran-Starobinski. On his account of the Seeligsberg conference, see A. Safran et al., *Judaïsme, anti-judaïsme et christianisme: Colloque de l’Université de Fribourg* (Saint-Maurice, Switzerland: Editions Saint-Augustin, 2000), 13–22. During the Vatican Council II (1962–1965), Augustin Bea, who was responsible for the fourth part of the encyclical *Nostra Aetate* on Jewish–Christian reconciliation, consulted with Safran on a number of occasions. See Augustin Bea, *L’Église et le peuple juif* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967).

¹⁰ Alessandro Guetta, *Philosophie et Cabbale: Essai sur la pensée d’Elie Benamozegh* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000). Translated as *Philosophy and Kabbalah* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006). Meir Seidler, “A Nineteenth Century Jewish Attempt at Integrativeness: Rabbi

Yet, in order to do justice to this rabbi's complexity, ambitions, and intellectual acumen, another of his activities—publishing—deserves more than the passing attention it has so far received.

His pursuits as a printer shed an important light both on Benamozegh's own work and on our understanding of intellectual networks in the nineteenth-century Mediterranean,¹¹ with Livorno as a vantage point for the Western Mediterranean. What do we learn about Benamozegh and his milieu from analyzing his work as a printer, and how different are the volumes that he published from the ones he authored? What light does this printing activity shine on publishing and intellectual networks in the nineteenth-century Mediterranean? What does it reveal about his participation in the Italian Jewish life of his time—and about the exchanges between key scholarly and rabbinical figures?

In this essay, I will first situate Benamozegh in the world of Livorno's publishing industry at a time of heightened competition among printers and publishers across the Mediterranean, and in the broader Sephardic world, a context that reflects the “demise of the Western Sephardi Jewish diaspora,” in the words of Yaron Tsur,¹² but simultaneously showcases the residual strength of networks between Livorno and North Africa. I will then examine how his catalog and the scarcity of titles pertaining to Italian Judaism demonstrate a distance between him and his contemporaries. In fact, his printing press links him to the greater Mediterranean and betrays an identity otherwise concealed in his mainstream writings.

Eliahu Benamozegh's Multicultural Approach to Polytheism,” in *Yosef Da'at. Studies in Modern History in Honor of Yosef Salmon*, ed. Yossi Goldstein (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2010), 13.

¹¹ Greater attention has been given to the Enlightenment period in the Western Mediterranean, while the nineteenth century is less studied—or, in the case of the Maghreb, with Jews envisioned as objects of a colonial project or the Alliance, thus implying a certain lack of agency—with the notable exceptions of Sarah Abrevaya Stein's, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), and Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010). The Eastern Mediterranean, with the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the co-existence of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as various ethnic groups in Salonika before the Holocaust and proto- or nascent Zionism in Palestine, has called for greater scrutiny: see Aron Rodrigue and Esther Benbassa, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th–20th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Julia Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹² Yaron Tsur, “Dating the Demise of the Western Sephardi Jewish Diaspora in the Mediterranean,” in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, eds. Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 93–104: 93.

I THE WORLD OF A LIVORNESE PUBLISHER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Benamozegh's activity as a publisher offers precious insights into the Jewish intellectual and commercial exchanges at a critical juncture in Livornese history.

A century after the *Livornine*, the laws of 1591 and 1593 that granted Jews extensive privileges while explicitly protecting them from the Inquisition and encouraging Jewish settlement, the city was declared a free port in the seventeenth century and saw the establishment of its first but short-lived Hebrew press. Founded by Yedidiah Gabbai in 1649, *la stamperia del Kaf Nachat*¹³ did not benefit from the city's growing Jewish population and increasing wealth and closed down less than a decade later, in 1657.¹⁴ Although Livorno became a center for state reformism and enlightenment as early as the mid-eighteenth century, as well as a model for the free circulation of goods and books in port cities, its flourishing printing presses were mostly non-Jewish. The second largest Jewish city in Western Europe after Amsterdam, Livorno exhibited, as Francesca Bregoli has noted, a certain tardiness: its second Jewish printing press dated from 1740, and another fifty years passed before the city became a prime center for the production of Hebrew books, gradually replacing Amsterdam and Venice at the turn of the century.¹⁵

In spite of unmistakable signs of economic decline in the nineteenth century,¹⁶ the number of books published in Livorno increased. Religious and economic ties around the Mediterranean and a new popularization of prayer books account for this spike: traditionally, sages or community leaders in the Arab lands would send their books to Livorno or arrange for their publication in person. Communities from around the Mediterranean would order prayer books and *piyyutim* (books of liturgical poems)

¹³Named after a treatise penned by Gabbai's father, *Kaf Nachat*, published in Venice in 1609.

¹⁴Marvin J. Heller, *The Seventeenth-Century Hebrew Book*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), xviii–xix. The first published book, in 1650, was the *Yalkut Shimoni*.

¹⁵Francesca Bregoli, "Hebrew Printing in 18th-Century Livorno: From Government Control to a Free Market," in *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 171–195; and eadem, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture and Eighteenth Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 181–207.

¹⁶Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 269.

following their own liturgies and printed specifically for them. Part of Benamozegh's imprints sought to respond to these needs. The expanding market for prayer books in Judeo-Arabic demonstrates a democratized access to books.¹⁷ With his responsa, commentaries, and liturgical books, part of Benamozegh's production as a printer operating out of Livorno conforms to these sociological trends and commercial rationale, in a context of heightened competition.

Examining Benamozegh's printing press and his competitors maps out the publishing landscape in Livorno. Between 1763 and 1870 as many as sixteen Hebrew presses were active in Livorno, of which the Belforte press, founded in 1838 and still active today, has remained the most emblematic.¹⁸ Other prominent Hebrew presses of the nineteenth century include Eliezer Menachem Ottolenghi, which in 1839 published *Maor va-shemesh*, Coriat's Kabbalistic anthology—and thus Benamozegh's first published text, as seen above. The Tubiana press, with which Benamozegh engaged in a legal suit, was later acquired by Israel Costa (also spelled Koshta). Sanson Gentilomo, a former student of the Padua seminary, gravitated toward more traditional texts, as well as translations by his professor Samuel David Luzzatto.¹⁹ A rabbi who graduated from the Livorno seminary the same year as Benamozegh, Israel Costa boasted a catalog that in its scope most closely resembled that of his former classmate.²⁰

Benamozegh's activity proved relentless. The inventory of the Valmadonna Library, cross-referenced with the *Bibliography of the Hebrew Book*, lists 163 books printed by Benamozegh and his associates and/or sons over a 50-year period, from 1852 to his death in 1900.²¹ Based on

¹⁷ In the specific case of the Tunisian market, Yosef Tobi has additionally identified a further step toward the popularization of printing with the publication of Judeo-Arabic folktales and popular stories, a line that Benamozegh's presses never crossed. See the chapter "The hikayat and the deeds of the righteous men" in Yosef Tobi and Tsvia Tobi, *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia 1850–1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 223–240.

¹⁸ On Belforte, see Arthur Kiron, *La casa editrice Belforte e l'arte della stampa in Ladino 1805–2005. Two Hundred Years of a Publishing House* (Collana di Studi Ebraici II: Livorno, 2005). On Livorno, see Yosef Rofe, "The History of the Hebrew Printing-House in Livorno," *Tagim* 2 (1971–1972): 123–134; (1972–1973): 132–140.

¹⁹ Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1998), 152, 178.

²⁰ Conversely, Israel Costa in 1875 ventured into less pious books such as a small book entitled *ʿAravim ve-tokha* (*Arabs within it*) containing stories of pure entertainment value and of non-Jewish import and based on the Arabian Nights.

²¹ The Valmadonna Library, a collection of 13,000 printed books and manuscripts, was sold by Sotheby's to the National Library of Israel in January 2017. In addition, the *Bibliography of the Hebrew Book* records the books printed in Hebrew between 1473 and

the widely accepted estimations of the *Otzar ha-sefer ha-ivri* by Yeshayahu Vinograd and on Brad Sabin Hill's *A Catalogue of Hebrew Printers*,²² the production of Hebrew books in Livorno from the establishment of the Gabbai printing press in 1649 until 1939 amounts to approximately 1500 volumes. According to this estimate, the Benamozegh publishing house would have brought out a tenth of Hebrew books published in Livorno, excluding a few Italian and French publications such as his lectures on *Shavuot, Israël et Humanité* (Introduction), and his *Bibliothèque de l'Hébraïsme*, penned by Benamozegh himself.²³ The fact that Benamozegh's work as an editor predates the establishment of his own printing press²⁴ might explain how he had acquired publishing skills and established himself as a partner in trade: as we will see, competition did not rule out cooperation.

2 BETWEEN AFFINITIES AND BUSINESS STRATEGIES: CATALOGUES EXPLAINED

It seems reasonable to infer from their respective catalogues that publishers established areas of expertise and de facto territorial marketing: Isaac Costa had greater ties with Tunisia and an inclination to explore more popular subjects, aligned with the local taste. Belforte had an edge on Ladino liturgical books, while Benamozegh's catalogue features more texts in Judeo-Arabic originating from or destined for North Africa and as far east as Baghdad.

The list of Benamozegh's imprints and works by his contemporaries, as well as his links and interaction with contemporary thinkers or actors,

1960, including over 120,000 titles and 13,500 authors. The recording of the books took place under the auspices of the National Library of Israel, according to rules set by an editorial staff led by Gershom Scholem and Ben-Zion Dinur.

²² According to Vinograd's estimates, the number of books published in Hebrew characters between 1650 and 1863 amounted to 1284. Yeshayahu Vinograd, *Otzar ha-sefer ha-ivri* (Jerusalem: ha-makhon le-bibliografyah memuchshevet, 1993). Brad Sabin Hill, "A Catalogue of Hebrew Printers," *British Library Journal*, London (1995): 34–65.

²³ Elia Benamozegh, *Shavuot. Cinque Conferenze sulla Pentecoste* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1885); idem, *Israël et Humanité*. Introduction (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1887); idem, *Bibliothèque de l'hébraïsme: publication mensuelle de ses manuscrits* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1897).

²⁴ The year before setting up he had edited the notes of a Zohar edition commissioned by the famous press, Belforte, to which his coevals, rabbis Isaac Millul and Shlomo Leone, had also contributed.

shows that his connections still straddled the Mediterranean in the broadest sense, from Mogador to Baghdad: a selection of his catalogues features, for instance, Morocco with his cousin Avraham Coriat's *Brit Avot* (1858); Algeria with *Tochechot musar* by the liturgist Judah Saadia b. Nehorai Azobib; Tunisia with *Sa'as anokhi*, a novella on the *Shulchan Arukh* by Salomon Samama of Tunis; Libya with the *Mizmeret ha-Aretz* by Farji Rachamim Naim from Tripoli; Egypt with *Teshuvot ha-geonim z"l* including *Iyye ha-Yam* annotations by Israel Moses Hazzan in Alexandria (1869); Syria with Mordechai Abadi (1826–1884) and his *bakashot* (songs or supplications originally sung in the Aleppo community) *Mikra kodesh*; the Ottoman Empire with a commentary of the Psalms in 1881 by Haim Palaggi from Smyrna, *chakham bashi* from 1854 until his death; and finally Iraq, in 1864, with *Aderet Eliyahu*, the first book of the famous and precocious Joseph Chaim ben Elijah al Chakham (1835–1900), better known as the Ben Ish Chai.

The Anglo-American world is also barely present in his epistolary or commercial exchanges, not even England in spite of a significant number of Livornese and Moroccan natives established in London, some of whom had risen to prominence.²⁵ In the United States, Sabato Morais (1823–1897), the Italian-American rabbi and chazan, leader of the Philadelphia congregation Mikveh Israel and a key figure in founding the Jewish Theological Seminary, was his only correspondent—and seems to have been an active advocate of his work, as evidenced in the minutes of the meetings of the Jewish Ministers' Association of America.²⁶

At first glance, a thematic specialty or division between publishers seems tricky to establish: for all his advocacy of kabbalah, Benamozegh does not seem to have produced a significant number of kabbalistic volumes—and this mirrors broader trends in the city. In spite of the publication of eight editions of the Zohar in the first part of the nineteenth century, as well as Livorno's role as a center of kabbalah studies, most kabbalistic texts were

²⁵ See Daniel Schroeter, "The End of the Sephardic Order," in *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic History and Culture*, eds. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 86–101.

²⁶ See Arthur Kiron, "Livornese Traces in American Jewish History: Sabato Morais and Elia Benamozegh," in *Per Elia Benamozegh*, ed. Alessandro Guetta (Milan: Thalassa De Paz, 2002), 41–62. See also Sabato Morais, "Two Living Jewish Writers – Elias Benamozegh, of Leghorn, and Dr. Castelli, of Florence." *Reports of the Meetings of the Jewish Ministers' Association of America (1886–1887)*. Center for Jewish History/American Jewish Historical Society. Rosenbach Archive. S-3543.

still circulated in manuscripts: fewer than ten such works were published between 1740 and 1789, most in the 1780s. This trend exhibited little change in the nineteenth century, except for the Zohar, which many Moroccan Jews considered the third holy book, alongside Torah and Talmud.²⁷ There was, however, no major influx of kabbalistic texts *per se* in Livorno. The most conspicuous counterexamples are a series of treatises by the nineteenth-century Aleppo-born rabbi Abraham Hamawi, *Bet El*²⁸ (*segulot*—mystical remedies) and *Le-Drosh Elohim* (on the interpretation of dreams)²⁹; surprisingly, they are works of practical kabbalah, an aspect which Benamozegh tended to disown, as it seemed to lend itself to criticism about kabbalah as superstition or as recuperated by Christians,³⁰ and thus be an infelicitous distortion of its real significance. For his part, Costa also published a book on amulets in 1874, which bore an approbation (*haskamah*) by Benamozegh. Because the *haskamot* could prove critical for a publication, the willingness to grant one to a rival publishing house sheds interesting light and suggests that some level of cooperation did not preclude competition: the fine line between partnership and competition is exemplified by a lawsuit for libel between Tubiana and Benamozegh over the distribution of books in Yemen. Only a degree of close cooperation could have led to such frictions.

Benamozegh's feud with Tubiana, arising a few years after a first dispute,³¹ grew into a clamorous case and might be further evidence of increased competition. Benamozegh himself called his entrance into the

²⁷ On the sanctity of the Zohar, see Moshe Idel, "Jewish Mysticism Among the Jews of Arab/Moslem Lands," *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* 1.1 (February 2007): 14–39: 24.

²⁸ Avraham Hamawi, *Bet El* (Livorno: Eliyahu ben Amozegh and associates, 1878).

²⁹ Avraham Hamawi, *Le-drosh Elohim* (Livorno: Eliyahu ben Amozegh and associates, 1879). On Hamawi (spelled Chamui), see Jacobus Swart, *The Book of Seals and Amulets* (Gauseng: The Sangreal Sodality Press, 2014), 194. On the Hamawi family, see Yaron Harel, "Ḥamawī Family," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman. Online edition (Brill, 2010); idem, "Rabbinic Literature in Syria and Lebanon, 1750–1950," *Pe'anim* 86–87 (2001): 67–123 [Hebrew].

³⁰ On a rare occasion, Benamozegh acknowledged the existence of healing amulets as a popular North African belief, only to immediately deride them: *Emat Mafgia* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1855), II 16b. On practical kabbalah and Christianity, see Moshe Idel, "Differing Perceptions of Kabbalah in the Early 17th Century," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 166–171.

³¹ In 1859, his sending of copies of the Pentateuch with the Arabic translation to Tunisia, Alexandria, Oran, Algeria, and Gibraltar (through Morocco) had aroused disagreement from

publishing market his *peccato originale* (original sin), thus implying that Tubiana resented it and did not let him gain a strong foothold in the Livornese printing world. The case is well documented thanks to written testimonies by Benamozegh and his associate Angelo Finzi, who published volumes defending their activities.³² The triangular drama, which played out between 1856 and 1861, also involved a Yemen-based publisher and distributor, Hanoh, with whom Tubiana had previously worked. Tubiana seems initially to have offered Benamozegh co-publication of Isaac Aboab's *Menorat ha-meor* and Jacob Ibn Habib's *'En Ya'akov*, both staples of Jewish learning. Yet Benamozegh deemed the terms and conditions unfavorable, and established contact with Hanoh during the latter's visit to Livorno. What ensued was a fierce competition between Tubiana and Benamozegh over Hanoh's distribution network.

Benamozegh's correspondence gives us a glimpse into business strategies but also into issues of monetary claims, and their adjudication. In an 1887 letter to the Orientalist Angelo de Gubernatis, Benamozegh requested an introduction to the former's brother, a diplomat in Libya, in order to solve a dispute. Benamozegh specifically asked for the diplomat's intervention—and probable mediation—regarding the payment of a Tripoli rabbi's long overdue debt, “for the dignity of that said rabbi and in the common interest of the two parties.”³³ The “said rabbi” could have been either the obscure Farji Rachamim Naim, author of *Mizmeret ha-Aretz* (1875), or more likely, Jacob Raccah (1800–1891), a prolific commentator and arbiter of Jewish law who set up a yeshiva but rejected the assistance of the community and supported himself through his day job as an accountant and, as a result, endured financial hardship. Raccah entrusted Benamozegh with a handful of books from 1858 onwards including the third of the four volumes of the *Ma'aseh Rokeach*, a commentary on the Mishneh Torah by his great-grandfather Ma'sud Raccah (1690–1768), a distinguished rabbi

another rabbi, Michele Allum. A settlement was reached with the mediation of Rabbi Piperno and Cesare Castelli. See Funaro, *Un Tempio nuovo per una fede antica*, 72.

³² In addition to Benamozegh's *La verità svelata ai miei giudici*, his associate Angelo Finzi penned a companion volume *La verità sulle due Tipografie Tubiana e Benamozegh svelata al Tribunale della pubblica opinione da Angelo Finzi socio nella ditta Elia Benamozegh e C.*, published in 1861.

³³ Benamozegh to De Gubernatis. Livorno, April 5th 1187, BNCF, *De Gub.*, box 10, 100. Cited in Liana Funaro, *Un Tempio nuovo per una fede antica*, 72; eadem, “Speculiamo, amiamo, combattiamo: lettere inedite di Elia Benamozegh,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 10 (2002–2003): 131–148: 141.

and scholar credited for having presided over the community's development in Tripoli.³⁴ Another grandson of Ma'sud, Avraham Haim Adadi (1801–1874), had revived the editorial enterprise and commissioned the second volume of his ancestor's *Ma'aseh Rokeach*, in 1862. Both publications came after a 120-year-long hiatus: the very first volume had been published in Venice in 1742–1743. Born in Izmir, Ma'sud Raccah was probably a descendant from a Venetian family. After emigrating to Jerusalem, he journeyed back West: as an emissary from the Holy Land, he was dispatched to North Africa and visited Livorno. Since we know that Benamozegh's maternal grandfather (d. 1788) was the rabbinic judge in Tétouan, one might wonder if their ancestors had crossed path³⁵; indeed some of the publication's rationale might have involved long-standing family ties. Adadi's first work, *Shomer Emet*, published in Livorno in 1849, before Benamozegh established his printing press, received the approbation of Benamozegh's uncle, Avraham Coriat. Livornese networks and connections seem to weave together time and space.

Notwithstanding instances of collaboration, the tension among publishers signaled an era in which competition intensified as sale prospects and financial revenues started to shrink—thus mirroring a broader decline of the city. In particular, French colonization and industrialization disrupted the demand for Livorno's printing presses to supply liturgical books throughout North Africa and the Levant, as the introduction of Hebrew printing presses to the Maghreb affected the dynamics of centuries of exchanges between Livorno and the Arab lands. Presses arrived in Algiers in 1853, in Oran in 1856, in Tunis in 1860, and Tangier in 1891, triggering considerable anxiety in Livorno.

In that context, Benamozegh's efforts to find patrons and new business opportunities proved relentless. Benamozegh received the help of the famous Caid Nissim Samama, the flamboyant and prodigal advisor to the Tunisian sultan, soon villain and exile in Paris and Livorno, whose contested testament has become a case study for the implementation of Jewish versus local law.³⁶ In this judicial battle, Samama's heirs commissioned various consultations and enlisted major figures, includ-

³⁴ See Moshe Hallamish, *Kabbalah in North Africa: A Historical and Cultural Survey* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameyuchad, 2001), 78.

³⁵ Sidney Corcos, "Coriat Family," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Fifth conference of Elia Benamozegh. "Sunto della V conferenza della dell' Ecc.mo Rab. Benamozegh," *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, XLII (1894): 10–14: 13.

³⁶ Richard Parks, "Scemmama, Nessim," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*.

ing Benamozegh whose response regarding the laws of inheritance served him as an excuse to ponder the importance of tradition in the sources of Jewish law.³⁷ Taking a closer look at Benamozegh's catalogue, one realizes that the connection to Samama predates the legal consultation: the Caid sponsored at least thirteen books in Jerusalem and Livorno between 1837 and his death in 1873; as early as 1860, all books printed in Livorno and funded by Samama appeared with Benamozegh's presses. Most of them were penned by lesser-known figures, such as Uziel Alheich and Abraham ha-Kohen Itzhaki.³⁸ The Caid certainly helped defray the costs of these publications. But significant sources of revenue had to be found elsewhere.

Liturgy books remained the bread and butter of Hebrew publishing, as demonstrated in Benamozegh's relentless exchanges to scout new opportunities. In his correspondence with Luzzatto in 1858, he openly admitted his desire to publish liturgical books for Algerian communities: "Regarding African mahzors, I won't deny that I was in tense negotiations in order to publish that of Tlemcen because I think that nothing will come out of the other one. I wrote just yesterday to one of my friends in Constantine about manuscripts to know whether there would be some over there."³⁹ A few years later, he was still bent on getting the Tlemcen mahzor published for the *yamim noraim* ("the days of awe," the period between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) and on getting a copy—even asking Luzzatto to sell him his own: "In case you have it, I would like to suggest sending it to me as I have in mind to do a new edition with the solemn promise to send you as a payment two more copies, as soon as the new edition comes out if this is fine with you, or anything better that you would kindly indicate to me."⁴⁰

³⁷ Elia Benamozegh, *Delle fonti del diritto ebraico e del testamento del fu conte caid Nissim Sem. considerato rispetto a ciascuno di esse, parere di Elia Benamozegh* (Livorno: Zecchini, 1882).

³⁸ See Robert Attal, *Le Caid Nessim Samama de Tunis, Mécène du livre hébraïque* (Jerusalem: R. Attal, 1995).

³⁹ *Lettere*, 7 (April 1858). "Quanto ai Mahzor africani non le nego che io era in istrettissima trattativa di stampare quello di 'Telemsen' credo però che fino a quest'altro non se ne farà niente. Scrisi ieri stesso ad un mio amico di 'Costantina' pei manoscritti se ve ne fossero."

⁴⁰ *Lettere*, 31 (December 1860). "Nel caso che Ella lo possedesse vorrei proporle d'inviarmelo avendo noi in animo di farne nuova edizione con solenne promessa di mandargliene in pagamento altri due appena terminata la nuova edizione se così le piace, o meglio

It is impossible to establish whether Benamozegh obtained his copy through Luzzatto himself but his insistence paid off: in 1860—and again in 1878—he did publish a mahzor for Yom Kippur, as well as one for Rosh Hashana following the Constantine rite. Less than ten years later, his press produced a *Machzor Katan* following the Algiers rite. Benamozegh's catalogue also featured the works of the respected rabbi and *maskil* of Mostaganem, Maimon Abou (sometimes spelled Abbo), including his Judeo-Arabic commentary of *Kohélet* in 1868–1869. Among other approbations, the books received that of the rabbi of Oran, Mahir Charleville, who had established himself in the French colony in 1864.⁴¹ Beyond probable affinities with the erudite Abou,⁴² Benamozegh certainly felt the urge to build and cultivate the network of Algerian rabbis, for commercial purposes.

It was also, at least in part, for business reasons that Benamozegh began a correspondence in 1869 with Livorno-born Sabato Morais, who later resettled in Philadelphia, and brought to his attention a variety of volumes from his printing press which, he claimed, could address the needs of the American communities, “whichever rite they follow.”⁴³ Yet he unconsciously operated on the assumption that the communities were Sephardic or that the Sephardic ritual was all encompassing, as indicated by the Sephardic-centered list of his volumes: *haggadah*, *Song of Songs* or *Pirke avot* in Ladino, and multiple *haggadot* in Judeo-Arabic.

3 RESISTING A SEPHARDIC TWILIGHT?

For all of its grim prospects, Livorno's printing industry managed to maintain its edge: the quality of the typeface proved important but also the orthography, which sheds light on the publishers' linguistic skills. The

corrispondendo com'Ella vorrà indicarmi.” In fact he seems to have settled for the Algiers minhag machzor, published in 1861.

⁴¹ See Richard Ayoun, *Un grand rabbin français au XIXème siècle, Mahir Charleville: 1814–1888* (Paris: Cerf, 1999). See also Norbert Bel-Ange, *Les Juifs de Mostaganem* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990), 105–114.

⁴² Abou published in Ha-Levanon and ha-Magid: *Ha-Levanon*, 3, volume 7 (Nissan 1866), 104. *Ha-Magid*, 5 (5 Shvat 1868), 39. His contributions on philology were noted by Geiger in *Die Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, vol. 5 (Breslau: Skutsch, 1867), 307.

⁴³ Letter to Sabato Morais, August 20, 1869, CAJS Sabato Morais collection, SBM XX FF28, box 1.

printing presses in Algiers and Oran soon met their demise because of the competition with Livorno.⁴⁴ From many observers' viewpoints, books printed in the Tuscan city were of higher quality, with close attention paid to the accuracy of the spelling, especially in the cases of Benamozegh and Israel Costa.⁴⁵ Benamozegh's Moroccan roots unquestionably helped him in his endeavor—his handwriting even betrayed his lineage. "Thanks ever so much for your observations on my calligraphy," he wrote to Shadal: "You are too good to pay attention to these minutiae. I really don't deserve so much: my calligraphy is African because I learned the Hebraic rudiments from the good soul of my maternal uncle, one of the honorable Coriat."⁴⁶

Benamozegh appears anchored in an age of supra-national networks, emblematic of the Mediterranean understood as a paradigm of connectivity. However, his lifespan and endeavors take place at a specific juncture—"the end of a Sephardic world order," in the words of Daniel Schroeter—irreversible in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Elaborating on Schroeter's analysis and on Jonathan Israel's notions of sub-diasporas, Yaron Tsur dates to the nineteenth century the "demise of the Western Mediterranean diaspora,"⁴⁸ due to the impact of colonialism and new axis of communications, exchanges, and loyalties for Jews. "Transimperial subjects," as Jessica Marglin demonstrated,⁴⁹ were on the wane—and the circulation of religious personnel, emissaries, as well as knowledge, seems to have followed suit. The aforementioned Samama case, Marglin argues,

⁴⁴Yosef Tobi, "Judeo-Arabic printing in North Africa," in *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in the Languages of the Middle-East*, ed. Geoffrey Roper (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 129–150. See also Yosef Tobi, "Early Judeo-Arabic Biblical Translations," *Religion Compass* 6:4 (2012): 225–235.

⁴⁵Robert Attal, "Hebrew Printing in the Maghreb." *Mi-Mizrach u-mi-Ma'arav: kovets mechkarim be-toldot ha Yehudim ba-Mizrach u-va-Maghrib* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University press, 1980), 121–129; 122–123 (Hebrew).

⁴⁶*Lettere dirette a S.D. Luzzatto da Elia Benamozegh* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1890), 3: "Grazie infinite delle sue osservazioni sulla mia calligrafia. Ella è troppo buono di occuparsi di queste minuzie. Io veramente non merito tanto, la mia calligrafia è affricana modificata perché i rudimenti di ebraico li appresi dalla buon anima di mio zio materno, uno dei H. Coriat."

⁴⁷Daniel J. Schroeter, *The Sultan's Jew: Morocco and the Sephardi World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁹Jessica Marglin, "Mediterranean Modernity through Jewish Eyes: The Trans-imperial Life of Abraham Ankawa," *Jewish Social Studies*, n.s. 20.2 (2014): 34–68.

also raises questions beyond the legal dispute as to which wills should be respected: it suggests that citizenships, nationalities, and belongings could clash in an age when the itineraries of belongings had been challenged by the collapse of traditional communities and by colonialism.⁵⁰

4 BENAMOZEGH AND THE MARGINS OF ITALIAN JEWISH IDENTITY

Benamozegh's work seems traversed by a paradox: a vocal patriot, he shows scant concern for Italian Jewish intellectual production and for being an actor of Italian Jewish modernity, at least in what he published. In his article "Elia Benamozegh e la Qabbala,"⁵¹ Moshe Idel claims that Benamozegh's itinerary led him to distance himself from a Moroccan legacy and embrace an Italian universe of references—if this is certainly true for the universalistic key in which he interpreted kabbalah, which is reminiscent of Renaissance humanism, it is worth asking if the printing press does not complicate the picture, indicating other priorities, or providing a discrete hyphenating identity.

Benamozegh maintained a strict separation between his writings geared to a general audience and to the Jewish world. Benamozegh never references any modern Sephardic thinker, nor does he use the word "Mediterranean," but both the Mediterranean and the Sephardic worlds provide the substance of his work as a printer, especially if one accepts Horden's and Purcell's criteria of connectivity as a defining feature of the Mediterranean,⁵² a way in which Mediterranean "micro-regions" cohere with each other more than with their hinterland. In the case of Benamozegh, the comparison is apt: the hinterland (Tuscany and, further, the Italian peninsula) seems elusive. To be sure, the most glaring absence in his catalogue regards his Italian Jewish contemporaries: the list of his publications features neither scholarship nor books on that subject.

⁵⁰ As expounded in her paper "Nationality and Jewish Law on Trial: The Life and Death of Nissim Samama," presented at the conference *Italian Jews in Context: Relations, Exchanges, Networks*, CUNY-Graduate Center and Columbia University, New York: March 9, 2015; this argument will be part of Marglin's forthcoming study of the Samama case.

⁵¹ Moshe Idel, "Elia Benamozegh e la Qabbala," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* XVIII (1997): 9–20. See also Daniel A. Klein, *Shadal on Exodus* (New York: Kodesh Press, 2015); Ephraim Chamiel, *The Middle Way* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2014), vol. 1, 102–154.

⁵² Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 123–172.

Benamozegh's indifference towards fashioning an Italian Jewish identity is counterintuitive. As a young preacher in 1847, in the tumult of the first Risorgimento and in a speech that became emblematic of the Jewish patriotism of nascent Italy, he had cast Jews as the perfect hyphen between past and present: "But you are Italian. And what greater glory than these two great names could you yearn for? In you, Israelites, you epitomize all of Antiquity, in all its holiness, its greatness—in you, Italian, you represent modern civilization spread to the four corners of the world..."⁵³ Such an identity could not have served his intellectual aims more accurately: to goal of annulling the binaries of modernity and tradition, faith and science, past and present recurs in his writings. He also paid a significant price for heralding this dual belonging, which, in his views, were not in conflict. Due to his vocal Italian patriotism, Benamozegh was suspended from any teaching activity shortly after the return of the Austrian troops to Tuscany in 1849, and it can be surmised that his publications also incurred close scrutiny. However, the measure was short lived and certainly did not apply to the second part of his life, after the Unification, when none of his subsequent writings exhibit such patriotic tropes.

In the Preface to his *History of the Essenes* (1867), Benamozegh claimed the creation of a national *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, a German-Jewish innovation, to be a duty towards Italy. Science was a patriotic act to which

every individual and every denomination must contribute, in their capacity, as the greatest tribute to the shared fatherland's glory, and why not the Israelites to the Israelite science? Italy has the right to have a Hebraic philosophical, historical, theological, and erudite science, which the other nations have possessed for a long time, and more specifically Germany.⁵⁴

⁵³ Elia Benamozegh, *Discorso pronunciato nel Tempio di Livorno, Il dì 8 settembre 1847 nel rendimento di Grazie per la conceduta Guardia Cittadina*. B.331. Biblioteca Labronica. Livorno, 6. The speech has been quoted and analyzed in Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, "La questione dell'emancipazione ebraica nel biennio 1847–1848: Note sul caso Livornese," *Zakhor: Rivista di storia degli ebrei d'Italia* VI (2003): 67–91. See also: Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Fare gli ebrei italiani. Autorappresentazioni di una minoranza (1861–1918)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), chapter IV (English-language edition: *Making Italian Jews: Family, Gender, Religion and the Nation, 1861–1918*, London: Palgrave, 2017); Bruno Di Porto, "Elia Benamozegh, un maestro dell'ebraismo nella nuova Italia," *Rassegna Mensile d'Israele*, L (1984): 157–181; Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah*, 66; Stefania Dazzetti, *L'autonomia delle comunità ebraiche italiane nel Novecento. Leggi, intese, statuti, regolamenti* (Turin: Giappichelli Editore, 2008), 3–13.

⁵⁴ Elia Benamozegh, *Storia degli Eseni* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1865), 4: "Che ogni individuo ed ogni ceto debbono contribuire, per ciò che lor spetta, a maggior onoranza e Gloria

His correspondence with Luzzatto shows the Padua rabbi striving to start a newspaper akin to the French *L'Univers israélite*. Yet Luzzatto's project, of which he had spoken to his favorite person in Livorno, Israel Costa, was specifically intended to counteract the "impiety and falsity of the Oltremontani" (i.e., the French), as he described the situation:

I would like to see a new organ of Judaism spring forth, an organ which would not be a vile worshipper of the ultramontanes. [...] Livorno, it seems to me, could be the center of Italian Judaism and I would not abstain from active cooperation. I would argue in a friendly manner with the mystics, but I would like to silence the impiety and fakeness of many ultramontanes.⁵⁵

Not only did no such journal come into existence, but Italy does not seem to be the focus of any of the books he published. The decade of the 1860s seems crucial and signals a turn whereby Benamozegh became estranged from his environment. He did not use his press to weigh in on the main debates of his days, such as the question of reform in Italy, introduced in 1863 when Marco Mortara, a student of Samuel David Luzzatto, called for a rabbinic congress in Ferrara. Benamozegh bitinglly expressed his opposition to Mortara's proposal in a number of articles published in the short-lived review *L'Israelita*, based on his defense of tradition. In "Del Congresso Rabbinico proposto dal Rev. Rabbino Mortara," for example, Benamozegh spelled out his views on religion and on tradition as an organism, which one could not leisurely throw away. In these articles, he mocked the reformists as censors or Karaites (the Jewish sectarian group characterized by its rejection the Oral law and exclusive recognition of the Hebrew Bible as a legal authority) who would like to impose an agenda harmful to the integrity of the Jewish tradition and its ethics. In their description of an organic religion, these articles contained intimations of ideas later refined in *Israel and Humanity*.

della Patria comune perché questo dovere non incomberà egualmente agli israeliti e la scienza israelitica? L'Italia ha il diritto di avere una Scienza ebraica filologica, storica, teologica, erudite quale da gran tempo posseggono altre Nazioni sorelle, e in special modo la Germania."

⁵⁵ Benamozegh, *Lettere dirette a S.D. Luzzatto* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1890), 29: "Io vorrei veder sorgere un nuovo organo del Giudaismo italiano, un organo che non fosse un vile adoratore degli oltremontani [...] Livorno mi pare potrebbe essere il centro del Giudaismo italiano e io non mancherei della mia cooperazione attiva [...] Disputerei amichevolmente con i Mistici, ma vorrei porre a nudo l'empietà e falsità di molti oltremontani." And also: "Ci vorrebbe un *Univers Israélite* italiano, dico almeno per le tendenze" ("We would need an Italian *Univers Israélite*, at least for the trends").

The Livornese rabbinical establishment failed in its bid to cancel the Ferrara Congress (1863), but the opposition was such that the event yielded insignificant results, as did a similar meeting in Florence in 1867—it is worth mentioning, however, that these two events were not meant to discuss the issue of the reform, but part of the slow process through which Italian Jewish communities established cooperation and, finally, agreed on a centralized institution.⁵⁶

Benamozegh's efforts to draw attention to the necessity of a university course for comparative religion and for Oriental studies came about at a time when nation building called for a new curriculum.⁵⁷ However, his suggestions were met with skepticism by officials and scholars, including his own student, David Castelli. The Orientalists dismissed him as a bigoted, retrograde mind, and the articles he proposed in scholarly journals were all rejected or ignored.⁵⁸ The reception of Benamozegh often strikes as an exercise in Orientalism, captured in Luzzatto's scathing comment: "If Livorno produces only kabbalistic or Talmudic works, it is because it is close to Africa, which is partial to those studies, and in Tuscany, Hebraic literature is dead."⁵⁹

In many ways, Benamozegh had in fact come to be identified with Livorno, at the margins of Jewish Italian modernity, which is what his catalogue suggests. The gap between his aspirations and his publications accounts for a pragmatic turn, arguably taken by Benamozegh in the 1860s: he first advocated internal apologetics, especially with a focus on kabbalah and its relevance to the Judaism of his day and age. Once he deemed them unintelligible to his contemporaries, he reached out to a larger European audience and engaged in external apologetics in his writings.

Benamozegh did not participate in any of the efforts to translate the Bible into Italian—an endeavor that swept Europe; in Italy, their object

⁵⁶ See Y. Colombo, "Il Congresso di Ferrara del 1863," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* XXXVI, 7-8-9 (1970): 75–108. See also Tullia Catalan, "L'Organizzazione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane Dall'Unità alla Prima Guerra Mondiale," in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 11. Gli Ebrei in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 1245–1290: 1249–1253.

⁵⁷ Marco Di Giulio, "Politics, Scholarship, and Jewish Identity in Post-Unification Academia," *History of Universities* 29.1 (2016): 88–111.

⁵⁸ See Funaro, "Speculiamo, amiamo, combattiamo," 141.

⁵⁹ Letter to I.M. Jost, November 16, 1840: "Se Livorno non dà fuori che opere cabbalistiche e talmudiche, egli è perché la vicina Africa è di quegli studj amica, e nella Toscana l'ebraica letteratura è dal tutto morta," in S.D. Luzzatto, *Epistolari italiano francese latino* (Padua: Tipografia alla Minerva, 1890), vol. 1, 389.

was to foster a sense of unity among Italian Jews but also to break with a tradition of Hebrew Bible translations into the vernacular, which the Catholic Church had made its prerogative.⁶⁰ Luzzatto's edition appeared posthumously in 1871, with the typographer Sacchetto.

The gap between his contributions as a writer, the contemporary literature of which he was cognizant, and the books he published is illuminating. Shortly after his death, Benamozegh's personal library was auctioned in New York in 1900.⁶¹ The catalogue of the auction sheds further light on the circulation of books in his days: it demonstrates that although Livorno—unlike Trieste or Padua—lay outside the Ashkenazic orbit, Benamozegh had read or availed himself of a number of thinkers in Eastern Europe, including Avraham ha-Malakh (son of the Magid of Mezrich). However he chose not to reprint them, either. Beyond the issue of financial profitability, this begs the question of Benamozegh's imprint's intended audience and of his task as a publisher. As we have seen, he chose to turn his gaze elsewhere—at the margins of Italian Jewish life. Thus, it is from the periphery that he launched a more global reflection on the meaning of Judaism and the ways in which it could be made universal. The authors he chose to publish had a distinct personality, deeply anchored in a Sephardic or Maghrebi heritage, but at the same time they were not averse to an understanding of Jewish tradition that would make space for scientific discoveries or other practices typically held to represent modernity.⁶² A few questions remain unanswered: was there an implicit hierarchy between what he wrote and published? And if so, why did he choose the very publications of his printing press to unveil his identity, draw

⁶⁰ See Marco Di Giulio, "Resisting Modernity: Jewish Translations of Scripture and Rabbinic Literature in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Italy," *Modern Judaism* 35.2 (2015): 203–232. See also his "S. D. Luzzatto's Program for Restoring Jewish Leadership in Hebrew Studies," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 105.3 (2015): 340–366.

⁶¹ *Catalogue of Books from the Library of the Rabbi and Author Known as "the Jewish Plato," Elia Benamozegh of Livorno, Italy* (New York: Hirsch, 1900), 32 pages.

⁶² See, for instance, the Moroccan rabbi Isaac Bengualid who was adamant on the necessity for a secular education. Isaac Bengualid, *Vayomer Itzhak* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1876). On Bengualid, see Marc Angel, "Bengualid, Isaac," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman, online edition (Brill, 2010). Shelomo Bekhor Hutsin—for whom Benamozegh acted as a proxy, publishing on his behalf. On Hutsin, see Lev Hakak, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Literature in Babylon* (West Lafayette: Purdue University); *Iggerot ha rav Shelomo Bekhor Hutsin* (Tel Aviv, 2005).

attention to non-Eurocentric traditions and be in dialogue with his peers across the Mediterranean?

Having seemingly given up on finding unity for Italian Judaism and fighting for a more modern understanding of tradition, Benamozegh sought other avenues, and even greater unities. As a printer, he worked as a supporting actor in his effort to promote a Mediterranean unity based on writers who shared his insistence of the compatibility between tradition and modernity. As a writer, switching to French to pen *Morale juive et morale chrétienne* ("Jewish and Christian Ethics")⁶³ and his magnum opus, *Israel and Humanity*, was clearly programmatic. He sought to educate both his contemporaries around the Mediterranean, as demonstrated by his attempt to set up a newspaper for the instruction of communities around the sea. But he also tried to foster greater awareness of the meaning of Judaism beyond Judaism, and of religious unity, especially with *Israël et Humanité*—one of the rare texts printed in non-Hebrew characters, which he published in 1885 as an introductory essay which planted the seeds of his future, unfinished work, *Israël et l'Humanité*.

Benamozegh used a variety of media and outlets to convey his views: the list of his imprints sheds new light onto his networks, his financial and cultural resources, and the ways in which they foreshadow, while resisting it, the demise of previous social, geographical, and rabbinic legacies. His work seems to be made up of concentric circles, of which the inner ring—an Oriental and Mediterranean inspiration—has remained less explored. His multi-layered discourses should be an invitation to further explore the complexity and sophistication of Sephardic modern intellectual history: in this respect, Livorno and Benamozegh offer an exceptional vantage point and a way to explore it both within and beyond the boundaries of the Italian Peninsula.

⁶³ Elia Benamozegh, *Morale juive et morale chrétienne* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1867).



CHAPTER 5

Claiming Livorno: Citizenship, Commerce, and Culture in the Italian Jewish Diaspora

Alyssa Reiman

In August 1889, Aron Daniele Moreno sent a letter from his home in Tunis to his 14-year-old grandson, Ugo, on the occasion of Ugo's first extended stay in Livorno. He wrote, "I'm so happy to hear that you are making many acquaintances in Livorno, since this is the purpose of your visit; while in other cities that you have visited and will visit in the future, you can find many monuments and objects of beauty that are missing in Livorno, [in those cities] you will find yourself completely isolated."¹ With these words, the aging Daniele Moreno tried to instill in his grandson a sense of deep roots in the city the family had left almost sixty years earlier; more important than seeing ruins, or fountains, or artwork on this trip was for Ugo to cement his personal ties to Livorno.

¹ Aron Daniele Moreno to Ugo Moreno, 20 August 1889, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), Livorno.

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This grandfather's letter is full of deeply personal memories of the past and hopes for the future, yet it also is a reflection of dense political, economic, and social exchanges between Livorno and Tunisia. Throughout the nineteenth century, Livornese Jews migrated around the Mediterranean—their experiences shaped by imperial and national contexts, local cultures, and networks of people, objects, and ideas. Historians have argued that households are spaces where broader historical developments “not only resonated but were incubated,” and examining family histories can reveal the “interplay between macro and micro processes of change.”² Using the Moreno family as a case study, this chapter will untangle the nature and meaning of Italian citizenship for Livornese Jews living amidst the muddled imperial context of Tunisia. This chapter argues that imperial rivalries in Tunisia functioned not only on the level of territorial claims, but also on the level of individuals' behavior and allegiances. With the rise of the Italian nation state, earlier instrumental understandings of subjecthood became undergirded by cultural understandings of citizenship. Salient moments from the Moreno family archive demonstrate how the Moreno family emphasized connections between their commercial practices and cultural awareness in order to mobilize claims of Italian citizenship while living abroad. In their transnational lives, the Moreno family built their life in Tunisia around their connections to Livorno, and in this framework, the family's economic activities, Jewish communal ties, and political allegiances overlapped to reveal complicated intersections between their individual and collective identities.

I MEDITERRANEAN NETWORKS AND THE BONDS OF COMMERCE: LIVORNO, TUNISIA, AND THE MORENO FAMILY

During the early modern period, Livorno was a central destination for Jewish migration, and a major site of Mediterranean trade. The growth of Jewish settlement in Livorno can be traced back to 1591 and 1593, when the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I, issued a set of charters known as *Livornine*. These charters were predicated on the idea that attracting Jewish merchants to the city, particularly members of the Sephardic diaspora,

² Julia Clancy Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 289.

would promote the development of international trade.³ With its strategic geographic position and free port status, Livorno developed into a bustling port city, a central node in the exchange of goods between near and far-flung markets. In Livorno, merchants could find capital, suppliers, transportation, and markets, and a growing number of Jewish families migrated to Livorno in order to insert themselves more effectively into the routes and rhythms of Mediterranean trade.⁴

For Jewish migrants, moving to Livorno not only offered economic opportunities, but also the attractive possibility of being naturalized as Tuscan subjects. This process, known as *ballottazione*,⁵ was particularly important for merchants who could then trade in the Ottoman Empire as foreign subjects under the protection of the French, and later Austrian and Tuscan consuls.⁶ The 1782 partnership contract between the Enriches and Franchetti families explicitly outlined this principle: “Il Sig. Abram di Salomone Enriches is obligated to set forth for Livorno from Tunisia ... in order to become a Tuscan subject through *ballottazione*,” and as soon as he accomplishes this, “he should embark promptly on the first boat flying

³The privileges of the *Livornine* permitted settlers to return to Judaism without fear of the Inquisition, even if they had lived or traded as Christians elsewhere. The charter provided the right to a synagogue, the legality of Jewish holidays, and vast amounts of administrative and judicial autonomy. Jews in Livorno were not required to wear any distinguishing items of clothing or to live in an enclosed ghetto. The full text of the *Livornine* can be found in Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1990), 419–435.

⁴According to data from insurance policies, between 1765 and 1790 Jewish merchants based in Livorno controlled as much as 83 to 94 percent of exports from Livorno to North Africa and between 11 and 35 percent of exports to the Levant. Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Il posto dei negozianti ebrei nel commercio di Livorno nel Settecento,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 50 (1984): 644. For more information on the early modern history of Livorno and its Jewish community, see: Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676–1814)* (Rome: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998); Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori dal ghetto: Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 2008); Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1990); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵*Ballottazione* referred to a secret vote by which Jewish leaders admitted individual foreign Jews to the *nazione ebraica*.

⁶Until 1753, per an agreement with the Ottoman Empire, Tuscans were under the protection of the French consulate. Jean-Pierre Filippini, “La ballottazione a Livorno nel settecento,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 49 (1983): 199–268.

a peaceful flag for Izmir to assist there in the trade” of the firm.⁷ The contract clearly reflects an instrumental understanding of Livornese and Tuscan subjecthood; Abram Enriches was to pass through the city only long enough to move on with all of the benefits of a European passport, consular protection, and commercial contacts. Like many other Jewish commercial firms operating in the Mediterranean, the Enriches–Franchetti family members traced paths and shaped networks that crisscrossed the Mediterranean through Livorno.

However, over the course of the nineteenth century, Livorno began to occupy a diminishing place in the realm of international commerce. Historians have widely classified Livorno as a “port city in decline” for much of the nineteenth century. Yet it is essential not to view the history of Livorno’s economy solely through the lens of decline, or backwards from the changes associated with Italian unification and the abolition of free port status in 1868.⁸ Even as Livorno lost its preeminent position in international commerce to rival port cities such as Marseilles, Trieste, and Genoa, it continued to function as a Mediterranean entrepôt.⁹

Nevertheless, over the course of the nineteenth century, declining profits, port activities, and sources of credit all contributed to a growing sense of uneasiness amongst those living and working in Livorno. “Decline” may be too simple a term to describe the city’s history in the nineteenth century, but major changes, some of which ominous, were indeed afoot. Although the general population of Livorno continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century, the Jewish population began to decline; in the 1840s, for the first time in more than two centuries, more Jews left Livorno than arrived. In 1842, Luigi Serristori observed, “For quite some time emigration from Livorno has been notable, since this market is ceasing to

⁷ Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Gli ebrei e le attività economiche nell’area nord Africana (XVII–XVIII secolo),” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 7 (1999): 131–149: 144.

⁸ Two historians who articulate this position are Samuel Fetta, “Temps et espaces des traffics portuaires en Méditerranée: Le cas du port franc de Livourne (XVII–XIX siècles),” *Ricerche storiche* (1998): 243–273 and David LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno 1814–1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁹ Livorno suffered deeply during the Napoleonic era and British blockade, but after the reinstitution of the free port in 1814, commerce in Livorno began to grow again. In 1839, while Livorno’s traffic had fallen behind Genoa’s, Livorno was still in fifth place among Mediterranean ports, after Marseilles, Trieste, Constantinople, and Genoa. Emanuele Repetti, *Dizionario geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, vol. 2 (Florence: Presso l’autore e editore, 1838), 754.

be an active center of commerce ... the Jews of Livorno will go establish themselves wherever advantages will arise. Many will move to Africa for the resources there and for the easy employment of youth with some education.”¹⁰ The *Registri di Partenze* for the Jewish Community of Livorno from this period reveal the intense mobility in the population as rabbis, merchants, shopkeepers, bankers, and craftsmen moved alone or with their families towards places like Tunis, Marseilles, Salonika, and Alexandria. From 1825 to 1865, 29 percent of Jewish migrants from the city, or about 1380 men, women, and children, made their way from Livorno to Tunis.¹¹

The members of the Moreno family emerge as individual protagonists within this larger pattern of migration: although they permanently settled in Tunisia, their economic endeavors constituted and reconstituted ties between them and the city of their origins. Moise Moreno set out for Tunis from Livorno in 1830 with his wife Grazia and their children, Aron Daniele and Sara, invited by the *bey* of Tunisia to open a European-style pharmacy in the city.¹² In Livorno, Moise Moreno worked as a collection agent of rents and other debts, and opening a pharmacy in Tunis represented an enticing economic opportunity for the family. In Tunis, the family encountered an already established Sephardic community with European origins, the *grana*, who strongly differentiated themselves from the *twansa* or indigenous Tunisian Jewish population. Since 1710, the two communities had maintained their own synagogues, schools, cemeteries, and communal leadership, and in the 1730s, French Consul Jacques Boyer de Saint-Gervais noted that the *twansa* dressed “like Turks, while the Livornese wear hats and wigs after the Christian fashion.”¹³ The early registers of the Moreno pharmacy in Tunis mostly

¹⁰Luigi Serristori in *Livorno ed i suoi traffici*, 372 as quoted in Roberto Bachi, “La demografia dell’Ebraismo italiano prima dell’emancipazione,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel. Scritti in onore di Dante Lattes* 12, 7–9 (1938): 256–320: 284.

¹¹While water damage has made some pages difficult to read, the number of Jews moving between Livorno and Tunis seems to be: 842 men, 264 women, 274 children (1380 total). Daniela Pennacchio, “Ebrei fra Livorno e altri porti del Mediterraneo secondo i registri delle emigrazioni dell’Archivio Storico della Comunità Israelitica,” in *Studi mediterranei ed extra-europei*, ed. Vittorio Salvadorini (Pisa: Edistudio, 2002), 224.

¹²In Livorno, there was a long history of Jews being involved in the commerce of spices and medicines. In Tunisia, the *beys* often preferred having Tuscan Jews as their personal doctors. Liana Elda Funaro, “Lumi e consigli: i Bonaventura ed altri “negozianti di droghe” a Livorno nel primo Ottocento,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 15 (2008): 171–209: 191.

¹³H.Z. Hirschberg, *History of the Jews in North Africa*, vol. 2 (Boston: Brill, 1974), 98.

show clients with names such as Montefiore, Valensi, Modigliani, and Franco, suggesting that the Moreno family was well integrated with the *grana* Jewish community.¹⁴

Tunis, by the mid nineteenth century, was a rapidly growing port, exporting products such as wheat, oil, dates, and leather, and importing textiles and other manufactured goods from Europe and the Ottoman Empire. In 1834, the Neapolitan Consul Antonio Girardi observed that “the innumerable establishment of French, Sardinian, and Jewish commercial firms protected by Tuscany has given this marketplace the tone of one of the principal markets of Europe.”¹⁵ In 1874, Isacco Coriat, a Tunisian-born Jewish merchant who traveled frequently between Livorno and Tunis, wrote admiringly to his family in Livorno about the profound changes he found in Tunisia. He observed that “at the marina you see the new market of grains that you would find glorious, magnificent, it was made by European engineers ... la Goletta has become a large village with a piazza filled with the continuous interactions between Europeans and natives,” and Tunisia seemed full of economic possibility.¹⁶

For Aron Daniele Moreno, Moise’s son, his status as a Tuscan subject, and then as an Italian citizen, had distinct economic advantages. Aron Daniele chose not to work in his father’s pharmacy, but rather turned towards commerce. His legal status in Tunisia supported the pursuit of commerce, which in turn reinforced his legal position as an Italian. The Ottoman capitulations in place granted those who were classified as foreign subjects and protégés privileges such as tax exemptions and access to the consular court system. Livornese Jewish merchants were well aware of the value of being classified as “Tuscan subjects.” In 1822, the leadership of the Jewish community of Livorno responded with distress to part of an agreement between Tuscany and Tunisia that stripped Tuscan Jews of their Tuscan subjecthood after a few years of residence in Tunisia; rather, they would be regarded as Tunisian subjects and pay taxes and other duties as “native Jews.” The leadership of the Jewish community of

¹⁴ Pharmacy Register of Moise Moreno, 1819–1863, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 1, ASL, Livorno.

¹⁵ Vittorio Salvadorini, *Tunisia e Toscana* (Pisa: Edistudio, 2002), 435.

¹⁶ Isacco Coriat to “I miei amati,” 7 June 1874, as quoted in Liana Elda Funaro, “Il ruolo degli ebrei livornesi: due percorsi individuali su uno sfondo mediterraneo,” in *I laboratori toscani della democrazia e del Risorgimento: La ‘repubblica’ di Livorno, l’“altro” Granducato, il sogno italiano di rinnovamento*, eds. Laura Dinelli and Luciano Bernardini (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2004), 79–98: 92.

Livorno protested that the Tuscan government could not “agree to such a condition prejudiced against some of its subjects and so injurious to commerce,” emphasizing the commercial importance for the Tuscan Grand Duchy of continuing to consider Jews living abroad as Tuscan subjects and of integrating the diaspora of Livornese Jews into the Tuscan state.¹⁷ An 1846 agreement between Tunisia and Tuscany stipulated that all Livornese Jews who had moved to Tunisia after 1822, as well as any future emigrants, would remain under Tuscan jurisdiction. By 1871, there were over a thousand Jews in Tunisia under the jurisdiction of the recently unified state of Italy.¹⁸

As a Tuscan subject and a member of an extended trading diaspora, Aron Daniele Moreno was uniquely positioned to join “preexisting commercial networks,” even if bonds of trust were not necessarily automatic among coreligionists.¹⁹ In the 1860s, Aron Daniele worked as the main representative in Tunis of Isacco Coriat, assisting him in the purchase and sale of goods, banking activities, and business exchanges. Their business relationship demanded that they exchange letters frequently; yet both were aware of the distance separating them, remarking on the “disastrous heavy winter storms” disrupting navigation between the two cities. In the mid-1860s, Coriat’s scrawling letters were full of notes on broad political and economic challenges such as the American Civil War or the 1864 Revolt in Tunisia and descriptions of the prices and quality of disparate goods such as sugar, cotton, wool, manufactured products, and oil. Declining profit margins in the Livornese economy made every small price difference or matter of speculation more important.

Amidst news of storms, political conflicts, prices, and quantities, Daniele Moreno and Isacco Coriat’s letters from the mid-1860s capture a particularly unstable moment in their relationship. In July 1863, Moreno reported to Coriat that he was working tirelessly to put the accounting books in order. He then broached the delicate subject of his place in the firm, and his desire for some changes. His employment with the firm had required many “sacrifices” and expenses, and after having recovered recently from an illness, he found himself tormented by the thoughts of “how it would have threatened my beloved family if I found myself unable to work any-

¹⁷ Copialettere, 11 November 1822, Archivio della comunità ebraica di Livorno (ACEL), Livorno.

¹⁸ Bachi, “La demografia dell’Ebraismo italiano prima dell’emancipazione,” 287.

¹⁹ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 22.

more. Their misery would be all my fault.” He concludes that bringing his unhappiness to Coriat’s attention was an “obligation of his conscience,” and he hoped that it would be considered as “the outpouring of the heart of one brother to another.”²⁰ A few weeks later, Moreno wrote again to Coriat about his concerns, and repeated his grievances even more explicitly, all the while reassuring his senior partner that he had no intention to displease him. He wrote that

from the time when I took direction of your firm here, I no longer have been doing business for myself ... I have directed my friends away from giving me commissions in the areas that the firm was working in ... with all sincerity, you be the judge, if I’ve done well or badly to sacrifice the best years of my life in Barbary to serve one person or another ... I hope that you understand my sincere feelings for you and don’t doubt my friendship and attachment.²¹

In reply to this outpouring, Coriat said simply that he understood Moreno’s feelings and wanted him to be happy, offering to give him 10 percent of the net earnings of the firm in Tunis—an offer Moreno in turn accepted.²² As Francesca Trivellato has pointed out, the “language of friendship, love and affection was highly utilitarian” in business letters; it implied integrity and loyalty across distances.²³ Nevertheless, expressions of emotional anguish raised the stakes of the negotiation above the confines of formulaic language. Aron Daniele used the image of himself as a father trying to build a stable foundation for his family as a way to leverage the personal ties between him and Coriat and maneuver his place within this economic network to his advantage.

In 1876, Aron Daniele Moreno and his sons Raffaello and Leone formed their own family firm for their commercial and banking activities, writing that “their experience in the economic affairs of this Regency ... and many good relations would allow them to satisfy” their business obligations.²⁴

²⁰ Aron Daniele Moreno to Isacco Coriat, 14 July 1863, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

²¹ Aron Daniele Moreno to Isacco Coriat, 29 July 1863, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

²² Isacco Coriat to Aron Daniele Moreno, Undated letter 1863, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

²³ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 181.

²⁴ Registration of Commercial firm, 1 August 1876, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 5, ASL, Livorno.

Alongside the official documents that registered their family firm, a separate contract brought in Isacco Coriat as a limited partner who would help provide part of the total capital of the firm, while leaving the daily direction and personal liability to the managing partners.²⁵ In formalizing their alliance with an agreement of *accomandita*, Moreno and Coriat created a partnership that rested not only on their longstanding personal relationship, but also on a legal foundation. Over the course of decades, the Coriat and Moreno families continued to align their economic interests. Even after both Aron Daniele Moreno and Isacco Coriat died in the last decade of the nineteenth century and one son, Leone Moreno, retired from the firm to focus on agricultural pursuits, Raffaello, the new director of the firm, renewed partnership agreements with Coriat's daughters, and eventually grandchildren, up to 1914. At the conclusion of their business partnership, Mathilde Enriques, one of Coriat's daughters, wrote to Ugo Moreno, "Apart from the threads of economic interest between us, I consider your family as mine"; for the Moreno and Coriat families, the bonds of commerce became as strong as the ties of family.²⁶

The Moreno family firm specialized in importing wood, iron, marble, and other construction materials from Europe to Tunisia, and successfully exploited the late nineteenth-century building boom in Tunisia.²⁷ The Moreno family expanded the credit operations of the firm, granting loans and mortgages in a wide range of amounts to Muslims, Jews, and Christians. They loaned money to the *bey* of Tunis as well as to the Italian consul. Beginning in the 1870s, the Moreno family also began to purchase homes and warehouses in Tunisia, a clear investment in their life in Tunisia. By the early twentieth century, the Morenos had been removed from Livorno and Italy for over seventy years. And yet, they chose to send each

²⁵ The founding capital of society was 350,000 *piastre* with 250,000 from Isacco Coriat and 100,000 from Moreno. Two-fifths of either the profits or losses went to Isacco, while three-fifths went to Daniele Moreno and his sons, Raffaello and Leone. Contract of 1 August 1876, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 5, ASL, Livorno.

²⁶ Mathilde Enriques to Ugo Moreno, 25 January 1914, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 5, ASL, Livorno.

²⁷ In 1900, the firm was reconstituted as Maison Raffaello Moreno & C., and all of the relevant documents were written thereafter in French. In 1913, after the death of Raffaello, Ugo Moreno, a lawyer by profession, and Daniele Cardoso (his brother-in-law) formed a firm under the name Moreno Fils and Co., Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 5, ASL, Livorno.

generation of sons back to Italy for their university education, and frequently exchanged letters, photographs, and visits with their wide network of family and friends in Italy.

For the Moreno family, mobility between Italy and Tunisia created overlapping loyalties and a layered sense of their place in the world. They identified as “European Jews,” culturally distinct from the indigenous Jews of Tunisia. In his letter to his grandson, Aron Daniele praised Ugo for attending services at the synagogue of Livorno during his visit, because there he would be able to observe firsthand the “dignity and good order that us Jews of civilized countries have in our synagogues, we are equal to all other religions,” for if only having in mind what is “done here in Tunisia ... doubts of this [civilization] can arise in a young mind.” Aron Daniele chose to see himself reflected in the Jewish community of Livorno, and emphasized to his grandson the importance of observing the religious traditions and practices of “us Jews of civilized countries” in its original context. In the mirror image of this religious experience, Isacco Coriat, visiting his native Tunisia from Livorno, complained that he could not remain in the synagogue long because he was being “asphyxiated by the stink of *Handak* (sewage)” and the extreme heat.²⁸ He held himself above the religious practices and spaces of Jews in Tunisia, regarding them as foreign and other.

2 BECOMING “ITALIANS” IN THE TUNISIAN CONTEXT: THE MORENO FAMILY AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

In its 1897 obituary for Aron Daniele Moreno, *L'Unione*, the Italian newspaper in Tunis, noted that his loss was mourned by “every social class and every nationality,” before stating that “[t]hroughout the commercial and political vicissitudes of this country, he always cherished, loved, and served his *patria* ... with the conviction of carrying out a religious duty.” The newspaper asserted that it was this deeply felt religion of patriotism that Aron Daniele had passed down as an inheritance to his children and grandchildren.²⁹ The newspaper account of Aron Daniele Moreno’s life situates him firmly as a prominent merchant, a notable member of the Jewish community, and an admired Italian patriot. And yet in late nine-

²⁸Funaro, “Il ruolo degli ebrei livornesi,” 92.

²⁹Obituary of Aron Daniele Moreno in *L'Unione*, 24 December 1897, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

teenth-century Tunisia, none of these identities or roles could be taken as a given. Mary Dewhurst Lewis notes that in colonial Tunisia “the fluidity of social identity made it possible for a single individual to belong to more than one group in his or her lifetime or to invoke different identities in different circumstances.”³⁰ As the Moreno family navigated the complicated political and cultural landscape of Tunisia, particularly after the advent of the French protectorate, they were both shaped by their legal status as Italian citizens and architects of the cultural and social meaning behind their citizenship.

Even after the declaration of the French protectorate in 1881–1882, Italy and Great Britain retained substantial interests and influences in Tunisia. Their populations outnumbered the French in the settler population until well into the twentieth century. Earlier waves of Italian migrants to Tunisia were joined in the 1870s and 1880s by tens of thousands of subsistence migrants, mostly from the South and Sicily. By 1906, the Italian community numbered 81,000, while the French numbered 34,000. This was a source of constant controversy for the French, who often decried the Italian “state within a state” or the “Italian peril.” The squabbling between Italy and France over Tunisia eventually seemed to be settled by their 1896 treaty, in which, in return for Italy’s recognition of the protectorate, France agreed to recognize Italian citizenship and institutions and grant Italy most-favored-nation trading status. One of the most important conditions of the treaty guaranteed Italians and their descendants born in Tunisia the right to maintain Italian nationality, a provision that would remain in place until 1921, when nationality laws were changed to favor French interests.³¹

In Tunisia, nationality was both a legal category and a category of practice, sometimes ignored and sometimes brandished. Although nationality was not always at the forefront of people’s minds as they went about their everyday work, there were moments and contexts in which being recognized as a foreign national or protégé was extremely important. In 1883, the Italian Consulate in Tunisia presented a certificate of nationality to Aron Daniele Moreno who was “born in Livorno, residing in Tunisia,” a “merchant by profession and an Italian citizen,” and inscribed him in their

³⁰Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 47.

³¹Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 59.

official registers.³² In places of contested imperial rivalries such as Tunisia, being counted and inscribed as a foreign national “functioned as a common language for sorting, identifying, and making one’s way.”³³ As Sarah Stein has argued, foreign status “marked [people] as white, European, and bourgeois, part of the power structure,” while also providing “relief from some taxes and tolls, paperwork that eased intra and extra regional travel, a measure of legal protection, and a more amorphous but still vital sense of political security.”³⁴ Treaties between France and Italy had established that Italian nationality was an inherited status; however, it still required renewed proof for those who wanted to enjoy the advantages it conferred. In 1912, Raffaello Moreno wrote to a relative in Livorno in order to receive a notarized record of the births of his father and grandfather, which served to document his origins in Livorno and his right to claim Italian citizenship.³⁵ The Italian consular records reveal many others pushing up against this legal boundary, often tracing somewhat tenuous family connections to Livorno in order to claim their rights as Italian nationals.³⁶

Emigration abroad had a deep impact on definitions of Italian citizenship and nationality. Italian lawmakers supported an understanding of nationality as a potent bond that could survive emigration away from the nation.³⁷ In 1874, even before mass emigration began in earnest, political economist Leone Carpi defined the word *colonie* as settlements of Italians abroad, rather than territories, and asserted that building ties with these

³² Certificate of Nationality, 3 January 1883, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

³³ Clancy Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 243.

³⁴ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Protected Persons? The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora, the British State, and the Persistence of Empire,” *The American Historical Review* 116, 1 (2011): 80–108: 93, 88.

³⁵ Raffaello Moreno to Rosina Corcos, 12 March 1912, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

³⁶ In just one example from the consular records, in 1891, local authorities in Egypt accused Jacob Levi Acobes of “pretending” to have Italian nationality. Jacob Levi Acobes traced his nationality back to his grandfather, born in 1810 in Livorno, and submitted documents from the Jewish community in Livorno as proof to the consulate. Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Ambasciata d’Italia in Alessandria d’Egitto, box 40 (1891), Rome, Italy.

³⁷ Pamela Ballinger, “Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship: Italian Repatriation and the Redefinition of National Identity after World War I,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, 3 (2007): 713–741: 725.

scattered emigrants was particularly important in light of the recent unification of Italy.³⁸ Tunisia was central to this goal because of its geographical proximity to Italy. Despite French rule in Tunisia, Italian politicians conceptualized Italians in the territory as part of a “greater Italy” that spanned the Mediterranean. This idea had numerous implications, both small and large. For example, the Italian government fought hard and successfully for a concession from the French that classified postage on letters sent between Italy and Tunisia as local.³⁹ Tensions over Tunisia also had vast consequences for Italy’s foreign policy, leading to the “commercial war” Italy waged against France in the 1880s and Italy’s unlikely military alliance with Germany and Austria Hungary in 1882.⁴⁰ “Greater Italy” was a transnational project that sought in turn to reify the power of the Italian nation state. As they moved away from Italy, many migrants confronted the power of the nation state for the first time as they negotiated policies from postage stamps to passports, from military service to taxes. Many migrants “became ‘Italian’ only when they left home.”⁴¹

In the Tunisian context, Italian citizenship did not signify political participation. Rather, Italian citizenship acquired meaning in social and cultural settings and in feelings of “belonging.” Certainly, there was no single or monolithic Italian colony in Tunisia. There were political refugees from the Risorgimento, laborers and agricultural workers from Sicily and Southern Italy, and domestic workers, mainly women, from central and Southern Italy. The experience of “becoming Italian” in Tunisia was undoubtedly affected by social class, gender, religion, place of origin, and so on. In the case of the Moreno family, their economic endeavors, social status, and cultural attachments were deeply enmeshed pursuits. The Morenos enacted their nationality through forms of bourgeois sociability that reinforced their privileged socio-economic status. They channeled nationalist sentiment into action to defend working class Italian migrants;

³⁸ Mark Choate, “Identity Politics and Political Perception in the European Settlement of Tunisia: The French Colony vs. the Italian Colony,” *French Colonial History* 8 (2007): 97–109: 98.

³⁹ Choate, “Identity Politics and Political Perception in the European Settlement of Tunisia,” 104.

⁴⁰ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World: 1860–1960* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 95.

⁴¹ Donna Gabaccia, “Is Everywhere Nowhere? Italy’s Transnational Migrations and the Immigrant Paradigm of American History,” *Journal of American History* 86, 3 (December 1999): 1115–1134: 1116.

Leone Moreno only hired Italian workers at his mills in Zaghoun, saving for years the letters that grateful workers and their families wrote to him.⁴² The family was conspicuous in their involvement with charitable organizations, supporting the founding of Italian newspapers, hospitals, and schools.⁴³

Intertwined with the Moreno family's Italian identity was their sense of place in Tunisian society as members of the *grana* Jewish community. The *grana* community was not solely Italian in terms of origins, citizenship, or culture; there were members who held French citizenship or prioritized French language and culture. However, many in the community did have occasion to feel connected to Italy. The Italian national holiday, the *Festa dello Statuto*, was celebrated with pomp and circumstance in the synagogue, and Italian officials were present at the openings of Jewish hospitals and schools. By the twentieth century, many members of the Moreno family were not religiously observant, but they preserved a sense of belonging to a Jewish identity. They maintained their connections to the *grana* community through their charitable contributions and marriages with other "European Jews." For the Moreno family, participating in Italian organizations also meant that they were consistently surrounded by other members of bourgeois Jewish families. Throughout the turbulent twentieth century, Ugo Moreno collected newspaper clippings on the conditions of the Jews of Europe and Tunisia. And when the Italian Consul, in an attempt to unravel personal status laws in Tunisia, asked Ugo Moreno about Jewish marriages, Ugo Moreno gave a detailed and nuanced explanation that he formulated as a Jew, as an Italian, and as a lawyer.⁴⁴

Through their creation and participation in Italian institutional spaces, members of the Moreno family were actively involved in a project to construct the Italian nation in diaspora.⁴⁵ The Italian Chamber of Commerce in Tunis, founded in 1883, represented one of the many efforts to create

⁴² Consul General to Leone Moreno, 22 March 1906, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 10, ASL, Livorno.

⁴³ Evidence of the Moreno family's charitable contributions and activities can be found throughout the Moreno Archive, in particular boxes 3, 6, 8, and 10. Archivio della famiglia Moreno, ASL, Livorno.

⁴⁴ Ugo Moreno to Consul General of Italy, July 1906, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 8, ASL, Livorno.

⁴⁵ Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 10.

links between Italy and Italian communities abroad. The Italian government classified the Chamber of Commerce in Tunis as a provincial unit, and subsidized it financially in the hopes that Italian emigrants abroad would serve as a strong market for Italian exports. The Chamber of Commerce in Tunis regularly communicated with the Italian government to ask for interventions in matters such as the docking of steamers in Tunis, tariffs on railroad and maritime transports, and import duties.⁴⁶ In Tunisia, Jews of Italian descent were at the forefront of this organizational effort; in 1903, there were 61 Jewish members of the Chamber out of a total of 110. Aron Daniele Moreno was a founding member, and Raffaello Moreno served as a president of the organization.⁴⁷

Economist, author, and future president of the Italian Republic, Luigi Einaudi, stated firmly in his 1900 work, *A Merchant Prince*, that “trade follows the footsteps of the emigrant, but not all emigrants, only those who even after many generations preserve relations of affection and interests and social customs with the land in which they or their ancestors were born.”⁴⁸ As Raffaello Moreno wrote, the goals of the Chamber of Commerce were to “contribute with all of its effort to the beautiful country that hosts us, with the high and honored tradition of Italian commerce ... we are spurred on by affection for our beloved *patria* ... whose name and light inspires our actions.”⁴⁹ Raffaello emphasized the long history of Italian business activities in Tunis, and the importance of furthering commercial relations between Italy and Tunisia. In his mental map, he distinguished clearly between the “country that hosts us” and the homeland of Italy, and envisioned the Italians living in Tunisia as architects of growth through their connection to both places. He also emphasized the crucial role of Italian organizations in inculcating a powerful, durable, and tangible loyalty to Italy—a sentiment that did not just exist amorphously, but could have concrete influence on daily lives and economic choices.

⁴⁶Raffaello Moreno to Consul General of Italy, undated 1898, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

⁴⁷Official Bulletin of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Tunis, January–February 1903, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

⁴⁸Luigi Einaudi, *A Merchant Prince*, 10, as quoted in Mark Choate, “Sending States’ Transnational Interventions in Politics, Culture, and Economics: The Historical Example of Italy,” *International Migration Review* 41, 3 (2007): 743.

⁴⁹Raffaello Moreno to Consul General of Italy, undated 1898, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

The activities of the Chamber of Commerce and the discourse around forging economic connections across the Mediterranean took place amidst the commercial and imperial rivalry between Italy and France. In direct response to the foundation of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Tunis, the French government created its own version of a Chamber of Commerce (*Syndicat International de défense des intérêts commerciaux, industriels, agricoles, et financiers de la Tunisie*) in 1884.⁵⁰ When they approached Aron Daniele Moreno to join their ranks, he replied firmly that he could not, for “I think that the idea of the absolute supremacy of the French element, which you have made the crux of your association, is irreconcilable with the feelings that I have for the commercial importance of our Italian colony,” leading the Consul General of Italy to write him a note full of congratulations and compliments for his “beautiful letter.”⁵¹ The reply from the French committee was decidedly frosty: “we [want] to reconcile all of the commercial interests of Tunisia without distinction of nationality. We regret that there are so many rifts between Italy and France ... [and] divisions in the country that we inhabit.”⁵²

In 1905, the French newspaper in Tunisia noted the conflict between French imperial ambitions and the Italian colony’s enduring autonomy in stark terms: “above the workers and farmers, organizing them and trying to lead them, there is an Italian bourgeoisie in Tunis of industrialists, merchants, lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors, and architects ... [they] have attempted to maintain an Italian group, impenetrable to French influence.”⁵³ In this characterization of the “Italian peril,” the author expressed a paternalistic fear not only of the large numbers of Italian workers in Tunisia, but also of the existence of leaders capable of influencing and directing these masses. The French, often in veiled antisemitic language, also expressed concerns over both indigenous and “Livornese” Jews manipulating the overlapping powers in Tunisia to their advantage.⁵⁴ From the French perspective, Livornese Jews represented a particular

⁵⁰ Aron Daniele Moreno to President of *Syndicat International de défense des intérêts commerciaux*, 12 August 1884, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

⁵¹ Consul General to Aron Daniele Moreno, 10 October 1884, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

⁵² President of *Syndicat International de défense des intérêts commerciaux* to Aron Daniele Moreno, 14 August 1884, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2, ASL, Livorno.

⁵³ Mark Choate, “The Tunisia Paradox: Italy’s Strategic Aims, French Imperial Rule, and Migration in the Mediterranean Basin,” *California Italian Studies* 1 (2010): 1–20: 8.

⁵⁴ Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 89.

potential threat since they seemed to be a distinct segment of the broader class of Italian leadership wielding cultural and economic influence amongst the Italian community.

Italian schools and other educational, cultural, or social welfare institutions in Tunisia were a source of anxiety and animosity for the French well into the twentieth century.⁵⁵ These organizations sought to create and maintain an Italian communal identity, even in the face of deep class, regional, and religious tensions within the colony. Above and beyond, the “Italian colony” stood against the assimilationist pressures of the French. The teachers of the *Liceo Ginnasiale Vittorio Emanuele II* declared that “this colony needs to be defended from the constant and ever more hostile attacks that [the French] bring against our nationality ... Us teachers have the sacrosanct duty of instilling and maintaining in this numerous colony the culture of our *patria* and the sentiments of *italianità*.”⁵⁶ The Dante Alighieri Committee of Tunis lobbied the Italian government repeatedly for financial support of the 21 Italian state schools in Tunis. They argued that financial support should be determined “not so much by the number of local Italians who would probably attend the schools, as much as by the stature and importance of Italy’s traditional interests in [this country].”⁵⁷ In a letter written on behalf of the Dante Alighieri Society, Raffaello Moreno repeatedly drew upon these formulations in describing the Italian colony as faced by the external danger of French policies and the internal threat of a new generation of Italians “lost without access to their language and culture.”⁵⁸ Raffaello Moreno’s lament that without the growth of Italian schools new generations of Italians would lose their cultural patrimony suggests a type of bourgeois “civilizing mission” among the larger Italian population of Tunisia.

The *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which opened its first school for Jewish boys in Tunisia in 1878, was long associated with a “civilizing mission” that decidedly privileged the French language.⁵⁹ Alliance schools

⁵⁵ Clancy Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 268.

⁵⁶ Teachers to Raffaello Moreno, 4 June 1901, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

⁵⁷ Dante Alighieri Society of Tunisia Committee to President Prof. Villari, 7 February 1902 as quoted in Choate, “Tunisia Paradox,” 10.

⁵⁸ Raffaello Moreno, undated, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

⁵⁹ For more information on the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, see: Michael Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862–1962* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1984) and Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The*

were granted French protection to combat Italian schooling initiatives in Tunisia. The Moreno family gave charitable support to the Alliance-run schools, although they chose to educate their children at Italian language schools. At the turn of the century, Ugo Moreno rallied the members of the Dante Alighieri to sponsor an Italian language course at the Alliance schools.⁶⁰ He argued that Italian would be an important economic tool for this school population. He also believed that the course would inspire the cultural awareness of the students and promote Italian interests.⁶¹ Ugo Moreno spoke and wrote French, Italian, and Arabic in various contexts, and his push to implement the Italian language course at the Alliance schools revealed an attitude towards language that was at the same time instrumental and nationalistic.

In 1901, Ugo Moreno wrote that “turning one’s gaze onto a map of the Mediterranean basin, one considers ... the jutting out of the Italian peninsula towards the coast of Africa, [and] the idea is immediately borne that in every era the political as well as commercial relationships between the two regions should be frequent and uninterrupted.”⁶² Ugo Moreno forcefully articulated tracing economic opportunities on the map of the Mediterranean, and staked Italy’s claim to be a dominant force in the Mediterranean world. In 1913, he was a founding member of the Italo-Libica Society, which held as its mission, “the commerce and manufacturing of goods and furniture and the commerce of wood and construction materials in Libya.”⁶³ The Moreno family firm dealt in importing construction materials, so there were certainly economic advantages to this endeavor. At the same time, the joint society was also an effort to participate in building the colonial project of Italy—from Tunisia, part of France’s empire, Italian citizens tried to help Italy “carve” its own niche of

Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁶⁰ Report of Dante Alighieri Society of Tunis, 1913–1914, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

⁶¹ Report of Dante Alighieri Society of Tunis, 1913–1914, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

⁶² Ugo Moreno, “Brevi cenni sulle antiche relazioni commerciali degli stati italiani con Tunisi,” *Bollettino Ufficiale*, n. 13, Sept–Oct 1901, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 6, ASL, Livorno.

⁶³ Founding papers of the Italo-Libica Society, 1913, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, ASL, Livorno.

North Africa.⁶⁴ After World War I, issues of sovereignty, nationality, and imperial control continued to be pressing, especially amidst broad post-war demands for national self-determination. The “‘scramble’ among European powers for empire never really ended,”⁶⁵ and in the 1920s, the French attempted to buttress the French population of Tunisia by declaring that “foreign” or “European” nationals born in Tunisia would be considered French.⁶⁶ In 1922, the *Lega Franco-Italiana della Tunisia* (Tunisia’s French-Italian League) invited Alexander Millerand, president of the French Republic, to an event in Tunis, together with members of both French and Italian institutions. Speaking in his role as president of the *Patronato degli Emigranti Italiani* (Assistance Organization for Italian Emigrants), Ugo Moreno made a speech on the shared Latin origins and intersecting goals of Italy and France: “there are deep roots in the affinity of the two peoples, in the perfect correspondence of their national genius and ... in the common ideal of the two peoples to fill the world ... Our sacred Mediterranean sea, upon whose shores the most glorious civilizations have already surged and blossomed, will be the chosen place where an arising new humanity will flourish.”⁶⁷ During World War I, Ugo Moreno had been unapologetic and fierce in his support of the Italian war effort and the “glorious redemption” of Trento and Trieste. By 1922, speaking to a room crowded with both Italians and Frenchmen, Ugo was able to look hopefully towards the future and call upon French and Italians to share an imperial future in the Mediterranean.

* * *

In crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Livorno to Tunis, the Moreno family traversed geographical, political, linguistic, and cultural boundaries in their daily lives. The reality of individual lives is too messy to fit into

⁶⁴ During the late nineteenth century, Italy’s imperial interests centered around expanding throughout the Mediterranean basin, and the Italian state looked to establish colonies in North and East Africa. After the disappointment of losing Tunisia, Italy gained Somalia as a protectorate in 1889 and claimed Eritrea as a colony soon after. In 1896, Italy’s defeat to Ethiopian troops at Adowa destroyed the hopes of Italian imperialists until 1911–1912, when Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire and subsequently gained Libya and the Dodecanese Islands. Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World*, 97–99.

⁶⁵ Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 129.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 129.

⁶⁷ Ugo Moreno speech to Lega Franco-Italiana della Tunisia, 22 April 1922, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 6, ASL, Livorno.

neat boxes, and in their movements through the city, the Moreno family certainly would have invoked different identities in different moments and places. However, examining the rhetoric and behavior of the Moreno family in Tunis during the late nineteenth century sheds light on how Livornese Jews could ascribe meaning to their claims of Italian citizenship through their participation in commercial networks and social and cultural milieus that reinforced their connections to Italy. Belonging to a long diaspora of Livornese Jews in Tunisia allowed the Moreno family to establish their claims of belonging to the modern Italian nation state. At the same time, the heterogeneity of state power in Tunisia offered commercial advantages to the Morenos and created space for them to maneuver within their allegiances. Generations after settling in Tunisia, the Moreno family formulated citizenship as a linguistic and cultural affinity, and associated it not only with their economic or charitable endeavors, but with an emotional and affective force. They enacted their nationality, validating their status as Italians making their way in a French protectorate, and demonstrated time and again the interconnected strands of identity, community, citizenship, and belonging.



CHAPTER 6

Living in Exile: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Study of Religion in Italy (1890s–1930s)

Cristiana Facchini

Recent scholarship on the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* has turned its attention to national contexts outside of the German one, where the scientific inquiry of Judaism was deeply rooted.¹ The Italian case, on which this chapter focuses, is particularly interesting, as it stands both at the center and at the periphery of this intellectual endeavor, and it therefore presents

¹For a general outline see Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1994). For a general overview: Kerstin von der Krone and Mirjam Thulin, “Wissenschaft in Context: A Research Essay on Wissenschaft des Judentums,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* vol. 58 (2013): 249–280. For an interesting study on the United States see Aaron Hughes, *The Study of Judaism: Authenticity, Identity, Scholarship* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013).

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a set of questions that are linked to religion at large, in relation to a society undergoing major cultural and political shifts.

The study of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* may be approached through different perspectives: one could focus on scholarly institutions, which were mainly rabbinical theological seminaries, and, less frequently, universities, whose mission was allegedly secular.² Or one could focus on its members, who generally held different opinions on the role of Judaism in contemporary society, spanning from the most pessimistic (such as the opinion attributed to Moritz Steinschneider) to more constructive views, meant to place the study of Judaism at the very core of modern society.³

In this chapter, I analyze the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Italy between the 1890s and the 1930s: this period ought to be considered of great interest due to the transnational dimension of the Jewish world at large and the political transformation of Italy from a Liberal regime to Fascism. This period represents, in my reconstruction, the third phase of the Italian *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.⁴ The first phase, which precedes the formation of the Kingdom of Italy, is characterized by a regional differentiation in terms of religious culture, with references and ties to either France or the German-speaking Habsburg Empire. A second period spanned from the unification of Italy (1860s) to the end of the nineteenth century, a time of strong conflict between the Church and the state. During these years, politics of “secularization” were supported at the establishment level and

² There is no extensive research on the European production of knowledge in relation to religions, and Judaism in particular. In some countries the process of “scientification” of religion took place in different institutions, including universities, which were reorganized according to a Humboldtian model. Some general remarks can be found in Giovanni Filoramo, *Cos’è la religione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2004). The production of knowledge about religion is an interesting lens through which to analyze the development of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and more broadly, the intertwined discourse on religion and Christianity, with which it was often entangled. See also Kocku von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion: An Historical Study of Discursive Changes, 1800–2000* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

³ For a better evaluation of Steinschneider’s work see: *Studies on Steinschneider: Moritz Steinschneider and the Emergence of the Science of Judaism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, eds. Reimund Leicht and Gad Freudenthal (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁴ This chapter is the second installment of a work devoted to Christian and Jews in Italy, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and historiography of religion. The first introductory part was presented in Oxford, in 2012. See Cristiana Facchini, “The Making of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in a Catholic Country. The Case of Italy,” in *Wissenschaft des Judentums in Europe: Comparative and Transnational Perspectives*, eds. Christian Wiese and Mirjam Thulin (Studia Judaica) (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

discourses about religion in general are very relevant. In Italy, this period is characterized by a strong conflict with the Catholic Church and the marginalization of a political Catholic elite that had previously played an important role in addressing a new understanding of Christian–Jewish relations.⁵ The case of Italy shows great similarities with France, where the Church and a secularizing anti-clerical component of society were in deep conflict at least since the French Revolution. This anti-clerical tradition gave birth, in some countries, to Catholic parties, some of which held also anti-Semitic agendas.⁶ Unlike Germany, where the *Kulturkampf* launched by Bismarck aimed to attack the conspicuous Catholic minority, France and Italy were characterized by an overwhelming Catholic culture, with its national historical features and a similar anti-Catholic culture. Against this backdrop, Italian Jews were endowed with political rights and a small component of the Italian Jewish elite had the opportunity to enter state institutions and contribute to the formative years of the new kingdom.⁷ During this period, a range of disparate critical discourses on religion developed; many Italian Jewish intellectuals discussed representations and notions of Judaism, just as scholarship and reform of religion went hand in hand in many European countries.⁸ The interpretation of the history of Judaism, and its meaning within this modernizing process, is not irrelevant for European history, and debates between scholars who were part of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and other intellectuals are instructive.

⁵For this purpose see David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) and, more specifically, Emanuele D'Antonio, *La società udinese e gli ebrei fra la restaurazione e l'età unitaria. Mondi cattolici, emancipazione e integrazione della minoranza ebraica a Udine 1830–1866/1870* (Udine: Pio Paschini, 2012).

⁶There might be some similarities with France, although French Catholics were politically more active in organizing political parties. See Pierre Pierrard, *Juifs et catholiques français d'Edouard Drumont à Jacob Kaplan, 1886–1994* (Paris: Cerf, 1997).

⁷For a general overview see Elisabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy, 1848–1915* (London and Portland, OH: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011); Corrado Vivanti, ed., *Storia d'Italia 11. Storia degli ebrei d'Italia. Dall'emancipazione a oggi*, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1997).

⁸See Cristiana Facchini, *David Castelli. Ebraismo e scienze delle religioni tra Otto e Novecento* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005); Alessandro Guetta, *Philosophy and Kabbalah: the Reconciliation of Western Thought and Jewish Esotericism* (New York: SUNY Press, 2010 [Italian version 1998]); more recently, Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews: Family, Gender, Religion and the Nation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017 [Italian version 2011]).

By the end of the nineteenth century the faith in science started to wane, and a third phase began, spanning from the crisis of the *fin de siècle* to Fascism (1922–1943).⁹ This period is dense in terms of cultural and political events: it witnessed the transformation of the political system from a liberal regime to a totalitarian state, the rise of political Catholicism and the alliance between state and Church, a world war and the deep crisis that grew out of it, and the rise of Zionism. During the first decades of the twentieth century more foreign Jews arrived in Italy. Although Italy was not a hub of immigration, in contrast to other countries, it did indeed attract Jews from elsewhere in small numbers and for various reasons. By the 1930s a small migratory wave had reached the country: some were students who wanted to enroll in the universities which were increasingly barred to them in their native lands, others sought job opportunities, or followed the path created by small groups of exiles who had fled for political reasons.¹⁰ The period that comprises the end of the Liberal age and the rise and consolidation of Fascism is of great interest for the study of religion: scholars of various religious backgrounds encountered one another, and as a result their research was influenced by numerous and diverse currents of European thought. However, their lives encountered innumerable obstacles, often of a political nature with the rise of Fascism. The implementation of the racial laws was, indeed, a tragic development in the lives and works of Jewish scholars and students, some of whom reached Italy because of Mussolini's promise that the country was devoid of anti-Semitism.¹¹

One of the master narratives of Jewish historiography when it comes to the Italian *Wissenschaft* starts with the arrival to Italy of a small group of "Polish" (Galician) rabbis, who were mostly educated at the Rabbinical Theological Seminary of Breslau and in German universities. Like many

⁹ Facchini, "The Making of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*."

¹⁰ For some information about Russian émigrés see: Asher Salah, "From Odessa to Florence: Elena Comparetti Raffalovich. A Jewish Russian Woman in Nineteenth-Century Italy," in *Portrait of Italian Jewish Life (1800s–1930s)*, eds. Tullia Catalan and Cristiana Facchini, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n.8 November 2015; an interesting insight in Clara Sereni, *Il gioco dei regni* (Florence: Giunti, 1993).

¹¹ Ludwig's interview appeared in 1932. Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961); Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000) and idem, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. by John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2006).

other rabbis who engaged with scholarship on Judaism, they acted both as members of the Italian Jewish community with its local rationale, and as scholars of Judaism operating within the greater network of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and European scholarship on religion. As we shall see, in their capacity as rabbis, they were also exposed to the political whims of the Fascist regime, being simultaneously fully integrated into its fabric.¹²

I will interpret their works alongside the production of a younger generation of Italian Jews, who were born around the 1870s or 1880s and whose stories are parallel to the ones of the “Polish rabbis.” This Italian generation of scholars was influenced by a culture that had been, as I said, characterized by the conflict with the Catholic Church, and by the establishment of Positivism. Many among them felt obliged to rebel against the tradition of Positivism: they shared similar paths of cultural education, and were especially imbued with the ethos of neo-Idealism, whose main tenets were elaborated by the Italian philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce and the powerful academic and then Fascist Minister of Culture, Giovanni Gentile.¹³

In doing so, I will focus on themes that were both relevant for the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and for scholarship on religious issues, especially the ones related to the history of Judaism, its relationship with the rise of Christianity, and the research on the historical Jesus.

1 WANDERING SCHOLARS: THE ARRIVAL OF THE POLISH RABBIS

By the beginning of the twentieth century the study of religion had become a well-established academic discipline or an important topic of research among psychologists and sociologists, being significant for philosophers

¹²The foundation of Jewish theological seminaries was a widespread European and then American phenomenon. They were modeled after the Protestant and, sometimes, Catholic theological seminaries, and mainly meant to form an educated and modern religious leadership. For Breslau see *Das jüdisch-theologische Seminar (Fränkelsche Stiftung) zu Breslau, am Tage seines fünfundzwanzigjährigen Bestehens, den 10. August 1879* (Breslau, 1879); *Zur Geschichte des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars, in Programm zur Eröffnung des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars* (Breslau, 1854).

¹³Gennaro Sasso, *Benedetto Croce. La ricerca della dialettica* (Naples: Morano, 1975); Guido Verucci, *Idealisti all'Indice. Croce, Gentile e la condanna del Sant'Uffizio* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2006); Girolamo Cotroneo, *Croce filosofo italiano* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2015); Gabriele Turi, *Giovanni Gentile. Una biografia* (Florence: Giunti Editore, 1995); Alessandra Tarquini, *Il Gentile dei fascisti: gentiliani e antigentiliani nel regime fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

and theologians as well.¹⁴ This new current had a relevant impact on the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as well. The renowned scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem, began his groundbreaking career in those years, when new interpretations of mythology and ritual were both elaborated and influenced by the rise of psychology, such as Karl Jung's discovery of archaic patterns of religious behavior.¹⁵ Further, the American psychologist William James had published his landmark Gifford Lectures under the title *Varieties of Religious Experience*, a book that reached a wide international public and was to be translated into Italian.¹⁶

By the early twentieth century and continuing in the following decades, a sort of nostalgia for the past began to be conceptualized by historians of religions and members of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.¹⁷ Philological precision and high textual specialization were accompanied by the desire to redescribe and reassess the Jewish past, as the cases of Gershom Scholem or Martin Buber indicate.

The case of Solomon Schechter is useful in order to better grasp the atmosphere of the time, embodied by some of the scholars whose work we will describe below. Schechter (1847–1915) was born in Moldavia, the son of a ritual butcher living in a community of Hasidim. He was educated within the framework of a traditional community, from *cheder* to *yeshiva*, but then moved to Vienna, where he earned a rabbinical degree at the

¹⁴For a broader picture see Hans Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte. Religionswissenschaft und Moderne* (München: C.H. Beck, 1997). There are a number of specific contributions based on national historiography.

¹⁵On Scholem's intellectual contribution to the study of religion see Steven Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henri Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Harold Bloom, ed., *Gershom Scholem* (New York: Chelsea Books, 1987); Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Paul Mendes-Flohr, ed., *Gershom Scholem: The Man and his Work* (New York and Jerusalem: SUNY Press, 1994); Amir Engel, *Gershom Scholem: an Intellectual Biography* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017). On psychology and religion see the comparison between Jung and Freud in Michael Palmer, *Freud and Jung on Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁶William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1902).

¹⁷See Cristiana Facchini, "Narrating, Visualizing, Performing, and Feeling a Religion. On Representations of Judaism," in *Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present*, eds. Christoph Boehinger and Jörg Rüpke (together with Elisabeth Begemann), *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 67 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 273–296.

Jewish Theological Seminary. By the end of the nineteenth century Schechter had moved to England where he was appointed lecturer in Talmudics and reader of Rabbinics at the University of Cambridge. One may note that Schechter's appointment was rather exceptional for those years, especially in regard to the academic study of post-biblical literature. From there Schechter became involved with the extraordinary discovery of the Cairo Genizah, whose whereabouts were located by two Christian missionary women in Egypt around 1896.¹⁸ Following his emigration to the United States, Schechter proved to be influential in directing the lines of research on Judaism, as well as in the organization of the Rabbinical Theological Seminary in New York.¹⁹ His example is indicative of the level of transnational scholarship and the mobility of scholars that was such a defining mark of intellectual life of the time.

One of the key figures among the "Polish rabbis" was Samuel Hirsch Margulies (1858–1922), a warm, passionate Orthodox Jew and a committed Zionist since the movement's beginnings. Margulies was born and raised in the Polish-Ukrainian city of Berezhany, which was then part of the Habsburg Empire. He earned a rabbinical degree at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, and was educated in the universities of Breslau and Leipzig, where he studied Oriental languages. Margulies arrived at the end of the nineteenth century in Florence, and in 1890 he was appointed chief rabbi in Florence, where he taught at the *Collegio rabbinico*, relocated from Padua and revived in 1889, becoming its director in 1899.²⁰ In Florence, he also established two new Jewish periodicals, the

¹⁸ Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza* (New York: Schocken, 2011); Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Janet Soskice, *The Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Discovered the Hidden Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).

¹⁹ Cyrus Adler, *Solomon Schechter: A Biographical Sketch* (Philadelphia: The American Jewish Yearbook, 5677/1916). Schechter developed the notion of "Catholic Israel." See Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 3 vols. (London: A. & C. Black, 1896–1924). On the Conservative movement in Judaism: Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Massimo Giuliani, "Gli Ebrei Conservativi negli Stati Uniti e il Jewish Theological Seminary," in *Le religioni e il mondo moderno*, ed. by David Bidussa, *Ebraismo*, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 2008), 385–405.

²⁰ Lionella Viterbo, "La nomina del rabbino Margulies: Un 'excursus' nella Firenze ebraica di fine Ottocento," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 3, 59 (1993): 67–89.

Settimana israelitica and the *Rivista israelitica*.²¹ Margulies was a charismatic rabbi, and went on to exert immense influence over the Italian Jewish community, especially through his cultural, political, and scholarly endeavors.²² His intellectual activity was multifaceted: as a rabbi and religious leader, he worked relentlessly as a preacher, teacher, and organizer. His publications are quite telling in that sense; his commitment to Zionism instilled Orthodox Jews with religious nationalism and an activism toward Jewish solidarity.²³

Margulies—an expert on medieval Jewish biblical exegesis—published his scholarly works in German. His most quoted work was dedicated to Saadya Gaon. Interestingly, in 1896 Margulies wrote a short biography of one of the most important Italian Jews of the time, David Levi (1816–1898).²⁴ In his portrait, Margulies translated some of Levi’s poems into German, and specifically those that were most imbued with the

²¹ Attilio Milano, “Un secolo di stampa ebraica in Italia. Scritti in onore di Dante Lattes,” *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* XII (1938): 96–136; Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews*, 24.

²² Elio Toaff, “La rinascita spirituale degli ebrei italiani nei primi decenni del secolo,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, nn. 7–12, XLVII (1981): 63–73; Simonetta Della Seta Torrefranca, “Identità religiosa e identità nazionale nell’ebraismo italiano del Novecento,” in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei nell’Italia unita, 1870–1945*, Atti del IV convegno internazionale, Siena 12–16 giugno 1989 (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1993), 263–272.

²³ Lionella Viterbo, *Spigolando nell’archivio della comunità ebraica di Firenze* (Florence: Giuntina, 1997); Sara Airoldi, “Practices of Cultural Nationalism. Alfonso Pacifici and the Jewish Renaissance in Italy (1910–1916),” in *Portrait of Italian Jewish Life (1800s–1930s)*, eds. Catalan and Facchini, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n.8 November 2015 (www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=367); on Italian Zionism see Alberto Cavaglion, “Tendenze nazionali e albori sionistici,” in *Storia d’Italia. Annali XI: Gli Ebrei in Italia*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 1291–1320; Simonetta Della Seta, Daniel Carpi, “Il movimento sionistico,” in *Storia d’Italia. Annali XI: Gli Ebrei in Italia*, vol. 2, 1321–1368; Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews*, 182–195; Arturo Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere. Gli ebrei italiani e l’emigrazione in Palestina prima della guerra (1920–1940)* (Genoa-Milan: Marietti, 2003). For a general approach Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2003); Georges Bensoussan, *Une histoire intellectuelle et politique du sionisme* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

²⁴ Samuel H. Margulies, *Saadja Alfajūmi’s arabische Psalmen-Übersetzung* (Breslau, 1884); idem, *Discorsi sacri* (Florence: Galletti e Cassuto, 1905); idem, *Dichter und Patriot: Eine Studie ueber das Leben und die Werke D. Levis* (Trier: Sigmund Mayer, 1896); idem, *Discorsi e scritti varii* (Florence: Israel, 1923). On David Levi see Francesca Sofia, “Gli ebrei risorgimentali fra tradizione biblica, libera muratoria e nazione,” in *Storia d’Italia: La massoneria* (*Annali* 21), ed. Gian Mario Cazzaniga (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), 244–265.

Risorgimento's pathos. This homage to Levi can also be seen as an early acknowledgment of Jewish patriotism that would somehow connect with late nineteenth century Zionism.²⁵

Although Margulies influenced a generation of rabbis and Italian young Jews, who became devoted Zionists, he nevertheless invited a few German-educated younger colleagues to teach at the *Collegio rabbinico*, including the outstanding scholar Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943), who taught biblical Hebrew and Jewish history from 1889 to 1902,²⁶ and Hirsch Perez Chajes (1876–1927), who published his main works in German and collaborated with the University of Florence.²⁷

Their appointment at the *Collegio rabbinico* did not go unchallenged. Criticism was voiced, mainly in Jewish periodicals. It was argued that the German rabbis were too scholarly or too cold, but the main issue was that they were foreigners.²⁸ Elbogen, who was not a committed Zionist, moved to Berlin shortly afterwards, where he was appointed at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*.²⁹ His experience in Italy had not been pleasant, although he paid tribute to the Italian *Wissenschaft des Judentums* with articles devoted to one of its outstanding representative, Samuel David Luzzatto; it is also likely that he maintained collaborative relationships with some of his Italian-Galician colleagues.³⁰ Elbogen should be remembered not only for his groundbreaking work on Jewish liturgy, but also as a vocal critic of both Harnack and Bousset, the outstanding scholars of early Christianity and ancient religious history.³¹

Chajes was also from Galicia, the offspring of an important member of the Polish Haskalah. In contrast to Margulies and Elbogen, Chajes studied at the rabbinical theological seminary of Vienna where he was ordained in

²⁵ See Leo Neppi Modona, "17 lettere di S. H. Margulies a David Levi," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 28 no. 2 (1962): 62–75.

²⁶ Among his works, see Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig, 1913); idem, *Die neueste Construction der jüdischen Geschichte* (Breslau, 1902); idem, *In commemorazione di S. D. Luzzatto* (Florence, 1901). Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

²⁷ Salo W. Baron, "Hirsch, Peretz Chajes," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* vol. 5 (1971–1972): 325–326.

²⁸ Alberto Latorre, *Il carteggio Zolli—Pettazzoni (1925–1956)* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2015).

²⁹ Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*.

³⁰ Latorre, *Il carteggio Zolli—Pettazzoni*.

³¹ See, for example, his book on the Pharisees; Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*.

1899. He arrived in Italy when he was in his twenties. He taught at the *Collegio rabbinico* in Florence from approximately 1902 to 1912, and in 1904 he became adjunct professor at the renowned *Istituto di Studi Superiori* (University of Florence), where David Castelli had held the chair of biblical Hebrew before him.³² He later became Chief Rabbi of Trieste, where he spent a few years (1912–1916) until he returned to Vienna, where he performed his duties of Chief Rabbi until his death in 1927. Chajes was both a scholar and an important religious and political leader, as most of the research on Austrian Jews indicates. In Vienna he became acquainted with Salo W. Baron, the future American historian of Jewish history, who was also from Galicia.³³ Chajes' works addressed, among other things, the scholarly study of the New Testament, as reflected in his book on the Gospel of Mark.³⁴ I shall return to this topic, which was a significant one to Jews of the early twentieth century. Chajes was destined to become one of the most important religious leaders of the Habsburg Empire, as, following World War I, he was increasingly seen as one of the most vocal supporters of Jewish refugees, both in Vienna and Trieste. For the purposes of this essay it will suffice to observe that, as Salo Baron suggested, most of Chajes' scholarly works were produced during his stay in Florence, where among other things, he influenced the younger Umberto Cassuto and Israel Zoller.³⁵

Israel Zoller (1881–1956) was another Jewish scholar who had come from Polish Galicia. Unlike his older colleagues, Zoller was educated in Italy, both at the *Collegio rabbinico* and the University of Florence, where he met Elbogen and Chajes. The biography of Zoller is probably the most complicated one, given the dramatic turn it took after his decision, in

³² Cristiana Facchini, *David Castelli*.

³³ See Umberto Cassuto, "Hirsch Perez Chajes," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 3 no. 5 (1928): 218–232; Elias S. Artom, Umberto Cassuto and Israel Zoller, *Miscellanea di studi ebraici in memoria di H. P. Chajes* (Florence, 1930); Salo W. Baron, "Hirsch Perez Chajes," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, Jerusalem 1971/72, 325–326; On Chajes see David N. Myers, "Was there a 'Jerusalem School'? An Inquiry into the First Generation of Historical Researchers at the Hebrew University" (<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/myers/Was%20there%20a%20Jerusalem%20School.pdf>).

³⁴ Baron, "Hirsch Peretz Chajes"; some references also in Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira, eds., *Zionism and Religion* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 154 ff.

³⁵ Baron, "Hirsch Peretz Chajes."

1944, to convert to Catholicism.³⁶ Zoller's dual identity is especially interesting because it did not only involve his role as both a religious leader and a scholar, but also his shift from religious Judaism to Catholicism. Above all, Zoller was a gifted scholar who dealt with a wide array of topics, as was customary at the time. Also, similarly to many of his colleagues, he published in scholarly journals, both in German and Italian. Zoller was interested in psychoanalysis and anthropology, whose theories he tried to apply to his interpretation of the Bible, in collaboration with scholars of religions.³⁷ These interests fueled outrage among his coreligionists in Trieste, but his writings nevertheless timidly circulated. In contrast to his other colleagues, Zoller's entire career took place in Italy, where he remained even after his conversion. Zoller's writings were far-reaching in their breadth, although his conversion to Catholicism contributed to his final marginalization: he continued teaching and writing on Judaism and Christianity, but now protected by the walls of Vatican City.

The youngest of the Galician Jews who relocated to Italy and performed rabbinical functions was Isaiah Sonne (1887–1960), who was born in Moscisko (Galicia, Hapsburg Empire), and educated in Switzerland and Italy, where he received his rabbinical degree in 1925.³⁸ After a short period in Lodz, he returned to Italy and taught Talmud and Rabbinical Literature at the *Collegio rabbinico* of Florence. From 1936 to 1938 Sonne served as director of the Rabbinical Theological Seminary of Rhodes, Greece, which had become part of Italy in 1912, during the first phase of

³⁶ Robert G. Weisbord and Wallace P. Sillanpoa, *The Chief Rabbi, the Pope, and the Holocaust: An Era in Vatican-Jewish Relations* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008); Gabriele Rigano, *Il "caso Zolli": L'itinerario di un intellettuale in bilico tra fedi, culture e nazioni* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2006). It is difficult to fully grasp the reasons that drove Zoller to conversion. He himself later constructed a self-explanation typical of conversion narratives. For relevant insight on this topic see John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: the Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012); Todd Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold: Conversion and Radical Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

³⁷ On this, see his correspondence with Raffaele Pettazzoni, the dean of the history of religions in Italy: Alberto Latorre, "La storia delle religioni tra 'ragioni di prudenza' e 'ragioni di stato': Uno spaccato della ricerca storico-religiosa al tempo del fascismo e della reazione anti-modernista nella corrispondenza di Israel Zoller con Raffaele Pettazzoni," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 77 no. 1 (2011): 65–85; idem, *Il carteggio Zolli—Pettazzoni*.

³⁸ There is a brief discussion of Sonne in Salo W. Baron, "Isaiah Sonne, 1887–1960," *Jewish Social Studies* 23 no. 2 (April 1961): 130–132.

Italian colonial expansion.³⁹ After the implementation of the anti-Semitic laws in 1938, Sonne was forced to flee the country and moved to the United States, where he ultimately worked and taught at the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati.⁴⁰

Sonne's contribution to the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was considerable, especially in the field of Renaissance history. He published extensively in Italian, Hebrew, German, and English on a broad range of topics, from bibliography to history, and from rabbinics to philosophy.⁴¹ His rabbinical work in Rhodes should also be analyzed within the context of the establishment of Jewish agencies, such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which since the nineteenth century had been cooperating with the local government to modernize and educate Jews from North Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Europe.⁴² Moreover, these agencies are also to be understood against the backdrop of colonial policies enacted by many European states since 1878. Salo Baron stressed this feature of Sonne's activity in Rhodes:

[Sonne] served as a director of the Jewish Theological Seminary on the island of Rhodes whose main function, from the standpoint of the Italian government which subsidized it, was to help spread Italian culture in the Middle East with the cooperation of its alumni serving in various rabbinic posts in the area. To Sonne, however, its great mission consisted in infusing Levantine Jewry with the spirit of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and thus helping to bridge the gaps between the intellectual developments in the Western and Eastern Jewries.⁴³

³⁹ On the relationship between Jews and the Italian colonial experience see Renzo De Felice, *Ebrei in un paese arabo. Gli ebrei nella Libia contemporanea tra colonialismo, nazionalismo arabo e sionismo* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1982); some information in Martino Contu, Nicola Melis, Giovannino Pinna, eds., *Ebraismo e rapporti con le culture del Mediterraneo nei secoli XVIII–XX* (Florence: Giuntina, 2003).

⁴⁰ Michael A. Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 345–361.

⁴¹ Abraham S. Halkin, "Isaiah Sonne (1887–1960), the Historian," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 29 (1960–1961): 9–15.

⁴² For South Europe see: Tullia Catalan and Marco Dogo, eds., *The Jews and the Nation-States of Southeastern Europe from the 19th Century to the Great Depression: Combining Viewpoints on a Controversial Story* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016); Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁴³ Baron, "Isaiah Sonne 1887–1960."

The case of Sonne brings out two significant issues. The first concerns the Jewish support of the Fascist regime, which is most evident among those who held important institutional roles. The second concerns the scholarship on religion and Judaism in its transnational and Fascist contexts, its legacy, and the relationship with other traditions, Catholic and secular alike.

2 “A JEW AMONG THE (CATHOLIC) MODERNISTS”: A RELIGIOUS TURN?

My family had been detached from Jewish religious practice for two generations, on my father's side even for three, since at the beginning of the nineteenth century my father's maternal grandparents had welcomed the anti-confessional and humanitarian principles of the Enlightenment, and those had been transmitted in their entirety to my father, quite modernized by the political and economic Liberalism typical of the Historical Right. [...] And thus, between the end of the gymnasium and the beginning of the lyceum, I started to teach myself some Hebrew and immersed myself in the Old and New Testament. I avidly searched for any sort of books about religion and history of religions, relying above all on those that I found in the family library, collected mostly by a great-great-grandfather and a great-uncle of mine, which faithfully reflected the development [of religious themes] from eighteenth-century Enlightenment toward nineteenth-century Positivism, passing through the experience of Romanticism—three phases meaningfully marked by three “lives of Jesus,” which I found in our library and which I devoured: those by Baron D'Holbach, David Friedrich Strauss, and Ernest Renan.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Giorgio Levi Della Vida, *Fantasma ritrovati* (Naples: Liguori, 2004), 59–60: “Da due generazioni la mia famiglia era staccata dalla pratica della religione ebraica, nella linea paterna addirittura da tre, poiché tra i nonni materni di mio padre ai primi dell'Ottocento avevano accolto i principii anticonfessionali e umanitari del secolo dei lumi, e questi si erano trasmessi integralmente a mio padre, ammodernati alquanto dal liberalismo politico ed economico della destra storica. [...] Fu così che, tra la fine del ginnasio e il principio del liceo, cominciai a studiare da me un po' di ebraico, a immergermi nella lettura dell'Antico e del Nuovo Testamento, a dare la caccia a ogni sorta di libri che trattassero di religione e di storia delle religioni, valendomi sopra tutto di quelli che trovavo in casa, raccolti per la più gran parte da un mio trisavolo e da un mio prozio e nei quali si rispecchiava con fedeltà lo sviluppo dell'illuminismo settecentesco verso il positivismo ottocentesco attraverso l'esperienza del romanticismo: tre tappe segnate da tre vite di Gesù che trovai nella biblioteca domestica e mi affrettai a leggere avidamente: quelle del barone d'Holbach, di David Friedrich Strauss, di Ernest Renan.” The title of the lengthy chapter is “Un ebreo tra i modernisti” (A Jew among

Written in the 1960s, this long autobiographical excerpt conveys a glimpse of Giorgio Levi Della Vida's youth, when he decided to become a scholar of Oriental Studies. It is a well-known and oft-quoted passage, part of a chapter that he wrote in memory of the "Catholic modernists," and may be used as a perfect example to show the multiple relations between Jews and Christians in this environment. Giorgio Levi Della Vida (1886–1967) was born in Venice, into a bourgeois Jewish family. He studied in Rome with Ignazio Guidi, an important scholar of the previous generation. Della Vida became a renowned scholar; his work and career belong to the history of European Orientalists, many of whom were Jews.⁴⁵ In Rome he eventually met Baron Leone Caetani, a great scholar of Arabic literature, who left Italy after the rise of Fascism.⁴⁶

Levi Della Vida taught Hebrew at the University of Rome from 1919 until his resignation in 1931, when he refused to swear the loyalty oath to Fascism. In 1938, he fled the country, along with many other Italian Jewish scholars who eventually found refuge in South America, the United States, and England.⁴⁷

the Modernists), which refers mainly to his friends many of whom were Catholics or scholars of Christianity, like for example Luigi Salvatorelli, to whom the book was dedicated. The first edition was published in 1966, a year before his death.

⁴⁵ On Jews as orientalists see Ivan D. Kalman and Derek Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2005); Italian orientalism has not yet been critically analyzed. The case of Levi Della Vida is very relevant within the context of scholarship on Islam in Europe, also as a "Jewish" scholar. Levi Della Vida was himself very critical of Said's interpretation of "Orientalism." See Cristiana Facchini, "Orientalistica ed ebraismo: Una storia ai margini. David Castelli e Giorgio Levi Della Vida," in *La storiografia storico-religiosa italiana tra la fine dell'800 e la seconda guerra mondiale*, eds. Mario Mazza and Natale Spineto (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2014), 111–139.

⁴⁶ Bruna Soravia, *Giorgio Levi Della Vida, Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 64 (2005), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/levi-della-vida-giorgio_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/levi-della-vida-giorgio_(Dizionario-Biografico)); Levi Della Vida, *Fantasmî ritrovati*.

⁴⁷ Ignazio Guidi (1844–1935) was one of the most important Italian orientalists of his time. His scholarly production was extensive and highly specialized, although it can be divided into three main areas: literature of the Oriental Churches, History and literature of Ethiopic, Arabic-Islamic literature. He also worked as a translator of juridical texts from Libya and was, along with many of his contemporaries, a strong supporter of the Italian colonial enterprise. See Bruna Soravia, *Ignazio Guidi, Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 61 (2004): [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ignazio-guidi_res-6635a523-87ee-11dc-8e9d-0016357ee51_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ignazio-guidi_res-6635a523-87ee-11dc-8e9d-0016357ee51_(Dizionario-Biografico))/ and eadem, "Ascesa e declino dell'orientalismo scientifico in Italia," in *Il mondo visto dall'Italia*, eds. Agostino Giovagnoli and Giorgio Del Zanna (Milan: Guerini: 2005), 271–286. His influential article-Ignazio Guidi, "Della sede primitiva dei popoli semiti," in *Memorie dell'Accademia nazionale dei Lincei*, cl. di scienze

It is not inappropriate to introduce this chapter with a reference to “Catholic modernism,” as Levi Della Vida did in his autobiography. This reference to the modernist priests indicates a growing interest in the study of religion, despite the Catholic Church’s official criticism of it and its growing attempt to keep it under control. Besides Levi Della Vida’s contact with modernist priests, the autobiographical excerpt reveals two important features of his constructed self-narrative: the first recounts his “discovery of religion,” after his family had been estranged for “at least three generations.” Levi Della Vida’s decision to become an Orientalist seems to have been determined by his interests in religion. The second interesting reference is linked to books that inspired him, namely Renan’s *La vie de Jésus* and David Strauss’ *Das Leben Jesu* (Life of Jesus), both best-sellers of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸

Levi Della Vida’s academic activities encompass more than a scholarly body of work devoted to religion and Oriental culture; they speak of the intellectual, religious, and political life of Italy in those years, of his relentless opposition to Fascism, of his life in isolation inside Italy when working for the Vatican after 1931, and then his exile to the United States, after 1938.⁴⁹ As an Orientalist, Levi Della Vida wrote several important articles about the history of ancient Israel, some of which were to be published in the *Enciclopedia italiana*, edited by Giovanni Gentile.⁵⁰ His contribution to the interpretation of ancient Judaism and Islam as religions is of great importance.⁵¹ On more than one occasion, Levi Della Vida expressed his own ideas about the role and character of Christianity, although he abstained from a thorough investigation into that field of research.

morali, storiche e filologiche, s. 3, IV [1879], 566–615—was discussed by Levi Della Vida in 1938 in his lectures at the *Collège de France*. See Facchini, “Orientalistica ed ebraismo: Una storia ai margini.”

⁴⁸ For a cultural approach to the study of the historical Jesus see Halvor Moxnes, *Jesus and the Rise of Nationalism: A New Quest for the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012); on Renan: Robert Priest, *The Gospel according to Renan: Reading, Writing, and Religion in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ “Dual exile” is a term I borrow from Arnaldo Momigliano’s review of Giorgio Levi Della Vida, *Fantasma ritrovati* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1966), in *Quarto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome: Ed. Storia e Letteratura, 1969), 663–665; published previously in *Rivista storica italiana* 78 (1966): 740–442.

⁵⁰ Gabriele Turi, *Il mecenate, il filosofo e il gesuita. L’«Enciclopedia italiana», specchio della nazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).

⁵¹ His depiction of Islam is quite interesting as it runs against much of Said’s claims in his *Orientalism* (1978).

The position which Levi Della Vida vacated in 1931 was given to rabbi Umberto Cassuto (1883–1951). Cassuto graduated from the University of Florence in 1906 and was ordained in the same city in 1908.⁵² After serving as a rabbi, he taught for some time at the University of Florence and then moved to Rome. Cassuto was both a biblical scholar and a historian. In 1913 he published a masterpiece on the Jews of Florence during the Renaissance, which was awarded a prize by the *Accademia dei Lincei* in 1920.⁵³ Cassuto was also a daring biblical scholar who criticized the “documentary hypothesis,” in particular the Graf–Kuenen–Wellhausen Protestant school of biblical interpretation.⁵⁴ This work speaks of a distinctive and more Orthodox, yet scientific attitude toward the study of the Bible that began to develop in that period, one which stirred much interest and conflict and became a full-fledged European scholarly practice.⁵⁵ Cassuto moved to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1939, where he worked primarily as a biblical scholar, his theory gaining some interest after his death.⁵⁶

These were the formative years also of Arnaldo Momigliano, who started out as a scholar of classics, and although Momigliano chose a different field of expertise, he left a strong mark on all things Jewish. Arnaldo (1908–1987) was born into a family of Piedmontese Jews and received, according to his own words, a strict Orthodox Jewish education.⁵⁷ Members of the Momigliano family were very active in the Italian cultural scene: a few deserve special attention, such as Arnaldo’s uncle Felice, on

⁵²Alberto Soggin, “Umberto Cassuto,” *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 21 (1978) ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/umberto-cassuto_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/umberto-cassuto_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)).

⁵³Umberto Cassuto, *Gli ebrei di Firenze nell’età del Rinascimento* (Florence: Galletti, 1918).

⁵⁴Facchini, *David Castelli*. Castelli accepted, even if with some scepticism, Wellhausen’s interpretation of the biblical material.

⁵⁵Julius Wellhausen was probably one of the most influential biblical scholars of the modern age. His work has often been criticized by Jewish scholars. See Aly Elrefa’i, *Wellhausen and Kaufmann: Ancient Israel and its Religious History in the Works of Julius Wellhausen and Yehezkel Kaufmann* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015); Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*, 217ff. We should therefore take Cassuto’s interpretation of the Bible as a conservative answer to Julius Wellhausen and its reception in Italy.

⁵⁶See Myers, “Was there a ‘Jerusalem School’?”

⁵⁷Arnaldo Momigliano, *Pagine ebraiche*, revised 2nd edition (Rome: Ed. Storia e letteratura, 2016).

whom we shall briefly focus later in this essay. Another is Attilio, a literary critic who taught at the University of Florence and was a vocal anti-Fascist from an early phase.⁵⁸

The young Arnaldo Momigliano grew up in a family that supported the Fascist movement, and his formative years seem to suggest a full adherence to the ideological tenets of the regime. Indeed, in 1931, he was installed as a professor of ancient history at the University of Rome, after his beloved professor, Gaetano De Sanctis, refused to pledge an oath to the Fascist regime.⁵⁹ Momigliano wrote about the Maccabees, Hellenism, and Hellenistic Judaism, and developed an interest in so-called apocalyptic literature and messianism. In general terms, these are all subjects that were being debated in the academic world, although Fascist Italy attempted to transmit a tone of nationalism imbued with Idealism into much of the discourse.⁶⁰ As Tessa Rajak suggests, Momigliano sifted through Jewish themes and reflected upon their encounter with Christianity, which was a topical question in this period.⁶¹ Momigliano is recalled here for two main reasons: he is part of a broader Italian and transnational *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and some of his interpretations reverberate through Italian historiography on Judaism and the Jews.⁶² His contribution to the history of scholarship, classics, and Judaism was immense, with his career taking a

⁵⁸ Enrico Ghidetti, *Attilio Momigliano*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 75 (2011) ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/attilio-momigliano_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/attilio-momigliano_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)).

⁵⁹ Carlo Dionisotti, *Ricordi della scuola italiana* (Rome: Ed. Storia e letteratura, 1998), 385ff. For De Sanctis see: Giorgio Boatti, *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001); Helmut Goetz, *Il giuramento rifiutato. I docenti universitari e il regime fascista* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 2000).

⁶⁰ On this topic see Mario Mazza, "Attualismo, storicismo, modernismo. Adolfo Omodeo e la storia delle origini cristiane," in *La storiografia storico-religiosa italiana tra la fine dell'800 e la seconda guerra mondiale*, 45–77.

⁶¹ Simon Levis Sullam insisted upon Momigliano's Jewish identity and offered an interesting portrait of the young Momigliano. See Simon Levis Sullam, "Arnaldo Momigliano e la nazionalizzazione parallela: autobiografia, religione, storia," *Passato e presente* 70 (2007): 59–82. On Momigliano as a scholar of Judaism, see Tessa Rajak, "Momigliano and Judaism," in *The Legacy of Momigliano*, eds. Charles Burnett and Jill Kraye (London and Turin: The Warburg Institute—Nino Aragno Editore, 2014), 89–106; a remarkable and insightful interpretation of Momigliano's scholarship is to be found in Peter Brown, "Arnaldo Dante Momigliano, 1908–1987," in *Proceedings of the British Academy* LXXIV (1988): 405–442.

⁶² The review of Cecil Roth, *The Jews of Venice* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1930) which is usually mentioned in reference to the "parallel nationalization" is now in Momigliano, *Pagine ebraiche*. Momigliano reviewed the Italian translation of Roth's book which was published by Dante Lattes in 1933.

dramatic turn after the implementation of Italy's racial laws. Moreover, his understanding of ancient Judaism and early Christianity may shed light on the cultural context under exploration, especially in reference to the rise of Christianity and its relationship with Judaism.

3 THE "WARZONE" OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS: ENTANGLED REPRESENTATIONS

The rise of the "historical Jesus" is a fascinating branch of Western modern scholarship, and it is usually rooted in the German cultural and theological context of the late eighteenth century.⁶³ Beginning in the nineteenth century, hundreds of books on the historical Jesus were published in Germany, as a result of a combination of Lutheran theology and the pre-eminence of historical thought. German scholarship was sophisticated and refined. The study of the historical Jesus was conducted by scholars who were primarily theologians, and whose works were defined by the disciplinary configuration of German academia. But the Germans did not go unchallenged, as French and British scholars engaged in the same fascinating topic. In France, even before Ernest Renan's controversial bestseller *Vie de Jésus* was published in 1863, Joseph Salvador's *La vie de Jésus Christ* had been published in 1838, after David Strauss' influential and enormously renowned biography of Jesus, published in 1835.⁶⁴ Members of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* wrote also some very relevant portraits of the historical Jesus. The most important Jewish works on Jesus were written by Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz, the latter's being a direct polemical answer to Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus*.⁶⁵

⁶³ Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Jesu-Leben-Forschung* (Stuttgart: UTB, 1984).

⁶⁴ David F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols. (Tubingen: Osiander, 1835–1836); Joseph Salvador, *Jésus-Christ et sa doctrine. Histoire de la naissance de l'Église, de son organisation et de ses origines pendant le premier siècle*, 2 vols. (Bruxelles: Société belge de Librairie Hauman et Compagnie, 1838); Francesca Sofia, "Gerusalemme tra Roma e Parigi. Joseph Salvador e le origini del cristianesimo," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 21/2 (2004): 645–62; Matthew B. Hoffman, *From Rebel to Rabbi: Reclaiming Jesus and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁶⁵ See Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); on Graetz and early Christianity, Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 2. The Essenes' hypothesis of the rise of Christianity was developed also by the Italian Elia Benamozegh. Some remarks on this topic in Cristiana Facchini, "The immortal traveler". How historiography saved Judaism," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* (forthcoming 2018) and Facchini, *David Castelli*.

The Italian context is still overlooked, but we may be able to detect the web of relationships and influences between scholars of different faiths, and the role the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* played in this particular field of research. At the onset of the twentieth century the debate over the “historical Jesus” became increasingly multi-religious. The entanglement of various scholarly, religious, and political commitments is apparent in an encounter that occurred in 1921–1922. That is when the journal *Bilychnis*, a Protestant periodical founded by an Italian Calvinist and, according to Arnaldo Momigliano, one of the most innovative venues for the study of religions, published a multi-faith collection of articles on Jesus, his relationship with Judaism, and the rise of Christianity.⁶⁶ Elga Ohlsen invited intellectuals of different religious backgrounds, although ultimately only Protestants and Jews participated, to answer the following questions: “Which are the specific [ethical] values of Christianity and Judaism? What is the essence of the new Covenant in relation to the old Covenant? Where is the border between the two religious systems?”⁶⁷

The first article was written by Dante Lattes, an Italian rabbi trained at the *Collegio rabbinico* of Livorno, where he had been a pupil of Elia Benamozegh. Lattes spent some time in Trieste, becoming acquainted with the Jewish culture of Eastern Europe.⁶⁸ Lattes underlined a scholarly tradition that was embedded in the late nineteenth-century debate associated with the Italian-French intellectual milieu, where the Jewishness of Jesus and his ethical teachings were particularly emphasized. The Gospels were, according to this narrative, both influenced by the core message of the prophets and the ethics of rabbinic literature. The common enemy—for Jews and Christians alike—was “Paganism.”

This position aimed to voice two main issues: the ethical message of biblical prophecy and the relevance of Jewish messianism, a theme that fueled many conflicting interpretations among the Jews who had analyzed it.⁶⁹ Lattes, who was both Orthodox and close to Jewish socialism

⁶⁶ A preliminary remark on this debate in Alberto Cavaglion, “La linea cenobitica e le aporie dell’ebraismo laico,” *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* XLVIII/3 (2012): 625–634; Laura Demofonti, *La riforma nell’Italia del primo Novecento: gruppi e riviste di ispirazione evangelica* (Rome: Storia e letteratura, 2003); Facchini, “Orientalistica ed ebraismo.”

⁶⁷ Facchini, “Orientalistica ed ebraismo.”

⁶⁸ See Facchini, *David Castelli*.

⁶⁹ Facchini, *David Castelli*, Chapter 3. At the beginning of the twentieth century many notions of messianism circulated.

(via Zionism from Eastern Europe), stressed that Jewish teachings retained a social dimension that was absent in the so-called “Aryan version” of Christianity. He highlighted that Judaism performed both a national and universal religious function, following in the footsteps of his teacher Benamozegh. Collective ethical instruction—like social justice, for example—also belonged to the teachings of Jesus, but they had somehow become obliterated by Christianity.⁷⁰

The second Jewish voice came from Giorgio Levi Della Vida, whose position was the most academic and (allegedly) emotionally detached. He himself emphasized being *konfessionlos*. Although he never wrote about Jesus, he did write about ancient Judaism and Islam. What he stressed in this article is nevertheless interesting: he acknowledged that the “essence of Christianity”—that is, its unique features—lay in the originality of Jesus’ religious experience (*coscienza religiosa*) or, in other words, in his highly individualized religious experience. That said, he then asked himself whether it was possible for the historian of religion to detect the real nature of that experience. And of course the answer was negative. Levi Della Vida’s criticism was also addressed to his fellow Jews who attempted to reinterpret religious history—both Christian and Jewish—in order to infuse new life into their religious communities. He was particularly critical of “Neo-messianism” (as he labeled Zionism), as a new movement to reinvent Judaism in modern times. According to Levi Della Vida, Judaism had no universal call and would therefore not be able to reinstate one. According to him, the attempt to rejuvenate Judaism brought about by Zionism was paradoxically linked to the appropriation of Christianity’s genetic relationship with Judaism, but the task would be to no avail. Levi Della Vida was quite sensitive on one point, namely that the similarities between the two religions were, in fact, the core cause of their conflict. The call for universal ethical values was mutually exclusive. In other words, Levi Della Vida detected what Freud described as the “narcissism of small differences,” which was indeed a cause of deep conflict.⁷¹

⁷⁰ According to Lattes, the universal ethical dimension of Christianity was utopian.

⁷¹ Giorgio Levi Della Vida, “Cristianesimo ed Ebraismo,” *Bilychnis* 17 anno X (1921): 395–399. He repeats the same in his *Fantasmî ritrovati*. Freud’s notion of “der Narzissmus der kleinen Differenzen” first appeared in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930) and then in *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* (1939). Sigmund Freud, “Civilization and its Discontents,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 21 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1962).

The debate, which was symptomatic of the clash between Protestants and Jews over the interpretation of Jesus and Christianity, also included the opinion of Felice Momigliano, whose allegiances stood with Reform Judaism and Socialism. Momigliano represents the position of those Jews who, beginning in the nineteenth century, had been attracted by Christianity as an inspiring source to reshape Judaism, as a way to strengthen ties with Christians, and to push for Judaism to become a religion with a universal inclination. Momigliano had *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus* (London: Macmillan, 1910), a book written by Claude Goldsmith Montefiore, the most outspoken representative of Liberal/Reform Judaism in Britain, translated into Italian in 1913.⁷²

Indeed, by the first decade of the twentieth century research on Jesus and early Christianity in Italy could be accessed through pamphlets, commentaries, book reviews, and translations. When Montefiore's book appeared in Italian, there were two works of Baldassarre Labanca already available: *Gesù Cristo nella letteratura contemporanea straniera e italiana: studio storico-scientifico* (1903) and *Gesù di "Nazareth"* (1910), the latter published by the same press as Montefiore's. Adolfo Omodeo, the pupil of the powerful philosopher and Fascist Italy's Minister of Culture Giovanni Gentile, published *Gesù e le origini del cristianesimo* in 1913, and Luigi Salvatorelli, an intellectual and journalist who started his career as a historian of Christianity, published *Il significato di "Nazareno"* in 1911 and *Il mito di Cristo* in 1914.⁷³ By the late 1920s, Omodeo had published a body of work on early Christianity, which included *Gesù* (1923) and *Gesù il Nazareno* (1927).

The book series directed by the Jewish publisher Angelo Fortunato Formiggini was pivotal in giving considerable visibility to different interpretations of the life of Jesus. Alongside Labanca's and Montefiore's works, Formiggini published Buoniauti's *Gesù il Cristo* in 1926. Formiggini, who committed suicide in 1938 after the implementation of the racial laws, was a strong critic of neo-Idealism. His publishing house created two book series—*Profili* (Profiles) and *Apologie* (Apologies)—

⁷² Claude G. Montefiore, *Gesù Cristo nel pensiero ebraico contemporaneo*. Introduzione di Felice Momigliano (Genoa: A.F. Formiggini, 1913).

⁷³ Luigi Salvatorelli, *Da Locke a Reitzenstein: l'indagine storica delle origini cristiane* (Cosenza: L. Giordano, 1988); Gabriele Boccaccini, "Gesù ebreo e cristiano: sviluppi e prospettive di ricerca sul Gesù storico in Italia, dall'Ottocento ad oggi," *Henoch*, 29 (2007): 105–154; Samuele Nicoli, *La cultura cattolica e gli studi religiosi in Italia fra Ottocento e Novecento* (<http://manfrediana2.racine.ra.it/files/lanzoni2011/nicoli.pdf>).

meant to provide a broad and diverse interpretation of the history of religions. In the series *Apologie* he published Buonaiuti's *Apologia del cristianesimo* (Apology of Christianity) and Rensi's *Apologia dell'ateismo* (Apology of Atheism).

Italian scholars brought the many debates that circulated in Europe to Italy, familiarizing their audience with the most important scholarship of the time, from von Harnack to Bousset, from Weiss to Loisy, and applying to the study of ancient Judaism the rising methodology and theories of *Religionswissenschaftsschule*.⁷⁴ What is usually overlooked is the Jewish component of this debate, which was the only counter-narrative to a historical Jesus who, even when acknowledged as Jewish and fully immersed in his Jewish environment, remained exceptionally unique as a "Jew." Whether it was von Harnack's extraordinary ethical personality, Bousset's apocalyptic preacher, or Loisy's eschatological figure, Jesus often transcended his Jewish background.⁷⁵ Jewish scholarship provided a different, and often contested, interpretation of the Jewish Jesus.

It is against this background that the work of the youngest among the Polish Jews who arrived to Italy will be briefly analyzed here. It is not surprising that Israel Zoller published, in 1938, a strange and forgotten book on Jesus, under the title *Il Nazareno*.⁷⁶ As mentioned above, Zoller was part of a scholarly community that was divided between religious leadership and research. The Polish-Germanized Italian milieu to which he belonged had brought to Italy scholars like Samuel Margulies, Ismar Elbogen, Hirsh Perez Chajes, and Isaiah Sonne, surveyed above. Chajes in particular was involved in reassessing the Jewish context of the Gospels, and quite interestingly, in identifying the Hebraic wording of the Gospel of Mark.⁷⁷ Although this was a tradition that dated back to the Christian

⁷⁴ See Luca Arcari, "La comparazione come metodo di selezione 'cristianocentrica' in Wilhelm Bousset. La 'sostanziale differenza' del giudaismo nel comparativismo storico-religioso tra Ottocento e Novecento," in *Non solo verso Oriente. Studi sull'ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, eds. Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Riccardo Di Segni and Marcello Massenzio (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2014), 597–621.

⁷⁵ On Jewish answers to this rhetorical and historical narrative see Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*. For a broader assessment of the conflict over the interpretation of Biblical religion, ancient Judaism, and early Christianity see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Antisemitism*.

⁷⁶ Israel Zoller, *Il Nazareno. Studi di esegesi neotestamentaria alla luce dell'aramaico e del pensiero rabbinico* (Udine: Istituto delle Edizioni Accademiche, 1938); it was published as Eugenio Zolli, *Christus* (Rome: AVE, 1946). Latorre, *Il carteggio Zolli—Pettazzoni*.

⁷⁷ Hirsch P. Chajes, *Markus-Studien* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1899).

Hebraists of the early modern period, it was usually the Gospel of Matthew that attracted that sort of investigation. Christian scholars had emphasized the significance of Jesus' words since the Renaissance, in order to precisely reconstruct his teachings.⁷⁸ In 1925, Harry Wolfson, a historian of Jewish philosophy who taught at Harvard and was born in the Russian Empire, wrote: "Jesus will not be reclaimed as God, nor as a son of God, a Messiah, or a prophet, but as a Galilean preacher."⁷⁹ Wolfson wanted to repossess the "sayings of Jesus" as part of the literary treasury of the Jews. "Jesus' sayings," wrote Wolfson, "were to be conceived as part of the maxims of the anonymous body of the wise, who expressed the national genius of the people."⁸⁰ The un-heroic, un-saintly, above all too human Jesus of Wolfson's was not very different from the one Joseph Klausner sketched in his renowned book on Jesus in 1922. Klausner was a Lithuanian Jew, a committed Zionist who had moved to Palestine where he was to become one of the first professors of the Hebrew University. Klausner's description of Jesus was generally more positive, presenting him as a figure with a political messianic calling. His book was influential: printed in Modern Hebrew, it was soon translated into English, French, and German (with several reprints).⁸¹ It created resentment among Eastern European Jews, and the publication proved to be hazardous to him. He had to renounce his position as a historian of Judaism to devote himself exclusively to Hebrew literature, a much less contentious field.⁸²

When Israel Zoller published a lengthy book on Jesus in 1938, under the title *Il Nazareno* (*The Nazarene*), he was well acquainted with a wide European intellectual debate over the historical Jesus. Zoller's *Il nazareno* is to be interpreted in reference to this new attention toward Jesus, but

⁷⁸ See Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: In the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁷⁹ Neta Stahl, *Jesus among the Jews: Representation and Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸¹ Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times & Teaching* (New York: Macmillan, 1925). It is worth mentioning that Klausner, who also was a Jew from Eastern Europe, published his *Jesus* in Hebrew. The English translation was made by a Christian Zionist, the Reverend Herbert Danby. Klausner's work reached international acclaim. On Klausner see Dan Jaffé, *Jésus sous la plume des historiens juifs du xxe siècle. Approche historique, perspectives historiographiques, analyses méthodologiques* (Paris: Cerf, 2009) and the autobiographical novel of Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. Engl. Transl. (London: Chatto and Windus, 2004).

⁸² See also Jaffé, *Jésus sous la plume des historiens juifs*.

also within a European context where research on the historical Jesus was blossoming. Whilst Zoller had a thorough Italian education and strong ties with Ernesto Buonaiuti and Raffaele Pettazzoni, the dean of history of religions in Italy, he was linked to Jewish networks of scholars and particularly indebted to the work of Chajes and Elbogen who had been his teachers in Florence.

Il Nazareno seems to fit particularly well with the idea expressed by Wolfson, as it was mainly, albeit not exclusively, devoted to the analysis of certain sayings of Jesus. It also incorporates chapters that had appeared in previous years as separate articles, where Zoller engaged with the comparison between Jewish and Christian rituals. As in the case of Wolfson, Zoller's Jesus is a preacher, but also a teacher of wisdom. Zoller attempts to recover the Hebrew and Aramaic language of the Gospels, and, through the language, the mindset and the religious experience of the preacher.⁸³ It is the oral dimension of Jesus' teachings that have to be restored to their plausible historical ultra-Jewish setting, Zoller argues. Zoller is probably one of the first to bring in literary evidence from a later period, drawn from liturgical or mystical texts. At times, his own religious experience guides his interpretation of certain words. As for the other articles included in *Il Nazareno*, a more phenomenological analysis of certain literary evidence is offered, combining textual exegesis with a sensitive reading of symbolical religious forms.⁸⁴

A book on Jesus can be praised, become a scandal (with all its consequences), or be totally ignored. One could assume that there was probably no worse moment for a Jewish scholar to engage in the Italian cultural scene than in 1938, when the racial laws were being implemented.⁸⁵ An emphatically Jewish Jesus in 1938 Italy must be interpreted against the atmosphere of the anti-Semitic campaign launched by the regime in 1937, when biblical scholars like Father Giuseppe Ricciotti became fully involved with the crusade against Jews.⁸⁶ But surprisingly, whereas Pietro

⁸³ Exactly what Levi Della Vida thought is impossible to recover through a historical analysis.

⁸⁴ Zoller, *Il Nazareno*.

⁸⁵ Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*. On Italian anti-Semitism and Catholics see Giovanni Miccoli, *Antisemitismo e cattolicesimo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013); Elena Mazzini, *Ostilità convergenti. Stampa diocesana, razzismo e antisemitismo nell'Italia fascista (1937–1939)* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2013).

⁸⁶ Giuseppe Ricciotti, *Vita di Gesù* (Rome: Rizzoli, 1941). On Ricciotti's anti-Semitic articles see Cristiana Facchini, "Culture cattoliche ed ebrei dopo la Shoah. Riflessioni a mar-

Martinetti's *Gesù Cristo e il cristianesimo*—published in 1934—was put on the Index of Prohibited Books of the Catholic Church, Zoller's book went almost unnoticed. The only positive review of Zoller's work was written by Ernesto Buonaiuti, who had once published some of Zoller's articles, and who had been persecuted both by the Fascist regime and the Catholic Church.⁸⁷

Zoller managed to remain in Italy even after 1937, possibly with the help of Raffaele Pettazzoni.⁸⁸ In 1944, while observing the Yom Kippur fast, he had a vision of the Holy Virgin, and in 1945 converted to Catholicism. After the war his book was reprinted under the title *Christus*. He was banned by the Jewish community and treated as a traitor, an apostate who had abandoned his people in its darkest hour. Among the Catholics he found the peaceful atmosphere he had been seeking, although he remained a marginal scholar, being—in my interpretation—too Jewish to be relevant.

4 TRANSNATIONAL INTELLECTUALS AND THE HUMAN CONDITION OF EXILE

This chapter has described trajectories and works of scholars who belonged to the wider network of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the first decades of the twentieth century and some of their entanglements with non-Jewish scholars. Although the rise of Fascism brought about a new ideological frame, influenced by neo-Idealism and by the increasing role of the Catholic Church, research on religious topics remained both an important field of research and a source of distress. It is remarkable that, despite the incredible amount of censorship and control exerted both by the Church and the Fascist regime, research on religion and the scholarly study of Judaism and Christianity flourished in a country with low literacy, where the Bible was not at the center of community life.

The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* comprises a diverse set of topics, some of which I briefly described here, and some of which remain in the background. The most significant, yet controversial, dealt with the Bible and

gine di due recenti pubblicazioni,” *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 29/1 (2012): 149–173. His articles were published in *L'avvenire d'Italia*, a Catholic daily newspaper based in Bologna.

⁸⁷ Ernesto Buonaiuti in *Religio*. Latorre, *Il carteggio Zolli—Pettazzoni*.

⁸⁸ See Michael Stausberg, “Raffaele Pettazzoni,” in *The Study of Religion Under the Impact of Fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 365–395.

its interpretation, which entailed examining the notion of the religion of ancient Israel and the rise of Christianity. This topic became a battlefield, especially for those who lived in Catholic countries and who did not receive enough protection from state institutions. The study of the Bible was also transnational, as it affected scholars in different countries and with diverse religious upbringings. The Jewish contribution to this field in Italy was probably very significant, as in other countries, like in Germany, where Jews largely opposed the master narratives of the powerful theologians and academics of their time. The entangled history approach I described in this article helps to better visualize the transnational character of scholarship, and its relationship with the different types of local culture. Although Fascism aimed to impress a strong national character upon anything Italian, when it came to the study of religions it was unable to control the output of different scholarly traditions. Moreover, despite the desire to imprint everything with a national stamp, scholarship was—until the impact of Nazism on certain areas of research—relatively transnational, in the sense that groundbreaking studies could not be ignored, even when contested. Despite the relative openness of scholarly borders, however, it is worth emphasizing the harshness of this historical period and the impact of the discrimination that affected all of these authors. The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* may then provide an interesting background for the study of religious themes, which go beyond the mere question of Jewish identity, but address general questions of intellectual history in times of persecution, where exile becomes a shared condition of existence.



Under Observation: Italian Jewry and European Jewish Philanthropic Organizations in 1938–1939

Tullia Catalan

To date there has been a great deal of research on the mechanisms, the stages, the contents, and the consequences of the racial laws in Italy, while only a small number of studies have analyzed the reactions of European Jewry to the anti-Semitic fascist persecution faced by Italian Jews and by Jews residing in the Kingdom's colonies.¹ This contribution aims to offer an analysis of the first signals of anti-Semitism and the first year of the persecution against Italian Jews by focusing on two important European Jewish philanthropic associations: the Joint Foreign Committee, an offshoot of the Board of Jewish Deputies, which also included the Anglo-

¹ On the reactions of French Jewry to fascism, see J  r  my Guedj, *Le Miroir des d  sillusions. Les Juifs de France et l'Italie fasciste (1922–1939)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011).

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Jewish Association, founded in Great Britain in 1871²; and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* which since 1860 had been an essential observatory of European anti-Semitism from its base in Paris.³ Both associations followed the developments of the Italian case with unfaltering interest, even interacting with the respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs not only in their attempts to find a solution for Italian Jews affected by the persecutions, but above all to face the urgent matter of foreign Jews threatened by expulsion and to try and find a way to receive Jews living in the Italian colony of Rhodes.⁴ Since 1933 thousands of Jews had fled from Germany to Italy, and some had decided to stay there, since they had received a decent welcome from the fascist regime.⁵ Michele Sarfatti records that at the outbreak of the racial laws in 1938 there were approximately 3100 foreign Jews living in Italy with authorized residency; another 8100 would have had to leave within March 1939.⁶ It is therefore clear how Italian Jewry became in this period a subject of great interest for the major Jewish international organizations in England and France.

There are several issues that deserve to be considered in order to analyze the reactions of those organizations to fascist anti-Semitism. What were the actions promoted by those foreign Jewish bodies in order to help the Jews persecuted in Italy? What were their relations with Italian Jewry and its institutions? In this difficult situation, how did con-

² On the creation of the Joint Foreign Committee (henceforth JFC), see Aubrey Newman, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews 1760–1985: A Brief Survey* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1987), 22–23.

³ On these two associations, see André Kaspi, ed., *Histoire de l'Alliance israélite universelle de 1860 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010); David Loewe, "The Anglo-Jewish Association. Past and Present," in A. Stephens, R. Walden (eds.) *For the Sake of Humanity. Essays in Honour of Clemens N. Nathan* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 203–216.

⁴ On the Jewish persecutions in Rhodes, see Marco Clementi e Eirini Toliou, *Gli ultimi ebrei di Rodi. Leggi razziali e deportazioni nel Dodecaneso italiano (1938–1948)* (Rome: Derive e Approdi, 2015). On the Italian presence in the Aegean, see Nicholas Doumanis, *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism's Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

⁵ On the German Jews present in Italy, see Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, 2 vols. (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1993–1996).

⁶ Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000) [(English version: *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006)], 171. According to the Board's figures from November 1938, there were 15,000 foreign Jews in Italy at the time of the racial laws' enactment. See: LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, Charles G. Grey's account to Dr Bernard Kahn, American Joint Distribution Committee, 30/11/1938.

tacts and exchange of information take place between these philanthropic associations, which had worked together in the past (though not without difficulties) to face the great emergencies caused by the anti-Semitic persecutions of the 1930s? Which topics characterized their internal discussion with regards to the plight of Italian Jews? Was there an active network of transnational connections as there had been in the past, or did they prefer to proceed autonomously? And finally, who were the main protagonists of these first interventions in support of Italian Jewry, and how did they operate? The focus of this study is Europe. I have noted the interventions of North American Jewry when I have found documents relating to such efforts in the associations analyzed here, though I have not yet conducted research in the archives of these American institutions.

An essential starting point for my ongoing research are the archives of the above-mentioned philanthropic associations—the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (henceforth AIU) in Paris, and the Board of Jewish Deputies (henceforth Board) in London, which preserve the materials of the Joint Foreign Committee (henceforth JFC) and the Anglo Jewish Association (henceforth AJA). Additionally, I examined the major Jewish papers in France, *Univers Israélite* and *Paix et Droit*,⁷ and the *Jewish Chronicle*⁸ in Great Britain, which allow us to understand to what extent information was circulated and, at times, even toned down for readers, probably to avoid alarmism. In some cases, predominantly in the British case, I discovered a significant discrepancy between what was printed in the *Jewish Chronicle* and the original considerations and concerns for Italian Jews expressed within the JFC and the Board, and often shared with representatives of the Foreign Office.

The period examined spans 1937–1939, which for British and French Jewry represents the time before the sometimes incredulous reception of the racial campaign in Italy and the pressing concern for the fate of foreign Jews present in the Kingdom of Italy and in the colony of Rhodes, which

⁷ *Paix et Droit* was the journal of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*; on this topic, see Kaspi, *Histoire de l'Alliance israélite universelle*. On the Jewish press in France during the period analysed here, see Catherine Nicault, ed., “Aspects de la presse juive entre les deux guerres,” *Archives Juives*, no. 36/1 (2003); Jérémy Guedj, “La presse juive française et l’Italie fasciste, 1922–1939: un vecteur des relations intercommunautaires juives en Méditerranée?” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 85 (2012): 195–211. URL: <http://cdlm.revues.org/6741>.

⁸ On the paper see David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

were hit by the first anti-Semitic decree of September 1938. Both organizations feared that it would be impossible to face an exponential increase in the number of refugees, since their resources were already being stretched by the aid offered to Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria.⁹

In terms of the historiography available on the French and British Jewish reactions to Italian anti-Semitism, there is Jérémy Guedj's study for France,¹⁰ but practically nothing on the reactions of British Jews,¹¹ except for the writings of Cecil Roth,¹² whom I examine here primarily as one of the protagonists of these events, given the fundamental role of mediation with Italy which he undertook on behalf of the Board, as commanded by the president, Neville Laski.

1 1938: AN "ANNUS HORRIBILIS" FOR ITALIAN JEWS

The fascist government's enactment of the racial laws in Italy was a truly traumatic event for Italian Jews, who were well integrated in the majority society and firmly believed that the rampant European anti-Semitism would never cross the borders of the peninsula. This was a widely held belief among Italian Jewish communities, despite the fact that an anti-Jewish propaganda campaign had been evident for a number of years in several newspapers directed by known anti-Semites.¹³ Italian Jewry was,

⁹The Evian Conference of July 1938 did not meet expectations, and the philanthropic organisations found themselves facing the problem of organising assistance for thousands of refugees.

¹⁰Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*.

¹¹Further information can be found in: Daniel Tilles and Salvatore Garau, eds., *Fascism and the Jews: Italy and Britain* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011).

¹²On the figure of Cecil Roth and his close relationship with Italy and Italian Jewry, see: Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth. Historian without Tears: A Memoir* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982). The following work is fundamental: Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Jewish Publication Society of America: Philadelphia, 1946). See also Elio Toaff, ed., *Studi sull'ebraismo italiano in memoria di Cecil Roth* (Rome: Barulli, 1974); David B. Ruderman, "Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry: a reassessment," in David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, eds. *The Jewish Past revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1998); Cecil Roth, "Gino Luzzatto and Jewish History," *Nuova Rivista Storica* 49, no. 1–2 (1965): 166–169. I am currently conducting further research into his mediating role with Italy during the racial persecutions.

¹³For an in-depth analysis of the persecution, see Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*. See also Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des Juifs* (Saint-Amand—Montrond: Perrin, 2006).

however, convinced that these anti-Semites belonged to a small and politically isolated circle within Italian society.

In the span of a few months during the summer of 1938, Mussolini's racist anti-Jewish policies were officially launched in the country. This began with the publication of the so called "Manifesto of the Racial Scientists" in July; it was followed by the census of all Italian Jews on August 22, and by the introduction—in September—of laws excluding Jews from the field of education. Foreign Jews were ordered to leave the country by March 12, 1939, and faced the penalty of internment and then expulsion for failing to do so.¹⁴ On September 18, 1938 in Trieste, the location of one of the most important Italian Jewish communities, Mussolini issued an official statement to the country and to foreign powers regarding the start of the anti-Semitic campaign. The exclusion of Jews from civil and political life continued in full force on November 17, when other racial norms, excluding Jews from every aspect of social and economic life were promulgated.¹⁵

In this way, Italian Jews were deprived of most of their rights as citizens. Between 1938 and 1939, with a succession of laws and circulars, the long and mostly positive route of integration of the Jews in the Italian state—a journey that had begun with their full emancipation in 1848 during the Risorgimento and which had been considered by the Jews of Europe as one of the most successful—came to an end.¹⁶

The Jewish communities of France and Great Britain also met with disconcert the debut of Mussolini's racist anti-Semitic policies, since over the years Mussolini had, on many occasions, reassured foreign public opinion that, unlike Hitler, fascist Italy did not bear any prejudice towards the Jews.¹⁷ Many had believed him, despite the fact that racism was in no

¹⁴ For a detailed examination of the events of summer 1938, see Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 145–150.

¹⁵ For further information on the legislation, see Michael A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938–1943* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁶ On the emancipation of Italian Jews, see: Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza. Il dibattito sull'emancipazione degli ebrei in Italia 1781–1848* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1998); Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews Family, Gender, Religion and the Nation, 1861–1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy, 1848–1915. Between Tradition and Transformation* (London and Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011).

¹⁷ Consider his interview in 1932 with E. Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1932), in which Mussolini claims that anti-Semitism didn't exist in Italy. The reas-

way outside the horizon of fascist ideology: one need only to consider the anti-Slavic policies applied along the eastern borders from the early 1920s, as well as colonial racism, made explicit with the enactment in 1936–1937 of laws against sexual relations and marriage between Italians from the Kingdom and subjects in the Italian African colonies.¹⁸

2 THE FIRST SIGNS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN ITALY (1936–1937): THE REACTION OF THE BRITISH AND FRENCH JEWISH ASSOCIATIONS

One of the most striking features of the French and British press in 1938 is the growing concern about the racist policies of Mussolini. The reactions of the journalists make it seem almost as if the racial laws came as a bolt from the blue in a country that both nations saw as a model of successful integration between Jews and the majority society until that moment. In reality, there had been some worrying, albeit isolated, signs following the Gentile education reform, which introduced a compulsory religious hour at school in 1923,¹⁹ and the Lateran Pacts of 1929, which sanctioned the concordat between the Italian state and the Catholic Church.

For instance, in December 1929 Neville Laski wrote to his friend Lucien Wolf, an important figure in British Jewry, and his predecessor at the helm of the Board, to discuss his concerns about the new developments in Italy: individuals were now required to declare their religious

surings declarations made by Italian diplomats on many occasions, including immediately prior to the introduction of the racial laws, were also important in this regard. Furthermore, in 1936 the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs commissioned Sozias (E. H. Rubin) to write a book, *The Jews of Italy*, which was printed in 1936 in Vienna. In this book the image of a fascist Italy devoid of anti-Semitic sentiments was underlined. In July 1936, the Italian ambassador in London stressed the unfounded nature of accusations of Jew-baiting, claiming that the regime had welcomed many foreign Jews in recent times: London Metropolitan Archives, London (henceforth LMA), *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C 11/6/2, letter from N. Cracassi to B. Raperport, London 22/07/1936.

¹⁸ On these topics, see Stefano Bartolini, *Fascismo antiservo. Il tentativo di bonifica etnica al confine orientale* (Pistoia: ISRPt, 2006); Giulia Barrera, “Mussolini’s Colonial Race Laws and the State-settler Relations in Africa Orientale Italiana (1935–1943),” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 8, no. 3 (2003): 425–443; Gianluca Gabrielli, *Il razzismo coloniale italiano tra leggi e società* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2005); Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁹ Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista*, 55–56.

beliefs on public documents, which—according to the informant—had brought about a change in attitude from the majority society towards the Jews. Some Italian Jews challenged the requirement, attributing it to the new relationship between Church and state.²⁰ On this occasion, Laski had also expressed his fears to the AIU, which had in turn asked for clarification from its network of informants in Italy. They responded with reassurances that there were not at present any forms of discrimination against Jews; indeed, according to the AIU's correspondents, life was better than ever.²¹ These shortsighted assertions from some members of the Italian Jewish community can perhaps be explained by the fascist leanings of a consistent portion of the community's leadership.²²

In his study, Jérémy Guedj claims that French Jewry observed clear signs of racist leanings in the fascist regime in 1935, following the discriminatory measures adopted in Ethiopia.²³ From 1936 onwards, preoccupation continued to grow due to the change in fascist politics towards the Kingdom's Jews following the creation of the Rome–Berlin Axis.²⁴ The discrimination shown against the Jews of Tripoli did not pass unobserved in France and England either. Marshall Italo Balbo, Governor of Libya, had rigidly implemented the November 15, 1936 ordinance that, starting from December 1, required all shops in Tripoli, including Jewish-owned shops, to open on Saturday in the “new city.” There were heated protests from Jewish traders, harshly and openly quashed by the Italian

²⁰ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/48, N. Laski to L. Wolf, 24/12/1929.

²¹ Ibid., AIU to N. Laski, 6/01/1930.

²² About the Italian Fascist Jews, Michele Sarfatti, ed., “Italy's Fascist Jews: Insights on an Unusual Scenario,” special issue of *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, 11 (2017). URL: www.quest-cdecjournal.it/index.php?issue=11.

²³ Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 310–12. See also: Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci, “D'une persécution à l'autre: racisme colonial et antisémitisme dans l'Italie fasciste,” *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine* 3 (2008), 116–37. On Italian colonialism, see Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).

²⁴ Historiography has, for some time, focussed on the progress of Mussolini's racist politics against the Jews: Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*. At the time, however, the presumed influence of Italy's agreement with Germany on the racist turn of fascism was the object of great debate, not only in the international Jewish press, but also in the inquiries conducted by the delegates of the agencies with the representatives of Italian Jewry: LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC, 3121/E3/271/2, *Memorandum on the Position of the Jews of Italy and Tripoli*, April 1937. Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 287–291.

government, which made numerous arrests and flogged two protestors in the public square to make an example out of them.²⁵

This was recounted with a certain emphasis in the reports on the Italian Jews' situation, written by the envoys of both the British and American Jewish philanthropic associations during the two years preceding the racial laws. In some of these documents, destined to a wide circulation in the diplomatic milieus in Europe and the USA, the anti-Semitic politics of Mussolini were defined as opportunistic and therefore lacking the racist connotations of ideological motivation. Take for instance the following passage from a 1937 Memorandum, which was circulated in the Jewish philanthropic associations in the United States:

Mussolini, himself, is neither an anti-Semite nor a philo-Semite. He is simply a realist and an Italian. He is quite willing, on purely material grounds, to have one policy today and another tomorrow, as he may conceive such policy to be productive of most material results for himself, Italy and his ambitions. If philo-Semitism pays, he is philo-Semitic; if anti-Semitism pays, he is quite willing equally to be an anti-Semite.²⁶

The events in Tripoli had, however, triggered the activation of a network of links among European Jewish philanthropic associations, especially between England and France, but also across the Atlantic. The agencies asked for a confirmation of the facts' veracity from one another, and also shared with each other the reactions of Italian Jews to the government's sudden anti-Semitism.²⁷ The AIU always had the most up-to-date

²⁵ On this episode, see Renzo De Felice, *Ebrei in un paese arabo. Gli ebrei nella Libia contemporanea tra colonialismo, nazionalismo e fascismo (1835–1970)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1978), 234–237; Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 113; Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 310.

²⁶ YIVO Archive, Israel Cohen 1879–1961, Italy, box 1, folder 14, *Memorandum on the Position of the Jews of Italy and Tripoli*, April 1937, 3. This is an edited version of the memo written by Laski (JFC) with Cecil Roth's revision. Roth was deeply knowledgeable about Italian Jewry and had a wide network of contacts in the peninsula. Laski's original with Roth's comments can be found in LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/2. The judgment on Mussolini's politics in Laski's account is far more nuanced and articulated.

²⁷ See LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/2, Letter from the Board to the American Jewish Committee, 15/12/1936; Letter from the Board to the AIU, in which they asked for further information on the events in Tripoli, 15/12/1936. The Board wrote to the AIU a week later to thank the *Alliance* for the news it had collected, which helped shed light on the events in question, 23/12/1936.

information regarding events, thanks to its well-established network of informants in situ.²⁸ For its part, the American Joint Distribution Committee paid particular attention to the evolution of anti-Semitism in Italy, because in 1937 it had transferred substantial sums to the Italian Jewish Committees to support the German refugees who had already arrived in Italy as well as to provide aid to the other refugees who continued to arrive.²⁹

The Italian authorities immediately attempted to downplay the events in Tripoli, while Italian Jewry adopted a very cautious attitude towards the facts.³⁰ Among Italian Jews there was a tendency to avoid talking about what had happened, while foreign Jews had received a request, apparently from the Chief Rabbi of Rome, David Prato, to stop interfering abroad in the relationship between Italian Jews and Mussolini.³¹ In London, for example, in a letter to Rabbi Hertz, who had pushed until a representative of the JFC intervened via the Italian Embassy in favor of the Italian Jews in February 1937, Laski replied:

We do not think that representations by the Committee to the Italian Ambassador would be favorably received. As you can well understand we do not want to take any action in regard to Italy which might be regarded as something in the nature of a pinprick. There has been no call from the

²⁸ Ibid., Letter from the AIU to the JFC, in which they reported the news on Tripoli, while underlining that they had not received a response from rabbi David Prato in Rome, to whom they had written to request an explanation. Paris, 18/12/1936. See also “*En Italie*,” in *Paix et Droit*, 1/1/1937, 8, where the question of whether anti-Semitism was really spreading in the Italian colonies as a sort of general test for the introduction of anti-Semitic politics in Italy was posed.

²⁹ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/2, Letter from B. Kahn (American Joint Distribution Committee) to N. Laski, Paris, 15/4/1937. The Committee provided aid for German Jewish refugees in Italy and had a fundamental role until 1943 in assisting in the transit of Jews fleeing to Italian ports. See: Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*; Sandro Antonini, *DeLaSem: storia della più grande organizzazione ebraica italiana di soccorso durante la seconda guerra mondiale* (Genoa: De Ferrari, 2000).

³⁰ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/2, Letter from A. Wiener to N. Laski, Amsterdam 9/3/1937: “As you know, it is extremely difficult to get a clear idea of the position of the Italian Jews because they must be very careful when giving a written report, and sometimes even this is impossible to obtain.”

³¹ Ibid., Letter to rabbi J.H. Hertz from the Board, 11/2/1937: “The Italian Chief Rabbi said that he, himself, had the matter in hand and was making all the necessary representations, and it would be a mistake for any other Jewish Community [...] to interfere [...].”

Italian side for our intervention, and I was given to understand at a recent interview at the Foreign Office that the Tripoli incident is by no means the stray indicating the uprising of an anti-Semitic wind. On the whole I think that, even at the risk of laying ourselves open to criticism, it will be best as far as the Committee is concerned to regard the incident as closed and to hope that it will be the last of its kind.³²

The AIU, however, was not entirely convinced by the Foreign Office's declarations, as reported in Laski's letter. They expressed a less reassuring judgment on the policies of the Italian government towards the Jews, claiming that the events in Tripoli, as well as the anti-Semitic press campaign already present in Italy, were to be considered disturbing signs of things to come.³³

As a result, the French Jewish newspapers followed with apprehension the plight of the Italian Jews, who were plagued by anti-Jewish propaganda, while in March 1937 the *Jewish Chronicle* asked if legislation against Jews was about to be enforced. The fact that Mussolini had not lifted a finger against the anti-Semitic propaganda in newspapers such as *La Vita Italiana* directed by Preziosi, or against other papers, such as *Il Tevere*, *Quadrivio*, and *Il Regime Fascista*, which called for the government to legislate against the Jews, had become worrying.³⁴

Throughout the year, the AIU received communications from Jews in Italy sent by the leaders of the Jewish communities, but also by single individuals, expressing concern for the growing anti-Semitism and asking the philanthropic association to intervene in some way. It was not a coincidence that the requests for help came from the Jewish Community of Trieste, which was more perturbed by the growing anti-Semitic intolerance in Italy than any other Jewish community in the peninsula.³⁵

³² Ibid., Letter from N. Laski to rabbi J.H. Hertz, London 3/2/1937.

³³ Ibid., Letter from the AIU to the JFC, Paris 11/1/1937.

³⁴ "The Beginning of Anti-Semitism?," *Jewish Chronicle*, 5/3/1937, 33. See also LMA, Board of Deputies of British Jews, ACC 3121/E3/271/1, letter sent by E. Kleinleher (Association of Foreign Press in Italy) to M.D. Waldman (American Jewish Committee), Rome 28/4/1937, where the anti-Semitic campaign is explicitly denounced in the press and fear is expressed about an increase due to Italian foreign policy, which was closer to that of Germany and in stark contrast to France's and England's.

³⁵ Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 301.

3 “THE ORIGIN OF THE MALADY BEING POLITICAL, THE CURE MUST BE POLITICAL”³⁶: THE RACIAL LAWS OF 1938 AND THE FIRST STEPS TAKEN BY THE FRENCH AND BRITISH JEWISH INSTITUTIONS TO DEFEND ITALIAN JEWS

Any doubts the British and French Jewish associations had had as to where the Italian racial politics were going to lead were blown apart by the anti-Semitic activity of the Italian government in 1938. From that moment on the situation in Italy, unexpected despite earlier warnings, forced the AIU and the JFC to analyze the anti-Semitic politics of Mussolini more closely, with the intention, first of all, of understanding the motivations behind the new anti-Semitism of the Italian government; and secondly, to urgently find ways of alleviating the suffering of the Italian and foreign Jews residing in the Italian Kingdom and its colonies. This required the two associations to frequently discuss matters together and to exchange information and considerations with the World Jewish Congress and Jewish philanthropic organizations in the United States. As we shall see, they did not always arrive at the same conclusions or agreed upon the methods of intervention. In my opinion, different stances were motivated by the disparate way in which France and England viewed the history of Italian Jews after emancipation. The absence of official protests from European Jews, moreover, was due to the fact that the pressing requests from Italian Jews not to intervene were partially heeded. A similar invitation to abstain from interference had, at least initially, also been made by French and British diplomatic circles; for example the Foreign Office asked British Jews to wait in order to better understand what was happening in Italy.³⁷

The evidence of an initial disarray regarding the anti-Semitic policies in Italy, even from the British and American ambassadors in Rome, can be found in a substantial series of statements and memoranda dedicated

³⁶LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, Memorandum of Sir Andrew McFadyean, 25/1/1939, 4.

³⁷LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/1, Letter from Clerk to Smolar, 11/8/1938, where he informs him that the international Jewish associations are organizing a delegation to send to the Italian embassy in Paris, and he confirms that the Board is awaiting the Foreign Office's advice. On the Italian Jewish leadership's request not to intervene, see *ibid.*, *Interview at the Foreign Office concerning the situation of the Jews in Italy*, 17/8/1938. The interview took place between the JFC and Sir Andrew Noble, who had previously been the British Ambassador in Rome.

to the situation of Italian Jews from 1938 to 1939, collected by the JFC's delegates in Italy at the Board's request. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency's correspondent, Smolar, who drafted the document, wrote in his long and accurate notes for August 1, 1938:

The present racial campaign in Italy, with its distinct reference to Italian Jewry, is a puzzle to all foreign diplomats in Rome who have been watching the Italian situation. [...] Even members of Mussolini's Cabinet are not clear at this moment as to what is exactly behind the sudden anti-Jewish campaign in the country. My impressions were similar [...].³⁸

Smolar discussed a series of conjectures, which attributed the racist politics of the Duce to his increasing ties with the Arabic world, as well as his growing disagreement with England, in stark contrast to the ever-increasing strength of the bond with Germany, seen as a means of pressuring the democratic countries into a rapprochement with Italy after the Ethiopia campaign. According to Smolar, however, rather than to foreign politics, the anti-Semitic turn could be ascribed entirely to the growing influence exercised on the Duce by some of his advisors, defined as "extremist leaders of the Fascist party," very close to Germany and its racism.³⁹ "It will last long enough to ruin us," an Italian Jewish leader had declared, in response to Smolar's request for a comment on the campaign in progress.⁴⁰

The JFC moved with greater speed than the French Jews, meeting with Foreign Office diplomats who were well informed on the Italian situation, to find out what the ministry thought of the anti-Semitic campaign in Italy, and to examine whether there was an opportunity for British Jews to intervene through the Italian ambassador in London, at the request of the World Jewish Congress. One of the first encounters in August 1938 was with Sir Andrew Noble, the long-serving British ambassador in Rome. The emissaries of the JFC went to the meeting knowing that the representatives of Italian Jewry did not look kindly on the intervention of foreign Jewish organizations. According to Noble, there had been signs of a growing anti-Jewish sentiment over the previous three years in Italy, but intervention seemed difficult to him, since it involved running the risk of

³⁸ Ibid., Memorandum of Smolar, *The Anti-Jewish racial campaign in Italy*, 1/8/1938.

³⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

inciting the anti-Semitic press: "In his opinion we would be well advised at present to 'sit tight' and do nothing."⁴¹ At the same time the Board found itself facing the problem of the anti-Semitism of British fascists: undoubtedly, the suffering of Italian Jews at the hands of Italian fascism brought about a reappraisal of possible actions against British anti-Semitic forces.⁴²

In reality, after the first laws in September 1938, Jewish organizations such as the World Jewish Congress, the Zionist Organization, and B'nai B'rith, continued to apply pressure on the JFC to intervene in Italy, but Laski's position was very firmly against proceeding, since he had received a great deal of advice in that vein.⁴³ That did not mean, however, that the JFC had no interest in the Italian Jews' situation: the association's minutes from 1938–1939 are often partly dedicated to an examination of the Italian situation. Furthermore, while the Annual Report of the Board in this two-year period interpreted fascist racism as an attempt to please the German ally, the JFC's analysis was very different, as the minutes from those years demonstrate.⁴⁴

It is clear from this correspondence that in the 1930s British Jews represented one of Europe's most authoritative interlocutors amongst international Jewish organizations. Although after World War I the AIU's centrality had progressively diminished, even in 1938, despite the evident emergence of anti-Semitism in Europe, the AIU continued to operate as it had always done, preferring to act autonomously, excusing itself from

⁴¹ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/1, *Interview at the Foreign Office concerning the situation of the Jews of Italy*, 17/8/1938. In this period there was a feverish exchange of letters with the World Jewish Congress to decide how to approach the Italian situation. The views collected by the leadership of Italian Jewry—represented in many of these documents by Dr Federico Jarach, president of the Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane and by the chief rabbi of Rome, David Prato—were also fundamental.

⁴² Daniel Tilles, "'Some lesser known aspects.' The Anti-Fascist Campaign of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1936–1940," in Geoffrey Alderman, ed., *New Direction in Anglo-Jewish History* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 135–162.

⁴³ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/271/1, N. Laski to the Board, 13/9/1938.

⁴⁴ Board of Deputies of British Jews, *Annual Report 1938* (London: Woburn House, 1939), 71; idem, *Annual Report 1939* (London: Woburn House, 1940), 47–48. The minutes can be found in LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/A 8, minutes from 8/9/1938, where the boycotting of Italian trades is criticized as "counterproductive" for the peninsula's Jews and several declarations made by other Jewish organizations on Italian politics are called "irresponsible." The minutes from 19/10/1938 are also useful, the racist policies are noted, but the Pope's weighty declarations on the racial laws are viewed with interest.

group meetings between the Jewish philanthropic organizations, but accepting a constant exchange of information.⁴⁵ Only in early 1939 did the French association tentatively reach out, offering its availability for a meeting with all of the Jewish philanthropic institutions in Europe in order to discuss the refugee crisis, which by that time included foreign Jews leaving Italy.⁴⁶ It was not until late 1938 that the AIU showed a particular concern for the situation of Italian Jews per se: all of the interventions they promoted until then were directed towards helping the German Jews persecuted by the Nazis.

For its part, French Jewish public opinion at the time followed the events in Italy with alarm, and was disconcerted by the contradictory messages coming from the neighboring country, where Mussolini's behavior was seen as duplicitous: a philo-Semite at home and an anti-Semite in the African colonies.⁴⁷ With the Rome–Berlin axis confirmed, the French view was that Mussolini was drawing closer to Hitler's racial politics, but other topics were discussed in the Jewish press, as Guedj confirms, such as the fight against the stereotype of the middle-class, liberal, emancipated, integrated and anti-fascist Jew.⁴⁸

The AIU's paper, *Paix et Droit*, which adhered to the most moderate line of French Judaism, gave space in March 1938 to several considerations on Italian anti-Semitism, which were expanded on with greater incision by Alfred Berl in October 1938. The suggestion was that Mussolini did not have much autonomy with regards to his German ally:

[H]is friendship with Hitler after the Anschluss is less voluntary than it appears [...] the Duce seems to have forgotten that German friendship is rarely positive for Italy [...] Mussolini is more or less Hitler's prisoner. If he

⁴⁵ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/6/2, Letter from the AIU to the JFC, 21/3/1938. On the isolationist attitude of the AIU during this extended period, see Tullia Catalan, "The Jews of Southeastern Europe and the Policies of Western European Philanthropic Associations (1878–1930)," in Tullia Catalan and Marco Dogo, eds., *The Jews and the Nation-States of Southeastern Europe from the 19th Century to the Great Depression: Combining Viewpoints on a Controversial Story* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 183–204.

⁴⁶ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/6/2, Letter from the AIU to Laski, 7/2/1939.

⁴⁷ Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 299.

⁴⁸ Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 305. In Italy fascism had for some time been conducting an anti-bourgeois campaign which was not unrelated to racism and anti-Semitism. See: Pier Giorgio Zunino, *L'ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).

acts anti-Semitically, it isn't through conviction, but by proxy, and in this circumstance Italy seems to play a secondary role, if not that of a satellite to the German star.⁴⁹

Berl's article focused on the Risorgimento experience of the Jews, recalling the patriotism they had demonstrated during the Great War. This was also one of the most frequently used tropes in the minutes taken by the JFC during this two-year period: it was supposed to serve as a testimony of the Jews' loyalty to Italy while also emphasizing the impact of the fracture caused by the racial laws within Italian society, which was often described as entirely detached from what the government legislated. Indeed, the origins of the "myth of the good Italian" can be traced back to this period, if one considers the good-natured judgments expressed on many occasions by the British and French observers within the Kingdom.⁵⁰ The thing that most concerned the AIU's press was that anti-Semitism could develop in the country considered to be the cradle of humanist thought and the Renaissance. The Jewish press had always stressed, especially in France, that the Italian population appeared impervious to anti-Semitism.

In the Jewish press, great attention was moreover dedicated to the opposition of Pope Pius XI to the promulgation of the anti-Semitic laws. In November 1938 Alfred Berl intervened again in the AIU's paper to comment on the new laws on mixed marriages in Italy, expressing that fluctuating sentiment characterizing many of the foreign observations on the Italian racial laws at the time. On the one hand, he recognized the extreme harshness of the Italian law, compared to that of the Third Reich; on the other hand, he did not fail to point out that "the fascist government's attitude towards the Jews is less inflexible than the German law."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Alfred Berl, "En Italie: variations anti-Semites," in *Paix et Droit*, 1/10/1938, 1–2. On this, see Guedj's comments in *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 319.

⁵⁰ On the myth of the "good Italian," see David Bidussa *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994); Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano: la rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2013); Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 109ff. For the French Jews and the *Alliance's* reaction, see: Guedj, *Le Miroir des désillusions*, 326–327.

⁵¹ Alfred Berl, "L'antisémitisme en Italie," in *Paix et Droit*, 1/11/1938, 4. On the legislation against mixed marriages, see: Giuliana, Marisa and Gabriella Cardosi, *Sul confine. La questione dei "matrimoni misti" durante la persecuzione in Italia e in Europa (1935–1945)* (Turin: Zamorani, 2007).

Within the AIU there was a discussion of the Italian situation, which had by that time deteriorated with the publication of the first anti-Semitic laws in September 1938. On September 28 there was a meeting of the Central Committee in Paris, presided over by Vice-President Georges Leven, in which the Chief Rabbi Maurice Liber addressed the dilemma in which Italian Jews found themselves, which he thought could be summarized in three ways.⁵²

The first was that the anti-Semitic laws raised the issue of the emigration of refugees fleeing Italy as well. According to him, the situation could no longer be considered a philanthropic affair, but a political matter, and so it had to be brought to the attention of the AIU: "We must anticipate an emigration of 20–25,000 Italian refugees. The Alliance must occupy itself as soon as possible with their distribution across the French territory and their assimilation." France was viewed by this member of the AIU as the natural terrain for Italian Jews' emigration, since it had always been considered a kindred community to the Italian one.⁵³ The second problem was the fact that Italian anti-Semitism jeopardized Italy's relations with the other Jewish communities in the Mediterranean, leaving them to their own devices. He deemed it necessary for the AIU to intervene as a matter of urgency, in order to take the place of Italy and win these other communities over to its influence and ideas. Finally, the economic motivations proposed by fascism as justifications for the anti-Jewish measures it had adopted were, in his view, an alarm bell for French Jews too: the internal economic structure ought to be reconsidered, paying attention to the professional orientation of the refugees, in order to avoid future attacks similar to those suffered by Italian Jews.

Rabbi Liber's claims help us understand the main beliefs and objectives of a long-standing institution like the AIU, which had commenced its philanthropic actions and its support for persecuted Jews in 1860, but always with an eye to the interests of French foreign policy. This position can also be found in the Board's way of acting, which was always attentive to the advice of the Foreign Office.

⁵² *Alliance Israélite Universelle* archive, Paris, *Registre des procès verbaux du Comité Central* (17/11/1937–16/3/1940), Minutes of 28/9/1938, 30–31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 31. Here explicit reference is made to the links existing between the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean, in which even the AIU strongly believed. See Jérémy Guedj, "Un aspetto delle relazioni intercomunitarie ebraiche nel Mediterraneo: gli ebrei francesi e i loro correligionari italiani al tempo del fascismo (1922–1939)," *Memoria e Ricerca. Rivista di storia contemporanea* 38 (2011): 137–157.

A later meeting of the Central Committee took place on October 19, 1938, after the major European Jewish philanthropic associations met in London. Although these associations had put on a united front in times of crisis since the Balkan wars, the effectiveness of future encounters of that type was questioned. The criticisms leveled by the representatives of the AIU (Stern, Mayer, and Helbronner) at the JFC and other philanthropic associations present at the meeting were very severe. They spoke of inconclusive days, a lack of organization, squabbles within British Jewry, and of having offered a new excuse to the anti-Semitic press to attack Jews. Nothing was reported, however, on the topics discussed, but the decision they reached was important: from that point on they would operate in total autonomy, accepting invitations of this kind only if they were backed up with a sufficiently detailed order of the day and with a clear list of participants.⁵⁴ The concern for the Italian case was, however, still apparent in the preoccupation with the Italian Jews living in Tunis and for the approximately 150 families in Rhodes who were originally from Turkey, but had acquired Italian citizenship after 1919 and who, with the racial laws, were subject to expulsion from the island.⁵⁵

In an attempt to resolve the question of the Italian Jews residing in the colonies, some contacts were maintained between the AIU and the JFC, thanks to the explicit request of the French. There was, indeed, a heated discussion about the plight of the Jews in Rhodes during the first months of 1939. In this situation, Paris requested the JFC's help in interceding with the Foreign Office in order to find a solution, even a temporary one, to transport the Jews expelled from Rhodes to Cyprus.⁵⁶ The Cyprus solution did not take off,⁵⁷ but this exchange again demonstrates the detached attitude of the AIU, which was determined not to expose itself too much,

⁵⁴ *Alliance Israélite Universelle* archive, Paris, *Registre des procès verbaux du Comité Central* (17/11/1937–16/3/1940), minutes from the session on 19/10/1938.

⁵⁵ *Alliance Israélite Universelle* archive, Paris, *Registre des procès verbaux du Comité Central* (17/11/1937–16/3/1940), minutes from the session on 12/11/1938. On fascism in Tunisia, see Daniel Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia*. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994).

⁵⁶ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, letter from the AIU to the JFC, 12/1/1939. The exchange of letters between the two associations was dense and lasted until March 1939, involving many agents, including leading members of the Foreign Office, such as Malcolm McDonald. I intend to address this issue in greater detail elsewhere, given the importance of the material recovered.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Board to the AIU, 15/3/1939.

jealous of its contacts in the territories and of the privileged relationship it had with Italian Jewry.

The refugees were one of the main problems facing the major associations. In addition to German emigration and those fleeing the East, from March 1939 there were also those German Jews who had previously found safety in the peninsula. This was largely the central topic of the exchanges of information that took place between British and French Jews from 1938 to 1939. The opening of a new front, so vast and above all unexpected, was faced with growing concern by the British, and with a certain detachment by the French, who were determined to proceed autonomously. On the French side it is clear that in this period there was a sort of disregard of the AIU's actions, which was less present than it had been in the past and perhaps less incisive, since it continued to use means of intervention which were by that period obsolete and out of step with the times and emergencies of the moment. Petitions, letters, and the activation of informants in the Italian territory, as well as the creation of Jewish diplomatic networks, could no longer solve political problems like they had in the past. The French caution was deemed excessive by British Jewry, who did everything they could to encourage the diplomatic channels of the Foreign Office, as well as those of the American diplomacies through the Jewish American philanthropic associations, to intervene urgently in some way in Italian politics.

Although the strategies adopted by the JFC with the support of the Board deserve further study, the next section will attempt to delineate the methods used to understand the situation of the Italian Jews during the persecution of 1938–1939, including the role of the individuals involved in these actions.

4 “OUR PROBLEM, I THINK, IS HOW TO WARD OFF THE AVALANCHE WITH A CRICKET-BAT.”⁵⁸ STRATEGIES TO ASSIST ITALIAN JEWS IN 1939

The method adopted by the Joint Foreign Committee in tandem with the AJA (both of which were acting under the direction of Neville Laski) was to periodically send trusted individuals to Italy, including diplomats or

⁵⁸LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, 3121/E3/513, Letter from N. Laski to A. McFadyean, 30/1/1939. With these bitter assessments of the difficulties facing Italian Jews, Laski thanked Sir McFadyean for his memorandum.

intellectuals who were knowledgeable about the history of Italian Jewry, in order to collect reports which could paint the most detailed and accurate picture of the situation. In the meantime, constant contact was maintained with the American Joint Distribution Committee, with British and American ambassadors in Italy and, in some cases, even with the AIU.

Here I will illustrate the role played by two of the Board's envoys: Sir Andrew McFadyean, whose mission in Italy took place in 1939,⁵⁹ and the Jewish historian Cecil Roth,⁶⁰ who was a personal friend of Neville Laski, and was equipped with all the necessary knowledge to understand the shift taking place in Italian society, and to grasp its most subtle implications. His reports, which I will not examine in detail here, are a mine of information and reflections on persecuted Italian Jewry, since Roth was able to understand both the transformations taking place in Italian society, and the danger in which the Jews in the peninsula lived. In fact, he immediately acted with the Board to propose the creation in London of an Italian Refugees Advisory Committee, beginning his proposal with a harsh criticism of Italian fascism, which helps us understand the extent to which the leadership of British Jewry was really informed on what was happening in Italy: "It is insufficiently realized that the plight of Italian Jewry, after four months or less of anti-Jewish discrimination, is worse than that of German Jewry after the first four years, and that in certain respects the Italian persecution has gone further than its German model."⁶¹

Roth was also aware that Italian Jewish refugees, and those who were about to leave Italy, could still not count on any material or logistical support, because the entire network of international aid was mobilized to support German refugees. His idea was, therefore, to convince the Spanish

⁵⁹ Sir Andrew McFadyean (1887–1974) was a British diplomat belonging to the Liberal Party. His mission in Italy in 1939 is mentioned, but not analyzed as closely as it deserves to be, by Meir Michaelis, "The Holocaust in Italy: Areas of Inquiry," in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, eds., *The Holocaust and History: the Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 439–462.

⁶⁰ Much has been written on Cecil Roth's historiographical work on Italian Jewish history, yet little is known about his attempts to help Italian Jews during the war. See Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian without Tears*; Ruderman, "Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry."

⁶¹ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, 3121/E3/513, Cecil Roth to the Board, 27/12/1938. Fundamental to understand his knowledge of the conditions of Italian Jews during the persecution is Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*. In this book he was the first to highlight the harshness of some aspects of the Italian racial laws compared to the German ones.

and Portuguese synagogue, in virtue of its close links with Italian Jews, to host the committee. As he envisioned it, "It would be a body to which they could apply for advice, as well as the Home Office, possibly for information regarding individuals: it might be able to elicit information on specific problems from the German Refugee organizations in a manner which would be impossible for private individuals."⁶² However, the proposal was met with some resistance, despite the support of Laski,⁶³ and he had to wait until May 1939 for the creation of the first committee in support of Italian Jewish refugees, in which the Catholic anti-fascist politician in exile, don Luigi Sturzo, was also involved.⁶⁴

The Board procured a comprehensive series of meetings with Italian Jews and anti-fascists for its emissaries, including with Benedetto Croce.⁶⁵ They were required to contact these individuals upon arrival in Italy in order to obtain trustworthy and first-hand information on the events in progress, and on the immediate needs of Italian Jewry. The most well-known mission is without a doubt the one conducted by Sir McFadyean in January 1939. Organized down to the tiniest detail by the JFC, the mission was supported by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.⁶⁶ Sir Andrew McFadyean left for Italy with a list of people to meet, many of whom were suggested by Roth, and not all of whom were Jewish. Milan was the operational hub of the opposition and the center from which Italian Jewish relations with foreign communities were organized, according to the British Jews; to the contrary, Roth termed Turin "a hot-bed of anti-Fascism" and therefore the conditions for the Jews in

⁶²LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, 3121/E3/513, Cecil Roth to the Board, 27/12/1938.

⁶³LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, 3121/E3/513, Neville Laski to Cecil Roth, 26/1/1939. Useful information on the position of Italian Jews in the United Kingdom can be found in: David Cesarani and Tony Kushner, eds., *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁶⁴LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, Letter from Bertha Pritchard to Oscar Deutsch, London 19/05/1939. On the presence and activity of Sturzo in London, see: Giovanna Farrell-Vinay, ed., *Luigi Sturzo a Londra: carteggi e documenti (1925-1946)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003).

⁶⁵Indeed, Roth advised McFadyean: "Should you go to Naples, it is always worth while to have a talk with Benedetto Croce: but as you know he is well out of public life," in LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC3121/E3/513, Cecil Roth to Sir Andrew McFadyean, 2/01/1939.

⁶⁶LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC/3121/C/11/A/8, minutes from the JFC on 14/12/1938.

the city were particularly difficult.⁶⁷ After his stay in Milan he traveled to Florence, Rome, and Naples. After more than a dozen days in Italy the envoy sent a long and detailed memorandum. While, on the one hand, the Italian population was described as relatively disinclined to follow the government's anti-Semitism ("Now the case of Italy is peculiar in that, in spite of anti-semitic policy and legislation, anti-semitism outside a restricted Government circle is non-existent. I am satisfied that the policy is unpopular"),⁶⁸ on the other hand, the fascist racial laws were analyzed in all their harshness, made even more shocking by their sudden enactment.

This reconnaissance, commissioned by the Board in Italy, produced detailed accounts between 1938 and 1939, which brought some important issues caused by the anti-Semitic campaign to the attention of the British Jewish leadership: the worrying increase in emigration; the considerable number of conversions to Catholicism, defined in January 1939 as "a real epidemic"; the Italian Jewish community's loss of leaders, who had fled abroad; the falling standards of living for Italian Jews.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the information gathered brought into question the initial acceptance of fascism by Italian Jews: a burning topic and one that was rarely discussed by French Jews. Even for the British, however, the anti-Semitic policies of the Italian government did not seem to have a strong hold over the population.

These accounts, punctually updated in light of new information, were then discussed by the Board and forwarded to the Foreign Office, where Neville Laski's respondent was often Sir Robert Vansittart.⁷⁰ From the recovered correspondence, it is clear that they held different opinions on the situation of the Italian Jews, who were defined as "too pessimistic to their fate" by Sir Vansittart.⁷¹ The latter claimed that "[o]ur experts therefore incline to the view that the position of the Jews in Italy will be

⁶⁷ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, Letter from Cecil Roth to Sir Andrew McFadyean, 5/11/1939. Roth added that in nearby Genoa "the laws are interpreted by the local authorities rather more mildly."

⁶⁸ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/E3/513, Memorandum written by Sir McFadyean, 25/01/1939.

⁶⁹ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, *The present position of the Italian Jews in Italy*, author unknown, but following on from McFadyean's writing.

⁷⁰ See Brotman's comments to Laski on Sir Vansittart, 1/03/1939: LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, where he discusses the positions of some members of the FO with regard to Jews.

⁷¹ LMA, *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, ACC 3121/C11/12/50, Letters from Sir Vansittart to Laski, 16/02/1939.

hard, but that there is at least a chance that the laws will not be harshly applied and that the Jews will have the sympathy of the mass of the people which will do something to mitigate the hardship.”⁷²

To the contrary, based on the information collected in the field in the years before Italy's entry into the war, the Board understood the danger the Italian Jews faced and organized an aid strategy to support the refugees fleeing from Italy, operating through a network of contacts established with various Italian communities, and particularly with Milan.

5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it seems to me that two different operational methods emerged from the major French and British philanthropic associations, in order to assist Italian Jews facing persecution in 1938–1939.

After an initial moment of confusion, following Mussolini's about-turn with the racial laws of 1938, and the different ways in which the French and the British interpreted what was happening in Italy, the AIU continued to proceed with its established methods of intervention, which had been rendered obsolete by the urgency of the events. Its tendency to isolate itself in the face of difficulties, and its inability, which had been evident on many occasions in the past, to form networks with the other European and American Jewish associations, impeded its ability to provide quick and constructive support to Italian Jews living in the Kingdom and its colonies who turned to Paris for assistance. Instead, the AIU often limited itself to a role of intermediation with the other associations, renouncing its previous role of leader of European Jewish philanthropy. Despite these difficulties, the AIU remained an important reference point for Italian Jewry until the outbreak of World War II, as Italian Jews were accustomed to the presence of its branches throughout the national territory.

Something truly new, compared to the previous decades, was the role assumed by British Jewry in relation to Italy, and on which there is so far little historiographical work. The Board, responsible for both the Joint and the AJA, knew how to face the emergence of European anti-Semitism with a series of more modern initiatives and instruments than had been used in the past, using the internal resources created through relationship networks, as well as men involved periodically in the Italian case by virtue of their knowledge and experience. One such example is Cecil Roth, who

⁷² Ibid.

from 1938–1939 put his deep knowledge of Italian society, both Jewish and otherwise, at the JFC's disposal.

The method finally used by the JFC, with the full support of the Board, was to periodically prepare memorandums to be submitted to the analysis of the Foreign Office. This provided the JFC with a deep knowledge of the position of Italian Jews in the period, although this did not emerge in the contemporary British Jewish press, which preferred to paint a more reassuring picture of the Italian Jewish situation, choosing not to spread alarmism among British Jews. It remains an open question whether this decision to underline the absence of anti-Semitism in Italian society fed the myth of the good Italian in the years after the war also in Great Britain. In any case it is clear that an important network of links between British and Italian Jewries was created. This connection should be studied in further detail and over a longer period of time.



Jewish DPs in Post-War Italy: The Role of Italian Jewry in a Multilateral Encounter (1945–1948)

Arturo Marzano

1 INTRODUCTION

After the war, thousands of Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) who had survived the Shoah transited through Italy on their way to British Palestine and other destinations, mainly the United States, and remained in the country for a period ranging from a few weeks to a couple of years. During their stay, they received assistance and support by several organizations and individuals, culminating in what may be defined as a “multilateral encounter.” In fact, what took shape in Italy at the end of the war and in its aftermath was more multifaceted than the “triangle” described by Dina Porat between Shoah survivors, representatives from the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine), and Italian Jews.¹ Several actors played a signifi-

¹ See Dina Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy: the Encounter of Italian Jews with Holocaust Survivors and with Hebrew Soldiers and Zionist Representatives in Italy

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cant role in providing assistance to Jewish DPs: the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), later replaced by the International Refugee Organization (IRO)²; the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee³ (AJJDC, also known as Joint); the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI)—that is, the *Irgun ha-plitim*, as it was called in Hebrew, which represented the vast majority of Jewish DPs⁴; other voluntary associations, such as the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT)⁵ and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)⁶; and the Italian Jews, both as individuals and as institutions: the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (*Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane*, UCI),⁷ various Jewish Communities, especially those in the vicinity of the facilities housing the Jewish DPs, and the Italian Zionist Organization.⁸

I will focus here on the relationship between Jewish DPs and Italian Jewry, addressing the following questions: What was the role played by Italian Jewry, both individually and institutionally? To what extent did Italian Jewry participate in the relief and rehabilitation of Jewish DPs? What type of relations, interactions, and networks developed between Italian Jewry and Jewish DPs?

(1944–1946),” in *Gli Ebrei nell’Italia Unita (1870–1945)*. IV *Convegno Italia Judaica* (Rome: Ufficio Centrale per la conservazione dei beni archivistici, 1993), 487–513.

² UNRRA, founded in 1943, was an international relief agency representing 44 countries whose main aim was to assist DPs in Europe. In July 1947, UNRRA was replaced by IRO. See Jessica Reinisch, “Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA,” *Past and Present*, 6 (2011): 258–289.

³ For a general overview of its activities, see Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981).

⁴ The OJRI was founded in Rome in November 1945, during the Conference of Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy.

⁵ The ORT had been created in the early 1880s to improve the lives of Russian Jews, the majority of whom was living in poverty. Its aim was to provide education and training in practical occupations, such as handicraft and farming work.

⁶ The HIAS was an American non-profit organization created in 1881 to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to Jewish refugees mainly coming from the Russian Empire.

⁷ The UCI was the association representing all the Italian Jewish communities. Founded in 1911 as the *Comitato delle università israelitiche*, it was renamed the *Consorzio delle comunità israelitiche italiane* in 1920, and then *Unione delle comunità israelitiche italiane* in 1930.

⁸ The Italian Zionist Federation had been created in 1901, but became a reference point for Italian Jews only at the end of Second World War II, when Zionism became the ideology of choice for the majority of Italian Jews.

The Jewish DP's presence in Italy between 1945 and 1948 has not been adequately addressed by historiography. Most of the available research on Jewish DPs in Europe has focused either on the issue at large,⁹ or specifically on Germany¹⁰ and, to a lesser degree, Austria.¹¹ Only minor attention has been paid to their stay in Italy by both Italian and international scholars. Apart from brief studies, most of which did not go to a significant level of depth or were specific to a particular local context,¹² previous research has mainly addressed Italy insofar as it was on the main route for Jews trying to reach Palestine illegally—the *'aliyah bet*. Much of the focus has been on the international dimensions of the phenomenon, namely the relations between the Italian and British governments and the

⁹ This research was carried out thanks to the International Institute for Holocaust Research *Yad Vashem*, Jerusalem, where I spent four months as Post-doc Research Fellow in 2007–2008. I would like to take this opportunity to thank David Bankier and Iael Nidam-Orvieto for all their support. My gratitude also goes to Silvia Salvatici for reading a first draft of this chapter and providing invaluable suggestions. Any mistakes are, of course, my own responsibility.

See, among others, Mark Wyman, *DPs Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 131–155 on Jewish DPs in particular; Arel J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945–1948* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 236–256 on Italy in particular; Menachem Z. Rosensaft, ed., *Life Reborn. Jewish Displaced Persons 1945–1951, Conference Proceedings, Washington DC, January 14–17, 2000* (Washington: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

¹⁰ See, for example, Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Life in Post-War Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Avinoam J. Patt and Michael Berkowitz, eds., *"We are here": New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-war Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010).

¹¹ See, for example, Susanne Rolinek, *Jüdische Lebenswelten 1945–1955: Flüchtlinge in der amerikanischen Zone Österreichs* (Vienna and Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007).

¹² See, among others, Eva Pfanzelter, "Between Brenner and Bari: Jewish Refugees in Italy, 1945 to 1948," in *Escape Through Austria: Jewish Refugees and the Austrian Route to Palestine*, eds. Thomas Albrich and Ronald W. Zweig (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 83–104; Sonia Menici, "L'opera del Joint in Italia. Un 'Piano Marshall' ebraico per la ricostruzione," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 2 (2003): 593–617; Vito Antonio Leuzzi and Giulio Esposito, eds., *La Puglia dell'accoglienza. Profughi, rifugiati e rimpatriati nel Novecento* (Bari: Progedit, 2006); Sara Vinçon, *Vite in transito. Gli ebrei nel campo profughi di Grugliasco (1945–1949)* (Turin: Zamorani, 2009); Susanna Kokkonen, *The Jewish Refugees in Postwar Italy 1945–1951. The Way to Eretz Israel* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011).

Jewish Agency, as well as on the Italian attempt to capitalize on the chance to challenge Britain's supremacy in the Mediterranean. The presence of Jewish DPs in Italy, their daily life in the camps, private residences or villas, as well as their relationship with Italian society, both Jews and non-Jews,¹³ has only recently started to attract greater attention, even though much still needs to be researched.¹⁴ In this sense, the aim of this contribution is to fill a historiographical gap analyzing the relationship between Jewish DPs in Italy and the Italian Jewry.

2 THE JEWISH DPs IN ITALY. HOW MANY?

From spring 1945 onwards, Italy became an important node on thousands of Jewish DPs' route to British Palestine, or *Eretz Israel* (Land of Israel) as they referred to it.¹⁵ It is hard to estimate their exact number. In fact, while most of them received assistance, nobody knows how many did not during their stay in Italy. At the same time, several Jewish DPs certainly used forged documents, thus altering the calculations. In this regard, American Counter Intelligence Corps operative Vincent La Vista's comment in the summer of 1947 looks particularly insightful:

¹³Maria Grazia Enardu, "L'immigrazione illegale ebraica verso la Palestina e la politica estera italiana, 1945–1948," *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 1 (1986): 147–166; Mario Toscano, *La "porta di Sion". L'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina (1945–1948)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990); Jacob Markovizky, "The Italian Government's Response to the Problem of Jewish Refugees 1945–1948," *The Journal of Israeli History*, 1 (1998): 23–39; Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: The Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁴Three MA theses have discussed this topic in the last few years: Martina Ravagnan, "I profughi ebrei in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra (1945–1950)" (MA thesis, University of Bologna, 2011); Chiara Renzo, "'Aprite le porte.' I profughi ebrei nei campi di transito del Salento (1944–1947)" (MA thesis, University of Venice, 2012); Federica Di Padova, "Jewish Displaced Persons in Italia tra il 1945 e il 1948. Permanenza e vita quotidiana nei campi profughi" (MA thesis, University of Bologna, 2014). See also Cinzia Villani, "Milano, via Unione 5: un centro di accoglienza per Displaced Persons ebrei nel secondo dopoguerra," *Studi storici*, 2 (2009): 333–370; Chiara Renzo, *The Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) in Italian Refugee Camps (1943–1951)* (PhD diss., University of Florence, 2017).

¹⁵According to Jacob Markovizky, out of 65 ships leaving Europe to reach Palestine illegally before May 1948, 21 sailed from Italian ports with 21,000 refugees aboard: Markovizky, "The Italian Government's Response." According to Mario Toscano, 33 ships left Italy with 20,480 passengers aboard; Ada Sereni has stated instead that the actual number of passengers was 23,500. In Toscano, *La porta di Sion*, 7.

“The undisputed fact remains that the number of authentic displaced persons in Italy will never be known. [...] There are so many forged and fictitious passports and identity documents in circulation that their actual number will never be known.”¹⁶ Finally, each organization had its own reasons for providing false numbers of Jewish DPs, either increasing or decreasing them. UNRRA figures are a good case in point. According to Lavy Becker,¹⁷ who visited Italy in August 1946, they were grossly inflated: “Official UNRRA figures on the camp populations come from the camp committees. Although quite a number of people have left the camp, the committees have not reduced the population figures reported to UNRRA because this would mean a loss of food.” The Joint, on the contrary, had a completely different aim, and played down the numbers to allow more displaced persons into Italy. As Becker stated: “Since we are anxious to have more people brought into Italy, we do not wish to have the [Italian] Government and UNRRA believe that there are more refugees in Italy now than is actually the case.”¹⁸ The Joint was also eager to reassure authorities that there was no reason to be concerned about a massive Jewish presence in Italy. That seems to be the gist of a letter sent by Jacob L. Trobe¹⁹ to the Italian minister of Foreign Affairs in February 1947:

It may be interesting to note the present number of persons of the Jewish faith in Italy is not much greater than the total pre-war Jewish population. Before the war, there were approximately 50,000 Jewish persons in Italy of whom only 30,000 survived. In other words, there are only in Italy today a total of 56,500 ([26,500] refugees and [29,000] indigenous Jews) as against 50,000 pre-war.²⁰

¹⁶ Pfanzelter, “Between Brenner and Bari,” 104.

¹⁷ In 1945–1946, Canadian Rabbi Lavy Becker (1905–2001) was Director of the DPs camps in the American zone of Occupation.

¹⁸ Mr. Lavy Becker’s Statement Concerning His Visit to Italy, 2 September 1946, in Joint Archive, Jerusalem (hereinafter JA), AR 45/54–663.

¹⁹ Jacob L. Trobe (1911–2005) was director of the Joint in Italy. Previously, he had been director of the Joint in Germany.

²⁰ Letter dated 26 February 1947, in Archivio Storico del Ministero Affari Esteri (Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hereinafter ASMAE), Rome, Affari Politici (Political Affairs, hereinafter AP) (1946–1950), Italia, Box 114, File “Jacob Trobe.”

A similar attitude was probably shared by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities in September 1946: according to them, out of the 25,000 Jewish DPs that had reached Italy until then, 11,200 had already left and therefore “only” 13,800 were still in the country.²¹

The number of so-called “infiltrates,” that is, Jewish DPs who entered Italy illegally and replaced those who had migrated to British Palestine (or tried to but were arrested by the British and sent to the camps in Cyprus) is the most difficult to estimate. As a Joint report highlighted in October 1947, there were “continuous movements in and out of the hachsharot.” In fact, “with the steady flow of infiltrates into Italy, which the camps could not absorb, came the situation that DPs were making their way into the hachsharot without passing through the regular channel.”²²

It was not at all unknown for Jewish infiltrates to enter Italy. The authorities were certainly aware of them. In 1947, the prefect’s office in Viterbo—which was monitoring Jewish DPs presence in the nearby town of Soriano nel Cimino, where a *hakhsharah* had been opened in July 1946—reported to the ministry of Interior that a suspicious fluctuation in the number of occupants suggested the presence of illegal immigration. On 25 January 1947, the prefect’s office reported that “18 Jews left the camp to move to Rome and they did not come back; on January 27, 25 more left and did not come back.” On February 19, it reported that 35 out of 43 had returned to the camp of Soriano nel Cimino. But upon checking their records on April 19, it became clear that these were not the same people who had left, even though they were using the same documents. Most probably, the prefect’s office stated, the former had illegally left for Palestine and were replaced by other Jewish DPs.²³

It follows that it is almost impossible to provide an exact number for Jewish DPs who transited through Italy between 1945 and 1948. A realistic estimate would put that number at around 50,000.²⁴ What can

²¹ Letter from Raffaele Cantoni, President of the UIJC, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 September 1946, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome (Central State Archive, hereinafter ACS), Ministero dell’Interno (Ministry of Interior, hereinafter MI), Category A 16 “Foreign Jews” (A16), Box 18, File 1, “Richieste per ingresso in Italia.”

²² Quarterly Report—Hachsharot Bureau, July–September 1947, in JA, Geneva I, Box 126, Bag 43.

²³ Letter from the Prefect’s office in Viterbo to Ministry of Interior, 16 March 1948, in ACS, MI A16, Box 21, Bag 5, Sottofascicolo Viterbo.

²⁴ See Villani, “Milano, via Unione 5.” Sergio Della Pergola, on the contrary, provides a different number. According to him, in the years 1946–1948 about 30,000 Jewish refugees

certainly be said is that, unlike what was happening in other countries such as Germany, the overwhelming majority of DPs staying in Italy between 1945 and 1948 were Jewish.²⁵

3 DPs CAMPS AND HAKHSHAROT

Among the facilities housing Jewish DPs, camps were the first to be set up. They were run from mid-1944 by UNRRA and after mid-1947 by IRO, although by then an increasing number of refugees receiving UNRRA aid were living in *hakhsharot*.²⁶ *Hakhsharot* were an Italian peculiarity, both in terms of their number and the percentage of Jewish DPs they housed.²⁷

The first *hakhsharot* were created in southern Italy after the signing of the armistice between Italy and the Allies in September 1943: the *Rishonim* (The first ones) and the *Dror* (Freedom) were built in early 1944 on the outskirts of Bari and housed mainly Czech and Yugoslavian Jews.²⁸ A third

stayed in Italy: Sergio Della Pergola, "La popolazione ebraica in Italia nel contesto ebraico globale," in *Gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 897–936. Mario Toscano provides the same number in Toscano, *La porta di Sion*.

²⁵ As Jacob L. Trobe, Director of the AJJDC activities in Italy between February 1946 and March 1948, stated in a report concerning the activity of the Joint in Italy in the first quarter of 1947, "80% to 85% of the UNRRA DP Load was Jewish." This was not only due to the presence of a much higher number of Jewish DPs compared to non-Jewish. As Trobe argued, in fact, "a few enlightened UNRRA staff members applied rigidly the eligibility clause, thus admitting for UNRRA care only persons discriminated against for race, religion or activity on behalf of the Allies." Report dated 21 April 1947, in JA, Geneva I, Box 126, Bag 42.

²⁶ The Hebrew term *hakhsharah* (plural *hakhsharot*) can be translated by the expression "preparatory farm." It was a place, generally in the countryside, where European Jews used to spend a period of time doing practical work, mainly in the fields, to get used to a different life in *Eretz Israel*. The first Italian *hakhsharot* were created in the 1930s for the German Jews on their way to British Palestine. See Carla Forti and Vittorio H. Luzzatti, *Palestina in Toscana. Pionieri nel Senese (1934–1938)* (Florence: Aska, 2009).

²⁷ In this sense, a comparison with Germany is quite useful. According to Avinoam J. Patt, in October 1946 there were 36 *hakhsharot* in the US zone, housing about 3442 refugees, hence only 2.4 per cent of the total number of Jewish DPs staying in the US zone. In Italy, *hakhsharot* hosted more than 7000 people, that is almost 50 per cent of the total number of Jewish DPs staying in Italy. Avinoam J. Patt, "Living in Landsberg. Dreaming of Deganiah. Jewish Displaced Youths and Zionism after the Holocaust," in *"We are here": New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-War Germany*, eds. Avinoam J. Patt and M. Berkowitz (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 98–135: 112.

²⁸ See Arturo Marzano, "The Italian Jewish Migration to Eretz Israel and the Birth of the Italian *Chalutz* Movement (1938–1948)," *The Mediterranean Review*, 1 (2010): 1–29, in particular p. 13.

one, *Ha-Bonim* (The Builders) was established in the camp of Santa Maria al Bagno, close to Lecce.²⁹ In April, four more *hakhsharot* were opened: two in Santa Maria al Bagno, the '*Aliyah* and the *Ba-Derekh* (On the way), and two in the other DPs camp of Santa Maria di Leuca, *Kibbutz Aviv* (Spring Kibbutz) and '*Atid* (Future).³⁰ By July, several *hakhsharot* had been created in the camp of Santa Maria al Bagno. As Chiara Renzo has argued, groups of people, ranging between 40 and 120 members, were creating small communities of their own, with an identified leader and specific rules. However, they were not structured to offer workshops or cultural/recreational programs.³¹

Their creation had been supported by the "Jewish Brigade," created after September 1944 by volunteer Palestinian Jewish soldiers serving in the British Army.³² These *hakhsharot* were hosting foreign Jews who had remained in Italy during the war, either in hiding or interned in fascist concentration camps (Ferramonti, among others),³³ and Yugoslavian Jews who were reaching southern Italy from the opposite coast of the Adriatic Sea, still under Nazi occupation.³⁴

At the end of the war, when the entire Italian territory was finally liberated, the number of *hakhsharot* throughout the country swelled into the dozens. In early August 1945, 37 young people (14 girls and 23 boys) left

²⁹A member of that *hachsharah*, Arieh Grossmann, joined the Provisional Central Committee with the idea of creating a Hechalutz movement in Italy. Report written by Eldad Boroccio, Rome, 16 January 1945, in Central Zionist Archives (hereinafter CZA), Jerusalem, S6, Box 2154.

³⁰Fabrizio Lelli, "Testimonianze dei profughi ebrei nei campi di transito del Salento," in *Per ricostruire e ricostruirsi. Astorre Mayer e la rinascita ebraica tra Italia e Israele*, ed. Marco Paganoni (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2010), 113.

³¹Renzo, "Aprite le porte," 103.

³²See Bice Migliau and Ghila Piattelli, eds., *La Brigata ebraica in Italia 1943–1945: attraverso il Mediterraneo per la libertà*, Manifesti, fotografie, documenti in mostra alla Cascina Farsetti di Villa Doria Pamphili, Roma 13–29 giugno 2003 (Rome: Litos, 2003); Michael Tagliacozzo, "Attività dei soldati di Eretz Israel in Italia (1943–1946). Il corpo ausiliario dei soldati palestinesi nell'armata di liberazione inglese," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 2 (2003): 575–586.

³³On this topic, see Carlo S. Capogreco, *I campi del duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940–1943)* (Turin: Einaudi, 2004).

³⁴See Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 524–527; see also Silvia Salvatici, "Between National and International Mandates. DPs and Refugees in Post-war Italy," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3 (2014): 514–536.

the Allied Commission Transit camp in Cinecittà to “train themselves as farmers, carpenters, shoemakers, and seamstresses.”³⁵ They established a *hachsharah* on a 4-hectare lot in Grottaferrata, a small town north of Rome, and restored a house that sat on the property. The Joint enthusiastically supported their project, which seemed to provide a much better solution than the transit camps:

This hachsharah, though new, showed promise. The group enthusiasm was a decided contrast to the spirit of the transit camps. The refugees had hope and faith in their future. The training they were receiving, the group work they were organizing, the mental and spiritual discipline they were imposing on themselves, and on their own free volition, was an indication as to the fine Jewish men and women this Hachsharah would produce.³⁶

In February 1946, the UNRRA director Tony Sestieri signed a Memorandum acknowledging Jewish DPs living in the *hachsharot* as “out-of-camps people,” that is people whom the Joint and UNRRA would jointly assist. According to the Memorandum,

Camp care is defined as care in camps operated by UNRRA, or Vocational Training Centres (Hachsharot) operated and serviced by the JDC. [...] With respect to the Hachsharot and those displaced persons in such Centres eligible for UNRRA care, it is agreed that eventual arrangement should be to consider them as camps operated by JDC in behalf of UNRRA.³⁷

On that account, residents of the *hachsharot* were entitled to UNRRA out-of-camp assistance, “consisting of £3000 per month ad capita, and UNRRA food rations.”³⁸ The amount of £3000 was calculated on the assumption that “the average daily cost per capita amount[ed] to £166.” This budget “enable[d] them [the residents] to maintain a reasonable diet,” which consisted of “fresh meat three times a week, ½ kg of fresh fruit and 400 grams of bread daily.” At the same time, the Joint was

³⁵ Letter from Joint Italy to Joint New York/Paris, 7 August 1945, JA, G5, File 54, Box 656.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Quoted in a letter from Charles Passman on “Hachsharah Groups – Italy,” 4 March 1946, in JA, Geneva I, Box 126, Bag 42.

³⁸ Hachsharot Report, 12 October 1946, written by Monika Gluskin, Hachsharot Department, AJJDC Rome. In JA, Geneva II, Box 279 B, File n. 4.

covering “all expenditures connected with the renting of lodgings and accommodating them so that they may receive an established number of inhabitants, as well as the establishment of workshops.”³⁹

The *hakhsharot* were perceived by the Jewish DPs willing to stay there both as a better way to foster rehabilitation, compared to the camps, and as an instrument to promote migration to Palestine. According to what can be considered an invitation⁴⁰ to the November 1945 Conference of Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy—where the OJRI was created—the DPs’ “moral rehabilitation” was the main aim of all the activities carried out in the structures where they were housed. At the same time, the final goal of Jewish DPs’ presence in Italy was “their emigration and settlement in Palestine.”⁴¹ Therefore, “rehabilitation” and “ultimate migration” were considered by the OJRI as two inseparable aspects.⁴² The same viewpoint was expressed in February 1946 by Leon Garfunkel, Chairman of the OJRI until December 1947, according to whom the *hakhsharot* were a unique opportunity to combine “rehabilitation” and “migration” to Palestine:

Emigration is the only path for Jewish refugees and for the remnants of Jewry who are living today in various European countries, [...] Palestine is concretely the only country in the world which can be the aim of this large-scale immigration. [...] The problem of refugees will not be solved in its entirety without the possibility of a free immigration to Palestine. [...] The refugees who came to Italy drifted here because it is the shortest route to Palestine. [...] The Jewish refugees [...] have been organised into Training Centres (Hachsharot) where they are learning trades as agriculture, carpeting, tailoring, fishing, etc., in preparation to a life of productive work in Palestine.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid. After July 1947, when IRO replaced UNRRA, negotiations began for a new agreement between the Joint and IRO. According to the new agreement, which was signed in February 1948, the IRO guaranteed “assistance to the refugees in Hachsharot,” who were going to receive “the same total per capita [...] provided to the population in larger camps.” In JA, Geneva I, Box 21 C, IRO 1117.2.

⁴⁰ In YIVO Archive, Record Group N. 294.3, Displaced Persons Camps and Centres in Italy (1945–1949), microfilmed and located in Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem (hereinafter YVA), JM 10.517.

⁴¹ Ibid. On comments by the Yiddish journal *Ba-derekh*, official organ of the Central Committee of the OJRI, see Ravagnan, “I profughi ebrei in Italia,” 58–62. On the journal itself, which was published from August 1945 to February 1949, see Ravagnan, “I profughi ebrei in Italia,” 88–100.

⁴² Mario Toscano recalled that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a representative to that Conference, who later stated that he was in favour of Jewish migration to Palestine. Toscano, *La porta di Sion*, 61.

⁴³ Memorandum, 15–7, in YVA, JM 10.517.

The combination of those two elements may explain the success of the *hakhsharot*.

According to the documents I was able to access, 97 *hakhsharot* were created all over Italy between 1945 and 1951, although not all of them were operating at the same time (e.g., 74 *hakhsharot* were active in April 1948). Of these, 60 were active at one time in the South and 37 in the North. Italy was “divided into two Regions: Southern Region, from Florence South [...]; Northern Region, from Florence North.” The Northern Region included Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, and Emilia, while the Southern comprised the rest of the country, from Tuscany and Marche to Apulia.⁴⁴ Four main types of *hakhsharot* were operating in Italy at one time: 63 “regular” *hakhsharot*, 6 “children’s houses,” 4 “special installations,” and 1 “Concert Ensemble.”⁴⁵

A detailed analysis of the activities that were organized in the *hakhsharot* is beyond the scope of this contribution; therefore, in the next pages I will focus on the role that Italian Jewry, both as institutions and individuals, played in the relief and rehabilitation of Jewish DPs, especially setting up new *hakhsharot* and/or supporting existing ones. The *hakhsharot* represent an interesting case study for retracing relations and networks among all the actors that were involved with the Jewish DPs. Several organizations did indeed contribute to the creation and development of the *hakhsharot*: while UNRRA mainly assisted with the DPs’ food needs, the Joint took care of the costs associated with renting the facilities and associations such as HIAS helped with many activities carried out in the *hakhsharot*. What part, then, did Italian Jewry play in setting up, running, and supporting the *hakhsharot*?

4 THE ROLE OF ITALIAN JEWRY: INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Before addressing this question, a distinction should be made between the contributions of Jewish institutions and Jews as individuals, seeing as the latter played a more relevant role. In this sense, what Dina Porat has argued should be analyzed in more detail: Italian Jews helped in different ways, “by handling the contacts with the local authorities and bureaucracy,

⁴⁴ Report on AJJDC Activities in Italy, prepared by the Hachsharot Bureau, 4 February 1947, p. 2 of 66, in YVA, JM 10.542.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

by approaching rich Italian Jews for funds, and by locating and registering sites and property needed for the refugee camps.”⁴⁶

As regards the institutions, after facing persecution under the fascist regime and Nazi occupation, the Union of Italian Jewish Communities mainly focused on its own reconstruction. For this reason, it is quite understandable that most of its efforts could not be directed at the relief and rehabilitation of the Jewish DPs. Indeed, many, if not all, activities in the camps and *hakhsharot* that hosted the DPs were carried out by the Joint and other organizations, such as the already-mentioned ORT. Yet, the UIJC was very supportive of the Jewish DPs and worked alongside the Joint, especially taking care of what may be called “administrative” issues. As Guri Schwarz has highlighted, Italian Zionists took over communal institutions in the immediate aftermath of the war: compared to the pre-war years, the new leadership was younger and strongly Zionist, and thus supported the Jewish DPs and their migration to Palestine in every possible way.⁴⁷

As regards the role the Jewish communities played at the local level, it appears that some of them were quite active in helping Jewish DPs.

The most obvious and well-known example is that of the Jewish community of Milan, which assisted and supported the Jewish DPs through the community center located at Via Unione 5, in the heart of the city. As Cinzia Villani has stated, the center “played a fundamental role in the events of the Jewish DPs in Italy and the history of the *‘aliyah bet*.”⁴⁸ The center, founded in May 1945, was managed by the Jewish community and provided the DPs with dormitory accommodation, a canteen, and health assistance in the small first-aid station. After assisting between 10,000 and 35,000 DPs, the center was closed in November 1947 and transferred to a new location in the village of Chiari, near Brescia, even though the canteen was in service until mid-1952.⁴⁹

Another good example is the financial support provided by the Turin Jewish Community. In January 1946, its president Eugenio Norzi wrote to the Joint branch in Milan that the Community had decided to donate

⁴⁶ Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy,” 503.

⁴⁷ Guri Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi. Gli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2004) 28–35, 51–62.

⁴⁸ Villani, “Milano, via Unione 5,” 335.

⁴⁹ Villani, “Milano, via Unione 5,” 358.

£5000 to the DPs of the Grugliasco camp, “since they needed extraordinary assistance for medicines and supplies.”⁵⁰ A similar role was played by the Jewish community of Modena, whose president, Gino Friedmann, donated a substantial amount to assist Jewish DPs hosted in the city and its surroundings. As Federica Di Padova has highlighted, several Jewish DPs wrote to Friedmann asking for economic and logistic support, and it was through his help that Villa Bisbini, located in Fossalta di Modena, was rented so that a *bakhsharah* could be created.⁵¹

Finally, two aspects should be considered as to the role played by the Delegation for the Assistance of Emigrants (DELAEM). Just like the UIJC, at the end of the war the DELAEM mainly focused on assisting Italian Jews, and yet it also had a part in supporting the Jewish DPs. As Elena Mazzini has shown, each local section received funds from the Joint, which was based in Rome, to provide Jewish DPs with clothes, medicines, food, and miscellaneous needs.⁵² The DELAEM also helped with practical matters, such as renting properties for the DPs. Unlike the OJRI, the DELAEM was indeed an Italian organization and was thus allowed to sign lease agreements for the private villas in the countryside or along the coast that would host the Jewish DPs either as groups or as *bakhsharot*.⁵³

Italian Jews, for their part, were crucial actors at the political level, liaising between the Italian government and political system and the Jewish DPs. From this point of view, three people in particular stood out for their unique contribution to the success of the *‘aliyah bet*: Raffaele Cantoni,⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Vinçon, *Vite in transito*, 93.

⁵¹ Federica Di Padova, “Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy (1945–1950),” *Rivista degli Istituti Storici dell’Emilia Romagna in Rete*, <http://e-review.it/di-padova-jewish-displaced-persons>, accessed 21 October 2017.

⁵² Elena Mazzini, *La Delasem di Firenze fra ricostruzione comunitaria e aiuti agli ebrei stranieri (1945–1948)* (Paper presented at the Conference “Cantieri di Storia IX”, Padova, 13–15 September 2017), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6AEKhUJCwcdcThxcFdrc1JEdk0/view>, accessed 21 October 2017.

⁵³ Settimio Sorani, *L’assistenza ai profughi ebrei in Italia (1933–1947). Contributo alla storia della “Delasem”* (Rome: Carocci, 1983), 159–160; 491–511. On the activity of the DELAEM after the war, see also Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, 335–350.

⁵⁴ Raffaele Cantoni (1896–1971), one of the leaders of the DELAEM in the late 1930s, was appointed president of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities in 1946. See Sergio Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni: un ebreo anticonformista* (Rome: Bonacci Ed., 1992); Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 33–36.

Umberto Nahon,⁵⁵ and Ada Sereni.⁵⁶ Cantoni, who was first appointed commissioner of the Jewish community of Milan on 29 April 1945⁵⁷ and then elected president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities on 26 March 1946, played a critical role in lobbying the Italian government for the DPs welfare.⁵⁸ In January 1946, thanks to his friendship with the socialist leader Rodolfo Morandi, Cantoni asked the Interior minister Giuseppe Romita, also a socialist, to facilitate the entry of 3000 Eastern European Jews into Italy.⁵⁹ In April 1946, Cantoni met prime minister Alcide De Gasperi to apprise him of the dramatic situation of Jewish DPs attempting to illegally migrate to Palestine.⁶⁰ In March of the following year, he met with Eugenio Reale, deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, to alert him and the entire cabinet to the internment in Cyprus of Jewish DPs who were trying to reach Palestine.⁶¹

It was thanks to contacts with several antifascist politicians such as Ferruccio Parri, the first post-war prime minister, and Riccardo Lombardi, minister of Transportation in 1945–1946, that Ada Sereni and Umberto Nahon—dispatched to Italy by the *Yishuv* to support Jewish DPs in their migration to Palestine—were able to meet influential personalities. As Ada Sereni herself recalled, Cantoni introduced her to Luigi Ferrari, a former judge who had become the head of the Italian police. She asked for support and he agreed because “all European nations had a moral duty to compensate the Jewish people for the persecutions they had suffered” and “Italy had no interest in letting so many refugees remain in the peninsula.”⁶² Yet, Ferrari was not the highest-ranking official she met. In a meeting with the Italian prime minister Alcide De Gasperi, Ada Sereni

⁵⁵ Umberto Nahon (1905–1974) had migrated to *Eretz Israel* in April 1939. In February 1945, he was sent to Italy as representative of the Jewish Agency in Italy. See Alfredo Sarano, “Ricordo di Umberto Nahon,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, no. 1 (1974): 9–11.

⁵⁶ Ada Sereni (1905–1998), Enzo Sereni’s wife, came back to Italy in 1945 to take part in the *‘aliyah bet* operations as second-in-command to Yehuda Arazi. She replaced him as commander of the operation in 1947 and continued in that position until 1948. On her experience in Italy, see Ada Sereni, *I clandestini del mare. L’emigrazione ebraica in terra d’Israele dal 1945 al 1948* (1973; repr., Milan: Mursia, 1994).

⁵⁷ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 148.

⁵⁸ See Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy,” 504.

⁵⁹ Toscano, *La porta di Sion*, 74.

⁶⁰ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 178–179.

⁶¹ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 184.

⁶² Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*, 110.

asked and was reassured that the government would “turn a blind eye to [...] the activities” of the *Mosad la-‘aliyah bet* (Office for the Jewish illegal migration to Palestine) in Italy.⁶³

Soon after his arrival in Italy, Umberto Nahon started coordinating with the Italian authorities. Seeking to enlist the support of the government and facilitate the transit of Jewish DPs on their way to Palestine, in April 1945 he met the prime minister Ivanoe Bonomi, and in June of the same year he met with high officials from the ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶⁴

The Italian government had every reason to support the Jewish DPs and their migration towards British Palestine.⁶⁵ On the one hand, it was believed that “playing the Jewish card” on the international scenario would serve to confirm that Italy had no responsibility in the extermination of the European Jews, as if the Jewish Holocaust had been perpetrated by the Nazis alone.⁶⁶ On the other hand, Italian relations with Britain were tense and would only improve in the second half of 1947, due to the beginning of the Cold War: Rome was thus eager to prove to the British that Italy was a sovereign country with its own foreign policy and competence in the Mediterranean.⁶⁷ Last but not least, hosting thousands of refugees in its territory at a time of deep economic crisis posed serious challenges and the earlier the Jewish DPs migrated, the better it would be for all involved. Yet, Raffaele Cantoni, Ada Sereni, and Umberto Nahon played a key part not only in securing the support of the Italian government, but also in making the entire operation successful. It was thanks to them, that “the unofficial behaviors in favor of the Jewish migration to Palestine [...] became Italy’s unwritten and undeclared policy.”⁶⁸ Thanks to their double identity as Italian citizens and Zionist representatives, Umberto Nahon and Ada Sereni were equally at ease navigating their way through Italian politics as they were embodying the Zionist political aim while maintaining deep ties with Italian Jewry.

Several other Italian Jews helped the Jewish DPs by supporting the Joint and the OJRI in their activities, often behind the scenes. Italian Jews were often crucial in setting up the *hakhsharot*. Among them were Sally Mayer (who in 1946 had replaced Cantoni as president of Milan’s Jewish

⁶³ Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*, 232.

⁶⁴ Toscano, *La porta di Sion*, 26.

⁶⁵ Toscano, *La porta di Sion*, 96.

⁶⁶ Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 130ff.

⁶⁷ Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 235ff.

⁶⁸ Toscano, *La porta di Sion*, 99.

Community) and his son Astorre, whose villa in Abbiate Guazzone⁶⁹ became a shelter for several Jewish DPs. As Italian citizens, the Mayers had the advantage of being able to sign lease agreements, and it was they who rented the properties housing some of the *hakhsharot*: Villa Bortoluzzi in Cusano Milanino, near Milan; Villa Faraggiana in Meina on Lake Maggiore, and Villa Borromeo in Costa Lambro, near Monza.⁷⁰

Sally and Astorre Mayer were not the only ones who rented houses on behalf of Jewish DPs. The *hakhsharah* of Tradate was located in a villa rented by an Italian Jew from Milan, Vittoria Cantoni (not related to Raffaele), though all expenses were paid by the Joint.⁷¹ As Ada Sereni recalled, “Vittoria [...] had been excellent in a huge variety of tasks. She was the one who was dealing with the owners of the villas and the apartments we needed, the one to whom our troublesome properties were assigned.”⁷² Vittoria Cantoni worked directly with Yehuda Arazi, the head of the Italian branch of the *Mosad la-‘aliyah bet* (literally, Institution for Immigration B), who had arrived in May 1945 to organize Jewish DPs’ illegal migration to Palestine. She helped Arazi with several activities, including forging passports and exchanging thousands of US dollars smuggled from Switzerland into Italian liras, to buy meat and flour for the canteen at the community center in Via Unione, 5.⁷³

Max Varadi played a similar role in Florence. Varadi, a key figure in the *‘aliyat ha-no‘ar* (youth emigration) from Italy to *Eretz Israel* in 1939–1940 before migrating himself in 1939,⁷⁴ was sent back by the *Yishuv* to help Italian Jewry at the end of the war. Once in Florence, he set up the *Givat ha-yeled* (The hill of the child), one of the four “children’s houses” active in April 1948, with the Zionist Orthodox organization Mizrachi. Housing 38 children aged ten to seventeen years, the *hakhsharah* was meant to counter the influence of the “children’s house” located in Campolecciano, a small city close to the port of Livorno, and managed by the non-Zionist Orthodox organization *Agudah*. Varadi had returned to Italy to help the

⁶⁹ Luisa Levi D’Ancona, *Filantropi ebrei italiani nella ricostruzione: il caso di Milano*, in Paganoni, *Per ricostruire e ricostruirsi*, 39–57: 47.

⁷⁰ I am grateful to Federica Di Padova for this information.

⁷¹ Alberto Gagliardo, *Ebrei in provincia di Varese. Dalle leggi razziali all’emigrazione verso Israele—Tradate 1938–1947* (Varese: ANPI-Edizioni Arterigere, 1999).

⁷² Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*, 101.

⁷³ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 161.

⁷⁴ On Max Varadi, see Arturo Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere. Gli ebrei italiani e l’emigrazione in Palestina prima della guerra (1920–1940)* (Milan: Marietti, 2003), 171ff.

reconstruction of Italian Jewry, further develop the local Zionist institutions, and boost the *'aliyah* to Palestine. But, at the same time, he took advantage of his Italian citizenship and his knowledge of Florence and Italy in general to support the Jewish DPs and specifically set up a *bakhsharah*.

In some cases, Italian Jews even agreed to rent *bakhsharot* that were used as arms depots. Nothing has emerged from Joint sources regarding the issue, most probably because the Joint did not know (or pretended not to know) that there were weapons in the *bakhsharot*; on the other hand, Italian authorities were seemingly aware of the matter. For example, the prefect's office in Viterbo that was monitoring the already-mentioned *bakhsharah* of Soriano nel Cimino reported that "the foreign Jews [...] had probably hidden in their houses a lot of weapons that were illegally owned by extremists."⁷⁵ Considering that on 31 October 1946 the British Embassy in Rome had been the target of a terrorist attack by the *Irgun Tzvai Leumi*—for which the British blamed "people who had been living as Displaced Persons at the camp of Ostia or in the Jewish "settlement" at Grottaferrata"⁷⁶—then it is clear that the Italian police were increasingly concerned about arms trafficking.

Previous research has already highlighted that the *bakhsharah* of Magenta, near Milan, was indeed an arms depot. Its location was conveniently close to Genoa, from where ships to *Eretz Israel* departed. It was probably not a coincidence that the already-mentioned Yehuda Arazi was at one time the director of the *bakhsharah* Magenta.⁷⁷ The site for the *bakhsharah* was identified by Raffaele Cantoni, who also negotiated its purchase,⁷⁸ and then registered it to the name of Carlo Shapira, a close friend of his.⁷⁹ Whether Shapira knew that weapons were stored at the *bakhsharah* is hard to say. What is certain is that he knew the place was used to bring together Jewish DPs who would try to sail illegally to Palestine.

⁷⁵ Letter from the prefect's office in Viterbo, "Foreign Jews in the IRO centre of Soriano al Cimino."

⁷⁶ *Aide Memoire*, Rome, 4 January 1947, in ASMAE, AP, Italia, Box 114, File "Terrorismo Sionista." See also Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 246–247.

⁷⁷ Matteo Villa, *Dai Lager alla terra promessa. La difficile reintegrazione nella «nuova Italia» e l'immigrazione verso il Medio Oriente (1945–1948)* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2005), 204. On Yehuda Arazi, see Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power*, 27ff. The same *bakhsharah* is mentioned by Primo Levi, *Se non ora, quando?* (1982; repr., Turin: Einaudi, 2007), 249.

⁷⁸ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 164.

⁷⁹ Porat, "One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy," 507.

Other Italian Jews donated the facilities that were used by the Jewish DPs. Among the “special installations” that were active in April 1948, there was a fishing school in Fano (218 km from Rome),⁸⁰ where 97 young people studied deep sea fishing techniques. A report by the Joint described the project as very successful, mainly because of the students’ devotion and efforts: “frequently they have foregone the pleasure of a full stomach in order to keep their work going by using moneys earmarked for food to purchase equipment and materials.”⁸¹ Another report from March 1947 highlighted that the student group “display[ed] a great fervency and diligence in its work. The members are working practically the whole day and this makes the *bakhsharah* at Fano the most unique of our projects.”⁸² Two of the small boats used by the students for their training in Fano—trawlers named “S. Pietro” and “Prima”—belonged respectively to Dario Navarra, who had participated in youth Zionist activities before 1940, and Carlo Alberto Viterbo, president of the Italian Zionist Federation and editor in chief of the Italian Zionist weekly *Israel*.⁸³

Italian Jews were crucial also in buying boats that were used for the ‘*aliyah bet*. Dina Porat has highlighted that, according to Italian law, vessels could only be registered in the name of Italian citizens older than 21. For this reason, they were fictitiously registered as property of young Italian Jews active in the Zionist movements.⁸⁴ Among them were the young members of the *bakhsharah Tel Broshim* (The hill of cypresses), which was located on farmland near Pisa and would remain open for 11 years, from summer 1947 until July 1958.⁸⁵ They were not the only young Italian Jews who agreed to appear as “owners” of the ships used to smuggle Jewish DPs to Palestine. Giovanni Pinter, a Milanese Jew, did that too and even agreed to be the director of a shipping company that

⁸⁰ See Stefania Pirani, *Storia dell'haksharà di Fano dal 1945 al 1948 attraverso i documenti e le interviste ai testimoni* (Bologna: Patron Editore, 2008).

⁸¹ AJJDC Report, 22 April 1948, in JA, Geneva I, Box 21 C, IRO 1117.2.

⁸² Letter from Jacob L. Trobe, 26 April 1947, in in JA, Geneva I, Box 9 A-2, C 54.033.

⁸³ Letter from the Prefettura di Pesaro-Urbino to the Ministry of Interior, 4 October 1948, in ACS, MI, A16, Box 21, Bag 15 “Scuola marinara di Fano.” On Navarra, see Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere*, 249; on Viterbo, see Arturo Marzano, ed., *Leo Levi. Contro i dinosauri. Scritti civili (1931–1972)* (Naples: l'ancora del mediterraneo, 2011), 23–24.

⁸⁴ Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy,” 507.

⁸⁵ See Marcella Simoni’s contribution in this volume. See also Marzano, “The Italian Jewish Migration to *Eretz Israel*.”

existed only on paper.⁸⁶ Enrico Levi, who had emigrated to Palestine in September 1939 and returned to Italy at the end of the war, was among the Italian Jews who “owned” ships: he commissioned the construction of the fishing boat “Sirio,” later renamed “Dallin,” which sailed from Apulia in August 1945 and brought 35 people to Palestine.⁸⁷ Gualtiero Morpurgo, the director of the *Milan Jewish Community Bulletin* from its creation in June 1945 until 1951, was in charge of setting up the boats that were used to smuggle Jewish DP’s to Palestine: the cargo holds were emptied so as to create “a space, 2 meters long, 60 cm large and 60 cm high for each passenger.”⁸⁸

To the best of my knowledge, very few Italian Jews contributed to the activities carried out within the camps and *bakhsharot* that were hosting the DP’s. Italian Jews had very infrequent contact with Jewish DP’s and even when they did, it did not lead to any deep cultural and social interaction. Settimio Sorani, the leader of the already-mentioned DELASEM, stated for instance that he was willing to “know and help with the many needs of the guests” and for this reason he had “frequent contact with them,” but he did not participate in the activities carried out in the Jewish DP’s facilities of “Ostia, Castelgandolfo, Grottaferrata, Rocca di Papa and Ladispoli” located on the outskirts of Rome.⁸⁹ The Florentine Yehuda Algranati recalled how “after the summer of 1945, several hundred *polacchini*⁹⁰ arrived in Tuscany,” and for a while he would go there every day and help with the cooking, though never staying for more than a few hours. Leah Dana, a friend of Algranati, shared similar memories. She helped the Jewish DP’s for a while as a cook, but that did not last for long: she decided to join other Italian Jews in the Zionist activities that were taking place in Italy in those years,⁹¹ because she felt it was more impor-

⁸⁶ Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy,” 507.

⁸⁷ Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*, 43.

⁸⁸ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 163.

⁸⁹ Sorani, *L’assistenza ai profughi*, 164.

⁹⁰ An Italian term of endearment for the Polish Jews, referring to the thinness of their bodies after surviving the Shoah.

⁹¹ See Marzano, “The Italian Jewish Migration to *Eretz Israel*,” 15–25, and Marcella Simoni, “Gli ebrei italiani e lo Stato di Israele: appunti per un ritratto di due generazioni (1948 e 1967),” in “*Roma e Gerusalemme*.” *Israele nella vita politica e culturale italiana (1949–2009)*, eds. Marcella Simoni and Arturo Marzano (Genoa: ECIG, 2009), 47–73, in particular 50–54.

tant to focus on the Italian Jews migration to *Eretz Israel* than the Jewish DPs who were already being helped by the Joint.⁹²

Matilde Cassin was an exception. She actively participated in the recreational and educational activities for the Jewish orphans hosted in Selvino, a former fascist sleepaway camp for children near Bergamo. It was thanks to Raffaele Cantoni that this “strongly wished for” camp became a reality, hosting Jewish orphans who had survived the Shoah.⁹³ Between July and November 1945, Matilde helped its director, Moshe Zeiri, with the camp’s everyday activities.⁹⁴ Cantoni frequently visited Selvino, she recalled, since he was very much in favor of that endeavor, but his support was mainly financial.⁹⁵

5 CONCLUSION

According to a Memorandum from August 1945, when the Joint arrived in Italy “two kinds of problems were of immediate concern [...]: 1) Emergency refugee relief, and 2) the reestablishment of communities and rehabilitation of communal institutions.”⁹⁶ At that time, the Joint differentiated between the situation of the Italian Jewish communities, which despite all suffering and losses seemed able to undertake a rehabilitation process, and that of the Jewish DPs, who were perceived as not yet able to go through that process. Yet, a few months later, the Joint changed its approach and started focusing on the “rehabilitation” of the Jewish DPs, while continuing to support Italian Jewish institutions and communal life.

Italian Jews also contributed to assisting Jewish DPs in their rehabilitation process but, as Dina Porat has argued, they “did so indirectly”⁹⁷ for a number of reasons. First, Italian Jews were going through a slow process of recovery, rebuilding their lives as well as their institutions. Therefore, they had neither the strength nor the capacity to be involved in the daily life of Jewish DPs. Italian Jewish institutions found themselves in dire circumstances after the war. Suffice it to say that they kept relying on Joint funding for many years, well into the second half of the 1950s.⁹⁸

⁹² Interviews with the author, Kibbutz Ma’agan Michael, 7 October 2007.

⁹³ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 157.

⁹⁴ On the experience at Selvino, see Sergio Luzzatto, *I bambini di Moshe. Gli orfani della Shoah e la nascita di Israele* (Turin: Einaudi, 2018).

⁹⁵ Minerbi, *Raffaele Cantoni*, 158.

⁹⁶ Memorandum, “Relief in Italy,” 17 August 1945, in JA, AR 45/54–629.

⁹⁷ Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy,” 511.

⁹⁸ Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 42–47 in particular.

There were also practical reasons: Jewish DP's were mostly staying in facilities, either camps or *bakhsharot*, in rural areas that were far from the cities where the vast majority of Italian Jews lived. Moreover, many were located in the southern regions, Apulia in particular, which had the lowest percentage of Jewish residents. However, even when they were not far from the cities, such as the camps on the outskirts of Rome, there was very little interaction between Italian Jews and DP's. Cultural factors should be taken into consideration. Italian Jews were culturally very different from the Eastern European Jews who constituted the vast majority of DP's: for example, there was no common language between the two groups. Leah Dana has recalled that she knew neither Yiddish nor Polish, and the DP's did not speak Italian: it was impossible to have a conversation.⁹⁹

Finally, despite lasting for years and involving thousands of people, Jewish DP's' presence in Italy had only limited influence on Italian Jews in terms of memory and self-perception. The reason could be the semi-legal nature of many activities in support of the DP's, presumably kept confidential and known only to a limited circle within the Italian Jewish institutions.

Italian Jews were crucial in connecting the various players—the Jewish DP's, the organizations taking care of them, and the *Yishuv* representatives—with Italian institutions, both at the central and local level. What Jewish DP's accomplished in Italy between the end of the war and the birth of Israel would have been impossible without them and the networks they set up. However, Italian Jews did not take part in the process of relief and rehabilitation of the Jewish DP's, since very few participated in the activities carried out in the camps and *bakhsharot* that hosted them.

⁹⁹ Interviews with the author, Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, 7 October 2007.



CHAPTER 9

Young Italian Jews in Israel, and Back: Voices from a Generation (1945–1953)

Marcella Simoni

They never forgot they were Italians; they never forgot their mother tongue and they never learnt good Hebrew. They never stopped eating pasta and drinking coffee, following football games or discussing passionately about the news that came in from Rome, Florence, Turin and Ferrara. Most of all, they remained nostalgic of the historic buildings, of the works of art and of the landscape in which they had grown up. And they always maintained an agonizing dualism that only their children might be able to overcome. (Oriana Fallaci, “Italiani d’Israele,” *L’Europeo* 13, 1973: 136)

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1 GROUP PORTRAIT OF A GENERATION

Between 1944 and 1955, about 900 Italian Jews left Italy for Palestine/Israel¹: of these, 621 emigrated shortly after 1948, and about 20 percent of them settled in a kibbutz in the first instance.² This is not the only group of Italian Jews that moved to Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century: some had left Italy already in the 1930s while others fled only after the Racial Laws in 1938; some of them then fled again from Palestine before the War of 1948 (like the Luzzatto family) while others fought in that war (like the Cividalli brothers); some escorted convoys that connected the Western part of Jerusalem to Mount Scopus (like Armando Caimi), or died in the Mount Scopus convoy attack on 15 April 1948 (like Enzo Bonaventura), and others, like Arrigo Levi and Luciano Segre, joined *Mahal*, the volunteer brigades of the newly established Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in 1948, and then returned to Italy. Many of these histories have already been told in part or in full and reveal a variety of ways in which Italian Jews related to Zionism as a national movement, as an ideal or ideological call, or as a path to refuge before and during World War II³; here, I will focus on the collective experience of that 20 per cent

¹In this chapter I use the term “Palestine” (short for British Palestine) to refer to the country before 15 May 1948; for events occurring after the end of the Mandate, I employ the term “Israel.” When I write “Palestine/Israel,” I refer to events taking place before and after 15 May 1948.

²Arturo Marzano, “Italian Jewish Migration to Eretz Israel and the birth of the Italian Chalcutz Movement (1938–1948),” *Mediterranean Review* 3/1 (2010), 1–29: 18. Guri Schwarz presents slightly different data for the same period, i.e. 1041 Italian Jews emigrating for Palestine/Israel, 161 of which later returned to Italy. See Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (London, Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 161.

³Arturo Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere. Gli ebrei italiani e l'emigrazione in Palestina prima della guerra (1920–1940)* (Genoa-Milan: Marietti, 2003); Amos Luzzatto, *Conta e racconta. Memorie di un ebreo di sinistra* (Milan: Mursia, 2008); Gualtiero Cividalli, *Dal sogno alla realtà. Lettere ai figli combattenti. Israele, 1947–1948*, ed. Francesco Papafava (Florence: Giuntina 2005); Marcella Simoni, “Gli ebrei italiani e lo Stato di Israele. Appunti per il ritratto di due generazioni (1948 e 1967),” in *Roma e Gerusalemme. Israele nella vita politica italiana 1949–2009*, ed. Marcella Simoni and Arturo Marzano (Genoa: ECIG, 2010), 47–73; Patrizia Guarnieri, *Italian Psychology and Jewish Emigration under Fascism: From Florence to Jerusalem and New York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Arrigo Levi, *Un paese non basta* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009). See also the newly released movie *Shalom Italia* by Tamar Tal Anati, 2016. Interview by the author with Luciano Segre, Milan, 2 October 2010.

that settled in a kibbutz after World War II, the first group of Italian Jews to do so, that I call here “generation 1948.”

This may appear as the story of a small group of youngsters in the process of determining their individual fate, deciding whether to move to Palestine/Israel or remain in Italy after the chaotic and terrible years of World War II. However, because of the times and the particular situation in which this generation grew up, their individual and collective choices placed them at the crossroads of greater questions and relations, which are also the subject of this essay: did the experience of this group help Italian Jewry reconnect to the transformations that Jewish communities around the world were experiencing in the dramatic period between the end of the war, the declaration of the State of Israel, and the War of 1948? And if so, to what extent? Did the call for a practical and socialist Zionism—that this generation responded to—remain a limited case in the relationship between Italian Jews and Zionism? Was it resolved within one generation, or did the experience of this group of youngsters represent the beginning of a longer exchange that gradually invested also the following generations, maybe with different approaches according to the changed historical circumstances? This essay will try to answer some of these questions.

The group that I called “generation 1948” was rather homogenous, first of all in terms of age. Many of them had been born at the turn of the 1930s; in 1938, they had been expelled from schools as a result of the Racial Laws and at home they had encountered the embarrassment of their parents, unable to give them convincing explanations. This group had lived their teenage years during the war, risking deportation, suffering fear and humiliation and often also hunger and deprivation. In his autobiography, one of them, Corrado Israel De Benedetti, remembered how during the war “the noise and the thuds terrif[ied] me and when I la[id] on my net tired at night, I clench[ed] my fists and I wonder[ed] why I have to live in this way at 17, with the fear of the Germans, of the Fascists and of the Allied planes.”⁴

After the end of the war, they all shared a strong resentment towards their parents for remaining passive during Fascism and, in some cases, for actively supporting the regime. The histories of Renzo Ravenna and Enrico Paolo Salem, the Jewish *Podestà* respectively of Ferrara and of

⁴Corrado De Benedetti, *Anni di rabbia e di speranza 1938–1949* (Florence: Giuntina, 2003), 73.

Trieste, are well known⁵; without looking so high in the hierarchy of the regime, one can find many other Jews who joined the Fascist party for various reasons, since its establishment in 1921 or from later years: patriotic enthusiasm, economic interests, the possibility to exercise one's own profession, or just adherence to social norms.⁶ Most of those who belonged to "generation 1948" inevitably had lived their Jewish identity as a heavy burden that they carried in solitude or within the family. As Guri Schwarz has argued, after the war a generational shift emerged. Emanuele Artom—who fought in the Resistance as a young man—defined such gap as an "abyss separating fathers and sons [...] that stops sons from revealing the changes they are going through," to the point that centuries seemed to "separate one generation from another."⁷ In this respect, "generation" is not only a term used to define an age group (which is obviously not limited to the 20 percent of Italian young Jews who chose *'aliyah* and the kibbutz), but stands here as a synonym of generational self-consciousness, as a way of elaborating one's possible future (over others), considering on the one hand the persecution they had just escaped and, on the other, alternative individual and collective scenarios that post-war reconstruction was showing ahead.

These very same themes emerge also from the words of many who belonged to this group: recalling the war years, Sergio Itzhak Minerbi from Rome, who had been hidden in the Convent of San Leone Magno in Rome during the German occupation, remembered thinking that

⁵ Ilaria Pavan, *Il Podestà Ebreo. La storia di Renzo Ravenna tra fascismo e leggi razziali* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2006); Silvia Bon, *Un fascista imperfetto. Enrico Paolo Salem, Podestà "ebreo" di Trieste*, (Gradisca d'Isonzo: Ed. Centro Gasparini, 2009).

⁶ See Luca Ventura, "Il gruppo de 'La Nostra Bandiera' di fronte all'antisemitismo fascista (1934–1938)," *Studi Storici* 41/4 (2000), 711–755. Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), ch. 1. Giulio Supino, *Diario della Guerra che non ho combattuto. Un italiano ebreo tra persecuzione e resistenza*, ed. Michele Sarfatti (Florence: Inprogress, 2014). See also *Italy's Fascist Jews: Insights into an Unusual Scenario*, ed. Michele Sarfatti, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, no. 11 October 2017 available at <http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/index.php?issue=11>, accessed 3 January 2018. For an interesting example of Fascist Italian Jews in Tunisia see Archivio di Stato di Livorno, Famiglia Moreno di Tunisi. See also Marcella Simoni, "The Morenos between Family and Nation. Notes for the History of a Bourgeois Mediterranean Jewish family (1850–1912)," in *Gender, Nation, Emancipation, Women and Families in the 'Long' Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany*, ed. Martin Baumeister, Philipp Lenhard, and Ruth Nattermann (Oxford: Berghahn, in press).

⁷ Quoted in Schwarz, *After Mussolini*, 70.

should he “get out alive from this business, I will not stay here [in Italy] one day longer.” His words were echoed by those of Corrado Israel De Benedetti from Ferrara, who had decided “not to remain in Italy, because Italy betrayed us,” or of Gabriella Luzzati from Genoa; back in school after the war, she “had found an anti-Semitic professor and [...] re-integration was impossible.” Remaining in Italy seemed impossible for those who had lost one or both parents to deportation and extermination, as in the case of the brothers Tullio Tzvi and Aldo Eldad Melauri (Adar) from Trieste, and of Bruno Levi from Turin, whose families and father had been deported in 1943. “I did not leave behind such a beautiful world,”⁸ concluded Donata Ravenna, summing up the situation. This group can also be considered as a separate generation for another reason: confronted with families they despised and with the difficulties of reconstruction and reintegration, they challenged the very notion of belonging to the Italian nation as it had been conceived by their forefathers, and, most of all, they challenged the dream of integration and the myth of equality.⁹ In doing so, they also broke with the tradition of Italian Zionism, which had remained contained in numbers, was traditionally theoretical and philanthropic, and somewhat ambivalent towards personal commitment to immigration.¹⁰

⁸ Individual interviews by the author with Sergio Itzhak Minerbi (Jerusalem, 16 August 2009), Corrado Israel De Benedetti (Ruhama, 26 July 2009), Gabriella Luzzati and Aldo Eldad Melauri (Adar) (Ruhama, 30 July 2009), Bruno Levi (Ruhama, 30 July 2009), Donata Ravenna (Haifa, 28 July 2009). As a general rule, I have inserted the Hebrew name that many chose for themselves, or that they received, between given first name and family name. For those who also translated their family name or chose a different one, I have placed it in brackets, next to the Italian family name.

⁹ Schwarz, *After Mussolini*, 76–80.

¹⁰ As it is well known, Italian Zionism suffered from a late start and a small following, if compared with other Zionist movements in Europe. Part of the archives of the Italian Zionist Federation (FSI) are at the Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, Fondo Angelo Sullam and Fondo Leone e Felice Ravenna. On the pre-war period see Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere* and, for a local example, see Maura Hametz, “Zionism, Emigration, and Antisemitism in Trieste: Central Europe’s ‘Gateway to Zion,’ 1896–1943,” *Jewish Social Studies*, 13/3 (2007), 103–134. The post-war situation is clearly different, at least until 1967. The avant-garde that chose immigration to Palestine/Israel before and after 1948 remained a small group, and, as we shall see in closing, the majority of Italian young Jews opted for a renovated model of philanthropic Zionism and forms of Jewish socialization organized around Italian Jewish institutions, Jewish communities and youth movements. See Schwarz, *After Mussolini*.

Some 82 percent of the Jews who left for Palestine were younger than 30,¹¹ and the first boat that left Italy with Jews on board (among them 158 Italian Jews) sailed on 25 March 1945. The geographical provenance of this group was varied enough to be considered altogether representative of the distribution of Italian Jewry, with an obvious imbalance towards the Center and the North, a reflection of the historical distribution of Jews along the peninsula.

In 1946 this generation of young Italian Jews established *Hechalutz* (the Pioneer), an inclusive pioneering youth movement. Through its ranks, in various yearly waves, many of them settled in a kibbutz. The movement operated until 1956 and published a fortnightly homonymous newspaper until 1953, when the first signs of a generational, and possibly political, crisis started to appear: the publication became monthly and the *hakhsbarah* (training farm) of Tel Broshim (hill of the cypresses, also known as San Marco) at Cevoli (Pisa)—which had been originally sponsored by the UCII, the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities, and where most of these youths had trained together since 1946—closed. At the beginning of the 1950s, this group also witnessed the first returns to Italy.

The history of “generation 1948” and of the group who chose the kibbutz is relational per se, if we look at how they redefined their existence and identity as individuals and as a peer group. Their choice was political and existential at the same time, embracing Socialism (and Communism for some) and collectivism over their middle-class background; it was also national, as they became *Italkim*,¹² rather than remaining Italian Jews as their families before them. Such a deep individual and collective transformation was the result of multiple influences. Some of these came from outside, whether in geographical or cultural terms, and they are discussed in the first part of this essay; others were the result of dynamics that developed inside the group; these will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. In any case, the history of “generation 1948” was—and remains to this day—the history of a collective experience.

¹¹ Marzano, “Italian Jewish Migration to Eretz Israel,” 18.

¹² *Italki*; pl. *Italkim* translates as “Italian/s” from modern Hebrew. In time, the term denoting the national provenance/belonging has acquired the marker of a specificity within the broader ethnonational definition of Israeli, as in many other cases (Polanim, Yekkes, Russim). The presumed particular role of the *Italkim* in Israel is discussed in *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 80/2–3 (2014/5775), ed. Sergio Della Pergola, Cecilia Nizza and Angelo M. Piattelli.

In an article of 1946, a young member of *Hechalutz*, Mirella Tedeschi, summarized in rigmarole these internal and external influences that determined the uniqueness of this experience as it was being shaped by a youth movement:

Hechalutz? Hechalutz is something, something for sure, but what it is remains unclear. Hechalutz are the Palestinian soldiers (what a nice uniform and what tasty chocolate!) and the girls cannot resist them [...] Hechalutz? Hechalutz is something, something for sure, but what it is remains unclear. Hechalutz are girls and boys without the soldiers [...] Only one thing is known, that they are mad, but seriously mad. Imagine they want to go to Palestine. Have you ever heard something like that? Leaving their parents, their studies, their home [...] Hechalutz? Hechalutz is something, something for sure, but what it is remains unclear. Hechalutz are girls and boys who believe they are adults: they print newspapers, they convene conferences, they go here and there, they say “we chalutzim,” they have a statute, they go to conferences [...] Hechalutz? Hechalutz is something, something for sure, but what it is remains unclear. Hechalutz are people who want to go to Palestine [...] But it is so good to stay here! And Palestine is for refugees, orphans, widows and the crippled [...] Hechalutz is that institution that steals our children, say the parents; Hechalutz is the place where these boys and girls are all shaken up, say grannies; Hechalutz is that place that I do not attend, say aristocrats; Hechalutz is those people that create anti-semitism, say assimilated Jews. Hechalutz is a movement, say the chalutzim, is an idea, a norm of life and of thought, is a continuous drive, it is sacrifice and joy, is clarity and ascent [...].¹³

2 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND RELATIONS

Various external factors influenced “generation 1948” towards emigration to Palestine/Israel: the presence on Italian soil of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group (JB), and various emissaries (*shelichim*) arrived from Palestine/Israel to favor and organize such immigration.¹⁴ Another institution that helped substantially in the reconstruction of Jewish life in Italy—and thus indirectly also helped some Italian and some foreign Jewish youth move to Palestine—was the Jewish Joint Distribution

¹³ Mirella Tedeschi, “Hechalutz è...,” *Hechalutz* 1/3, 6 Tammuz 5706 – 5 July 1946: 4.

¹⁴ For a very interesting comparative case, see Chaya Brasz, “Expectations and Realities of Dutch Immigration to Palestine/Israel After the Shoah,” *Jewish History*, 8/1–2 (1994), 323–338.

Committee (JDC), whose emissaries arrived in Milan on 30 April 1945, just five days after insurrection and liberation, and immediately set to work in cooperation with the JB and local Jews.

The history of the JB is very well known¹⁵: established in 1944, and originally headquartered in Egypt, it saw about 5000 Jews from Mandatory Palestine enlist as volunteers. It was adjoined to the British Eighth Army in the Italian Campaign of 1944–1945, it fought in combat, and was then stationed in Tarvisio after 1945, close to the border between Italy, Austria, and former Yugoslavia. It was then dispatched to Belgium and Holland and ultimately disbanded in 1946. Beyond combat, the JB had a tremendous impact among Italian Jews. It had a positive psychological effect on those (especially young or teenage) Jews that it encountered, often by chance, and a practical one once the war was over, helping Italian and foreign Jews locate survivors; it served as an organizational task, favoring some embryonic forms of Jewish collective life in liberated areas; and it offered an ideological/national purpose, organizing the so-called *berichah*, the illegal flight of European Jewish survivors towards Palestine from Italy's liberated Southern ports,¹⁶ and encouraging youth to settle in Palestine.

In various ways, most testimonies of Jews who encountered the soldiers of the JB tell of the combination of these aspects.¹⁷ Marco Maestro for example, another member of “generation 1948” who immigrated to Israel in 1952, recounted how his “contacts with the movement *Hechalutz* start[ed] in 1944, with the arrival in Florence of the Chaiolim (*sic*) [soldiers of the JB].”¹⁸ With the liberation of Rome on 4 June 1944, the JB helped establish a center close to the synagogue, in Via Balbo 33, whose activities and significance for the re-foundation of a Jewish community in Rome have been described extensively by Sergio Itzhak Minerbi, one of

¹⁵ See the documentary by Chuck Olin, *In Our Own Hands. The Hidden Story of the Jewish Brigade in World War II*, 1998, available at <http://mediaburn.org/video/in-our-own-hands-the-hidden-story-of-the-jewish-brigade-in-world-war-ii/>, accessed 1 November 2016.

¹⁶ Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970); Ada Sereni, *I clandestini del mare* (Milan: Mursia, 1973); Mario Toscano, *La “Porta di Sion.” L'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina (1945–1948)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990); Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁷ *La Brigata ebraica in Romagna 1944–1946. Attraverso il Mediterraneo e l'Italia per la libertà*, Quaderni del Museo Ebraico di Bologna/5, ed. Franco Bonilauri e Vincenza Maugeri (Rome: De Luca Editori D'arte, 2005), 45, 49–50.

¹⁸ Marco Maestro, *Un Kaddish per Stalin*, http://www.hakeillah.com/5_03_37.htm.

the center's organizers, and by others.¹⁹ Here came to life the first (Center-South) branch of what would become a national pioneering youth movement *Hechalutz* and its newspaper (originally appearing as "Dapei Hechalutz" in two separate editions, one for Rome and one for Milan). As for Milan, Cinzia Villani has discussed the establishment of a center for Jewish DPs in Via Unione 5 and the joint role of the JB, the JDC, and some notable local Jews in this enterprise. This was neither connected to the movement *Hechalutz*, nor did it lead directly to the re-foundation of Jewish life there. Still, it was another example of how important were the relations between these different local and international bodies for the rebirth of an organized Jewish life in Italy, whether as a direct result of their efforts, or as an indirect cause of collective action and cooperation.²⁰ A similar cooperative effort gave life to the children's home of Sciesopoli in Selvino (Bergamo), a facility where about 800 Jewish orphans from Eastern Europe spent some time in preparation of their immigration to Palestine/Israel between 1945 and 1948.²¹

The JB was also instrumental in setting up *hakhsharot* (training farms) in Italy where youths combined the study of Hebrew and of life in Palestine from the Zionist perspective of the times (called Palestinography), and agricultural practice. The *hakhsharah* had proven a valid instrument in Eastern Europe, favoring the construction of strong bonds within the group undergoing training and leading to the formation of nationally committed youths, becoming one of the standard means to channel new recruits for the Zionist movement from the 1910s onwards.²² In Italy there had been a few *hakhsharot* between 1934 and 1938, when small

¹⁹ Sergio I. Minerbi, "L'Hechalutz in Italia dopo la Liberazione," in *Verso una terra "antica e nuova." Culture del sionismo (1895–1948)*, ed. Giulio Schiavoni and Guido Massino (Rome: Carocci Editore, 2011), 261–287. Marzano, "Italian Jewish Migration to Eretz Israel."

²⁰ Cinzia Villani, "Milano, via Unione 5. Un centro di accoglienza per 'displaced persons' ebrei nel secondo dopoguerra," *Studi storici* 50/2 (2009): 333–370. On the international networks operating in Italy for Jewish DPs see Chiara Renzo, "'Our Hopes Are Not Lost Yet.' The Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy: Relief, Rehabilitation and Self-understanding (1943–1948)," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 12 (2017): 89–111.

²¹ The facility was rented by Raffaele Cantoni in 1945 and run by the JB until 1948. Aharon Megged, *The Story of the Selvino Children* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001) and <http://www.sciesopoli.com>, accessed 1 November 2016. See also Sergio Luzzatto, *I bambini di Moshe* (Turin: Einaudi, 2018).

²² Henri Near, *A History of the Kibbutz Movement, Volume 1: Origins and Growth 1909–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

groups of German, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian young Jews found in Tuscany a precarious refuge before most of them obtained immigration certificates to Palestine after one year of training; however, at that time, this kind of pioneering socialism had not really awakened much interest in Italian Jewish youths.²³ With the post-war *hakhsharot*, therefore, and with the establishment of its first pioneering youth movement, “generation 1948” belatedly embraced some of the pillars of labor Zionism, among them promoting the spiritual and physical regeneration of the Jews through manual and agricultural labor, the transformation of the Jewish middle classes into a socialist community of workers, the idea that such transformation would bring about the normalization of the Jewish people, and, last but not least, the creation of the new individual.²⁴ The first *hakhsharot* were mainly for Jewish refugees transiting in Italy and were set up and managed by soldiers of the JB.²⁵

The influence of relations of external agents and actors was not limited to the JDC and the JB; another factor that weighed on the experience of “generation 1948” was the arrival of some Italian emissaries (*shelichim*) from various organizations and kibbutz movements after liberation. Umberto Nahon (who had emigrated to Palestine in April 1939) arrived in Italy in February 1945 on behalf of the Jewish Agency, and set up the Palestinian Office of Rome issuing visa certificates to emigrate to Palestine. Marcello Malkiel Savaldi—who had left Trieste for Palestine in 1938 and was among the founders of kibbutz Givat Brenner where other *Italkim* had settled after 1938—arrived in the fall of 1945; he came on behalf of the *Kibbutz Ha-Menchad* Movement (United Kibbutz, 1927, originally associated with *Po‘ale Zion* and *Achdut ‘Avodah*).²⁶ His brother, Bruno

²³ Carla Forti and Vittorio Haim Luzzatti, *Palestina in Toscana: pionieri ebrei nel Senese (1934–1938)* (Florence: Aska 2009); in July 1939 two *hakhsharot* for young Italian Jews were established in Orciano and Cevoli (Pisa). These were closed by the authorities following an order of the Carabinieri on 3 May 1940. On Italy as a refuge for Jews between 1934 and 1938 and *hakhsharot* see Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1993), 220–240.

²⁴ For this kind of language and rhetoric, see, among the many possible examples, Tullio Melauri, “Vita di Hechalutz. Da Trieste,” *Hechalutz* 1/2, 21 Sivan 5706 – 20 June 1946: 4 and F.L. “Che cosa faremo in Eretz,” *Hechalutz* 1/6, 24 Elul 5706 – 20 September 1946: 2; Nora Bolaffio, “La crisi della gioventù,” *Hechalutz* 2/1, 12 Tishri 5707 – 7 October 1946: 3.

²⁵ Alex [Alessandro Sternberg], “Hechalutz dei profughi,” *Hechalutz* 1/3, 6 Tammuz 5706 – 5 July 1946: 2.

²⁶ See Marcello Savaldi, “Ricordi di Via del Monte,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 38/7–8 (1972): 193–195. Marcello Savaldi had also been one of the few that had promoted a pio-

Savaldi, had entered the country as a soldier of the JB. Yosef Galili from kibbutz Messilot came as *shaliach* of the *Kibbutz Artzi* Movement (National Kibbutz, 1927, associated to the Marxist-Zionist political party Mapam), though it was Silica Cahana (1923–1948)—a Romanian refugee based in the DP camp of Avigliana near Turin, who operated informally as representative of the *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir* youth movement (HH, socialist-Zionist) and thus also of *Kibbutz Artzi*. Silica left an indelible impression on the young Jews of “generation 1948” who met him, to the point that Bruno Gad Segre created a new Italian verb to describe him and his work: “he fell upon us in Turin and silicated (*sic*) us all.”²⁷ With his personality, enthusiasm, and personal example, he succeeded in attracting—almost seduce—many Italian young Jews, initially from Turin and Northern Italy, and then from other parts of the country too. His myth is very much alive with many of “generation 1948” until today: he is remembered falling on the battlefields of the War of 1948 singing the Italian communist song *Bandiera Rossa*, on 24 May 1948.

Other emissaries arrived, among them Max Varadi (Meir Vardi) and Nurit Ravenna from kibbutz Sde Eliyahu—thus affiliated with the *Kibbutz Ha-Dati* (the Religious Kibbutz Movement). Last but not least, arrived Leo Levi, representing the *Irgun Olei Italia* (sic, Organization of Immigrants from Italy) that had been established in 1939.²⁸ The arrival from Israel of emissaries representing different movements/political parties and their quite frantic activities among young Italian Jews and within Jewish communities to attract as many youngsters as possible can be seen as a sign of a reconnection between the major trends of Zionism at the time and Italian Jewry, and the moment in which an altogether marginal and provincial group of Jews started to be reincorporated and to realign itself into a broader Zionist picture. In order to pull as many recruits as

neering approach to youth education already in the 1930s, before his migration to Palestine. See Marcello Savaldi, “I campeggi ebraici: 1931–1939,” *Storia Contemporanea*, 6 (1988): 1121–1152.

²⁷ Interview by the author with Bruno Gad Segre, Haifa, 28 July 2009. “Silica era un profugo attivista di Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir che è piombato a Torino e ci ha *silicato* tutti.” See also the letter from Bruno Gad Segre to Silica on 10 April 1947 in Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia, Milano (henceforth INSMLI), Collection Guido Valabrega, Folder 20/1.

²⁸ On Leo Levi, see *Contro i dinosauri. Scritti civili 1931–1972*, ed. Arturo Marzano (Naples: L'ancora del mediterraneo, 2011), and the documentary film by Yaala Levi Zimmerman, *Leo Levi – The Man with the Nagra*, 2011.

possible towards their movement's settlements, each of them played their tunes: at one edge of the spectrum stood Savaldi and Varadi-Ravenna vouching respectively for kibbutz Givat Brenner and Sde Eliyahu, convinced that a new *'aliyah* of young Italian Jews should go where an Italian presence had consolidated in previous years; another argument was put forward in favor of the religious kibbutz, namely that in that movement middle-class parents would be reassured about the future of their rebellious sons and daughters.²⁹ At the other edge stood Cahana who, on the contrary, argued that they should settle in a new and/or in a frontier community, in line with the process of physical and political regeneration they had embraced in *hakhsarah*. As we shall see below, most of "generation 1948" ended up settling in a kibbutz of the *Kibbutz Artzi* Movement. Sergio Itzhak Minerbi—one of the older members of this generation, and one of the first to arrive in Palestine/Israel on 1 August 1947—claims the merit of diverting this Italian *'aliyah* from Givat Brenner or Sde Eliyahu to kibbutzim of the *Kibbutz Artzi*.³⁰ In a letter to Guido Gadi Valabrega, a young member of the community of Turin, he wrote:

As long as there remain two separate kibbutz organizations (K. Ammeuchad and K. Arzi) (*sic*), and this separation will certainly continue for years to come, we must educate the chaverim [members/comrades] (*sic*) to kibbutz arzi (*sic*). It is not enough to be content with adhering politically to MAPAM. It is sufficient for those who will contribute to the socialist construction only with their electoral vote. But for those chaluzim [pioneers] (*sic*) who want to implement their ideas instead, and actually live a socialist life, there is the problem of the choice of the kibbutz (*sic*). [...] And this is the problem that we must begin to lay before the chaverim (*sic*) right now, so that they do not find themselves unprepared tomorrow before any Savaldi.³¹

On 29–30 April 1946, at the conference of Ceriano Laghetto, the Center and Northern branches of *Hechalutz* merged in a united and national youth movement. This process responded to the aspirations of many young Jews to be affiliated on a national scale, and to their belief that Italian Jewry should remain united in view of its limited numbers and of its tradition of inclusiveness. For the time being, the competition of the

²⁹ Interview with Melauri (Adar) and Gabriella Luzzati.

³⁰ Minerbi, "L'Hechalutz in Italia dopo la Liberazione," 276–285.

³¹ INSMMLI, Collection Guido Valabrega, folder 7, Letter from Sergio Izhak Minerbi to Guido Gadi Valabrega, Rome, 4 March 1949.

shelichim for recruits had caused a reaction against ideological/political fragmentation. As we shall see, this lasted until the early 1950s, when the unity of intents and aspirations of this group broke when it was confronted with the ideological and political rifts that split the kibbutz movements between 1952 and 1953. The celebrated unity of the *Italkim* stood strong until they migrated to Israel where they were absorbed into the scorching political climate and debates of the times and of the place.³²

3 INTERNAL INFLUENCES AND RELATIONS

As mentioned above, a first group of young Italian Jews arrived in Palestine before a youth movement was established in Italy; among them, 34 did their *bakhsharah* in Degania A³³ next to a group of French Jews training in Degania B. The *Italkim* and their peers who were organizing *bakhsharot* in Italy corresponded regularly: the former produced a home-made journal, entitled “LeIedidenu” [To Our Friends], in which one can read the first impressions of middle-class Jews parachuted into an agricultural settlement whose standing was mythical in the history of Zionism. This group struggled to integrate with migrants who had arrived a few decades before, generally from Eastern Europe. With the exception of Armando Caimi from Trieste, whose family originated in Corfu and who had a

³² The rifts were not only on the left of the political spectrum, but also between secular and religious kibbutzim. Arturo Marzano reports that already in 1947 the *Chevrat Yehude Italiyah le-Pe’ulah Ruchanit Yerushalayim* [the Association of Italian Jews for spiritual action—Jerusalem] had criticized the non-religious kibbutzim in a small booklet; this provoked the angry response of the secular members of the “Irgun Olei Italia.” See Marzano, “Italian Jewish Migration to Eretz Israel,” 25.

³³ Rachel Baruch, Armando Menachem Caimi, Adele Calò, Germana Calò, Silvio Gershon Calò, Umberto Ya’akov Calò, Elda e Aldo Campagnano, Arduino Caro, Arrigo Tzvi Caro, Emma Cortesi Sonnino, Enzo Mosheh Cortesi (the latter two married in Degania A on 18 May 1945), G. Zev Di Porto, Leo Ariei Disegni, Carla Rivka Gomez de Silva, Benzion Koenig, Yehudit Kun, Ilse Mandel, A. Shlomo Mariani, Laura Ester Milano, Sara Milano, R. Hillel Millul, Dalia Millul Anticoli, G. Lot Minerbi, Liliana Pacifici, Gianna Popper, Letizia Chava Popper, G. Mosheh Rosenwass, Nathan G. Rossi, Tullio Shmuel Segre, Ferruccio Barzilai Sonnino (Bar-Yosef), Dvorah Sonnino, Adolfo Efraim Ventura, Miriam Ventura. The group included four others who, upon arrival, enlisted in the JB—Sergio David Amati, Sigfrido Ariel Cardoso, Elio Eliahu Millul, and Ya’akov Weiss (Fiume)—and a *madrakh* (group leader) from nearby kibbutz Puriyah, Lucio Yair Levi. Archives of the Jewish Community of Trieste (AJCT), Collection Caimi, *LeIedidenu*, Luglio 1945, n. 1. *Giornale del gruppo Degania A.*, “Notizie sul Gruppo,” 18–20.

working-class background,³⁴ they all came from middle-class families and 15 of them went back to Italy after a while. They had no experience in manual work, they were not accustomed to the climate, spoke little Hebrew and no Yiddish, and adapted to the hard working conditions with difficulty. The difference between them and the inhabitants of the kibbutz could not go unnoticed, at work for example: Aliza Ilse Mandel told her friends doing *hakhsharah* in Italy about how difficult it was to keep the pace of work in the fields with the “sabras that work with ease and swiftly,” and of how hard she tried, to the point of fainting under the scorching sun, remaining idealistically committed to her “adored Land.”³⁵ The differences were evident also by looking at their recent pasts: Ferruccio Barzilai Sonnino described the inhabitants of Degania as “educated in an atmosphere of freedom and balance, as sons of the independent agricultural colony” while they “had spent the last few years in hiding.” At the same time, he described the “culture of the country” as “closed,” and themselves as a group “who had studied Greek and Latin, read Dante, listened to Chopin and Wagner,” suffering from the “intellectual emptiness” that they perceived around them.³⁶ Another member of this group, Silvio Gershon Calò, observed the differences on a more general level:

Eastern European Jews have indeed built Eretz Israel but they brought here a reaction against a terrible slavery that they suffered for centuries; they have known the pogroms and the manhunt by the Cossacks and of the Ochrana [Czarist Secret Police]; they have known the dark atmosphere of revolutionary anti-czarist circles, the misery and hunger of the small villages, the exalted mysticism of the chassidim (*sic*) and the anti-religious rebellions of youth at the beginning of the century. Maybe for this reason Eretz Israel is so full of extremism.

The tradition of Italian Jewry could not be more distinct, continued Calò, as it

³⁴ I have described the tragic story of Armando Caimi and analyzed the correspondence between him in Palestine and his family in Italy in Simoni, “Gli ebrei italiani e lo Stato di Israele.”

³⁵ AJCT, Collection Caimi, *LeIedidenu*, Luglio 1945, n. 1. Giornale del gruppo Degania A., Aliza Ilse Mandel, “La malattia dell’idealismo,” 13.

³⁶ Ibid., Ferruccio Barzilai Sonnino, “Incontro con un altro mondo,” 7–10: 7 and *ibid.*, Baiah Baraz, “Parla una figlia di Erez Israel,” 10.

has always been [based on] respect and mutual understanding, a trend towards unity and the smoothing of ideological differences; Italian Judaism has always been against extremes; it always found a way that could be walked by an orthodox and heterodox, the socialist and the middle class, the idealist and the one inclined to practicalities.³⁷

When “generation 1948” established the youth movement *Hechalutz* in Italy, it also followed the same unitary approach, and the inclusive *hakhsharah* of Tel Broshim became its main means of immigration to Palestine/Israel. Still in Italy at the time, and writing about that period much later, the future historian and intellectual Corrado Uri Vivanti (Chaim) from Mantova remembered how the movement “dispensed with all distinctions of parties,” because of “the scarcity of Italian forces,” but also to bring “vital energy for the action of the movement.”³⁸ The relationship between the movement and the *hakhsharah* was symbiotic; one nourished the other, in diverse ways and intensity in different periods of time. In order to attract as many young Italian Jews as possible, in 1946 Savaldi wrote in the journal “Hechalutz” of the connection between the two:

Hechalutz [...] is the result of the union of those young Jews who actually wanted to get ready to build Eretz Israel through their work. [...] And there isn't a more stringent form of life, and more freedom at the same time, than the one made by halutzim in their hachsciarà (*sic*) centers, and even more in the kibbutzim of Eretz Israel. Therefore these centers of new life exert an extraordinary fascination for all who approach them.³⁹

The *hakhsharah* of the movement *Hechalutz* (Tel Broshim or San Marco) opened in 1947. It was a farm owned by Giulio Racah (later Israel Prize for physics); it had fields, a barn, some animals and it came with Pellegrino Lippi, the farmer who tried to teach agriculture and transform these urban youngsters into socialist workers.⁴⁰ A small paper, “Darkeinu” [(*sic*), Our Way], was also published at Tel Broshim. Approximately after one year of training, from here “generation 1948” migrated to Israel in

³⁷ Ibid., Silvio Gherston Calò, “LeIedidenu,” 2.

³⁸ Corrado Vivanti, “Ricordi dell’Hechalutz,” http://www.hakeillah.com/5_03_36.htm, accessed 5 November 2016.

³⁹ Malkiel Savaldi, “Hechalutz. Sue origini ed essenza,” *Hechalutz* 1/3, 6 Tammuz 5706 – 5 July 1946: 2.

⁴⁰ Some pictures of Tel Broshim are available at INSMLI, Collection Valabrega, folder 290.

classes or cohorts, organized by year. As Aldo Eldad Melauri (Adar) said, pointing to himself and to his wife Gabriella Luzzati: “We were like wine. I am year 1949; she is year 1950.”⁴¹

The exchange between the group doing *bakhsharah* in Italy and the one that immigrated to Israel was continuous, and took various forms. They corresponded, writing individual and/or collective letters. Each group described their collective life, updated the others on the decisions of the assembly and of the leadership, on the newcomers, their functioning as a group, on some inevitable difficulties, some equally inevitable love affairs, and so on. Those in Israel described their experiences: the practical and ideological question of manual work, their encounters with Jews from Arab countries, and some aspects of the country’s domestic policies; they also insisted that those who seemed hesitant should join the *bakhsharah*. From their first placement (kibbutz Nahshonim) in the spring of 1949, the avant-garde of the movement—the two brothers Tullio Tzvi and Aldo Eldad Melauri (Adar) who had left on 1 November 1948 (with Tina Cohen)—wrote to another future historian and intellectual, Guido Gadi Valabrega, who in 1949 was hesitating between joining Tel Broshim or enrolling at university:

We consider quite a serious matter the doubts and hesitations about entering the *bakhsharah* or continuing higher education [...] Our opinion is that a technical preparation cannot justify postponing the entry into *bakhsharah* and, consequently, the alià (*sic*). The non-entry into *bakhsharah* at 19–20 years old (at the end of high or technical school) makes it very likely that young people who lag behind will be completely lost to the *chalutzistic* (*sic*) [pioneering] movement [...]. On the other hand, one should not think that having completed a university degree, places the chaver (*sic*) in a privileged position [...]. Physical labor is the fundamental factor of kibbutz life and the premise of each technical improvement. The difficulty of adaptation to physical work (especially for young people coming from the Italian *Golà* (*sic*) [Diaspora], so far away from manual labor) makes the urgent entry in *bakhsharah* more necessary, while a university education is likely to alienate further from this life.⁴²

⁴¹ Interview Aldo Eldad Melauri (Adar) and Gabriella Luzzati.

⁴² INSMIL, Collection Valabrega, Corrispondenza Eldad Aldo Melauri, folder 17/1, letter from Eldad and Tzvi [Aldo and Tullio Melauri (Adar)] to Gadi [Guido Valabrega], Nahshonim, 7 March 1949.

Valabrega ultimately chose the *hakhsharah*, at least for a while. Beyond the political and ideological dimension—which permeated the whole enterprise, but was more relevant for some than for others—there was a very strong generational pull to the *hakhsharah*, amplified by the peer group. As Idalba (Yael) Bassani said: “And then I joined the *hakhsharah*. I knew I would not stop there”; Donata Ravenna echoed: “When I entered San Marco, I knew I would go out at the port of Haifa.” Bruno Gad Segre stated: “It was almost natural to join the *hakhsharah* and leave for Palestine.”⁴³

There were other ways to keep in touch between the “here” and the “there”: some of the veterans (Sergio Itzhak Minerbi, Corrado Israel De Benedetti, and Aldo Eldad Melauri for example) came back in the first few years as *shelichim* themselves; their task was to find and motivate new recruits for the movement, to direct their immigration, to organize new departures and, altogether, to keep the movement alive.⁴⁴

From the 1950s onwards, in fact, the question of how to mobilize new youngsters appeared with increasing frequency in the correspondence, revealing that the movement was encountering some difficulties. A third way of communication between the two groups was the journal of the movement. “Hechalutz” published articles from Israel and from Italy in its various sections, “*News from Aretz*,” “*From Palestine they write*,” “*Reports on political developments in Israel*,” “*The reality of the kibbutz*.” This is not the place to analyze the contents of the articles published in “Hechalutz”; the paper, directed since 1946 by Luciano Forti, then by Ruggero Iair Minerbi and then by Marco Maestro between 1950 and 1952, remains one of the main sources to study not only the relations between the two groups, but also the history of this youth movement, and its complex relations with Italian Jewish communities and their institutions.⁴⁵

⁴³ Individual interviews of the author with Idalba (Yael) Bassani, Donata Ravenna, and Bruno Gad Segre, Haifa, 28 July 2009.

⁴⁴ INSMMLI, Collection Valabrega, Tullio Zvi Melauri, folder 16, letter from Tzvi [Tullio Melauri (Adar)] to Gadi [Guido Valabrega], Ruhama, 27 January 1950, about the imminent departure from Israel of his brother’s Aldo Eldad as *shaliach*.

⁴⁵ INSMMLI, Collection Valabrega, folder 292, Marco Maestro, “Un Kaddish per Stalin,” also available at http://www.hakeillah.com/5_03_37.htm, accessed 4 November 2016. The journal *Hechalutz* was directed by Luciano Forti (1946–1948), Ruggero Iair Minerbi (1949), Corrado Vivanti (1950), Marco Maestro (1950–1953), Mario Sciunnach (1953–1954), Dario Di Capua (1954) and, finally, Giuseppe Franchetti (1954–1956).

Some of the letters between the two groups, the articles in the periodical publication “Hechalutz” and other written and oral material allow us to follow this group further, by looking at three more issues which marked their history as the first group of young Italian migrating to a kibbutz: first, the discussions on which kibbutz to go to; second, how to maintain the movement going once the first cohorts left; finally, what happened if someone decided to leave the group, the kibbutz and the movement altogether, for personal, family, or political reasons. These three last points intertwine at several junctions.

4 SOME INTERNAL CONFLICTS AND DIVISIONS

At the beginning of the 1950s two parallel processes invested “generation 1948.” On the one hand, in Italy, the wave of enthusiasm of the younger generation for pioneering Zionism started to settle, and the presences in the *hakhsharah* began to diminish. One of the most active members of this group, Corrado Uri Vivanti (Chaim), reported in June 1950 that the *hakhsharah* counted 19 members, which became 10 when cohort 1950 left. In the same collective letter, he also warned of the renovated presence at Tel Broshim of *shelichim* from various kibbutz movements “hunting for our precious skins.” Lot Minerbi of *Kibbutz Ha-Meuchad* was one of them, trying to push the new cohorts to kibbutz Regavim (where indeed several of them went).⁴⁶ The group at Tel Broshim looked at the progressive normalization of Italian Jewish life with increasing preoccupation as Vivanti was writing:

If the Hachasharah (*sic*) closes, you can be sure that no one in Italy will speak of practical Zionism for a long time. The only thing that one can see is that really Italian Jewry is dead and we feel the consequences here. The only thing that is worthwhile is the kidnapping of the youth. We are the only ones left with some living energy. And so, let’s move on; ad matai [until when?].⁴⁷

Marco Maestro’s recollections of the time he spent at Tel Broshim in the following couple of years are similar; despite his attempts to attract to

⁴⁶ INSMMLI, Collection Valabrega, folder 43, letter from Corrado Uri Vivanti (Chaim) to the comrades that have left Cevoli for Israel, S. Marco, 14 June 1950.

⁴⁷ INSMMLI, Collection Valabrega, folder 43, letter from Corrado Uri Vivanti (Chaim) to the comrades that have left Cevoli for Israel, S. Marco, 5 October 1950.

the *bakhsharah* young Jews from the ghetto of Rome, he ended up leaving for Israel in 1952 with only one friend, Nathan Mestre, who had not participated in the *bakhsharah* and did not originate from the ghetto of Rome. His recollections shed some light on the twilight of this pioneering Italian experience:

When I left, Cevoli did not have much time left to live. Also for this reason, the preparation received in *haksharà* (*sic*) had increasingly become some sort of rite of passage, a rite of separation from the Italian surrounding reality, more than a real preparation to the kibbutz.⁴⁸

On the other hand, in Israel, during the same period, the kibbutz was also changing as an institution: it had become central in the absorption of new immigrants and progressively more involved in the bitter and divisive controversies that marked the Israeli Left in this period. Jews migrating to Israel in the 1950s came from non-European lands, and they belonged to political traditions that were very far from collectivist socialism, thus exacerbating the fallacies of a system that, as Vivanti had written, “hoped for a state built through socialism” but “closed [its] eyes in front of the needs of the kibbutz galuiot [*sic*, ingathering of the exiles].” The *Italkim* that immigrated in the early 1950s thus landed in a political reality and social organization that they struggled to recognize, and necessarily had to reassess and rescale the myth of the kibbutz as a place where to realize a revolutionary and transforming socialism, at least as they had imagined it in the *bakhsharah*. This detachment between expectations and reality took many forms. One of them was a generational rebellion that still kept the group within the broader kibbutz movement; another was political disillusionment that led to further splits inside the group, and also to the first renunciations and returns to Italy. The much-celebrated unity of Italian Jews did not stand the test of their arrival in Israel.

Indeed, writing in the periodical “Hechalutz” in 1950, Corrado Israel De Benedetti explained the overall differences between the *bakhsharah* in the Diaspora and the Israeli reality of the kibbutz: the first was to be understood as a moment of transition marked by youth and by a very strong collective striving for an ideal; the second was a permanent settlement, a testimony to the realization of that ideal.⁴⁹ While in *bakhsharah*, the group

⁴⁸ INSMILI, Collection Valabrega, folder 292, Marco Maestro, “Ricordi dell’Hechalutz.”

⁴⁹ [Corrado] Israel [De Benedetti], “Hachsciarà (*sic*) e kibbutz,” *Hechalutz* 5/9, 7 Shevat 6510 – 25 January 1950: 2.

discussed and voted on which kibbutz they would go to once in Israel. The avant-garde writing from Israel and the *shelichim* that had returned to Italy oriented the first cohorts of “generation 1948” to the newly established kibbutz Ruhama (*Kibbutz Artzi*) in the Negev, according to the political alignment that Minerbi, De Benedetti and others had impressed upon the movement. For example, in 1949 Tullio Tzvi Melaury (Adar) wrote from Israel how “Ruhama offers the best opportunities” to receive Italian Jews also because it “[would] open the movement in Italy.”⁵⁰

The first splits occurred in 1950, when the groups from Tel Broshim opted for kibbutz Karmia, not far from today’s Ashkelon, instead of Ruhama. In accordance with the spirit and the ideology of the time and of the whole enterprise, this was an emotionally and politically charged decision; it represented a rebellion by the younger members and indeed it was received as a betrayal by the “elders.” After learning of the choice of cohort 1950 at Tel Broshim, its *shaliach* Aldo Eldad Melaury (Adar) wrote them a long and dramatic letter where, in a continuous *crescendo*, he described their decision as an attitude, a mistake, an abdication, cowardice, and a huge blow to his work.⁵¹ More easily after many years, Gabriella Luzzati, a member of that rebellious group, then Aldo Eldad’s girlfriend and today his wife, explained:

I will tell you what Karmia was: when we came here [Ruhama], our group (that was the second to arrive) found that the previous groups had become bourgeois, Corrado [De Benedetti] and others, they had small children, and wanted to stay at Ruhama. And when we arrived as a group, without children and without nothing, we became fixated with the idea of establishing a new kibbutz. [...] All of us in the second group felt that this kibbutz here—established five years before—was old.⁵²

One should also add that Ruhama was at the time absorbing a group of newly arrived Tunisian Jews, whose relations with the *Italkim* were difficult. For a similar rebellion, another small group (Idalba Yael and her husband Umberto Bassani, Donata Ravenna and Bruno Gad Segre, Luisa

⁵⁰ INSMIL, Collection Valabrega, Tullio Zvi Melaury, folder 16, letter from Tzvi [Tullio Melaury (Adar)] to Gadi [Guido Valabrega], Nahshonim, 16 September 1949.

⁵¹ INSMIL, Collection Valabrega, Aldo Melaury a Corrado De Benedetti-Shoshanna, folder 43, letter from Eldad [Aldo Melaury (Adar)] to the *chaverim* [group] Tel-Broshim, 29 June 1950.

⁵² Interview Aldo Eldad Melaury and Gabriella Luzzati.

Minerbi and her husband Bruno Levi) chose kibbutz Regavim, founded in 1950 by 50 Italian and 50 North African Jews. For similar reasons—very hard working conditions and the difficulty to integrate with a group of Jews from a very different background—they all left within a few years. Somewhat anticipating his peers, Vivanti wrote about some of the contradictions that they all found when they arrived in the kibbutz: “It is useless to accuse the kibbutz of not knowing how to absorb the *alià* (*sic*). It is very well known that it is not possible to make live in a post-revolutionary climate those that not only do not know what the revolution is, but that actually oppose it.”⁵³ The Levis left Regavim and moved to Ruhama to rejoin the original group, while for the others Regavim represented the last stop of the collectivist experience.

5 SOME RETURNS

Vivanti and Valabrega articulated their doubts, and later their disillusionment with the kibbutz, in political terms. This had little to do with a broader political analysis connected to the conditions in which the State of Israel was established, the *Nakba* or the incorporation of Palestinian lands in Ruhama as absentee property lands. Their analysis was conducted along Marxist categories, namely to what extent could the kibbutz be a transformative tool for the creation of a Socialist society in Israel; and to what extent were Jewish immigrants (and Italian Jews in particular) able to shrug off their own petite bourgeois legacy. Already in 1950 Vivanti had started to describe Israel as “running towards the bourgeois state,” the Histadrut [trade union] “burdened by religious influences,” and the kibbutz as “turning into something closer to a cooperative [...] or an oasis, an isolated community like many others that have flourished and decayed in many other countries.”⁵⁴ The fierce political rifts within the Israeli Left in the early 1950s complicated the situation further; at their core stood the question whether Israel should remain anchored to the USSR (as the small communist party Maki, and the pro-Soviet Mapai—and thus *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir* and *Kibbutz Artzi*—were holding), or move closer to the Western sphere, following Ben-Gurion's leadership and Mapam. The crisis within the Israeli left precipitated in 1952–1953, when the

⁵³ INSMIL, Collection Valabrega, folder 43, letter from Corrado Uri Vivanti (Chaim) to the comrades that have left Cevoli for Israel, S. Marco, 14 June 1950.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Doctors' Plot in the USSR and the Slánský trials in Czechoslovakia—both of which saw Communist regimes sentencing Jews to death with the accusation of betraying their homelands and, in the latter case, of favoring illegal immigration to Israel—caused all kibbutz movements, individual settlements, and every kibbutz member to take a stand for or against affiliation to the USSR, thus cracking the kibbutz movements open.⁵⁵ As with all members of a kibbutz, the *Italkim* of “generation 1948” were also drawn into these dynamics, some in harsher ways than others.

In 1952, Valabrega had become a member of kibbutz Ruhama and, soon after, he was called to serve in the Israeli army. His diary “Notes from the barracks” appears as the story of a suspended time, a perpetual waiting between training and rest, a progressive loss of illusions, hopes, intellectual abilities, and a frequent return to family memories. In 1953 Guido Gadi Valabrega wrote an article for “Hechalutz” in which he ultimately described Israel as a capitalist state like all others.⁵⁶ The article cost him dearly: in the heated climate of the post-Slánský affair, he was expelled from Ruhama on 15 August 1953.⁵⁷ He then joined a splinter group from kibbutz Yad Hanna that established the smaller nearby kibbutz Yad Hana Senesh and became known as the only communist kibbutz. There he found Tullio Tzvi Melauri (Adar), Marco Maestro, and other *Italkim* from kibbutz Amir, among whom Nella De Benedetti, the sister of Corrado Israel, Alessandro Alex Sternberg, Sara Todros and her husband Dov Shalom.⁵⁸ In the same year Valabrega returned to Italy on leave from the army for family reasons,⁵⁹ did not go back to Israel and was thus declared a deserter, never being able to set foot in Israel again.

Corrado Vivanti, too, went back to Italy in 1953 for family reasons; upon arrival, the authorities blocked his passport for draft dodging in Italy, and he did not have the courage to immigrate to Israel illegally. He

⁵⁵ See Joel Benin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁵⁶ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, Gadi [Guido Valabrega], folder 31, “Stato—Kibbutz—Partito,” *Hechalutz*, 8/10 15 Luglio 1953—3 Av 5713, 2.

⁵⁷ See INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, folder 50, for the original report of the assembly in which Valabrega was expelled. The translation from Hebrew into Italian is in INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, folder 292.

⁵⁸ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, Tullio Zvi Melauri, folder 16, Letter from Tullio Tzvi Melauri (Adar) to Gadi Guido Valabrega, Ruhama, 24 November 1954.

⁵⁹ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, Corrispondenza Eugenia Zargani, folder 22/, [n.d.] and 26 August 1953.

thus enrolled in university to postpone military service, later became a member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and ultimately decided that the Party, more than the kibbutz, would be the instrument for liberation and revolution. This stand was strongly resented by the rest of the group, who judged his non-return as a betrayal. A letter from Tullio Tzvi Melauri (Adar) to Guido Gadi Valabrega shows how the news of Vivanti's non-return was received:

We have received a long letter from Uri [Corrado Vivanti] that caused a great sensation in us all. [...] In short, Uri says that in Italy he found many nice things, and among them "wandering around newsstands and bookshops hunting for interesting books etc." In any case, he was getting ready to come back when his mother notified him in Rome that the Carabinieri had called him [to be enlisted in the Italian army for compulsory military service]. He showed up, not giving too much weight to the call, relying on certain *protezzie* [*sic*]. Then things turned complicated. [...] On his decision not to come back your issue also played a role [...] as he shared your pessimism towards the Israeli workers' movement etc. Moreover, given his political stands, he did not see any *sikuim* [chances, *sic*] to stay in Ruhama, and he did not feel like moving to the city. [...] His letter caused a massive scandal among us, and everyone accuses him of treason, of choosing the easy life, of being spoiled. Personally, I am sorry I have lost a good friend, though such a development could be easily anticipated lately.⁶⁰

After their studies, Vivanti and Valabrega became well-known academics, public intellectuals, who took very strong anti-Zionist stands in Jewish communities as well as in the circles of the PCI, Valabrega more publicly and more outspokenly than Vivanti. Corrado Israel De Benedetti, who had returned to Italy as *shaliach* at Tel Broshim between 1952 and 1954, felt that his work was in part undermined—and misrepresented—by these two uncomfortable witnesses, and he vigorously opposed their interpretation and public presentation of the Israeli reality. As he wrote in 1953 to Valabrega, "a farmer or a worker Jew" is a "more faithful comrade than an intellectual with trappings of the party,"⁶¹ further elaborating on this concept the following year:

⁶⁰ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, Tullio Zvi Melauri, folder 16, Letter from Tullio Tzvi Melauri (Adar) to Gadi Guido Valabrega, Ruhama, 21 September 1953.

⁶¹ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, folder 16, Letter from Corrado Israel De Benedetti to Guido Valabrega, [n.d.], 1953?

I will restore completely my esteem in you only when you will return there [in Israel]. Otherwise I'll have to draw the conclusion that you choose the path of revolution where it is easier, which I think is not very dignified for a good Marxist-Leninist. And I also have to think that this is true not only from a moral point of view (a strong PCI rather than a scanty MAKI), but also from a material perspective, so that of course your family circumstances allow you to prefer Italy to Israel, this country with more than 1,000,000 unemployed workers, with hunger in the South, poverty etc., all things that, however, fortunately, are far away from you.⁶²

These words revealed not only a completely divergent political vision, but also a personal unbridgeable distance that separated some of the members that had belonged to the same peer group and youth movement. Before De Benedetti, who continued “to believe in the revolutionary role of the ‘alyia [*sic*],” stood Vivanti, who considered the historical necessity of Jewish immigration to Israel “a reactionary falsehood” particularly unsuited to the Italian case.⁶³ Already in 1953–1954 Vivanti was looking bitterly at this experience, seeing it as a “parenthesis” and as a personal utopia that he really had believed to be collective, Jewish, and socialist, but “which had passed like a summer storm” and to which he “he had dedicated among the best years of [his] life.”⁶⁴ This was more than a generational rift inside a peer group and it continued to be present in the collective memory of that early experience until very recently, on both sides. Still in 1997 Valabrega wrote to De Benedetti, asking that his expulsion from Ruhama be revised; and while Valabrega was looking for a late rehabilitation, he obtained a statement from De Benedetti to the effect that “his expulsion for political reasons in 1953 could have been avoided.”⁶⁵

Others also went back to Italy: among them was Tullio Tzvi Melauro, who left the kibbutz wondering “why one should work as a farmer, having so little inclination for it,”⁶⁶ and who settled in Florence. Marco Maestro

⁶² INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, folder 16, Letter from Corrado Israel De Benedetti to Guido Valabrega, [n.d.], 3 December 1954?

⁶³ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, folder 22/2, Letter from Corrado Vivanti to Guido Valabrega, 25 January 1954.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Letters from Corrado Uri Vivanti to Guido Gadi Valabrega, 4 December 1953 and 19 April 1954.

⁶⁵ Paolo Valabrega, *Gadi. Ascesa e caduta di un giovane socialista sionista. Un'introduzione alle carte 1942–1953 del Fondo Guido Valabrega nell'Archivio INSMIL a Milano*, Tesi di laurea non pubblicata, Università di Milano, a.a. 2006–2007, 103–105.

⁶⁶ INSMIL, Fondo Valabrega, Tullio Zvi Melauro, folder 16, Letter from Tullio Tzvi Melauro (Adar) to Gadi Guido Valabrega, Jd-Hanna (*sic*), 5 September 1954.

also went back to Italy in 1954, on a temporary visit that turned into a permanent stay after meeting his baby daughter for the first time. He, too, became a member of the PCI.

Not surprisingly, the narrative and the memory of the returnees stand in stark contrast to the narrative and memory of those who stayed in Israel. The dream of Corrado Israel De Benedetti, and of the others who had first come into contact with the JB and with Savaldi and Silica did not come true. At the time, De Benedetti wrote how they dreamt “of a movement that could be a mass movement, that would depopulate Italian Jewish communities within a few years.”⁶⁷ However, already in 1950 “Hehchalutz” was speaking of a few interested youngsters, “the rare ones that are interested to the call of Eretz Israel.”⁶⁸ In 1951, the *Irgun Olei Italia* (sic) presented some data on Italians in Israel in that year: there were about 1199–1299 *Italkim* in Israel, with 300 children born *in loco*. Some 510 had arrived before 1945 (69 went back). Between 1945 and 1948, 300 people had immigrated and 90 arrived after 1948 (50 of whom went back).⁶⁹

Corrado Israel De Benedetti remained as one of the movement’s leaders and settled in Ruhama, where he raised his family and where he lives to this day. His next-door neighbors are Aldo Eldad Melauri (Adar) and Gabriella Luzzati, Bruno and Luisa Levi, and a few others who immigrated from Tel Broshim. Idalba Yael Bassani, Donata Ravenna, and Bruno Gad Segre live in Haifa. Sergio Itzhak Minerbi, one of the very first leaders of this movement, also left Ruhama in 1956 and moved to Jerusalem. Like Vivanti, but from a different perspective, he had also reached the conclusion that the kibbutz, intended as the main means for immigrant absorption, was really unable to integrate the hundreds of thousands of Jews coming to Israel from Arab countries, due to the lack of interest and ability of the leaders of the kibbutz movements.⁷⁰

For all, it was the combination of the post-war circumstances, and of personal and political factors that pulled them to the movement, to Zionism and to the kibbutz, and that pushed some of them out of it and back to Italy, in different ways. The words of Idalba Yael Bassani, the

⁶⁷ Interview with De Benedetti.

⁶⁸ Eliahu Dobkin, “Ritorniamo al chalutzismo,” *Hechalutz* 5/5–6, 14 Chislev 5710 – 5 December 1949: 1–2.

⁶⁹ INSMLI, Fondo Valabrega, Irgun Olei Italia di Tel Aviv, Irgun Olé (sic) Italia, 17 June 1951.

⁷⁰ Interview with Minerbi.

youngest of “generation 1948,” well summarize the historical moment that they all lived through, and that each of them interpreted in different and, at times, diverging ways:

The history in itself is not exceptional; it was the times that were incredible. In 1945, I was 14 years old. And to breathe the political climate of Turin in those times, at that age, was something that marked my whole life; it was the postwar years and there was an atmosphere of enthusiasm, of freedom, and an incredible energy, and everything was possible.⁷¹

6 CONCLUSIONS

“Generation 1948” developed their own response to the momentous changes that invested Italian Jewry during and after the war, identifying practical Zionism and the kibbutz as the main, if not the only, way to save themselves and future generations of Italian Jews from losing their cultural identity and national specificity. In this way, they rebelled not only against their parents who had been on the whole unable to detect the impending danger before and during the war, and thus to protect their children and themselves from persecution; they also reacted to the idea that Italian Jews would remain (once again) detached from the social and cultural trends that were transforming world Jewry. For many of “generation 1948” the soldiers of the JB represented the first encounter with another way of being Jewish than the one they had experienced in Italy until then. The *shelichim* who had arrived in Italy from several religious and political streams and who were “hunting for [our] precious skins,” to quote Vivanti, represented yet another model that “generation 1948” saw in action and in some cases imitated, for example with the return at Tel Broshim of Aldo Eldad Melauri Adar and Corrado Israel De Benedetti as *shelichim* for *Hechalutz* between the late 1940s and the early 1950s. As we have seen, after their pioneering experience, not all of those who belonged to this group remained in the kibbutz or even in Israel. Regardless of the ultimate decision of each individual about his or her life, their collective experience succeeded in reconnecting Jews in Italy with the Zionist movement on a global scale. This was not enough to turn them into examples to be followed, though, and successive generations chose other paths to maintain this connection with Zionism and the State of Israel, and to

⁷¹ Interview with Bassani.

elaborate on the meaning of the Italian Jewish experience during the war. Still, the path of “generation 1948” remained crucial because it allowed for the initial connection to be made. New emissaries from Israel arrived in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s; these were *shelichim* of the Jewish Agency or, more unofficially, Israeli students at Italian universities. In various Jewish communities—among them Milan, Turin, and Florence—they became reference points for the generation of Jewish youth born after the war. Like their predecessors, the young adults who belonged to this group were also attracted to Israel and the kibbutz and to the legendary status of pioneering Zionism; however, unlike them, some had already had the opportunity to visit the country, whether for family reasons or with some organized trip. The new *shelichim* were active in Jewish communities and often tutored them: they taught Hebrew and/or gymnastics; they encouraged youngsters and families to visit Israel on holiday; in various instances, they accompanied the local Jews to university meetings and discussions where the Middle Eastern question was discussed, often with inflammatory tones.⁷²

In the meantime, the once marginal Jewish Italian scene had become populated with other local and international agents that further promoted exchanges between Italian Jews, *Italkim*, the State of Israel, and Jews from other countries, for example through the activities of two transnational Jewish youth movements, *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir* and *Bnei 'Akivah*. Here we cannot discuss in detail the political reasons behind their arrival and spread in Italy, the Zionist activism they promoted, their different political orientations, and their long-term impact among successive generations of Italian Jews. However, it is interesting to note, on the one hand, their inevitable rivalry with the *Federazione Giovani Ebrei d' Italia* (FGEI, Federation of Young Jews of Italy), a left-wing and non-Zionist organization established in Florence already in March 1948. This organization was meant to help Italian Jews establish connections also within their own country and not only within a transnational perspective of immigration and resettlement.⁷³ On the other hand, it is important to note the coinci-

⁷² Interviews by the author with Piero Avner Calò, Magan Michael, 22 July 2009; Daniele Ventura, Raanana, 22 July 2009; Lia Pacifici Millul, Haifa, 27 July 2009; Marina Ergas, Jerusalem 3 August 2009; and Liana E. Funaro (high school teacher at the Jewish Secondary School of Milan in 1960–1962), Florence, 10 May 2010.

⁷³ Giovanni Battista N. Paglianti, “Profilo dell’associazionismo giovanile ebraico,” in *E li insegnerai ai tuoi figli. Educazione ebraica in Italia dalle leggi razziali a oggi*, ed. Anna Maria Piusi (Florence: Giuntina, 1997), 201–209; idem, “Aspetti socio-antropologici dei movi-

dence between the emergence of these new protagonists in the first half of the 1950s and the gradual fading of the pioneering experience of *Hechalutz*, with smaller numbers at Tel Broshim, a less frequent publication, and no clear heir to their experience, as Vivanti, Valabrega, and De Benedetti had all foreseen.

In June 1967—responding to the much-feared threat that a new Holocaust would take place with the imminent annihilation of the State of Israel—110 young Jews from Northern and Central Italy left as volunteers to work in various kibbutzim, often arriving after the war's end for obvious logistical reasons. A table in the autonomous journal “The Volunteer/HaMitnadev” (which was published by the Jewish Agency) summarized the number of Jewish (and the few non-Jewish) volunteers that had flocked to Israel in the months of June–August 1967, as a total of 5043 individuals from various countries. The publication was obviously trying to capitalize on the arrival of so many new youngsters, building on their feeling of participating in an exceptional experience—a feeling that they all shared and that many of them still convey through their own accounts of those days. Indeed, the number of Jewish volunteers had grown to 7215 by October.⁷⁴

Regardless of who stayed and of who came back from Israel during the long summer of 1967, it is interesting to note that, twenty years after 1948, not much was left of the Italian specificity and marginality that “generation 1948” had reacted against. While still thinking and acting in several different ways on the crucial issues concerning contemporary Judaism, by this time young Italian Jews were now broadly in line with most Jewish youth in Europe and the world.

menti giovanili Hashomer Ha-tsair e Bnei Akiva,” in *Presto apprendere, tardi dimenticare: l'educazione ebraica nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Anna Maria Piussi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1998), 112–36. See also Schwarz, *After Mussolini*, 83–92.

⁷⁴ On “Generation 1967,” see Simoni, “Gli ebrei italiani e lo Stato di Israele,” esp. 57–66. See also *HaMitnadev / The Volunteer*, 1, Tammuz 5727 – July 1967, 8 for a comparative table of Jews volunteering divided by national provenance. The largest group came from the UK (1400) followed by South America (1200); South Africa (860); France (800); USA (500); Canada (300); Belgium (285); Switzerland, Austria, Spain, and Germany (262); Australia (150); Scandinavia (135); the Netherlands (90). See also “The Volunteers’ Convention,” *HaMitnadev / The Volunteer* 3, Tishri 5728 – October 1967: 1.

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