Ebrei Piemontesi: The Jews of Piedmont



Yeshiva University Museum

WITHDRAWN

Ebrei Piemontesi: The Jews of Piedmont



Yeshiva University Museum, New York

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Dedicated to the memory of our parents and older brother:

Giorgio Salvatore Sacerdote
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with the 1996 Yeshiva University Museum exhibition
Ebrei Piemontesi: The Jews of Piedmont

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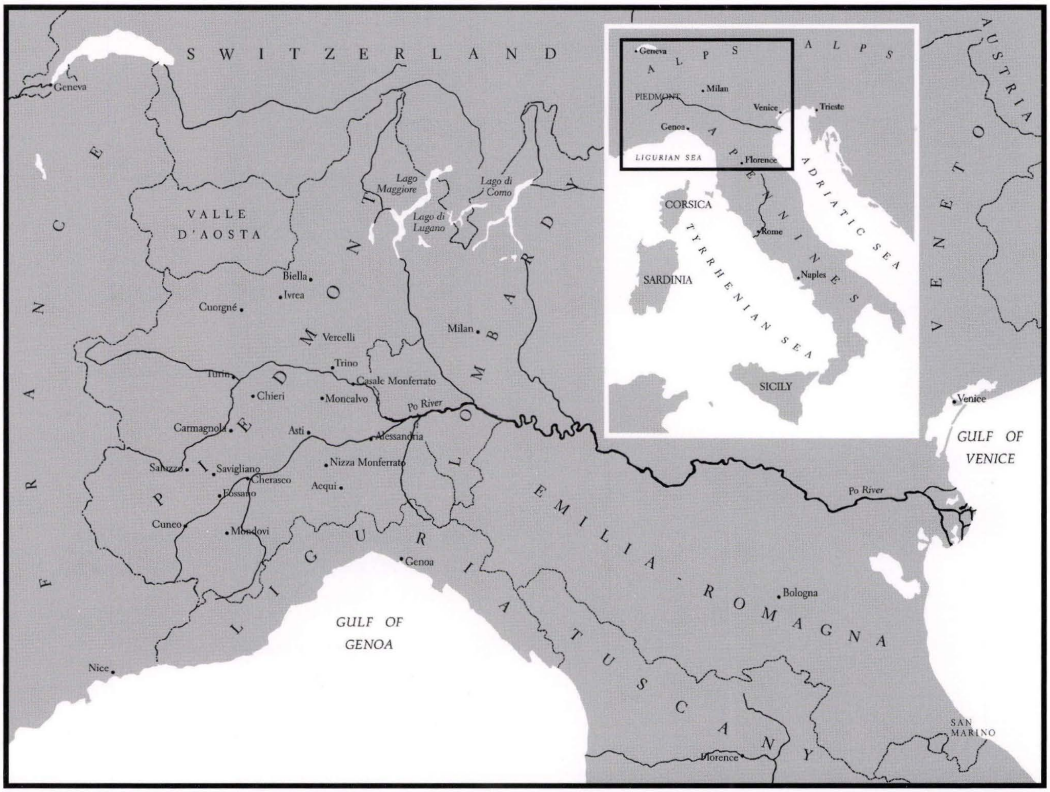
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Preface

In Yeshiva University Museum's thirty-five year history, there have been times when an exhibition catalogue was delayed for almost a year. But the appearance of this publication, twelve years after the original exhibition opened, can only be deemed a small miracle.

In October 1996, during the last few weeks of the exhibition's run, in what might be termed a photo finish, the Museum received a generous grant from Peter and George Sacerdote, which enabled us to photograph the objects in the show and assemble a catalogue. A respected university press accepted the completed manuscript, and we looked forward to its publication within the year.

However, a series of unexpected events kept delaying publication—events that were totally out of our control—so that it was not until 2007 that we took back the manuscript. We then proceeded with all possible speed to fulfill our obligations: to our mission as a museum dedicated to illuminating the Jewish past and present, and to the patient and forbearing donors, to whom we owe immeasurable gratitude.

The first major settlement of Jews in Piedmont began in the fourteenth century, when émigrés from France (and, to a lesser extent, from Germany) settled in the territories of the Duchy of Savoy, which extended into Piedmont, on the Italian side of the Alps. Some of these communities maintained their medieval French and Ashkenazic identity through their synagogue liturgy, their ceremonial objects, and what the late Primo Levi called a "curious Judeo-Piedmontese speech."

From 1500 onward the Piedmontese Jewish population, as well as its cultural mix, was enriched by the arrival of native Italian Jews (*italiani or lo'azim*), German Jews primarily from the Veneto, and, most significantly, Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had been expelled from Iberia. Others subsequently came from the Kingdom of Naples. The dukes of Savoy actively encouraged Jewish immigration into Piedmont, because of the economic advantage this populace provided. In the subsequent centuries the Jewish population was marked by many vicissitudes. Demographically, by the late nineteenth century many of the smaller, rural Jewish communities of Piedmont numbered no more than several hundred people. Larger communities, such as Turin, remained vibrant. World War II, however, further reduced their numbers.

In *The Periodic Table* Levi compared Piedmontese Jews to those gases that have been termed by chemists noble, inert, and rare. In an interesting parallel, these adjectives can also be said to describe the ceremonial objects that we gathered together for the exhibition. It is our hope that this catalogue, with its essays and images, has captured and preserved the significance of the *ebrei piemontesi* and their distinctive traditions, traditions that now "belong to the ages."

Sylvia Axelrod Herskowitz
Director, Yeshiva University Museum



Synagogue interior, Asti (1809, remodeled 1889). View to Ark.

The Jews of Piedmont from the Later Middle Ages to 1796

Geoffrey Symcox

Political Geography: Piedmont and the Savoyard State

Let us begin by defining the geographic area of our study. *Piedmont* (from the Latin, *Pedemontium*) denotes the zone of northwestern Italy bordering on France, centering around its present-day capital, Turin. It is a self-defined region comprising the upper basin of the river Po, encircled to the north and west by the Alps, to the south by the Ligurian Apennines, and to the east by the hill country of Monferrato, which merges imperceptibly into the plain of Lombardy. Throughout the period under study here, Piedmont—with the duchy of Savoy and the county of Nice—formed part of a group of territories ruled by the House of Savoy, which together we will call the Savoyard state.[1]

In the later Middle Ages, when our study begins, Piedmont was a region of small and middling cities, each ruling the countryside immediately around it. These cities had emerged as self-governing communes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but they remained relatively small, never growing into powerful city-states like those in Lombardy and Tuscany. Although Piedmont served as the conduit for trade between Lombardy and France across the Alpine passes, its towns—apart from Asti and Vercelli—never developed as important foci of trade and manufacturing; for the most part they functioned as markets and administrative centers for their agrarian hinterlands.[2] Piedmont's fundamentally rural character would profoundly affect the pattern of Jewish settlement. Instead of being grouped in large urban communities—apart from Turin—as they were elsewhere in Italy, the Jews in Piedmont would be scattered across the region's little market towns and semirural manufacturing centers.

Medieval Piedmont was a patchwork of competing urban centers, none of which proved strong enough to subdue its rivals and dominate the region. But in the thirteenth century the counts—later dukes—of Savoy began to extend their overlordship across the region, forging an incipient unity. From its dynastic cradle on the French side of the Alps, the House of Savoy slowly pieced together a domain in Piedmont, as one by one the cities and local feudatories became its vassals. This trend accelerated during the social and political upheavals that followed the great plague epidemics of the mid-fourteenth century, so that by the beginning of the fifteenth century the dukes of Savoy had come to control a group of territories on the Italian side of the Alps, which became known as the Principality of Piedmont.[3]

But despite its name, the Principality of Piedmont was by no means a centralized political unit. The councils of local notables that ruled the cities, and the nobility in their rural fiefs accepted the dukes of Savoy's overlordship, but they remained deeply attached to their traditional autonomy and contested the attempts to extend authority over them. The creation of an effective central administration by the dukes was thus destined to be a slow, tortuous process. In it the Jewish communities would come to play a significant—though sometimes unwilling—role. As we shall see, their fate and that of their rulers were closely intertwined, and would remain so until the French Revolution rent them asunder.

From the Origins to the Mid-16th Century

Jews had lived in Piedmont at least since the eleventh century, and by the later thirteenth century Jewish communities were to be found in a number of the regions' cities. In the later fourteenth century a fresh trickle of Jewish immigrants began to settle in Piedmont; judging by their toponymics, they came from across the Alps, from Savoy itself, and from eastern and southern France.[4] They first established themselves in Savigliano, an important rural market center and a seat of the Savoyard administration, and then in other towns. A few were physicians, but most seem to have been moneylenders who set up "loan-banks," advancing money in return for pledges. The dukes of

Savoy encouraged the spread of Jewish loan-banking as a source of capital to quicken economic development in their domains. Thus in 1424 we find the city council of Turin permitting a small group, consisting of Elya Alamandi, his family, and Amedeo de Foya, to settle in the city and operate a loan-bank.[5] This was the modest origin of what would later become Piedmont's most important Jewish community. Over the next decades other little groups, many of them apparently recent immigrants, appeared here and there in other towns. Besides loan-banking, they seem also to have traded in grain and agricultural produce.

The gradual establishment of Jewish communities was conducted in the teeth of opposition from the local city councils, and was only made possible through the active support of the Savoyard rulers.[6] In 1403 Duke Amadeus VIII (reigned 1397–1434) issued an edict placing the Jews under his special protection. He worked systematically to extend his authority over the towns and vassals in his territories. As part of this strategy, in 1430 he promulgated a comprehensive new law-code, or Statute, whose aim was to codify existing laws and procedures and to provide a single legal framework for all his domains. Among its multifarious provisions was a series of clauses pertaining to the Jewish communities, which defined their status and regulated their relations with the Christian population.[7] The inclusion of these clauses was by no means accidental, but was a deliberate act of ducal policy. The Statute affirmed that the Jews were under the dukes' protection. They formed a useful instrument for expanding ducal authority at the expense of local centers of power: by protecting the Jewish communities against the local town councils, the dukes could undermine the latter's autonomy.

The Statute declared that the Jews were not to be subjected to violence, "especially during their festivities and celebrations." Nor could they be converted by force, although special provisions dealt with Jews who converted voluntarily; converts were not to associate with their former coreligionists, and could not be denied property or inheritances. The Christian and Jewish populations were to remain separate. Jews were to wear badges identifying them as such; their Christian servants or nurses were not to live under the same roof with them; Jews were to occupy a specially designated area (a "Judeasymus") in the towns where they resided. Particular attention was devoted to the preservation of Christian orthodoxy. The Statute decreed that Jews must not own heretical books; they were not to blaspheme the Christian deity or saints; they could not handle or purchase Christian sacramental vessels except in the presence of reputable witnesses; during Easter week they were to remain indoors; their religious services were to be conducted unobtrusively; they were not permitted to build new synagogues. Finally, the statute expressly forbade Jews from practicing usury, but without defining it.

The Statute formed a kind of charter for Piedmont's Jews, and came to constitute the basis of all subsequent legislation dealing with the Jewish population down to the French Revolution. Its provisions—the intent to segregate, the issue of conversion, the concern for the purity of the Christian faith—recall similar legislation covering other Jewish communities in Italy at this time. But how far they were applied in practice is difficult to estimate. Frequent repetition of many of the regulations suggests that they were often flouted. Moreover, enforcement seems to have been selective. The ban on usury, for instance, was obviously open to a wide variety of interpretations, and seems to have been enforced only sporadically, for punitive purposes. Enforcement was also negotiable: again and again the dukes waived observance of the law in return for cash. So the legal position of Piedmont's Jews was fraught with ambiguity. Evidence suggests, for instance, that the requirement for them to wear badges and live in designated quarters was not observed. Such was the case—one among several—at Turin, where the Jews do not seem to have resided in a specific area despite repeated orders to do so.[8]

For a long time, in fact, residence of the Jews in Piedmont seems to have been largely unregulated, in contrast to the conditions prevailing elsewhere in Italy. As we shall see, ghettoization was not instituted until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[9]

Besides the relevant clauses in the Statute, the legal status of Piedmont's Jews was defined by another fundamental document: the *condotta*. This was a grant of privileges in the form of a contract between the Jewish community and the dukes. By the later fifteenth century it was becoming a regular institution, renewed at fixed intervals. It reaffirmed the special protection extended by the dukes to their Jewish subjects and detailed the activities in which they were permitted to engage. But it was also a fiscal device: for each renewal of the *condotta* a duke demanded a substantial payment.[10] And in addition to this fee, the dukes also levied a personal tax, the *censiva*, on the Jews in their domains.[11] Ducal protection came at a price, and the dukes fostered the Jewish community not merely as an instrument for developing the state's economy but also as a significant source of revenue.

The condition of Piedmont's Jews was always precarious, for it depended on the dukes' ability to shield them from the hostility of the local authorities. In the later fifteenth century, as ducal authority was weakened by a sequence of short reigns and regencies, the position of Piedmont's Jews deteriorated. The waning of ducal power made it possible for some town councils to persecute and even expel their Jewish communities. In some cases this enmity may have stemmed from the desire of local merchants to eliminate commercial rivals; in other cases it was a manifestation of lower-class hatred of Jewish moneylenders, whipped up by the preaching of the Mendicant friars. To combat what they denounced as Jewish usury the friars established Christian pawnshops, the *monti di pietà*, to undercut Jewish moneylending. But although these foundations spread rapidly through Central and Northern Italy, they did not take root in Piedmont until later. A *monte di pietà* was set up at Turin in 1519, but soon collapsed and was not revived until the end of the century.[12]

The deteriorating situation of Piedmont's Jews forms one small part of the torrent of persecution that descended on European Jewry at the close of the Middle Ages.[13] But the situation in Piedmont was aggravated by a specifically local factor: the half century of warfare that engulfed Italy following the French invasion of 1494. Because of its strategic position as the gateway to Italy, Piedmont became a battleground for the foreign powers contending for dominance in the peninsula. In 1536 the principality was invaded by French and Spanish armies and effectively partitioned between them. Law and order broke down. Duke Charles II (reigned 1504–1553) was reduced to ruling a small enclave of his former territories. Piedmont's Jewish communities were left to the caprice of foreign military governors. Foreign occupation lasted until 1559, when the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis restored Duke Emmanuel Philibert (reigned 1553–1580) to his ancestral domains. A formidable task of reconstruction awaited him.

Restoration and Growth, 1559–1679

As part of this work of reconstruction, in 1562 Emmanuel Philibert shifted his capital from Chambéry in the duchy of Savoy across the Alps to Turin; Piedmont, richer and more populous than the Savoyard lands west of the Alps, now became the state's center of gravity. From this moment Turin grew very rapidly, soon dwarfing the other Piedmontese towns. Correspondingly, its Jewish community became far and away the largest in the Savoyard territories. But expansion lay in the future; in the mid-sixteenth century Piedmont's Jewish community was far from flourishing. Decades of war and civil strife had reduced its numbers and undermined its cohesion. The return of peace and orderly administration now permitted recovery, which was actively seconded by the duke.

In 1551 Charles II had granted a *condotta* embodying a significant innovation: the appointment of a high government official as *conservatore* of the Jewish community, whose function was to mediate its relations with the Christian population and the government.[14] Emmanuel Philibert maintained this new institution and built upon it. The new *condotta* he granted in 1565 constituted another important innovation, by endowing the Jewish community with a new organizational structure, the *università*, destined to last throughout the Old Regime.[15] This new institution—which probably gave legal recognition to a system of self-government already in existence—endowed the Jewish community with juridical, fiscal, and administrative autonomy. The *università* was headed by three *eletti*, who were to be elected from among the leading bankers, each from a different local community. (How they were chosen is not clear.) The *eletti* were responsible for maintaining order in the community, for apportioning taxation—always a contentious issue—and for admitting new members. The duke however kept economic authority in his own hands. He reserved the right to decide the number and location of Jewish loan-banks within his territories and to regulate the rate of interest they could charge.

Emmanuel Philibert's outlook was that of a mercantilist prince, willing to accord toleration in return for economic gain. Like his predecessors, he regarded the Jews as an economic asset and therefore encouraged them to immigrate into the Savoyard state. In 1569 he invited the Jews recently expelled from the Papal territories of Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin to settle in his domains, and four years later issued a similar invitation to Jews and Marranos from Iberia and the Ottoman Empire. He hoped in this way to attract wealthy bankers and merchants with far-flung contacts in the Levant, with the particular aim of expanding traffic through his port of Nice-Villefranche.[16] In 1572 he issued a special *condotta* for these new immigrants, specifically granting immunity from prosecution to former converts who had relapsed from Christianity and guaranteeing the safety of the Jews and any foreign merchants, Moorish, Persian, Turkish, or Armenian, who might come to trade with them.[17] The duke was careful to bolster this grant of privileges with references to similar decrees by popes Paul III and Julius III and various Italian princes, but it nonetheless incurred the ire of Pope Gregory XIII and Philip II of Spain, both deeply hostile to any sign of toleration for Iberian Jews and Marranos.[18] To appease them Emmanuel Philibert took refuge in ambiguity. He ordered the new immigrants to leave his territories, but then failed to enforce the order. Shortly afterward he issued another set of privileges permitting the Marranos to remain.[19]

The arrival of these immigrants started an influx of Jewish immigrants from the Levant, North Africa, and other parts of Europe, which would continue through the next century.[20] It altered the composition of Piedmont's Jewish community and set up tensions within it. The ascendancy of the original elite of loan-bankers was undercut by the growing presence of wealthy merchants and manufacturers, and by a swelling population of artisans and poor laborers. Many of the new arrivals did not become members of the *università*, but formed a transient population that—it was alleged—failed to pay its share of taxes. These changes were reflected in the structure of the *università*: the authority to apportion taxation passed from the original *eletti* of loan-bankers to an assembly of delegates.[21] Division was exacerbated by the dukes' granting of special privileges to favored individuals, whom they freed from all obligations to the *università*.[22] As time passed the community became increasingly factionalized, with older members pitted against new arrivals, rich against poor. So, for example, in 1642 we find the leaders of the *università* complaining to the authorities about various "ebrei vagabondi e di mala vita" who had recently arrived in Turin. Such complaints were constantly repeated; a century later the *università* was still seeking to have certain Jews it defined as "vagabonds"

banished from the state.[23] Within the community, public order was a problem: we know of recurring instances of homicide and brawling, of theft and fraud. Gambling too was rife.[24]

The relationship between the *università* and the dukes now became institutionalized through the regular renewal of the *condotta*, which had evolved into a lengthy and comprehensive document. Emmanuel Philibert's *condotta* of 1576 formed the basis for the one issued by his son Charles Emmanuel I in 1603, which in turn became the standard form followed for most of the next century.[25] But while the *condotta* assured the legal and political stability of the Jewish community, it could not guarantee prosperity in a fast-deteriorating economic climate. Like the rest of Italy, Piedmont suffered from a severe agricultural and commercial depression that began in the early seventeenth century and reached its nadir at midcentury, aggravated by outbreaks of plague, notably that of 1630, and by constant warfare to 1659. In 1639–40 Turin was besieged and sacked; its Jewish community suffered severely.[26] Piedmont's towns and villages, beset by these disasters and by crushing taxation, accumulated a mountain of debt they were unable to pay. Much of it was owed to Jewish bankers, who consequently were unable to meet their financial obligations or pay their taxes.[27] The tensions brought on by war, pestilence, and economic depression seem to have heightened anti-Semitic feelings among the population. The government again and again reissued its order forbidding violence against the Jews; significantly, the order issued in 1653 noted that the violence was not solely the work of youths and ne'er-do-wells but also of adults and individuals of standing.[28]

The Era of the Ghettoes, 1679–1796

In 1679 Turin's Jews were ordered to take up residence in a district of the city specially set aside for them. This marked the first stage in a process of ghettoization that would later extend to the rest of the state. The second stage came after 1713, when the other Jewish communities in Piedmont were ghettoized one by one. Finally, in 1733, the last open community of significance in the Savoyard state, that of Nice, was confined to a ghetto, completing the process.

It would be tempting to regard this movement as the consequence of a wave of anti-Semitism, attributable perhaps to social tensions sharpened by the economic depression. There is some evidence for such a hardening of attitudes. The government was more alert than before to prevent the mingling of Christian and Jewish populations: in 1667 Jewish doctors were forbidden to treat Christian patients, and in 1673 Jews were no longer permitted to keep Christian nurses and servants in their households, as had been customary for the past century. This order was enforced through the vigilance of a powerful religious brotherhood, the ubiquitous Compagnia di San Paolo.[29] We may perhaps discern another sign of rising tension in the apparent increase of conversions to Christianity after midcentury.[30] These conversions were encouraged by the clergy, who as ever played a leading part in fomenting tension and who pressed the Savoyard rulers to segregate the Jewish population, in conformity with the practice in the rest of Italy.[31] But it would probably be incorrect to attribute the ghettoization of Piedmont's Jews to clerical pressure, as has been argued; the issue is rather more complex.[32]

First we must bear in mind that the Piedmontese Church considered the Jews less of a danger than the local Protestant minority, the Waldensians, who occupied an enclave in the Alps above Turin.[33] Alone among Italian rulers, the Savoyard dukes had to contend with a Protestant presence inside their borders. They regarded the Waldensians as a far more serious threat than the Jews, because they were more numerous and concentrated in one place, rather than being dispersed in little groups. The Waldensians could also call upon support from the Protestant powers of Europe; the Jews had no such external protectors. In 1561, 1655,

and again in 1686 the dukes tried unsuccessfully to destroy their Protestant subjects by military force. Piedmont's Jews, by contrast, were never subjected to military repression. In between these brutal episodes the dukes dispatched Catholic missionaries into the Waldensians' territory and sponsored other efforts to convert them. Prominent among the latter was the work of the Ospizio dei Catecumeni at Turin, established in 1652 as an offshoot of a pious confraternity founded by Ignatius Loyola at Rome in 1540 for the purpose of evangelizing non-Catholics. Elsewhere in Italy its efforts were directed at the Jews, but in Piedmont its primary target was the Protestants.[34]

Hostility to the Jews in Piedmont was thus partially eclipsed by hatred of the Waldensians. Moreover, the dukes' mercantilist policies were now promoting increased symbiosis between the Jewish community and the state. The leading members of the community by now functioned almost as "court Jews," lending money to the crown, purveying luxury goods and jewels to the court, farming state taxes, supplying the troops, and even conducting secret missions for the dukes.[35] Such evidence does not suggest that ghettoization was the result of mounting tension between the Savoyard rulers and the Jewish community.

The principal cause of ghettoization is probably to be found in the administrative reforms undertaken by successive Savoyard rulers at this time, with the aim of constructing a centralized, absolutist state. To this end they set out to impose a uniform administrative structure on all the divergent social groups and regional entities in their domains.[36] The order for Turin's Jews to reside in a ghetto was part of this process. It was issued by the Duchess-Regent Maria Giovanna Battista (regent 1675–1684) in 1679 as part of her administrative reorganization of the capital city, following the addition of a new residential district a few years earlier.[37] She intended to make Turin a model of the "well-administered city" beloved by absolutist sovereigns, with each group of the population occupying a specific place in its urban fabric. So she decreed that the Jews were to reside in one block of the new extension; at the same time she ordered the construction nearby of a vast new poorhouse to house the city's paupers, a hospital for the sick and aged, and a hostel for Protestant converts. In this way the extraneous elements in the city's population were to be categorized, isolated, and brought under control.

Turin's Jews moved into the new ghetto at the end of September 1680.[38] The enclosure occupied a single city block in Turin's gridiron plan. The buildings in which the Jews lived were the property of the city poorhouse, and the rent they paid provided much of its income. Over the next few years shops were built in the ghetto, and a kosher butcher was added.[39] There was also a tavern.[40] Until the arrival of the French revolutionary armies over a century later, Turin's Jews would occupy this restricted space. With the passage of time its population grew steadily: the 772 souls in 1702 doubled by the end of the century.[41] Despite the addition of another small city block to the original *ghetto vecchio*, demographic expansion meant that by the later eighteenth century the Jewish quarter was uncomfortably crowded. Shortage of space could be overcome by adding extra stories to existing houses, but this was at best a partial solution.[42] Wealthy Jews with connections at court did not have to suffer in these cramped conditions, however; they could obtain permission to live outside, with their own places of worship in their dwellings.[43]

We must remember that the order of 1679 affected only the Jews in the capital city, who numbered less than a quarter of Piedmont's total Jewish population. The other communities were not confined until a generation later, when Duke (later King) Victor Amadeus II (reigned 1684–1730) embarked on a renewed program of reforms following the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. As before ghettoization should be seen as one component in a series of reforms intended to reduce all the Savoyard territories to administrative uniformity. But another motive

may also have played a part. Victor Amadeus II was involved at the time in a bitter dispute with the Papacy, and the restrictions he placed on Piedmont's Jews may have been intended to score points in this conflict by showing off his orthodoxy.[44] The ghettoization that ensued was a gradual, piecemeal process spanning the years from 1713 to 1731. By the time it was complete, no fewer than eighteen ghettos were scattered across Piedmont. The orders to establish ghettos frequently met with opposition from town councils, since they had to bear the cost of leasing or constructing a suitable enclosed space to house their Jewish communities. And in small towns and villages where only a handful of Jews lived, ghettoization was not deemed practical. There the Jews still lived free from formal restrictions.[45]

In 1707, during the War of the Spanish Succession, Victor Amadeus II occupied the neighboring province of Monferrato and the city of Alessandria. Their Jewish populations included two substantial communities in Casale Monferrato and in Alessandria itself. The juridical position these communities had enjoyed under their former rulers, the Gonzaga dukes of Mantua and the Spanish crown, differed markedly from that of Piedmont's Jews.[46] The Jews of Monferrato formed a separate *università*, which Victor Amadeus II set out to merge with the Jews of his own state. His desire to integrate the two communities formed the guiding principle behind the sections that dealt with the Jews in the new law-code he issued in 1723 and reissued in 1729.

The new law-code, the Regie Costituzioni, formed a central element in Victor Amadeus's program of absolutist reforms, aimed at standardizing legal procedure throughout the state. To this end its provisions concerning the Jews attempted to bring the communities of Monferrato into line with those of Piedmont. This it did not fully achieve; important differences remained. Its ultimate effect, however, was a distinct worsening in the legal and social positions of both communities. This deterioration can perhaps be viewed in the broader perspective of a rise in popular anti-Semitism, encouraged by the clergy, which led to the forced baptisms of a number of Jewish children.[47] The Regie Costituzioni affected the position of the Jews in several significant ways. They were now required to wear distinguishing badges at all times; the original provision in the Statute of 1430 was now enforced. The office of *conservatore*, which had acted as a buffer protecting the Jewish community, was abolished, placing it under the jurisdiction of the state courts, which were less sympathetic to its interests. The legal loopholes that had allowed Jews a limited measure of landownership were closed, and they were expressly barred from owning real property. And whereas the 1723 law-code had merely suggested that ghettoization be undertaken where practicable, the 1729 version explicitly required it.[48]

Ghettoization and the tighter juridical regime imposed by the Regie Costituzioni determined the social and political environment in which Piedmont's Jews would live during the Age of Enlightenment. Its radiance did not, however, illuminate their ghettos. Instead, a traditional way of life was maintained there under increasingly bleak conditions, marked by internal tensions and external pressures. The steady trickle of conversions during this period may be interpreted as an indicator of social malaise. The overwhelming predominance of young males among the converts suggests that they were seeking to escape familial restrictions; in some cases conversion was the result of quarrels over the division of the family inheritance.[49] A further sign of internal tension was the recurring conflict over the apportionment of taxes by the *università*. A new system of assessment was introduced in 1708, based on capital assets. Its purpose was to reduce fraud, but it proved ineffective; evasion remained rampant despite subsequent efforts to improve the system.[50]

The tax reform of 1708 had specifically exempted the poor who were supported by charity from the community,

suggesting that the Jewish population was now clearly stratified along economic lines. The old elite of loan-bankers had been eclipsed by a new elite of manufacturers and merchants, who dealt in grain, silk, and textiles and contracted with the state to collect taxes or provision the army. As before the government encouraged Jewish entrepreneurs to settle in the state, further building up this economic elite.[51] The elite enjoyed a comfortable, even opulent, way of life. Regulations tried—with little apparent success—to curb the luxury of banquets and celebrations, to limit the amount of jewelry that could be worn, and to prohibit gambling.[52] Such ostentation was, however, beyond the means of most of the Jewish population, who lived as petty craftsmen and traders, many in second-hand goods. They eked out a marginal existence and sank into poverty when times were bad.[53] A number were reduced to beggary, especially foreign Jews who passed through Piedmont, making a living as best they could.[54]

Tensions persisted between the Jewish community and the Christian population. Piedmont's predominantly agrarian economy, beset by recurrent cycles of depression, offered only limited possibilities for profit. Jewish artisans and merchants were pitted against their Catholic counterparts, who sought to restrict their ability to trade or practice their craft. Past privileges guaranteeing the Jews freedom to engage in any trade were hard to enforce against the tenacious opposition of the guilds, determined to minimize Jewish competition. Thus in 1738—a year of severe economic crisis—the government had to remind the saddlers' and tailors' guilds that they could not exclude Jews from their respective crafts.[55] Tailoring was of particular importance, since many Jews, male and female, made their living by this trade. Again and again we can find evidence of the Jewish *università* having appealed to the crown to uphold its freedom to practice any trade.[56] The frequent repetition of these appeals suggests that the privileges were not being honored.

But firm government control always prevented the tension between Jews and Christians from escalating—apart from a few isolated instances—beyond economic rivalry into outright violence. Since the fifteenth century the crown had guaranteed the Piedmontese Jews' juridical and political status, in return for the fiscal and economic benefits they brought it. This meant that throughout the Old Regime the fate of Piedmont's Jewish community had been closely intertwined with that of the Savoyard dynasty. By overthrowing the Old Regime, the French Revolution would create an entirely new situation for Piedmont's Jews. When Napoleon Bonaparte burst into Piedmont in the spring of 1796 at the head of a victorious French army, shattering the Savoyard state and humbling its ruling dynasty, he destroyed the juridical and political foundation that had sustained the Jewish community up to that moment. The royal privileges that had defined its position as a separate community were swept away to be replaced by an entirely new concept, the equality of all citizens, enshrined in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" of 1789. The next year, as the French Revolution consolidated its hold in Piedmont, the walls of the ghettos came down, and the Jews were declared to be citizens with full civil rights. They were no longer a separate *università* dependent on the privileges accorded them by the monarch, but citizens called upon to participate in the new political order. A new era was dawning for them, full of promise yet fraught with danger and uncertainty.

Notes

1. I use the terms *Savoyard dynasty* and *House of Savoy* interchangeably to designate the ruling family. From 1720 the Savoyard rulers were known as kings of Sardinia, after acquiring that island kingdom. In 1861 they became rulers of the new kingdom of Italy.

2. See the population figures for some Piedmontese towns in the later Middle Ages, in Karl Julius Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, vol. 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1937–61), pp. 250ff. Background in Anna Maria Nada Patrone, *Il medioevo in Piemonte* (Turin: UTET, 1986).

3. On the formation of the Savoyard state and its different regions, see Geoffrey W. Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II: Absolutism in the Savoyard State 1675–1730* (London: Thames & Hudson; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), chapters 1 and 2.

4. See Renata Segre, ed., "Introduction," in *The Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986), pp. ixff.

5. "Extract from the Turin *Ordinati*" (record of the council meetings), June 15 and 17, 1424, in Renata Segre, ed., *The Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986), pp. 44–46. Cf. Luigi Cibrario, *Storia di Torino* (Turin: Alessandro Fontana, 1846), vol. 1, p. 392.

6. For example, the decree of August 27, 1423; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, p. 38.

7. Relevant clauses in Giovanni Battista Borelli, ed., *Editti antichi, e nuovi de' sovrani prencipi della Real Casa di Savoia* (Turin: Bartolomeo Zappata, 1681), pp. 1223–26.

8. In 1436 the Torinese Jews were required to reside "in aliquo angulo et cancello civitatis"; the order was repeated in 1447 and 1457; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, pp. 115, 203, 281. For a general overview, see Mario D. Anfossi, *Gli ebrei in Piemonte: Loro condizioni giuridico-sociali dal 1430 all'emancipazione* (Turin: G. Anfossi, 1914).

9. On ghettoization in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, see Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1963), chapters 5 and 6.

10. See the example, dated July 1, 1465, in Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, pp. 306–08, 311–12, which pardoned the Piedmontese Jews for unspecified offenses and reconfirmed their status for an additional three years, in return for a payment of 6,500 florins. In the next year (on March 14, 1466) it was extended to cover the Jews in the other Savoyard territories, for a further payment of 1,000 florins.

11. It seems to have been levied annually; a document from October 1458 states that it had been paid twice in the previous year and that the next payment was due the following Easter. Ibid., p. 285.

12. The first *monte di pietà* was set up at Perugia in 1462. On the one at Turin, see Mario Abrate, *L'Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino 1563–1963: IV centenario*, vol. 1 (Turin: Istituto Bancario San Paolo, 1963–64), pp. 39ff.

13. Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985), chapter 1.

14. May 31, 1551. Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, pp. 385–91. In 1553 Emmanuel Philibert reconfirmed this privilege (for 500 *scudi*); ibid., p. xlix. Cf. also Marcantonio Bobba (*conservatore generale*) to Emmanuel Philibert, October 6, 1553, in ibid., pp. 399–400. The duke selected one of three candidates nominated by the leaders of the Jewish community for the post of *conservatore*.

15. November 28, 1565; full text in Felice A. Duboin and Camillo Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine di materia delle leggi . . . emanati negli Stati sardi sino all'8 dicembre 1798*, vol. 2 (Turin: Enrico Mussano, 1818–69), pp. 291–98; summary in Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, pp. 448–53. The closest equivalent to the term *università* would be, in English, *guild*.

16. Salvatore Foa, "Banchi e banchieri ebrei nel Piemonte dei secoli scorsi," in *Rivista mensile di Israel* (1955); Foa, *La politica economica di Casa Savoia verso gli ebrei dal secolo XVI alla rivoluzione francese: Il portofranco di Villafranca (Nizza)* (supplement to *Rivista mensile di Israel*, Rome, 1962). Nice by then had the second-largest Jewish community in the Savoyard state.

17. It is addressed to "tutta la natione hebrea, e d'essa stirpe così italiani, todeschi, spagnuoli, portughesi, di Levante, Barbaria, di Soria," September 4, 1572; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, pp. 478–85.

18. See the correspondence from May 1573 onward in ibid., pp. 506ff.

19. Order expelling the Marranos, November 27, 1573, and the grant of privileges to them, February 27, 1574; in ibid., pp. 529, 539.

20. On seventeenth-century Sephardic immigration, particularly to Nice, see Israel, *European Jewry*, pp. 157–58.

21. Thus on December 8, 1666, the *conservatore generale* ordered the delegates to meet in Turin to decide the apportionment of taxes within the *università*; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1157.

22. For a typical example, see the privilege granted to Fortunio Lattes, a soapmaker, November 14, 1603; ibid., p. 855.

23. "Inibizione a qualunque Ebreo di introdursi ad abitare nella presente Città senza presentarsi agli Eletti, Banchieri, e Rabbini d'essa," January 26, 1642, 1647, and 1653, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 363–64, 376. Also "Memoriale a capi" (by the *università*), May 24, 1743, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, p. 431.

24. See the various incidents in Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, passim.

25. Complete text (in fifty-three sections), December 15, 1603, in Borelli, *Editti antichi*, pp. 1228–34; summary in Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, pp. 856–62, with cross-references to the *condotta* of 1576.

26. On the plague, see Giovanni Francesco Fiocchetto, *Trattato della peste o sia contagio di Torino dell'anno 1630* (Turin: Guglielmo Tisma, 1631). The author was the chief medical officer of Turin at the time. On the effects of the sack of Turin, see the order by Duchess-Regent Cristina of October 24, 1640, that remitted taxes and granted a moratorium on the Jews' payment of their debts; in Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1079.

27. For example, the loan agreement between the city of Carmagnola and Jacob Laude, October–November 1647; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1094; petition from the Università degli Ebrei, June 18, 1631, for remission of taxes; ibid., p. 1053; "Memoriale a capi" (by the *università*), July 15, 1652, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 367–70.

28. See the edict of November 21, 1653, which reiterates earlier ones, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, p. 377, noting that violence was committed "non solo da garzoni, e persone vagabonde, ma ancora da persone d'età, e di qualche condizione."

29. The Turin Senate's ratification of the *condotta* (November 23, 1667) included the ban on Jewish physicians; Borelli, *Editti antichi*, p. 1257. In 1582 Jews were expressly permitted to keep Christian servants, but an order of July 2, 1673, withdrew this permission; Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 319, 384. Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1169, reprints the duke's instruction to the Compagnia di San Paolo (July 13, 1673).

30. Ibid., pp. 1134ff., records many more conversions after 1655; this may, however, merely be the result of more precise reporting.

31. For example, the declaration by the archbishop of Turin, November 8, 1619, condemning "la troppa famigliarità, conversazione e prattica de'Christiani con gl'Hebrei," in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, p. 335; and the order to the inquisitor of Vercelli to stop the Jews from employing Christians to extinguish synagogue lights; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1021.

32. See, for instance, Foa, *Politica economica*, pp. 61–62.

33. They originated as the followers of Peter Waldo of Lyons in the twelfth century and affiliated with the Genevan Reformation in the 1530s. For general information, see A. Armand-Hugon and E. Rivoire, *Storia dei Valdesi* (Turin: Claudiana, 1974–80). Cf. Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II*, chapter 6.

34. Luciano Allegra, "L'Ospizio dei Catecumeni a Torino," *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 88, no. 2 (1990), shows that the total of its converts from Protestantism far outnumbered those from Judaism.

35. These examples (from the 1650s to the 1670s) are taken from Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, passim. On the phenomenon of the court Jew, see Vivian B. Mann and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage and Power, 1600–1800* (Munich and New York: Prestel: 1996).

36. On the reforms, see Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II*, chapters 9 and 14.

37. Edict of August 2, 1679, in Borelli, *Editti antichi*, p. 1259. As Segre notes, the edict was "part of a general plan of urban redistricting" ("Introduction," vol. 1, p. lxxvi). A ghetto had been planned as part of the first extension added to the city in 1619; in 1621 the Jews were ordered to move into it, but the order was never enforced. See the exemption of September 21, 1621, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, p. 336. On the expansion of Turin at this time, see Martha Pollak, *Turin, 1564–1680: Urban Design, Military Culture, and the Creation of the Absolutist Capital* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), chapters 6 and 7.

38. Report of the Papal Nuncio, October 2, 1680; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1189.

39. Petition for kosher butcher, September 2, 1683; building of shops, 1684, 1685, 1687; ibid., pp. 1204, 1208, 1212–13.

40. See the pledge by two Jews to stop drinking there, August 17, 1738; ibid., vol. 3, p. 1596.

41. The "Stato delle anime" (May 1702) in Archivio di Stato, Turin, Sezione Corte, *Provincia di Torino, mazzo* 5, no. 1, gives 752 persons in the ghetto, divided into 144 households, with 20 people residing outside. Figures for 1773 are in the same series, *mazzo* 2 *d'addizione*, no. 6. By then the Jewish population of Piedmont totaled 5,667; Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, vol. 3, p. 264. In 1798 Turin's Jewish population was 1,497; Segre, "Introduction."

42. "Memoriale a capi" (by the *università*), July 6–11, 1766, asked permission to acquire a hostel outside the city for traveling Jews, because of overcrowding (the request was refused). On adding extra stories to houses in the ghetto, see "Regie patenti," August 29, 1767; Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 447–48; vol. 3, p. 1565.

43. An example is Moyse Calvo, an important tax farmer, May 20, 1688; Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, p. 1215.

44. Luciano Allegra, "L'antisemitismo come risorsa politica: Battesimi forzati e ghetti nel Piemonte del '700," *Quaderni storici*, no. 84, anno 28, no. 3 (December 1993), p. 887. This article is reprinted as chapter 1 in Allegra, *Identità in bilico: Il ghetto ebraico di Torino nel Settecento* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1996).

45. The process can be followed through the various orders in Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 2, pp. 1334ff. The first of the later ghettos was at Fossano, in 1713; the last were those of Racconigi, Cuorgnè, Canelli, Moncalvo, Acqui, and Casale Monferrato, in 1731. The Jews of Nice were ghettoized in 1733.

46. Background in Salvatore Foa, *Gli ebrei nel Monferrato nei secoli XVI e XVII* (1914; reprint Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1965). The Jews of Alessandria were not subjects of the Gonzaga dukes; they lived in the duchy of Milan under a special dispensation granted by the Spanish crown in the sixteenth century.

47. Allegra, "L'antisemitismo come risorsa politica," pp. 888ff., notes that as long as Victor Amadeus II was at odds with the Papacy, his officials disallowed these forced baptisms. Once the dispute was settled, they assumed a hands-off attitude.

48. Ibid., p. 883. On the impact of the Regie Costituzioni, see also Foa, *Politica economica*, p. 101; and Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, pp. lxxxviiff. Mario Viora, *Le costituzioni piemontesi (1723, 1729, 1770). I. Storia interna della compilazione* (Turin: Bocca, 1928), pp. 158–59, notes the continuity between these codes and the Statute of 1430.

49. Luciano Allegra, "Modelli di conversione," *Quaderni storici*, no. 78, anno 26, no. 3 (December 1991), pp. 903–04; and Allegra, *Identità in bilico*, chapter 3. Using the records of the Ospizio dei Catecumeni, he notes that whereas Protestant conversions were evenly divided between males and females, there were almost twice as many male Jewish converts as female.

50. "Regole," September 13, 1708, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 457–65. Taxes were to be paid into a common fund or *casella*. New rules were promulgated in 1730, 1764, and 1774; Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 468ff.

51. For example, the royal *biglietto*, April 23, 1742, in favor of Moyse d'Acosta, a manufacturer of silk and cloth of gold; ibid., pp. 428–29.

52. Regulations of February 17, 1751, and April 9, 1764; ibid., pp. 486–88, 495–500.

53. The renewal of the *condotta*, July 6, 1766, granted a reduction in the taxes paid by the *università*, in view of the economic crisis; see Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 3, p. 1839.

54. An order of October 20, 1766, expelled several foreign Jewish families (from Metz, Amsterdam, and Frankfurt) for begging; ibid., p. 1842.

55. Royal reply to petition by saddlers, September 23, 1738; ibid., p. 1598. Royal *biglietto* to tailors' guild, May 15, 1738, in Archivio Storico del Comune di Torino, *Carte sciolte*, no. 3857. There was a similar lengthy dispute with the goldsmiths' guild.

56. "Memoriale a capi" (by the *università*), May 24, 1743, and August 18–23, 1751, requesting enforcement of the freedom to practice a trade as stated in the 1603 *condotta*. Also July 6–11, 1766, in Duboin and Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine*, vol. 2, pp. 429–35, 438, 444–46.



Detail of the Ark (1783) in the synagogue of Cuneo.

Piedmont Judaism after Emancipation

Gadi Luzzatto Voghera
Translated by Renée Tannenbaum

In 1908 Guglielmo Lattes published in Casale Monferrato a book of Hebrew readings for children entitled *Cuore d'Israele* (*The Heart of Israel*), clearly inspired by the contemporaneous *Cuore* (*Heart*) by Edmondo De Amicis. Only sixty years had passed since the emancipation of Piedmont Judaism, and the educational course suggested by Lattes reveals with extreme clarity what should have been the cornerstones of good upbringing for the young Piedmontese and Italian Jews preparing to enter into civil life: an attachment to their fathers' tradition (perhaps lightened and "modernized" in some of its parts) and loyalty to the homeland, specifically identified with the Savoy monarchy, the first in Italy to declare March 29, 1848, the end of the ghetto regime. The first chapter, "Vigilia del capo d'anno e venti settembre" ("New Year's Eve and the Eve of September 20"), synthesizes these two guiding concepts in its title; in it are concentrated what should represent the two first moments in the year of a Jewish boy: the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and September 20, the anniversary of the entrance of the *bersaglieri* (Italian plume-bearing infantry) into Rome (1870) and the moment of Italy's unification. The same idea continues through the pages of *Cuore d'Israele* in the stories, as well as in the structure of the book itself. The children around whom the stories revolve are called Elia and Vittorio, their names representing the essence of Lattes's message: the first has a classic Jewish name, the second bears the name of the king of Italy. The distinguished characters that are presented to the young reader as an example to follow and honor are chosen invariably from those Jews who in the most recent past sustained a particular adherence to Jewish tradition, along with a determined commitment to the civil and political life of their Italian homeland. Thus are recalled the names of Luigi Luzzatti (minister on several occasions), Tullo Massarani (senator of the kingdom and patriot conspirator during the Risorgimento), Isaac Artom (secretary to Camillo Cavour), and many others.

The events that had marked the days of the emancipation are remembered with these words:

In Piedmont the emancipation of the Jews was sought by the best of the intellectuals and by the people of the nation, by the public cry of "libertà e Italia" *[freedom and Italy]. In other cities the people tore down the ghetto walls with tremendous joy, crying: "Long live our Jewish brothers!" And, through the tears, Jews and Christians kissed through the streets. Levi, author of* Profeta (The Prophet)*, stirred the people in Turin when speaking of the emancipation of the Jews. Then, together with Robert D'Azeglio, the Evangelical minister Bert, and Chief Rabbi Cantoni, he went before Carlo Alberto to obtain the emancipation decree for the Piedmont Jews. Levi invited those of his religion to join the liberation ranks of Italy. In great numbers they responded to his call.*[1]

In 1848, however, it did not happen exactly in that way, although it is significant that in the early 1900s patriotic rhetoric played an important role in the education of Piedmontese Jewish youth. The emancipation process of Piedmont Jews was a long and troubled one, and even on the eve of Carlo Alberto's decree from the Voghera military encampment, there was resistance throughout the region at the most varied levels. The majority of bishops were opposed to equalizing the Jews as citizens for all intents and purposes, and a certain aversion to the Jews remained on all social levels. In the region of Piedmont, as in other parts of the Italian peninsula, this often took on the characteristics of open anti-Semitism.

On the other hand, in numerous Piedmontese Jewish communities an educational program had begun some time earlier that was intended to facilitate the Jewish people's entrance into bourgeois and modern liberal society. Following the revolutionary events of the end of the eighteenth century, there was a popular belief that social separation sooner or later would be abolished completely,

and that the Jews too would be able to integrate; but in order to do so, reeducation and rehabilitation were necessary to make a clean sweep once and for all of the "ghetto psychology" and its influences. The new generations were brought up to love their country and their fellow citizens, and above all were educated and directed toward professions that were as far as possible from the ghetto economy, that is, moneylending and selling objects and used clothing. In other words, they were educated as model citizens, who remained Jewish only in an increasingly superficial way with respect to their traditions and who continued to lose even the memory of the cornerstones of Jewish culture, the first being the Hebrew language. In Turin as early as 1817 there was a "Charity Administration" that proposed to "aid the suffering poor and . . . to incite the poor children to learn crafts and trades with weekly reconnaissance . . . to prevent the children of the needy from falling prey to idleness or vice for lack of sustenance and supervision."[2] Later in the Savoy capital, in 1832, there was the institution of a "brotherhood for the relief of the indigent puerpera" and then, in 1853, the birth of the "society for the encouragement of learning crafts and trades."[3]

Despite the scarcity of documents directly related to the life of these individual institutions, it is possible to compile a list of the most important ones that were in operation in the period around 1848 and in the years of the so-called second emancipation. In Turin, besides the three aforementioned institutions, there was the Colonna and Finzi College, which shaped a good part of Jewish youth from 1854 onward, functioning for a few years also as a senior institute of rabbinical studies under the direction of Lelio Cantoni. Vercelli was home to Foa College—born out of a last wish expressed in the will of the wealthy banker Elia Emanuela Foa—which offered classes of every kind and level.[4] In Asti there was the Clava Religious Institute, an elementary school that served the entire basin of small communities of the Langhe and Monferrato.[5] And similar charity and educational institutions operated in Casale Monferrato, Acqui Terme, Cuneo, and Saluzzo.

Besides the question of education—an element that remained central in the formation of the newly emancipated Jewish citizen of Piedmont—the reorganization of Piedmontese communities affected numerous other factors. Among these, the one that seems to me to be most significant, for the consequences that it implied for Jewish history on the Italian peninsula, was linked to a pair of questions: how can the relationship of the communities to the central state and the relationships between individuals and the communities themselves be explained? The two questions can be only summarily synthesized by briefly revisiting the contribution of Cantoni, who from 1834 to 1857 held the position of chief rabbi of the Jewish Community of Piedmont. There are traces of his abundant commitment in pleading the cause of the complete emancipation of the Piedmont Jews through regular contact with Turin's liberals in the years 1846–48.

But above all there is a document essential to understanding the internal debate in the Jewish communities on the matter of the reorganization of the communities' varied circles of interest. This is a project (never realized, and it will become immediately clear why not) known as *Nuovo ordinamento del culto israelitico nei regi stati* (*The New System of Jewish Faith in the Royal States*).[6] With this work, commissioned expressly by the heads of the *università* of Turin (the formal organization of the city's Jews) at the request of the government, Cantoni entered the debate on the reorganization of the Piedmontese communities, which in 1857 resulted in the issue of a specific law (which remained valid until 1930) known as the Rattazzi law. His theory stemmed from clear assumptions: emancipation was a done deed; the Jews were citizens like the rest; freedom of religion was already a reality sanctioned by the Albertino Statute of 1848. It was necessary to base the new foundations of a centralized organization of communities

on these certainties, on the model of the French consistory, which would regulate all aspects of life of the individual communities, from taxation to charity to the educational system. The project requested explicitly—as for the Waldensian ministers—that the state would provide for the maintenance of rabbis, thus transforming them into government officials, stripping them of chronic financial dependence, and in practice placing them on the same plane as the community leaders. Other important innovations were also foreseen in the plan: in particular a highly premature case of universal suffrage to supplant the electoral right limited by wealth. Secondly, an elementary and advanced Jewish educational system shaped on the model of the Lombardy-Veneto kingdom would be instituted, creating a rabbinical college as a way of ensuring control over the validity of the rabbi. And, above all, Cantoni expressed his inclination to make the rabbi of a community irremovable, that is, not subject to dismissal.[7]

This plan remains the most detailed nineteenth-century attempt to take the power of running the individual communities away from notable, local families in favor of a more democratic system. Perhaps it is superfluous to articulate that the plan remained nearly completely unrealized. After eight years of debate, some heated, the law remained unchanged, keeping the privileges of administrative autonomy within the individual communities. Cantoni's independent attempt to create a rabbinical institute in Turin had only minimal results, and the unitary organization of the Jewish educational system remained a nice plan with no concrete outcome. There was a certain discussion whose traces can be found on the pages of the Vercelli monthly *Educatore israelita* (*Jewish Educator*) in the years 1855–57. In reading between the lines of tendentious news expressing a false spirit of harmony and reconciliation, rather than the actual tone of the discussion at hand, one can find an organizational effort that clearly met with insurmountable resistance. The focal event was a meeting in Vercelli in December 1855, coordinated by the editors of the *Educatore*, to examine the terms of the preliminary bill. But it was actually a secondary event to which only a few representatives of only a part of the interested communities participated. After all, the Rattazzi law disregarded all of Cantoni's appeals for democracy, confirmed suffrage based on wealth, and left full autonomy to the individual communities without giving directives of any kind. Thus the law clinched the liberal regime's belief in a necessary separation between affairs of state and religion, which was taking shape under Cavour. Despite the rigid administrative order and in spite of the decided direction undertaken by his educational apparatus (that we could synthesize in the formula "Judaism and homeland"), to all appearances large margins of development and activity were not granted to Piedmont Judaism; in reality the proposed model ended, becoming instead the driving force in the more general circle of Italian Judaism.

From a demographic point of view, Piedmont could count a fair number of medium and large communities. Turin had more than 2,000 Jews; Vercelli, Casale, and Alessandria amply exceeded the 500 mark. The historical communities of Cuneo, Asti, Acqui, Fossano, Moncalvo, Saluzzo, and Chieri, plus other small ones, each numbered several dozens of families. For a long time, until the middle of the 1900s, each could allow itself the luxury of a rabbi and an active synagogue. This situation—which rapidly changed due to the natural process of the Jews concentrating in major cities—allowed a consistent level of Jewish social and cultural activity. In particular, in 1853 an important period of Italian Jewish journalism began in Piedmont, contributing definitively—for better or worse—to the cultural life of the Jews. From 1853 to 1875 the "*Educatore israelita*, a paper for Jewish families edited by Professors Levi Giuseppe and Esdra Pontremoli" in Vercelli, acted as an organizational and political center, as well as an educational point of reference for those Italian Jewish families of average schooling.

The assessment of Attilio Milano—the first to outline a comprehensive historical survey of the Jewish community in Italy—is in its truth rather harsh:

This publication—writes Milano—by the nature of its editors (rabbis and not journalists), cannot resolutely and brutally confront the whole system of Italian Judaism with the problems of contemporary life, and the consequences of its straying from the religious field . . . Therefore it can neither interest nor even less shake up the already idle Jewish masses.[8]

On the pages of the *Educatore*, and later in *Il vessillo israelitico* (*The Jewish Banner*) of Casale Monferrato (published 1875–1922), we find discussions that would touch the cultural life of Italian Judaism. Addressed were the subject of primary education and the teaching of the Hebrew language, the debate on religious reform, the dispute on the administrative and organizational system of Italian Jewish *universitàs*, the religious "catechism" texts, and the conflicts between the rabbinical institutes of Livorno (near mysticism) and Padua (influenced by German rationalism).

In these two papers the cultural lines that Piedmont Judaism intended to pursue in the education of the new generations appeared clear-cut and precise. For example, the direction that was chosen to recover the historical awareness of the Jewish people seems to be significant. In introducing an essay on the history of the Jews in Italy in the *Educatore*,[9] Rabbi Giuseppe Levi Gattinara expressed the intentions underlying the study of the history of the Jews of the Italian peninsula:

Italy is the most ancient homeland of the Jewish people in their dispersion . . . Will we love this dearest land? Our ancestors loved it when it was cruel to them, all the more should we love it now that it is merciful to us. The love for one's country is a moral instinct, a religious duty. And could not the knowledge of history make the work of nature and religion stronger and more stable? We believe and hope so.

The study of one's own history then, in a propaedeutic sense, is a carrier of love for one's country. Gattinara's work moved from the first settlements of Jews in Rome in the age of the Republic rapidly toward progressive political and civil marginalization, which became decisive with the beginning of the Church's temporal power when "the *tav* of civil death was written on the foreheads of all the children of Israel."[10] In examining the salient historical moments of the Jewish diaspora, from abandoning farming life to the imposition of commercial professions, from the increase of incidents of anti-Jewish violence to the flourishing of Jewish culture in Southern Italy, the *Educatore* prudently cut the contributing writer's text off at the year 1492, the dawn of the modern age marked by burnings, expulsions, and forced confinements; it would hardly have been compatible with the declaration of intentions in Gattinara's introduction to the study.

An even more significant example is offered by another work, written by Flaminio Servi, who—although of Tuscan origin—as editor of *Il vessillo* in 1875 was for more than a quarter of a century one of the principal voices of Piedmont Judaism. His book *Gli israeliti d'Europa nella civiltà* (*The Jews of Europe in Civilization*) was a decidedly popular work that "had nothing then to do with the other Jewish histories that were published in France and Germany."[11] In this work Servi synthesized anecdotal and statistical history in order to provide a progressive course of action that would unite Jews and Christians in the building of a modern European civilization. In order to do this he did not stop even at distorting history:

This book was proposed because it speaks of noble deeds, of acts of brotherly love; acts of intolerance we must silence

or barely mention. By now the time of fanatics and madmen is past. If there are some exceptions, we must not be afraid; it cannot last long. It will not last.[12]

A kind of a priori denial of the existence of forces opposing the integration of Jews in Italian society had significant impact and certainly did not help those Jews who in the fall of 1938 suddenly found themselves without basic civil rights. The majority of them, who had read on the pages of *Il vessillo* and *Cuore d'Israele* for over a generation that there was no anti-Semitism in Italy, found themselves culturally unprepared to face the unexpected laws imposed by the country's anti-Semitism and ratified without much difficulty by the same House of Savoy that in 1848 had been chosen by the Jews as divine instrument of worldly redemption.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, changes within Piedmont Judaism in physical location, ways of life, and adherence to Jewish traditions were also important. In several Piedmont cities, not unlike elsewhere on the Italian peninsula and in Europe, the old synagogues that had been carved out of the ghetto were abandoned along with ghetto life. Except in Casale Monferrato, where there was already a large Baroque synagogue that continued to be the center of community life, large synagogues were built in other sizable centers like Alessandria, Vercelli, Asti, and Turin. Their visibility should have contributed, concretely, to the idea of a complete and definitive emancipation of the Jews and their visible integration into the fabric of the city. In fact, in Turin the very symbol of the city, the Mole Antonelliana, began as a project commissioned by the capital city's Jewish community. The tremendous cost of the work forced the leaders of the community to abandon the project and to make do with building the synagogue in the Moorish style. (It too, however, is of considerable size and today makes a fine showing in the city center.[13])

The educational direction undertaken in the 1800s also had repercussions in Jewish ritual. It is known that the Jewish Reform movement, which arose in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century and later spread especially in the United States, was never officially recognized in Italy. Until today, in effect, Jewish communities on the Italian peninsula declare themselves officially Orthodox. And it is likewise known, on the other hand, that in light of this official declaration, the adherence to the mitzvoth, or precepts, by the majority of Italian Jews had rapidly decreased since the second half of this century. Furthermore, in numerous aspects of ritual, several details were introduced with the emancipation that closely recall the ways of the Reformed communities. The solemn ceremony in synagogue of the bar mitzvah for males at thirteen years of age and of the bat mitzvah for girls at twelve years was introduced; also introduced was the use of the organ in synagogues; photographs and sculpted images were permitted on the tombs of the deceased.

In Piedmont, in particular, there was one event that historians remember as the most important attempt to introduce a concrete element of Jewish Reform in Italy.[14] In 1865 Salomone Olper published his decision to reduce the prescribed first period of mourning from seven to three days. Olper was a Venetian rabbi and student of the college of Padua, who courageously fought for Daniele Manin's short-lived Venetian Republic in 1848, later served as rabbi of Florence and of Casale Monferrato, and finally ended up on the rabbinate of Piedmont communities in Turin, succeeding Cantoni. His was a limited but reasoned reform, which Olper based on three decidedly innovative principles. In the first place he considered Judaism to be a religion based on intangible principles, and the mitzvoth solely a means of protecting those same principles, susceptible then to possible changes. Secondly, he openly criticized the oral law and its authors, who in his opinion weighed down the pure religion with unnecessary tinsel. He proposed finally the elimination of those customs that distinguished

the Jew from the non-Jew. For example, Olper granted permission to men in mourning (by rule obliged to let their beard grow for one month) to shave after the seventh day, so as not to appear unkempt.

As Menachem Emanuele Artom emphasized accurately, this proposal created a unique controversy of some importance within the context of the reforms that took place within Italian Judaism in the 1800s. Olper's decision in fact opened an intense debate: nearly all the major Italian rabbis expressed opinions and criticisms on the pages of the *Educatore israelita* and the *Corriere israelitico* (*Jewish Post*), the latter the important Jewish Italian newspaper of Trieste. Essentially two fronts were created: from one side a letter was published written on the initiative of the rabbis of Livorno (including Elia Benamozegh) and signed by fourteen rabbis, condemning without appeal Olper's decision as contrary to the law. On the opposite side were another seven rabbis (out of which the figure of Marco Mortara stands out), who as well as declaring themselves in favor of the spirit of reform, bound this to a collective decision that would involve all the Italian rabbis in order to avoid divisions and conflicts. Yet only Rabbi Levi of Biella expressed his opinion as decidedly in favor of Olper's reform.

If at the level of religious, cultural, and administrative institutions, Piedmont Judaism after emancipation seemed on the road toward a definite and full integration and assimilation, making both traditional and renewed Jewish ties more and more marginal and secondary, one should not be surprised that in Piedmont itself there was an increased number of individuals, the children of Piedmont Judaism, who contributed to Italian history in a determinative way. Even if it may be futile to compile lists of names, it is undoubtedly useful to give an idea of the intensity with which a community that was all in all small contributed to several varied aspects of civic life in unified Italy. This participation was an increasingly characteristic quality of Piedmont Judaism, as opposed to other Italian Jewish communities, such as Rome's, which maintained a certain mistrustful closedness for many decades following emancipation.

Therefore, I believe, it is not fruitless to call to mind, first of all, the names of the most significant figures who distinguished themselves in the field of Jewish studies and rabbinical teaching: from Lelio Della Torre (for nearly fifty years teacher at the rabbinical college of Padua with Samuel David Luzzato) to Beniamino Artom (from Asti, rabbi of the Sephardic congregation of London); from Sabbato Graziadio Treves (rabbi in Turin and later Trieste and father of the founders of the historic publishing house Treves, today Garzanti) to Marco Tedeschi (also from Asti, rabbi of Trieste and Italian editor of the *Preghiere d'un cuore israelita* [*Prayers of a Jewish Heart*], the most widespread Jewish catechism of the 1800s).

And in the broader field of intellectual activity, the names that stand out are Salvatore Debenedetti (Hebraist and teacher at the University of Pisa), David Levi (patriot, entrepreneur, and poet of the Risorgimento), Giacomo Dina (pupil of Rabbi Cantoni, subsequently principal figure in liberal journalism and founder of the daily paper *L'opinione*), Felice Momigliano (philosopher and champion of Jewish Reformism), and Arnaldo Momigliano (great historian of antiquity, forced into exile by Fascist racism).

Naturally, in continuing with this list, we run the risk of leaving out some important names along the way, each deserving of mention. To conclude let's just say that the recognizable feature of Piedmont Judaism after emancipation was a constant, individual commitment in the ongoing construction of the fabric of civil society, a course of action that underwent a traumatic interruption with the racial laws of 1938. However, even on that extreme occasion, this purpose found in itself the resources to continue. The active participation of a significant body of the Piedmontese Jewish intellectuals in the anti-Fascist battle and in the war of liberation attests to this and is the most recent example

of the constant Jewish presence in Piedmont society. That presence leads to the conclusion—paraphrasing Primo Levi—that if the Jews had not been there, Piedmont and its history would have been different.

Notes

1. G. Lattes, *Cuore d'Israele* (Casale Monferrato, 1908), p. 177.

2. Cf. B. Terracini, "Il centenario della Pia Società femminile israelitica di Torino," *Rassegna mensile di Israel* 7, no. 3 (1932), p. 96.

3. The statute of the society was edited and published by Subalpina (Turin, 1853).

4. Cf. R. Bottini Treves, *Storie del ghetto di Vercelli* (Vercelli, 1993).

5. Cf. L. Voghera Luzzato, ed., *Documenti per la storia del ghetto di Asti* (Cepros Asti, 1981); M. L. Giribaldi Sardi, *Scuola e vita nella comunità ebraica di Asti* (Turin: Rosemberg and Sellier, 1994). The latter stresses the decisive influx of the theories of Ferrante Aporti in the educational organization of the Clava Religious Institute.

6. (Turin: G. Cassone Printing, 1848), p. 59.

7. Analogous ideas were expressed later by Lelio Cantoni in an elaborate "note" addressed in 1854 to Rattazzi and Cavour and then printed in S. Foa, "Un manoscritto sconosciuto del Rabbino Lelio Cantoni sul regolamento delle comunità nello Stato di Sardegna," *Rassegna mensile di Israel* 28, nos. 3–4 (March–April 1962) (volume in memory of Federico Luzzato), pp. 192–204.

8. Cf. A. Milano, "Un secolo di stampa periodica in Italia," *Rassegna mensile di Israel: Scritti in onore di Dante Lattes* (1938), p. 102.

9. Cf. G. Levi Gattinara, "Degli ebrei in Italia e della loro condizione politico civile antica e moderna, sunto storico," *Educatore israelita* 1 (1853), pp. 246–51; and 2 (1854), pp. 203–08, 235, 263, 306, 335.

10. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 206; the letter *tav* refers to the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

11. F. Servi, *Gli israeliti d'Europa nella civiltà* (Turin, 1871). The role of Flaminio Servi was particularly important. A native of Pitigliano and an admirer of S. D. Luzzatto, he served as rabbi of the small communities of Moncalvo and Monticelli d'Ongina, and after 1875 as editor of *Il vessillo israelitico* of Casale Monferrato, the paper most widely read by Italian Jewish families. Even if Servi was not alone in the fight for this kind of cultural approach, his personal commitment and incredible ability to produce popular material were in any event decisive.

12. Ibid., p. 17.

13. *Ebrei a Torino, ricerche per il centenario della sinagoga, 1884–1984* (Turin, 1984).

14. Cf. M. E. Artom, "Regarding the Reform Movement in Italy: The Controversy on Reducing the Mourning Period in 1865," in *Works in Memory of Sally Mayer* (Jerusalem, 1956), pp. 110–14 (in Hebrew).



Synagogue interior, Alessandria (opened 1871). The sanctuary is notable for its stained-glass windows and rich, eclectic decoration, part neo-Gothic and part Rococo.

The Jews of Piedmont and the Holocaust

Susan Zuccotti

A first look at the Holocaust in Piedmont evokes no sense that the nightmare was any different there than elsewhere in Northern and Central Italy. Further examination indicates shades of variation, however, not so much in the events themselves as in the nature of individual responses. The actual persecution did not differ in intensity. Neither were the racial laws of 1938 and 1939 enforced more or less severely, nor were the internments of foreign Jews in 1940 more thorough than elsewhere. German and Fascist round-ups in 1943 and 1944 were not more brutal, and Resistance fighting was not fiercer in Piedmont. But the responses of Piedmontese Jews themselves to these and other wartime horrors often seem more intense, comprehensive, and immediate. They seem, one might even say, more dramatic and extreme.

Startlingly large numbers of Piedmontese Jews are remembered for their personal responses to the persecution. They seem to represent a larger percentage of the Piedmontese Jewish population from which they came than was true of the Italian Jewish population as a whole. To some extent, this is the case because so many Piedmontese Jews wrote, wrote early, and wrote beautifully of their wartime experiences. One thinks above all, of course, of Primo Levi, but there were many others, as will be seen. But Piedmontese Jews are also remembered because they were proportionately more Fascist, more Royalist, more anti-Fascist, more Resistant, or simply more politically involved than Jews elsewhere. The story of the Holocaust in Piedmont then becomes the story of extreme and well-articulated individual responses. This paper will examine that phenomenon.

It is useful to begin by setting the broad framework of events. The chronology of the Holocaust was similar throughout Italy. Real persecution of the highly integrated and widely accepted Italian Jewish community did not begin until the autumn of 1938, when Benito Mussolini, eager to ingratiate himself with Adolf Hitler and solidify an alliance, issued a series of anti-Jewish laws.[1] The laws decreed that, among other things, Jews could no longer marry non-Jews; attend the public schools; work in the public service, including the military; practice law, medicine, and accounting with non-Jews; and own property and businesses above a certain value. These laws were a tremendous shock to their unsuspecting victims, and were thoroughly enforced.[2] With regard specifically to Piedmont, there is much evidence that local bureaucrats, especially in the schools, took real initiatives to pinpoint individuals with possible Jewish names or backgrounds and insure that they lost their positions.[3] This is not to say that most Italian non-Jews were hostile to their Jewish friends and colleagues. On the contrary, most were quietly sympathetic. In an authoritarian state in which dissent was harshly repressed, however, a handful of zealous bureaucrats and hostile Fascists in every school, business, and town could do much damage. In Piedmont, as elsewhere, most of the five thousand Jews in the region lost their jobs and properties over a given value. Their children were without exception obliged to attend specially created Jewish schools.

After the anti-Jewish laws were created, little changed for Jews until Italy declared war on the side of Germany in June 1940, as the Battle of France was drawing to an end. Even then, changes were slight for most. Foreign Jews throughout the country were interned or placed in supervised residence in specified areas.[4] Some native Jews with just a whiff of an anti-Fascist record were also arrested and interned. A mild but humiliating, obligatory labor service was instituted for a time, but enforced without much conviction.[5] Finally, anti-Semitism intensified in the press and among Fascist fanatics, and sporadic incidents of violence occurred. In Piedmont vicious, anti-Semitic graffiti appeared overnight on walls and buildings in Turin, Casale Monferrato, and elsewhere. Fascist thugs attempted to burn the main synagogue in Turin on October 14, 1941. But no Jews were deported from Italy until the German

occupation in the autumn of 1943. This was very late, considering that massive deportations to Auschwitz began early in the summer of 1942 from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, to speak only of Western Europe.

The dramatic, overwhelming change in Italy came immediately after September 8, 1943, when General Dwight David Eisenhower announced to the world that Italy had signed an armistice with the Allies and was withdrawing from the war. Italian Jews and non-Jews alike rejoiced, but the German army waiting on the frontier for exactly such an event immediately invaded and occupied the country. Arrests and deportations of Jews promptly followed. The first arrests occurred along Italy's northern frontier, so that Piedmontese Jews were very much involved. Twenty-four Italian Jews were arrested in a house to house roundup in Cuneo on September 28.[6] On the same day the Germans destroyed the synagogue in Vercelli and arrested several Jews in nearby Novara, on the Piedmontese-Lombardian border.[7]

Ten days before these incidents, a terrifying series of incidents had occurred in Borgo San Dalmazzo, near Cuneo and the mountainous border with France. Since November 1942 the Italian army had occupied part of southeastern France, while the Germans had occupied the rest of the country. During that period Italian diplomatic and military personnel had protected and assisted the thousands of Jews who found themselves in their zone of occupation. When the armistice was announced, at least a thousand Jews, realizing that the Germans would immediately seize the Italian zone, joined Italian soldiers in a harrowing trek across the Alps into Piedmont. As they came out of the mountains into the little Piedmontese towns of Entracque and Valdieri, they found the Germans there as well. Posters soon appeared ordering Jewish refugees to turn themselves in under pain of death for them and for any Italians who sheltered them. Deprived of all resources, with winter coming on and exhausted from years of eluding the Nazis, some 349 foreign Jewish refugees either surrendered or were caught. These poor people were held in a barrack in Borgo San Dalmazzo until November 1943, when 328 of them were deported, first back to France and then to Auschwitz. Only 10 of the 328 survived.[8]

In early October 1943 in Turin, where some 4,000 of the region's 5,000 Jews lived, a frightening and nauseating public burning by local Fascists of books from the Jewish Community Library served as a warning of things to come. In part for that reason, a German and Fascist attempt at a large-scale roundup on October 16 failed. Most Turinese Jews had already gone into hiding, much earlier than would occur farther south. According to one source, only two elderly women were caught in their homes.[9] Large, coordinated roundups that same day in Milan and Rome trapped many more victims—some 200 in Milan, and an appalling 1,259 in Rome.[10] But during the twenty-month period of terror before liberation, many more Jews in Turin and elsewhere in Piedmont were caught, usually as the result of informers. They numbered about 761 in the entire region. They consisted of 48 arrested in the province of Alessandria, 19 in Aosta, 45 in Asti, 383 in Cuneo (a number that included the 328 refugees in Borgo San Dalmazzo), 246 in Turin, and 20 in Vercelli.[11] These numbers represent about 15 percent of the Jewish population in the region, a percentage roughly equivalent to the number nationwide.

How, briefly, did other Jews survive? Many were able to flee to Switzerland, much closer to Piedmont than to most of the rest of Italy.[12] Indeed, rescue networks, often staffed by priests and Catholic laypersons cooperating with them, frequently focused more on escorting Jews across the frontier than on finding them long-term hiding places in Piedmont or Lombardy. Elsewhere in Italy, similar rescuers more often tried to place fugitives in monasteries, convents, and other religious and secular institutions. But rescue networks usually focused on foreign Jewish refugees, especially those who had so recently arrived from southern

France. Exhausted, impoverished, friendless, and with no ability to speak Italian, refugees were completely helpless and vulnerable. On the other hand, many Piedmontese Jews survived more or less on their own with the help of two or three personal friends and contacts. In this context the close ties between city and countryside and between Jews and non-Jews that had existed historically in Piedmont were of enormous help. Jews found friends who helped them change residences, find places in hospitals, schools, or isolated farmhouses, secure false identification papers and ration books, and purchase food. Such things were essential to survival.

Our focus now turns to the individuals concerned—to individual Piedmontese Jews, who have been described as just a little different from Jews elsewhere in Italy. How were they different? Again, the appropriate word seems to be "more." They were, first of all, probably even more integrated into the broader community than other Italian Jews. They supported the king and the royal family with even more loyalty and fervor. The king, after all, was himself Piedmontese, resident in Turin long before Italian unification and the emancipator of the Jews in Piedmont in 1848, well before unification and general emancipation elsewhere in Italy. As an extreme example of Jewish pro-monarchist sentiment, the wealthy Turinese Jewish banking family Ovazza enjoyed an intimacy with the royal family that was probably not exceeded among Italian Jews. Ovazzas were frequently invited to court. For example, Ettore Ovazza and his wife, Nella, whose appalling fates will be described below, were invited to the wedding of the prince of Savoy in 1928. Ettore's brother went to military academy, itself a step indicating a high degree of integration, with two nephews of the king, who frequently visited the Ovazza home.[13] Such relationships were almost inconceivable in Rome, where monarchist social circles were largely aristocratic and had no place for an upper-middle-class Jewish banking family.

After Mussolini's rise to power in 1922, many Jews in Piedmont became members of the Fascist Party. They were not unique in this. Throughout Italy more than ten thousand Jews belonged to the party between 1922 and 1938.[14] They joined the party in percentages comparable to the non-Jewish population. About 10 percent of Italian Jews joined the Fascist Party, along with about 10 percent of Italian non-Jews. Jews joined for the same economic, social, political, and purely expedient reasons as non-Jews. Their joining is one clear indication of the lack of an anti-Semitic dimension in Italian Fascism before 1938.

While not unique, some Piedmontese Jewish Fascists nevertheless seem to have been more fervent in their devotion to the cause. They displayed a vocal and tenacious devotion to Mussolini that seemed to exceed that of Fascist Jews elsewhere in Italy, and that endured well into the period following the anti-Jewish laws. The above-mentioned Ettore Ovazza was the leading spokesman of this group. Ovazza was joined most notably by General Guido Liuzzi, head of Italy's principal military college—a highly atypical position for a Jew and again symptomatic of the exceptional integration of Jews in Piedmont. Liuzzi was also president of the Jewish Community of Turin. In 1934 Ovazza, Liuzzi, and other Piedmontese Jews founded a Jewish Fascist newspaper, *La nostra bandiera*, in Turin that loudly professed Jewish loyalties to the Duce and to Fascism and mercilessly condemned Jewish Zionists and anti-Fascists. The tone of *La nostra bandiera* became more desperate but no less strident, as Italian anti-Jewish laws and policies emerged in the second half of 1938. Indeed, its attacks on Italian Zionists became more vicious than ever, for Zionists were blamed for the rise of anti-Semitism itself.[15] Again, Ovazza and his group were not unique in Italy. They were simply "more"—more articulate, more public, more dramatic, and more extreme.

Ovazza's patriotism and Fascism were not enough to save him. On October 11, 1943, in the early days of the

German occupation, Ovazza, his wife, and his fifteen-year-old daughter Elena were caught by the German SS in Gressoney, in the province of Aosta, just west of Piedmont and south of the Swiss border. In one of the most gruesome atrocities of the Holocaust in Italy, they were shot and their bodies were chopped into pieces and burned in the furnace of a school. Their twenty-year-old son Riccardo had already been apprehended and shot elsewhere. The Duce and the cause that Ovazza never betrayed in fact betrayed him, in the most brutal and horrible way.[16]

Lest it be thought that Piedmontese Jews as a whole were more pro-Fascist than Jews elsewhere, it must be quickly added that they also participated in some of the earliest manifestations of non-Marxist anti-Fascism in Italy before the war. Indeed, there were so many Jews from all over Italy, but especially from Piedmont, in the famous anti-Fascist movement Giustizia e Libertà in the 1930s that some members considered it a problem. Vittorio Foa, for example, a Piedmontese Jew and leading member of Giustizia e Libertà, once told Carlo Levi, also a Piedmontese Jew and a member of the organization but best known today as the author of *Christ Stopped at Eboli: The Story of a Year,* that Sion Segre Amar, also Piedmontese and Jewish, wanted to join. Levi looked distressed and replied, "Alas, another Jew!"[17] The obvious concern here was to avoid creating any impression of a connection between anti-Fascism and Jews in particular. Such a connection surely did not exist elsewhere in Italy, but in Piedmont it probably was a reality.

It certainly appeared so in March 1934, when police at Ponte Tresa, on the Italian-Swiss border, apprehended an automobile filled with anti-Fascist literature. The owner of the car was the above-mentioned Segre Amar, a new member of Giustizia e Libertà who had been directed by that organization to smuggle anti-Fascist pamphlets into Italy. Accompanying Segre Amar was Mario Levi (no relation to Carlo Levi), the son of a prominent Turinese Jewish professor of anatomy and medicine, Giuseppe Levi (and, incidentally, the brother of the not yet prominent writer Natalia Levi Ginzburg). In the police investigation following the incident, seventeen people were arrested and detained, of whom eleven were Jews, mostly from Piedmont. Among those held were Segre Amar; Mario Levi's father and brother (Mario himself had escaped back across the Swiss border); Carlo Levi; and Leone Ginzburg, a brilliant Russian Jewish immigrant to Turin, linguist, literary scholar, future husband of Natalia Levi Ginzburg, and future Resistant, who was tortured to death in Regina Coeli prison in Rome by Nazis and their Fascist sympathizers in 1944.[18]

Perhaps the best known Piedmontese Jewish Resistant is Primo Levi. Levi is remembered above all as the author of a personal memoir of deportation and concentration-camp life entitled *Survival in Auschwitz*.[19] This brilliant and beautifully crafted work first appeared in Italian in 1947 under the title *Se questo è un uomo*, and in English in 1960 as *If This Is a Man*. It is generally regarded as one of the four or five classics of Holocaust literature in any language. Levi later wrote *The Reawakening*, about his liberation from Auschwitz and his long trip home, as well as many other collections of essays and several novels.[20]

Primo Levi was born in Turin in 1919. Many of his childhood experiences, as described so beautifully in his essays, were typical of Piedmontese Jews. Like so many others, he had relatives in small towns and villages throughout the region, whom he visited often. Piedmontese Jews had lived and worked as silk manufacturers, small-town bankers, or agricultural estate managers in and around towns like Cuneo, Asti, Ivrea, Casale Monferrato, Moncalvo, Saluzzo, and Alessandria as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Many of them had close ties to the land and agricultural life—a condition unusual among Jews in Western Europe. Many of the Jews in Turin had moved to the big city rather recently. They were not purely urban sophisticates, for they retained solid personal contacts and sympathy with everyday Italians in small towns and rural areas. These

contacts were meaningful to them, and deeply enhanced their sense of belonging to the fabric of the nation. They also helped greatly in finding help and shelter during the German occupation.

Primo Levi, trained as a chemist, joined Giustizia e Libertà before the war. After the German occupation he participated in the armed military Resistance in the hills around Turin, where he was captured in 1944. Aware that captured partisans were often shot, and quite unaware of what was happening to Jews in deportation, he informed his captors that he was Jewish. He thought that his chances of survival would be better as a Jew than as a partisan.

In some of his most moving pages in *Survival at Auschwitz*, Levi described how his friendship with a non-Jewish Italian prisoner and his ability to recite long passages of Dante's *Inferno* from memory helped him retain his humanity and strength to fight for survival. He was, in the fullest possible way, a citizen of Italy and a product of Italian civilization.

Discussion of all well-known Piedmontese Jewish Resistants is impossible in a short essay.[21] Only a few individuals can be mentioned briefly here. The name of Carlo Levi, medical doctor, talented painter, famous author, and military Resistant after 1943, who fought primarily in Tuscany, has already appeared. Carlo was not a relative of Primo Levi. His book *Christ Stopped at Eboli* describes his prewar experiences in supervised residence in Southern Italy, where he was forced to live in the 1930s as punishment for his anti-Fascist activities in Turin. The book offers brilliant insights into the characters and lives of the Southern Italian peasants he met—uneducated, impoverished, long-neglected men and women so very different from himself and from anyone he had ever met before. It reveals not only his innate sympathy for the universal human condition, but also the extent to which he, like Primo Levi, was rooted in the Italian national fabric.[22] In 1963 Carlo Levi became a senator from Lucania in Southern Italy. In that capacity and as an activist in working-class organizations, he, an integrated Northern Italian Jew, served the needs of the Southern non-Jewish underdogs he had come to know so well after Mussolini sent him into confinement.

There were many other Piedmontese Jewish Resistants. Vittorio Foa, a young lawyer from Turin, was active with Giustizia e Libertà, imprisoned for anti-Fascist activities in 1935, released by Marshal Pietro Badoglio in 1943, and active in national Resistance coordinating committees during the occupation. Foa became a well-known parliamentary deputy and labor leader after the war.[23] Adriano Olivetti made his family's Olivetti Typewriter Company in Ivrea, in northern Piedmont, a center of anti-Fascist activities throughout the 1930s and the war years.[24] More tragic than the others was the young Emanuele Artom, a university student in 1938 when the anti-Jewish laws were decreed. Because Artom was already enrolled in the university, he was permitted to remain, but he could not use the library or other school facilities because he was Jewish. He completed his studies and, like Primo Levi, joined the partisans fighting in the hills around Turin in 1943. In 1944 he was captured and tortured horribly by the Germans until he died. He is especially remembered, among many others who fought and died, because of the poignant and sensitive diary he wrote between January 1940 and February 1944. It was published posthumously in 1966.[25]

The link between action, authorship, and memory is critical, and there are many other Piedmontese Jews whom we remember at least in part because of what they wrote. There is, of course, Natalia Levi Ginzburg, one of Italy's finest twentieth-century authors. Born Natalia Levi in 1917, she was raised in Turin in a family closely tied to local intellectual circles. As mentioned above, Levi witnessed the arrests for anti-Fascist activities of her father and brother in 1934. She subsequently married Leone Ginzburg and, after his arrest in November 1943, lived in hiding with her children until liberation. She moved permanently to Rome after

the war, became a member of Parliament, and wrote many novels and short stories set in the capital. In her poignant memoirs, *Family Sayings*, however, she returned to the city of her birth and created a beautiful portrait of Piedmontese Jewish family life.[26]

Also to be mentioned in this category is Rita Levi-Montalcini, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1986 for her work in neurobiology. In 1988 Levi-Montalcini published her memoirs in a book addressing in particular her medical achievements and experiences as a woman in science. It begins, however, with moving chapters about her childhood, family life, and education in Turin.[27]

Less well known in the United States, in part because his book has not been translated into English, is a Piedmontese rabbi from Casale Monferrato named Augusto Segre. Rabbi Segre's memoirs also cover much more than the war years, but they contain fascinating descriptions of his early life as an observant Jew and son of a rabbi in a small Piedmontese city. The author relates his experiences during the period of the anti-Jewish laws, his flight to the countryside during the German occupation, and his survival in hiding with the help of local peasants.[28] His is another example of the close relationships that Piedmontese Jews often enjoyed with non-Jews in rural as well as urban areas. Those contacts saved his life.

Dan Vittorio Segre is perhaps better known in the United States, since his memoirs have been published in English. Segre (no relation to Augusto Segre) describes his family's long history in Piedmont. As well as any other writer, he conveys Piedmontese Jews' profound sense of belonging to their country. Segre's parents, grandparents, and great grandparents had been landowners and had established long-standing relationships of trust and respect with their tenants. His father was also the local mayor. Again the theme of close interaction between urban and rural life becomes apparent. During the period of the anti-Jewish laws, Segre's rural neighbors could not understand how their acquaintances of generations could suddenly be declared strangers and enemies. During the German occupation, Segre's grandmother was too old to disguise her identity and go into hiding. She remained quietly but openly in the village where she had always lived, and where everyone knew her. No one ever informed.[29]

This was an extraordinary community. Of course, not all Piedmontese Jews were exceptional. Most, like people everywhere, lived quiet, nonpolitical lives. However, in no other section of Italy did proportionately so many Jews step forward to make public statements, take political action, and make themselves remembered through their acts and words. There were certainly memorable and outstanding Jewish citizens throughout the country. Many were rabbis, like Riccardo Pacifici in Genoa, who refused to leave his people and was arrested and deported with them to Auschwitz, where he died.[30] Another exceptionally courageous rabbi was Nathan Cassuto in Florence, who was able to organize a rescue network with the help of many non-Jews, before he was caught and deported to his death at Auschwitz.[31] And there were many others, rabbis and laypersons alike. Among Resistance fighters, there were, of course, thousands. One of the best known perhaps is Carlo Rosselli from Florence, among the first organizers of Giustizia e Libertà and himself murdered with his brother Nello by Fascist sympathizers in France in 1937. Also vividly remembered is Enzo Sereni from Rome, a fervent Zionist who returned from a kibbutz in Palestine to join the military Resistance in Italy, was captured and deported, and died at Dachau in 1944.[32] Among Jews who wrote war-related memoirs and even fiction before the late 1980s, when memoir writing became much more frequent, one thinks of Giorgio Bassani of Ferrara, Giancarlo Sacerdoti of Bologna, Enzo Levi of Modena, Fabio Della Seta of Rome, Memo Bemporad of Florence, and Carlo Modigliani of Milan—and there were many others.[33] But nowhere were there so many in such a concentrated area as Piedmont.

Piedmontese Jews constituted an exceptional community of outstanding people: highly intelligent, educated, articulate, politically active, resolute, and self-conscious. They exhibited no alienation or isolation. They seem to have taken it for granted that they should participate intimately in national life. There was never anything even remotely passive about them. They were determined to influence events, not to wait for events to develop and influence them. They were secure in their sense of self and their sense of belonging. They were not to be, could not be, uprooted, much less eradicated, by another Italian minority, the extreme Fascists. They were firmly rooted in the Italian soil, and it seems never to have occurred to them that it could be otherwise.

In all this, of course, they resembled other Italian Jews throughout the country, but again, it seems that they were "more so." So the final question remains, why? Three general explanations might be considered.

First, Jews in Piedmont were emancipated and made free and equal citizens a half generation before Jews elsewhere in Italy and twenty-two years before Jews in Rome. The dates here are 1848 for Piedmont, about 1860 for much of the rest of Italy, and 1870 for Rome. The time difference is admittedly not great, but in the contribution it made to emerging self-confidence and a sense of belonging, it is relevant. Jews in Piedmont were emancipated first, and they never forgot it.

Second, and perhaps more important, at least in the eyes of the Piedmontese, Italian unification occurred under the leadership of King Victor Emmanuel II and the House of Savoy, rulers of Piedmont for hundreds of years. Newly emancipated Jews in Turin contributed heavily to the election campaigns of Camillo Cavour, the Piedmontese diplomat who was the mastermind of unification, and they gave both money and personal service to Giuseppe Garibaldi's military expedition to Sicily, which brought Southern Italy into the newly enlarged kingdom in 1860. Piedmontese Jews were there from the beginning. How could they not have felt even more Italian than the Romans, who joined the unified nation only in 1870? How could they or anyone else have questioned their right to belong?

Finally, the explanation for the activism of Piedmontese Jews may lie deep within the geography and historical nature of their region. Piedmont was a small, rather isolated, mountainous kingdom, saddled between great nations but never ruled by outsiders. With relatively good interior lines of communication and comfortable relations between city and country, it was largely self-contained. Its people demonstrated a sturdy, serious self-sufficiency, independence of spirit, and lack of materialism. Without easy contacts with outsiders, they were receptive to the new political ideas and concepts of the nineteenth century but not prone to radicalism.

Jewish emancipation came with the political ideas of the French Revolution and with the constitutional monarchy established in 1848. The Piedmontese kingdom, however, remained essentially conservative. It cannot be described as liberal in quite the same way as Lombardy. Ideas in Piedmont, unlike its neighbor to the east, mattered more than business and commerce. Lombardy led the nation in industrialization, scientific agriculture, and general modernization. Piedmont was known as the region that produced priests, professors, politicians, and generals.

Piedmontese Jews reflected these characteristics. Political speculation and political action were highly prized. Political involvement in the affairs of the day, whether pro-Fascist or anti-Fascist, was taken for granted. Indifference was not an alternative.

Notes

1. On the anti-Jewish laws, see especially *La persecuzione degli ebrei durante il fascismo: Le leggi del 1938* (Rome: Camera dei Deputati, 1998); and four works by Michele Sarfatti: *Mussolini contro gli ebrei: Cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1994); *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista: Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000); *Le leggi antiebraiche spiegate agli italiani di oggi* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002); and *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), which is a translation and expansion of *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*. For more general information on the subject, see Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); and Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 4th ed. (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1988). De Felice's book has been published in English as *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York: Enigma Books, 2001).

2. On enforcement, see Susan Zuccotti, "The Italian Racial Laws, 1938–1943: A Reevaluation," in Jonathan Frankel, ed., *The Fate of the European Jews, 1939–1945: Continuity or Contingency? Studies in Contemporary Jewry, an Annual, XIII* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 133–52.

3. See Adriana Muncinelli, *Even: Pietruzza della memoria: Ebrei 1938–1945* (Turin: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1994). Muncinelli drew her conclusions primarily from her study of archival documents in the province of Cuneo.

4. The best study of the internments of foreign Jews in Italy is Klaus Voigt, *Il refugio precario: Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, trans. (from German) Loredana Melissari, 2 vols. (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1993 and 1996).

5. On July 31, 1943, an official government report declared that 15,517 Jewish men and women between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five had registered for the forced labor program decreed a year earlier. Of these, 2,410 had received temporary dispensations, and 1,301 permanent ones. Of the remaining 11,806 people, 2,038 had actually worked—only 1 percent of those registered. See De Felice, *Jews in Fascist Italy*, p. 360. This was the only example of lax enforcement of the Italian anti-Jewish measures.

6. Liliana Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria: Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943–1945)* (Milan: Mursia, 1991), p. 805.

7. Giuseppe Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò: La persecuzione antisemita 1943–1945* (Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1978), pp. 68–69.

8. For more details, see Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria*, p. 805; Alberto Cavaglion, *Nella notte straniera: Gli ebrei di St.-Martin-Vésubie: 8 settembre–21 novembre 1943*, 2nd ed. (Cuneo: Edizioni L'Arciere, 1991); and Susan Zuccotti, *Holocaust Odysseys: The Jews of Saint-Martin-Vésubie and Their Flight through France and Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

9. Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, pp. 132–35.

10. The best study in English of the Rome roundup is Robert Katz, *Black Sabbath: A Journey through a Crime against Humanity* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969).

11. Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria*, p. 29.

12. For more on the flight to Switzerland, see especially Michele Sarfatti, "Dopo l'8 settembre: Gli ebrei e la rete confinaria italo-svizzera," *La rassegna mensile di Israel* 46, nos. 1–3 (January–June 1981), pp. 150–73.

13. For details, see Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), pp. 17–89.

14. De Felice, *Jews in Fascist Italy*, p. 66.

15. Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, pp. 17–89.

16. Ibid.

17. Told by Sion Segre Amar in his "Sui 'fatti' di Torino del 1934 Sion Segre Amar ci ha scritto . . . ," in *Gli ebrei in Italia durante il fascismo*, Quaderni del Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea 2 (Varese: La Lucciola, March 1962), p. 125. For more on Segre Amar, see also his *Il mio ghetto* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987).

18. Ibid. See also Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, pp. 99–117.

19. See Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz and The Reawakening: Two Memoirs*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Summit Books, 1985).

20. Ibid. *The Reawakening* was first published as *La tregua* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1963). The first English translation appeared in 1965. Primo Levi's other works include *The Periodic Table*, *The Drowned and the Saved*, and *Moments of Reprieve*.

21. On the Italian Resistance in general and Jewish participation in it, see Charles F. Delzell, *Mussolini's Enemies: The Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); and Gina Formiggini, *Stella d'Italia, stella di David: Gli ebrei dal Risorgimento alla Resistenza* (Milan: Mursia, 1970).

22. The book was originally published as *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1945). The English was translated by Frances Frenaye (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1947).

23. Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, pp. 91–165.

24. For details, see Zuccotti, *Italians and the Holocaust*, pp. 252–53.

25. Emanuele Artom, *Diari: Gennaio 1940–febbraio 1944* (Milan: Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, 1966).

26. Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, revised from translation by D. M. Low (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1984). The book was first published as *Lessico famigliare* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1963).

27. Rita Levi-Montalcini, *In Praise of Imperfection: My Life and Work*, trans. Luigi Attardi (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

28. Augusto Segre, *Memorie di vita ebraica: Casale Monferrato, Roma, Gerusalemme, 1918–1960* (Rome: Bonacci, 1979). The second chapter appears in English translation in this volume.

29. Dan Vittorio Segre, *Memoirs of a Fortunate Jew: An Italian Story* (Bethesda, Maryland: Adler and Adler, 1987).

30. On Rabbi Riccardo Pacifici, see especially Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, pp. 223–78.

31. On Rabbi Nathan Cassuto, see Zuccotti, *Italians and the Holocaust*, pp. 157–62.

32. See ibid., pp. 241–55, for the Rosselli brothers, and pp. 268–70 for Enzo Sereni.

33. See, for example, Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi Contini*, trans. William Weaver (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), first published by Giulio Einaudi in 1962; Giancarlo Sacerdoti, *Ricordi di un ebreo bolognese: Illusioni e delusioni, 1929–1945* (Rome: Bonacci, 1983); Enzo Levi, *Memorie di una vita (1889–1947)* (Modena: S.T.E.M. Mucchi, 1972); Fabio Della Seta, *L'incendio del Tevere* (Trapani: Editore Celebes, 1969); Memo Bemporad, *La macine: Storia di una famiglia israelita negli ultimi 60 anni di vita italiana* (Rome: Carucci, 1984); and Carlo Modigliani, *Una croce e una stella: Dal mio diario* (Milan: Gastaldi, 1959).



Synagogue interior, Carmagnola. View shows the octagonal bimah (1766) and Ark.

Rabbinic Culture in 15th-Century Piedmont

Jeffrey R. Woolf

The cultural history of Piedmontese Jewry[1] up until the sixteenth century[2] begins with the large-scale migration of Jewish loan-bankers from Savoy into Piedmont.[3] These individuals, who were overwhelmingly French in origin,[4] required the services of teachers for their children and of legal scholars to adjudicate their problems and disputes. It was these scholars, migrating with their patrons to the cities and towns of Piedmont, together with bankers who themselves possessed scholarly credentials, who created rabbinic culture in the area.[5] Unfortunately, with the prominent exception of the writings of Rabbi Joseph Colon Trabotto (also known as Maharik, 1420–1480 or 1484) and his students,[6] surviving literary works from this era are somewhat sparse.[7] However, if we combine these together with those other sources presently available, a fairly coherent picture of the identity and activity of these scholars begins to emerge.

We know, for example, of the activity of Rabbi Yehiel Raphael Bellin (ca. 1375–1450). Most of his adult life was spent first in Savigliano[8] and then in Nice.[9] His scholarship is attested to by Maharik himself, who refers to him as the "light of the exile."[10] He appears to have authored many responsa, which have not survived, and was considered by many the elder statesman of Piedmontese Jewry in the first half of the century.[11]

Other scholars who were active in the region are known to us by name alone. The archival records[12] list a number of individuals with the title of *magister* or rabbi.[13] Gedalia ibn Yahya in his *Shalshelet ha-kabbalah*[14] lists no fewer than thirty-one scholars of note who lived in Piedmont in the course of the fifteenth century.[15] These scholars in turn attracted students from all over Italy, Savoy, and Germany. Sources confirm that large numbers of students traveled to Savigliano in order to study in the Yeshiva Maharik.[16] In addition, there are a number of contemporary references to gatherings of the "great ones of the Piedmont" and to students traveling to study there.[17] The picture that emerges then is one of a significant center of rabbinic scholarship arising in Piedmont within a generation of the major Jewish influx to the region.[18]

Jewish intellectual activity was centered upon the study of the Talmud and other works of Jewish law,[19] but with a flavor all its own due to its largely French origins.[20] This is important to note, because there is a definite tendency in scholarly literature to homogenize French and German Jews under the general heading of Ashkenazim.[21] Of course, there were numerous points of contact between the two groups, in light of the common origins and symbiotic growth of the two communities over the centuries.[22] In fact, in terms of the reference made to the Franco-German literary tradition, which dated from before the turn of the fourteenth century, the two communities are almost indistinguishable. Nevertheless, deeper examination reveals that French scholars in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries maintained a legal tradition significantly distinct from that of their German brethren.[23]

If we take Maharik as an exemplar of the French school,[24] one discovers in his responsa a sense of his isolation from contemporary German Jewish tradition and from German rabbinic scholars. Colon was not aware of otherwise well-known German Jewish customs.[25] Even more striking is the absence of any significant reference in his responsa to the writings or opinions of the great German scholars of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, such as rabbis Alexander Susskind, Isaac of Dura, Israel Krems, Shalom of Neustadt, Jacob Moelin, and Jacob Weil,[26] whose writings form the backbone of mid-fifteenth-century German *halakhah*.[27]

On the other hand, Maharik's responsa, and those of his students, are replete with references to specifically French legal practices, which they try to protect.[28] Their writings are marked by heavy reliance upon the *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* of Rabbi Moses of Coucy and the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* of Rabbi Isaac of Corbeille, along with the glosses of Rabbi

Peretz to the latter.[29] Those works were viewed as the summae of French legal tradition.[30] Moreover, there were fundamental methodological differences between French and German rabbis. French responsa, for example, contain more casuistic legal analysis than those of contemporary German rabbis.[31]

Alongside the Talmud, French Piedmontese scholars devoted significant time to the careful study of Maimonides's code, the *Mishneh Torah*.[32] Maharik, for example, in his writings invested extensive efforts in the elucidation of this work, relied upon it for actual decisions, and gave a regular lecture in his yeshiva, which was dedicated to its study.[33] Colon's student Rabbi Ben Zion Denoit (1435–ca. 1504) went even further and based his entire legal code on the *Mishneh Torah*, with appropriate adaptations to the specifics of the French Jewish halakhic tradition.[34]

While the primary focus of Jewish intellectual activity was on the Talmud and its related literatures, other disciplines were cultivated as well. The study of the Bible, per se, was common.[35] Maharik, in his writings, demonstrates total mastery of the entire biblical corpus, a requirement for the type of highly allusive, intricately constructed, rhymed prose with which his responsa were often prefaced.[36] He made use of and taught in his yeshiva the commentaries of Rashi, Nahmanides, and David Kimhi, as well as extensive portions of midrashic literature.[37] Certain allusions in his responsa and those of other writers indicate that there was more than a smattering of interest in Hebrew grammar and style in the Piedmontese scholarly community.[38]

Of significant interest are indications that both philosophy and Kabbalah were cultivated in the circles of the French émigré scholars. One major indication of the former is provided by the anonymous moralizing tract, *Orhot Zaddikim* (*The Paths of the Righteous*),[39] which was almost certainly authored by a French scholar, most likely in the first half of the fifteenth century.[40] The massive influence of rabbis Sa'adiah Gaon, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Bahya ibn Pakudah, and Maimonides upon his work suggests the familiarity of both writer and audience with the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition.[41] At the same time, the cultivation of the study of Kabbalah among the French émigrés of Savoy/Piedmont is confirmed by a work on the mystical names of God that was authored by Maharik's own father, Rabbi Solomon Trabotto, himself a noted scholar at the turn of the fifteenth century.[42]

More suggestive evidence of meta-halakhic study by Piedmontese Jews is to be found in a small manuscript legal code authored by Maharik's disciple Rabbi Denoit.[43] In the first two entries[44] the author presents a rationale for the Jewish dietary laws. The initial discussion is based upon the kabbalistic tract *Maarekhet ha-Elohut*.[45] The rest of the discussion, covering some nine folio pages, is based both implicitly and explicitly upon Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed*.[46] The author heavily endorses the study of philosophy (which he declares to be the "revealed" sense of the Torah) as an effective method of enhancing personal spirituality and observance.[47] However, at the same time, the author makes it quite clear that the study of Kabbalah is superior to that of philosophy, which hence remains an esoteric lore.[48] That philosophy was actively studied by initiates, though, is beyond question.[49]

We would be amiss, however, if we were to conclude this survey without a brief description of the schools wherein this cultural life flourished, namely the yeshivot. As it is Maharik's yeshiva that is best known and best documented, our remarks must perforce be based thereupon. However, from other sources it is clear that Colon's academy was typical of those maintained by other scholars. We have already noted that in Piedmont most scholars served as teachers for the loan-bankers, who formed the communities, and their children. Maharik was no exception. Elementary teaching was the mainstay of his economic existence. In an early responsum he complains bitterly of his fate: "I awake to the voice of the bird, a thin crust of frost

on my neck, and ice at night. Sleep wanders from my eyes due to the task that is before me."[50] The result, he concludes, is that he has neither the time nor the composure to respond properly to the complicated legal questions sent to him.[51]

By the 1450s Maharik began to attract older students and some rabbinic contemporaries, who formed the nucleus of his yeshiva.[52] Those who gathered around Colon to study with him traveled from Piedmont, Savoy, Central and Eastern Italy, and even Germany; his reputation was evidently quite widespread.[53] These were of three types. There were older colleagues who formed an inner circle around Maharik[54] and whom he consulted when writing his responsa.[55] Then there were somewhat younger students who came to study under Colon's tutelage. Finally, there came wandering scholars who would spend relatively short periods with Colon, before moving on to the academy of yet another prominent scholar.[56]

In the early 1460s Maharik's yeshiva was located in one of the several synagogues of Savigliano, and it is about this school that we possess the most detailed information.[57] The day was divided into two parts. The morning was dedicated to a daily lesson given by Maharik in either the Talmud or a code such as the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol or the *Mishneh Torah*.[58] Preparation for this lecture took up a significant portion of Maharik's time, for he constantly complains of being busy with "teaching in the *yeshivah* of the scholars, the *Haverim*,[59] may G-d protect them."[60] Afternoons were spent in private study with the children of his various patrons.[61]

This yearly curriculum was divided into half-year semesters. In the first Colon and his students concentrated upon the text of a given talmudic tractate, together with the commentary of Rashi. According to the testimony of later scholars,[62] in this way they attained a clear understanding of the text at hand and the issues presented therein. Only in the second half of the year were the students introduced to the casuistic glosses of the Tosafists dealing with the material covered in the first semester.[63]

It was probably after the daily lesson in the synagogue that Maharik was available to answer questions of law, for not only did people write to solicit his opinion, local Jews seem to have brought their questions to him in person.[64] As people came in and presented their problems, Maharik would consult his students, turning practical decision making into a pedagogical exercise.[65]

This schedule would hold true for the entire week, except for Friday and the Sabbath. On the former day Colon gave his students an informal class on the portion of the Pentateuch to be read in the synagogue the next morning.[66] In this class, a rough record of which has been preserved in the notes of his students,[67] Maharik would carefully analyze the biblical portion, concentrating on its refraction through the commentary of Rashi.[68] He might clarify the proper version of the text of Rashi's comments,[69] explain the meaning of Rashi's comments,[70] and point out what in the text or context of the Bible caused Rashi to comment as he did.[71] Occasionally, Colon would also add his own comments or alternative explanations to issues raised by Rashi.[72]

Maharik's relationship with his students and former students transcended the narrow bounds of intellectual exchange. He was actively involved in their personal lives and carried on intensive correspondence and long-distance guidance for them, even after they had physically departed his academy.[73] Such continued relations only further served to strengthen the ties between master, disciple, and the unique traditions imparted by him to them.

What emerges from our survey of Piedmontese Jewry is a picture of a vibrant cultural center maintaining its native legal traditions, while expanding its intellectual horizons into the Bible, philosophy, and mysticism. Small wonder that the academy of Maharik and others turned the region into a mecca of Jewish scholarship, until persecution and expulsion brought it to an untimely end.[74]

Notes

1. Up until the present time, scholarly attention has been focused upon the political, social, communal, and economic history of Piedmontese Jewry. The scholarly consensus has been in agreement with the declaration of Renata Segre: "The Jewish community which, for close to seventy years, had developed in the Italian domains of Savoy has not provided us with testimony about its internal life. Only the voice of Rabbi Josef Colon has reached us through his Response" (R. Segre, "Introduction," *The Jews in Piedmont*, vol. 1, 1297–1582 (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1986), p. xliii. My brief article demonstrates that through the use of Rabbi Colon's responsa and collateral sources that have since come to light, it is possible to present a clearer picture of parameters of Jewish culture in Piedmont than has hitherto been thought possible. A full presentation of the state of fifteenth-century Piedmontese life will be included in a book on Rabbi Colon that I am preparing.

2. At this point political instability, persecution, and expulsion brought a break in Jewish settlement that was not renewed until the second half of the sixteenth century. See Segre, "Introduction," pp. xlv–lxiv; and H. Beinart, "Jewish Settlement in the Duchy of Savoy in the Wake of the Privilegium of 1572," in D. Carpi et al., eds., *Scritti in memoria di Leone Carpi* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 72–118 (in Hebrew).

3. While long an integral part of the duchy, Piedmont was in the midst of a period of expansion under the active encouragement of dukes Amadeus VIII and Louis I, for whom Piedmont provided the only avenue for territorial expansion, since Savoy was blocked to the west by France, to the north by the Swiss Confederation, and to the south by the Mediterranean. See C. Dufayard, *Historie de Savoie* (Paris, 1914), pp. 128ff.; S. Foa, "Bianchi e banchiereri ebrei nel Piemonte dei secoli scorsi," *Rassegna mensile d'Israel* 31 (1955), pp. 41–42; A. Luzzatto, "The Entry and Settlement of the Jews in the Piedmont in the Fifteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 159–60 (in Hebrew); M. Ruggerio, *Storia del Piemonte* (Turin, 1982), pp. 215–24, 237–38; and Segre, "Introduction," p. x. For more recent sources, see also T. Bardelle, *Juden in einem Transit- und Brückenland: Studien zur Geschichte der Juden in Savoyen-Piemont bis zum Ende der Herrschaft Amadeus VIII* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1998); and M. Anfossi, *Gli ebrei in Piemonte: Loro condizioni giuridico-sociali dal 1430 all'emancipazione* (Bologna: A. Forni, 2001).

4. In the wake of the final expulsion of the Jews from France in 1394, Jews moved in large numbers into the Duchy of Savoy, which, while technically part of the Holy Roman Empire, was French in language and cultural orientation. See Luzzatto, "Entry and Settlement of the Jews," pp. 160–61; and R. Bonfil, "The Settlement of Wandering Jews in Italy in the Late Middle Ages," in A. Shinan, ed., *Emigration and Settlement in Jewish and General History* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1982), pp. 139–41 (in Hebrew).

5. See M. Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Kultur der abendlandischen Juden während des Mittelalters* (Warsaw: S. Friedberg, 1899), p. 187 (in Hebrew); and my article, "New Light on the Life and Times of Rabbi Joseph Colon Trabotto (Maharik)," in R. Bonfil, ed., *Professor Giuseppe Sermonetta Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998) (*Italia* 13–14), pp. 151–80. See also ShuT Maharik (Venice, 1519), *shoresh* 72 (end), where Maharik describes himself (not unconflictedly) as a teacher of little children.

6. See below. His life is discussed in J. Booksbaum, "The Biography of Rabbi Joseph Colon and His Legal Method," in *Shut u 'Piske Maharik ha-Hadashim*,' ed. E. D. Pines (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1984), pp. 19–48 (in Hebrew); and J. Woolf, "The Life and Responsa of Rabbi Joseph Colon b. Solomon Trabotto (Maharik)," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1991, pp. 1–66.

7. Examinations I carried out at the Institute for Microfilmed Manuscripts of the Jewish National and University Library at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, promise that there is much material waiting to be discovered concerning this topic.

8. The documents published by Segre (*Jews in Piedmont*, nos. 19, 142, 200–01, 227) describe Bellin as one of the leading householders in Savigliano, as evidenced by his payment of the annual Easter tax to the Duchy of Savoy.

9. Gedalia ibn Yahya, *Shalshelet HaKabbalah* (Venice, 1587), p. 28b. The fact that our writer describes a *get* as having been returned to Maharik from Nice by his father lends further credence to the identification suggested here.

10. *Shoresh* 162 (Venice, 1519).

11. The responsa are cited by Maharik (ibid). See also Woolf, "New Light," passim.

12. Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, nos. 106, 108, 142, 203, 281, 324, 527.

13. Not all of those listed as *magister*, though, were necessarily rabbis. The title could equally be used for physicians. (Cf. Segre, *Jews in Piedmont*, nos. 45, 46).

14. Ibn Yahya, *Shalshelet HaKabbalah*, p. 28b.

15. Ibn Yahya himself admits a certain amount of inaccuracy in his dating. See ibid.

16. Woolf, "Life and Responsa," pp. 20–21.

17. I. Sonne, "The General Council in Italy: Forerunner of the Council of Four Lands in Poland," *HaTequfah* 8 (1948), pp. 642–44 (in Hebrew).

18. Maharik departed Piedmont in the early 1460s. Hence the reports concerning his academy all relate to within thirty years of the major Savoyard migration.

19. See M. A. Shulwass, "The Study of the Torah by Italian Jewry in the Renaissance," *Horeh* 10 (1948), pp. 106–08 (in Hebrew); and his *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 267–76.

20. Piedmontese Jewry also had its own unique liturgical tradition, *minhag APaM* (an acronym for Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo), which was derived from that of medieval Northern France. See D. Goldschmidt, "Gleanings from *Mahzor APaM*," *Studies in Liturgy and Liturgical Poetry* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 80–121 (in Hebrew). (See also the essay in this collection by Yom Tov Assis.)

21. See the discussion in Woolf, "New Light."

22. For the general contours of the relationship between the two communities, see H. Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in *Sefer Hasidim*," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 1 (1976), part 3; and A. Grossman, *The Earliest Sages of France* (Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 539–86.

23. Bonfil, "Settlement of Wandering Jews," pp. 162–63.

24. As he certainly saw himself to be and was in turn perceived. Cf., e.g., *shoresh* 37.

25. *Shorashim* 21, 41, 79, 92.

26. When Maharik cites any of these writers, it is generally in response to their mention by others, e.g., *shorashim* 38 (*Agudah*), 16 (R. Jacob Weil), and *Hadashim*, nos. 3 (R. Israel Isserlein) and 14 (R. Jacob Weil). (In these notes *Hadashim* refers to *Shut u 'Piske Maharik ha-Hadashim*,' ed. E. D. Pines [Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1984; in Hebrew]). Such occasional references, as opposed to the massive use that he makes of classical French writers, only underscore their marginality in his thought.

The highly circumscribed use of German writings is also characteristic of R. Azriel Diena in his *Responsa*, ed. Y. Boksenboim, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1977), pp. 592–93; and R. Ben Zion Denoit, the author of JTS Ms. Rabb. 1087. See Y. Yudeliv, "Who Was the 'Italian Scholar and Legist'?" *Italia* 10 (1993), pp. 9–16 (in Hebrew); and my article, "Philosophy in Late Medieval Ashkenaz: New Evidence," *Da'at* 42 (1999), pp. 63–86 (in Hebrew).

27. See Y. Dinari, *The Rabbis of Germany and Austria at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 169–79 (in Hebrew).

28. *Shorashim* 19, 30, 32, 37, 40, 56, 92, 114. In *Hadashim*, no. 46 (end), Maharik accentuates the existence of parallel legal traditions between French and German Jews, when attempting to adjudicate a situation in which these came into conflict. See also Diena, *Responsa* 1, nos. 5, 30, 73, 82, 107.

29. A search conducted on the Bar Ilan Responsa Project CD documented the massive use made by Maharik of these two works.

30. Cf. R. Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

31. This conclusion is my impression based upon a comparison of Colon's and Diena's responsa with those of R. Judah Mintz and R. Meir of Padua (died 1565).

32. This is true of Colon, his teachers, and his students. In this they were simply continuing a long-standing French penchant for the work. See J. Woolf, "Maimonides Revised: The Case of the *Sefer Misvot Gadol*," *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997), pp. 275–303, and Woolf, "Philosophy in Late Medieval Ashkenaz." I present a full discussion of this issue in my study "Admiration and Apathy: Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in High and Late Medieval Ashkenaz," in J. R. Harris, ed., *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 427–53.

33. See Maharik's *Hiddushe u-Ferushe Maharik ha-Hadashim*, ed. E. D. Pines (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1984), part 2. For our purposes here, I have relied totally on the material published by Pines. All references in these notes are thus to material found therein. In large part Pine's material overlaps that which is contained in Bartenura's commentary and, from both a qualitative as well as a methodological point of view, is identical to it.

34. Woolf, "Philosophy in Late Medieval Ashkenaz," n. 38.

35. S. Simonsohn, "Jewish Education in Italy in the Renaissance," in *Educational Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, ed. M. Buber et al. (Jerusalem, 1964), pp. 364–81. (in Hebrew).

36. In this Colon was not atypical. See Shulwass, "Study of the Torah," p. 118.

37. This emerges both from his responsa (cf. *shorashim* 37, 52, 63, 88, 158, 169) and from the notes of his students reproduced in *Hiddushe*, part 1.

38. In Ms. Budapest-Kaufman 150A, p. 202. See, e.g., *shoresh* 162; and the discussion in Woolf, "New Light," passim. Maharik did see the need for grammatical consistency in the writing of *gittin*. The same concern was evinced by R. Samson Bellin in Ms. Vat-Ebr, 429/18, p. 58b.

39. *Sefer Orhot Zaddiqqim HaShalaim*, ed. G. Zeloshinsky (Jerusalem, 1988).

40. See M. Breuer, "The Ashkenazic Yeshivah at the Close of the Middle Ages," Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 86ff. (in Hebrew); and J. Woolf, "When Was the Book 'Orhot Zaddiqqim' Written?" *Qiryat Sefer* 63, no. 192 (1993), pp. 321–22.

41. This arises from the listing of sources in the above noted edition (pp. 250–60). The work also reveals a significant reliance on the literature of *Hasside Ashkenaz*, which in light of the above description requires further study. See Güdemann, *Geschichte der Erziehungswesens*, pp. 172ff.

42. The manuscript is entitled *Al Nun-Dalet Shmot HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (*Concerning the Fifty-Four Names of the Holy One, Blessed Be He*; Ms. Bodeley 1943 3). The work is based on the writings of the thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalist Joseph ibn Gikitillia. (The authenticity of the attribution of this manuscript to Maharik's father was provided by Professor Moshe Idel.) Colon's grandson, R. Abraham B. Gershon Treves (himself the scion of a prominent French family), also authored mystical works that were heavily based upon the work of ibn Gikitillia. See G. Nepi and M. Ghirondi, *Toldot G'dolei Yisrael B'Italyah* (Trieste, 1853), p. 8, no. 32.

43. It is listed as JTS Ms. Rabb. 1087 and is entitled *Halakot by a Student of Yosef Colon*, Italy, fifteenth century.

44. Fols. 1b–9a (Tel Aviv, 1976); M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 260–64.

45. Ferrara, 1558.

46. Fols. 4b and 9b.

47. Fol. 4b.

48. Fol. 4a of Woolf, "Philosophy in Late Medieval Ashkenaz." Interestingly, the author of the contemporary Ashkenazic moralist tract *Sefer Mardea* takes his German brethren to task for neglecting the inner meaning of the commandments, which may be obtained by studying both philosophy and kabbalah. See Ta Shema, "New Information Concerning *Tosafot Gornish*," *Alei Sefer*, no. 1 (1975–76), pp. 86–87 (in Hebrew).

49. This finding is not necessarily dependent upon the ongoing scholarly debate concerning the extent of philosophical and kabbalistic activity in late Ashkenaz generally. First because there are enough indications that French Jews brought these areas of interest with them into Piedmont, one can easily argue that texts such as that of R. Denoit express ongoing traditions (especially in light of the heavily Maimonidean tint of French halakhic culture). However, even if this point is considered moot, one may easily see the penetration of these disciplines into Piedmont as an inevitable result of its proximity to Italian Jewry, which we know cultivated them. Cf. Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, chapter 5.

50. *Shoresh* 72 (end).

51. On the life of the scholar as a children's tutor, see A. Marx, "R. Joseph of Arles as Teacher and Rosh Yeshivah in Siena," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1946), pp. 271–79 (in Hebrew).

52. The establishment of a place for older students to learn was a prerogative of rabbinic ordination and was encouraged by the patrons of rabbinic scholars as lending them prestige. See Breuer, "Ashkenazic Yeshivah," p. 9ff.; and Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, chapter 2.

53. Booksbaum, "Biography of Rabbi Joseph Colon," p. xlv. The impetus to study with Colon was, no doubt, enhanced by the decline of the intellectual center in Chambéry in the 1450s. See Segre, "Introduction," p. xxxvi.

54. Maharik often cites his teaching responsibilities toward these students, usually to explain delay or brevity in responding to questions. See, e.g., *shorashim*, 88, 90, 93, 102, 132, 149, and *Hadashim*, no. 7. Such gatherings of older students into a sort of advanced institute was the rule in Italy, as pointed out by Breuer, "Ashkenazic Yeshivah," p. 23.

55. Cf., for example, *shoresh*, 171. Such consultation was not unusual. See A. Fox, "Two conceptions of the *Herem HaYishuv*," *Zion* 37 (1972), p. 192 (in Hebrew).

56. A perfect example of such a peripatetic student was Jacob B. Moses, who wandered all over Germany and Northern Italy. See J. Freimann, *Leket Yosher*, 2, pp. vii–ix.

On the general phenomenon of wandering rabbinic scholars, see H. H. Ben-Sasson, "The Social Teachings of R. Yohannan Luria," *Zion* 21 (1962), p. 177 (in Hebrew); Breuer, "Ashkenazic Yeshivah," p. 7; and Breuer, "The Wanderings of Students and Scholars: A Prolegomenon to a Chapter in the History of the Yeshivot," in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson*, ed. M. Ben-Sasson et al. (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 445–68 (in Hebrew).

57. JTS Ms. Rabb. 1087. That Savigliano had more than one synagogue is attested to by Segre, "Introduction," p. xxxiii. Cf. A. Sacerdoti and A. Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici, i luoghi, la storia, l'arte* (Venice: Marsilio; Turin: Regione Piemonte, 1994), pp. 133–34.

58. I assume that Colon's school functioned in a fashion not unlike that of his contemporary R. Judah Mintz. See Elijah Capsali, *Venetian Chronicle*, ed. A. Shmuelewitz et al. (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1977; in Hebrew).

There is, at the same time, some question as to whether the Ashkenazic glosses on Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, known as *Haggahot Maimuniut*, were part of the curriculum in Colon's yeshiva. We know—for example, from the testimony of both R. David Messer Leon (*Sefer Kavod Hakhamim*, ed. S. Bernfeld [Jerusalem, 1971], pp. 79–80, 101–02) and the anonymous author of *Sefer Alilot Devarim* (see R. Bonfil, "*Sefer Alilot Devarim*: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Thought in the Fourteenth Century," *Eshel Beer Sheva* 2 [1980], pp. 241–44 [in Hebrew])—that these glosses played a central role in the course of study in German academies. Bonfil, in *Rabbis and Jewish Communities*, concludes that the former's remarks may be taken to pertain equally to Maharik's circle.

59. That is, those who had not yet been fully ordained as rabbis.

60. *Shoresh* 90.

61. Breuer, "Ashkenazic Yeshivah," p. 12.

62. See R. Hillel b. Naftali, *Bet Hillel (ad Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah)*, sec. 242, subpar. 5.

63. This was in marked contrast to the contemporary German practice, which heavily emphasized the study of the *Tosafot*. See D. Rappel, *The Debate over Pilpul* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 78–99 (in Hebrew).

64. E.g., *shorashim* 5, 49, 58, and *Hadashim*, no. 6.

65. Cf. Breuer, "Ashkenazic Yeshivah," pp. 10ff. These oral rulings would then be written down and preserved by the students.

66. Ibid., pp. 60–61.

67. A large number of these student recordings of Colon's comments were published by Pines in *Hiddushe*, part 1. Other extracts, some duplicating the material published by Pines, are to be found in the Bible commentary attributed to R. Obadiah Yare of Bartenura entitled *Omer Naka* (Jerusalem, 1983).

68. The overwhelming majority of comments that are clearly cited as being by Maharik deal with Rashi. In this Maharik falls within a strong movement of supercommentaries on Rashi created in the period. See A. H. Freimann, "Manuscript Supercommentaries on Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch," in *Rashi Anniversary Volume* (New York, 1941), pp. 73–109 (in Hebrew).

69. E.g., Gen. 1:2, 2:14, 8:22, 10:10, and 12:6; Exod. 3:19 and 9:9. At the same time it is quite clear that Colon's text of Rashi often diverged from the standard, published text. Cf., e.g., Exod. 28:4 and 28:26. The examples given are intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive.

70. E.g., Gen. 11:14, 18:1, 20:20, 33:4, and 25:20; Exod. 3:18; and Num. 20:7.

71. Gen. 1:1, 4:16, 37:33, and 40:1; Exod. 28:27; and Num. 2:2. Maharik also carefully compares and contrasts comments of Rashi in different portions of the Pentateuch, ever aware of possible contradictions between them. In such case he would offer his own resolution of the difficulty. Cf., e.g., Gen. 8:3, 12:2, 13:7, and 41:42; Exod. 12:15; and Num. 1:49. Only once does he summarily dismiss a comment of Rashi as "forced" (Num. 7:1), though he often carefully notes that Rashi's remarks do not reflect the "simple meaning of the text" ("peshuto shel mikra"). Cf. Gen. 48:7 and Exod. 17:2.

72. E.g., Gen. 1:12, 2:7, 11:10, and 48:7; Exod. 28:26; Num. 26:9; and Deut. 1:11. As Breuer ("Ashkenazic Yeshivah," p. 63) has noted, this approach to the study of the Bible, which emphasizes a careful, almost pedantic study of Rashi's commentary rather than a fresh reinterpretation of the Bible, may be seen as the application of the method of analysis known as *pilpul* to the Bible.

73. See Woolf, "Life and Responsa," chapter 5.

74. Subsequent to the submission of this article, I published a number of studies that elaborate upon themes first raised here. Among these are: "The Authority of Custom (*Minhag*) in the Responsa of R. Joseph Colon, *Dine Yisrael* 19 (1997–98), pp. 143–73; "Between Law and Society," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 25, no. 1 (2000–01), pp. 45–70; and "Between Diffidence and Initiative: Ashkenazic Legal Decising in the Late Middle Ages (1350–1500)," *Journal for Jewish Studies* 52, no. 1 (2001), pp. 85–97.



Synagogue interior, Casale Monferrato (in use since 1599). View to Ark. The interior is the most elaborate Baroque synagogue design in Italy.

Nusah APaM: A Medieval Liturgical Survivor

Yom Tov Assis

As the centers of learning in the east, in Israel and Babylon, lost their prominence in the Jewish world, two new centers of Jewish scholarship began to emerge from the middle of the tenth century onward: Sepharad and Zarfat-Ashkenaz.[1] Franco-German Jewry, with its smaller branches in England, Bohemia, and Moravia, is often conceived as one branch of Jewry under the term *Ashkenaz* in contrast to *Sepharad*. Although this is generally true, this concept lacks the precision that any generalization does. For unlike the smaller branches, French Jewry enjoyed a more or less equal status to that of Ashkenaz. In several fields it surpassed Ashkenazic Jewry. Despite the great affinity between the two, the Jews of France were not Ashkenazim. They had their own customs and traditions, ordinances and liturgy.

What happed to French Jewry? Why do we not come across "Zarfatic" Jews, as we do Ashkenazic or Sephardic Jews? What happened to their customs and liturgy? The fate of French Jewry was determined in the fourteenth century, when it was subjected to a very harsh royal policy. There were at least two expulsions of Jews from France, at the beginning and at the end of the fourteenth century, in 1306 and 1394. In 1306 French Jewry suffered a very heavy blow when Philip le Bel decided to expel all the Jews from his realm. Many Jews found refuge in the German territories and Provence,[2] while some were admitted to the Hispanic kingdoms.[3]

Following the expulsion of 1306 French Jews settled in the western parts of German lands.[4] The French refugees joined Ashkenazic communities, with which they had great affinity. It was easy for them to assimilate within communities so much akin. Many new communities that appeared in western Germany in the fourteenth century seem to confirm the extent of French Jewish emigration to Germany.[5] Since the liturgy of both communities was much alike, it was not difficult for French Jews to adopt the Ashkenazi ritual sooner or later. Some of the prayer books that they brought from France were "corrected" and were thus adapted to the Ashkenazi rite.[6] In other circumstances and conditions, French Jews acted differently when their numbers allowed them to do so. In Barcelona French Jews established a synagogue of their own, the *sinagoga dels francesos* or *scola gallarum*.[7] There has been no research on the fate of the French liturgy in Catalonia or elsewhere in the Iberian peninsula, and the question how long this tradition continued its independent existence must remain for the time being unanswered. The expulsion of 1394 left even less impact of Franco-Jewish influence upon neighboring lands due to their small numbers.

In 1394 the majority of French Jewry, an already reduced population, moved to Provence, Savoy, and eventually Piedmont, which came under the rule of the duke of Savoy. Provence expelled its Jews in 1511. By then no Jewish community remained in western Europe, except in the Comtat Venaissin area, which was under papal rule. Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews moved on the whole eastward, where they established their own communities and often exercised their hegemony over existing communities. French and Provençal Jews were not numerous enough to form communities of their own, and where they did manage to do so, these groups did not last long. They merged with other Jews, as did their traditions and liturgy. The old French ritual, however, survived in the small communities of Piedmont, where its vestiges remained until the twentieth century in three localities: Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo. These three communities that preserved the ancient liturgy of medieval French Jewry gave their name to the special liturgical tradition that is now known as *nusah APaM*, an acronym formed from the first letters of the three communities' names. Other French Jews lived in other localities in Piedmont. While they were not numerous enough to form their own communities and retain their own liturgy, they must have had some influence in shaping *minhag Torino*, which is a special Ashkenazi *nusah*.[8]

Samuel David Luzzatto was apparently the first to

describe *nusah APaM*. According to Luzzatto, the three communities prayed according to the Ashkenazi ritual throughout the year except for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In fact, they used the above-mentioned special ritual of Turin. Obviously, the differences between the Ashkenazi and French, or Zarfati, rituals were too minor during the year to warrant the production of special prayer books for the three French communities of Piedmont. They were not large enough to ever have their *mahzorim* for the High Holidays printed. As far as we know *nusah APaM* has been preserved in manuscript only. Luzzatto's description of the circumstances that made the three Piedmontese Jewish communities the sole holders of a liturgy that has otherwise disappeared is still as valid today as it was in 1841. Luzzatto was informed about *minhag APaM* by his student the chief rabbi of Piedmont Jewry, Rabbi Hillel Barukh Shalom Cantoni, who headed the *beth din* in Turin. The rabbi sent some manuscripts to Luzzatto, who was able to study the ritual of *APaM* and describe it for the first time in the Jewish world.

On the basis of a manuscript of the Yom Kippur *mahzor* of the three communities, Luzzatto described the unique *Piyyut* for the Kippur seder *ha'Avodah Ata Konanta Olam Berov Hesed*, which is found only in the French *nusah*.[9] In a letter that he wrote to Gabriel Falk, who had it published, Luzzatto explained the historical circumstances that led the communities of Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo to retain the French *nusah*. Meanwhile, other Jews of French origin mostly adopted the Ashkenazi ritual, and some accepted the Sephardi or other rituals.[10] Elsewhere Luzzatto explains further the French origin of *nusah APaM* and blesses the Jews of the three communities, who preserved in manuscript the *Piyyutim* of Rashi, and other medieval French Jews. Had it not been for them, all the *Piyyutim* of medieval French Jewry would have been lost forever.[11]

The similarity between the German and French rituals was so great that the three Piedmontese communities did not feel the need to have their own prayer books for any occasion except Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Hence all the manuscripts, of all the types that will be discussed below, belong to these two solemn days. The main differences between the French and the German *mahzorim* are found in the *Piyyutim*. Those that are found in *nusah APaM* are the original French liturgical poems that are not found elsewhere. Isaac Markon became acquainted with the Piedmontese French *nusah* in the late 1920s, when he came across an incomplete manuscript in Berlin, which led him to two other full manuscripts in Frankfurt. On the basis of these two manuscripts Markon wrote an article in which he included a full list of all the *Piyyutim* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur according to the *APaM* ritual.[12] On the title page of one of the manuscripts we find the following passage:

May He who hears prayers, hear our prayers, as we come through His gates with the words on our lips, and instead of our sacrifices we offer our tears; may He gather us soon in our land where we may behave as we are commended. Enter through His gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Seek the Lord and His Strength, look always for His countenance. Book and mahzor *for the High Holidays according to the French ritual and that of the Jewish Community of Asti.*[13]

The *Piyyutim* in the *mahzorim* of *APaM* are the outstanding characteristic of the ancient French ritual that has been preserved in manuscript in Piedmont. These liturgical poems reflect the love and perseverance of the Jewish refugees from France and their descendants who refused to abandon their customs in favor of the Ashkenazi *mahzor*, which was adopted by other refugees. These poems were published by A. Rau and S. Bernstein.[14] Some of these poems were written by well-known Franco-Jewish poets; others are anonymous.

As explained above, the three communities were not large enough to print their *mahzorim*, which have therefore remained in manuscript.[15] The number of manuscripts that we know of is not large. D. Goldschmidt divided them into three categories: full *mahzorim* primarily for the use of the *hazan*, abridged *mahzorim* for congregants and *hazanim*, and booklets only for the public.[16] The first category contained the full prayers, the *Piyyutim* and *selihot*, and were most likely written for use by the *hazan*. They are usually folio size.[17] The second category, quarto size, contain the prayers of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that were recited by the *hazan* with a loud voice.[18] Such books were used in conjunction with other *mahzorim* according to the Ashkenazi *minhag*, which were easily available in northwestern Italy. In these books the afternoon and evening prayers, as well as the *zemirot* (or *Pesukei de-Zimra*) and the silent *'amidot*, are omitted. The last category contained only the parts that were recited according to *nusah APaM* and naturally could have only been used by the congregants who were equipped with *mahzorim* of Ashkenaz.[19]

The main differences between *nusah APaM* and that of Ashkenaz are as follows: The *Piyyutim* in the first benediction of the 'Amidah; several verses in the *Piyyutim*, called *qerovot*, are like Italian ritual; the *qerovah "Agan HaSahar"* in *musaf* of the second day of Rosh Hashanah; a different version of *kol nidre*; different *selihot* on the eve of Kippur; differences in *Seder ha'Avodah*; differences in the *Piyyutim* of the *minhah* and *neilah*; different *selihot* for *neilah*.[20]

Nusah APaM cannot be identified fully with the medieval French ritual. It is certainly the latter's heir, but it was also influenced probably by three other rituals: Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Provençal. The Ashkenazi influence has been referred to. It, in fact, replaced the old French ritual throughout the year because of the great similarity between the two. The Sephardi and Provençal influences are less obvious, but have contributed to the formation of *nusah APaM* as a variant of the French ritual.[21] Even *Piyyutim* that are found in *nusah APaM* and the Ashkenazi *mahzor* are not completely identical. The differences reflect the French and Ashkenazi versions and therefore deserve the expert's attention. The most authoritative description of *nusah APaM* is Goldschmidt's article, where all the differences and variants are given. His study is based on three manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, while my own research is based on the two manuscripts from Yale University, particularly Hebrew Ms. 52.[22]

There are several noteworthy features in the Hebrew Ms. 52 in Yale, some of which characterize *nusah APaM*. The prayers that the *hazanim* recite before *Barukh she-Amar* on the morning of Rosh Hashanah are especially beautiful in their contents and form. Many of the variants are introduced by the words "*Bene Tsarfat nohagim*," that is, "French Jews [literally, the children of France] have the custom to." In some instances a different or additional psalm is inserted in accordance with French usage. Thus in the *Pesukei de-Zimra after Barukh she-Amar*, psalms 34 and 17 are given in two columns under the following information: "The custom of French Jews is to say this psalm [*Tefilah leDavid*, Ps XVII] before *LeDavid Beshanoto* (Ps XXXIV) on the day of Rosh Hashanah because it is written in it, 'Let my judgment come forth from you.'" On Kippur after *Hodu*, psalms 32 and 33 appear in two columns with the instruction that the former is recited by French Jews before the latter.

The same *mahzor*, which is vocalized, contains numerous mistakes. Some of the mistakes are due to the scribe's ignorance of Hebrew grammatical rules.[23] The most noteworthy mistake is the confusion between the *kamats* and *patah*.[24] This suggests that the pronunciation of Hebrew was influenced by Sephardic Jews. Another characteristic of many of the *APaM* manuscripts is the use of the form *Elokenu*, a form usually used in speech at times other than prayers and designed to refrain from pronouncing the divine name.

In the nineteenth century, following innovations in other European communities, some changes were introduced in many synagogues in Piedmont, including Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo, in the form and, to a lesser degree, content of the prayers. Unlike the traditional polar structure of the Italian synagogues, where the *bimah* and *Aron ha-Kodesh* are adjacent to the western and eastern walls, respectively, the Piedmont synagogues had the *bimah* in the center, in the fashion of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic synagogues. In modern times in many synagogues in Piedmont the *bimah* was moved next to *Aron ha-Kodesh*. This happened also in the synagogues that followed *nusah APaM*, as one can see today in the synagogue of Asti. The order of service, however, was not seriously affected.

At their peak the communities of Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo numbered several hundred people.[25] The number of Jews in each of these towns decreased continually in modern times. In 1925 there were twelve Jews in Fossano and sixteen in Moncalvo. Eight years later six Jews were left in Fossano, and eight in Moncalvo. In the largest of the three, Asti, there were ninety Jews in 1933. World War II put an end to a tradition that had been brought from France to Piedmont in the fourteenth century. For more than half a millennium three communities in Piedmont preserved some of the essential parts of the medieval French liturgical tradition, which had disappeared elsewhere in the Jewish world.

Notes

1. On the terms Sepharad, Ashkenaz, and Zarfat, see S. Krauss, "The Names Ashkenaz and Sepharad . . .," *Tarbiz* 3 (1932), pp. 423–35. S. Schwarzfuchs, "L'opposition Tsarfat-Provence: La formation du judaïsme au nord de la France," in *Hommage à George Vajda: Etudes d'histoire et de pensée juive* (Louvain, 1980), pp. 135–50.

2. This did not apply to Languedoc, which was by then under French rule.

3. Y. Assis, "Juifs de France, réfugiés en Aragon (XIIIe–XIVe siècles)," no. 142 (1983), pp. 209–27.

4. F-J. Ziwes, *Studien zur Geschichte der Juden im mittleren Rheingebiet während des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Hannover, 1995), pp. 33–34, 181–93. See also F. Burgard, "Zur Migration der Juden im westlichen Reichsgebiet," in *Juden in der christlichen Umwelt während des späten Mittelalters*, Zeitschrift für historische Forschung, Beiheft 13 (Berlin, 1992), pp. 50ff.

5. Compare maps B and C in Ziwes, *Studien zur Geschichte der Juden*.

6. D. Goldschmidt, "Postscript and Reconsiderations on the Mahzor of Asti, Fossano and Moncalvo," in *On Jewish Liturgy, Essays on Prayer and Religious Poetry* (Jerusalem, 1980), p. 80, n. 1 (in Hebrew); see Montefiore Ms. 204 (today in Jews' College Library, London).

7. Y. Assis, "Synagogues in Medieval Spain," *Jewish Art* 18 (1992), p. 14.

8. For *nusah* Turin, see *Preghiere del giorni feriali e sabati secondo il rito italiano particolare della communità ebraica di Torino*, trans. D. Disegni, 2 vols. (Turin, 5707 [= 1949]). One volume is for weekdays, and the other for the Sabbath; both are dedicated "to the special Italian rite of the Jewish Community of Turin." The *nusah* is a mixture of Italian, Ashkenazic, and French.

9. *Avne Zikaron* (Prague, 5601 [=1841]), p. 167.

10. G. Fal, *Halikhot Kedem* (Amsterdam, 5707 [= 1847]), p. 51.

11. See Yehuda Rosenberg, ed., *Qovez Ma'ase Yede Geonim Qadmonim* (Berlin, 5616 [= 1856]). Luzzatto's description appears in part 2, pp. 107–10.

12. Isaac Markon, "The Mahzor A. F. M.," in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut*, ed. S. W. Baron and A. Marx (New York, 1935), p. 89-1-1 (Hebrew section).

13. For the Hebrew original, see ibid., p. 90.

14. A. Rau, "Querovat Agan HaSahar," in Emet LeYa'akov, *On the Occasion of the 70th Birthday of Rabbi Dr. Freiman* (Berlin, 5697 [= 1937]), pp. 128–48; S. Bernstein, "New Poems from Spain and France," *Tarbiz* 10 (1938), pp. 13–25.

15. The following articles can also be consulted for more information: D. Goldschmidt, "The Mahzor 'APaM' (= Asti, Fossano, Moncalvo)," *Kirjath Sepher* 30 (1954–55), pp. 118–36, 264–78 (in Hebrew); D. Disegni, "Il rito di Asti-Fossano-Moncalvo (APaM)," *Scritti in memoria di Sally Mayer: Saggi sull'ebraismo italiano* (Jerusalem, 1956), pp. 78–81; M. Acanfora Torrefranca, "Il rito APaM: Una diversa tradizione musicale?" in *Scritti sull'ebraismo in memoria di Emanuele Menachem Artom*, S. J. Sierra and E. Artom, eds. (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1996), pp. 322–28.

16. Goldschmidt, "Postscript and Reconsiderations," p. 81.

17. The following manuscripts belong to this category: Ms. from 1715 in the Italian Synagogue in Jerusalem; Yale Hebrew Ms. 52, from 1745; and Hebrew Ms. 62 from ca., but prior to, 1600.

18. To this category belong the following: Hebrew 8 1807 (probably from the mid-eighteenth century); and Hebrew 8 1806 (written in Asti in 1769). Both manuscripts are found in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem (JNUL).

19. The manuscripts from this category are numerous. One such booklet is Hebrew 8 of 1938 at JNUL.

20. Goldschmidt, "Postscript and Reconsiderations," p. 82.

21. For Sephardic influence, see ibid., pp. 114–15 and n. 114.

22. While I served as visiting professor of Jewish history at Yale University in 1997, I had the opportunity to study the two manuscripts thoroughly. I wish to thank the Center for Judaic Studies at Yale for its warm hospitality. Yale's Hebrew Ms. 52 is a full *mahzor*. The illumination of the title pages was apparently prepared by Eleazar Yehoshua in 1745, according to a typed note attached to the frontispiece. On the title page of the Yom Kippur section, there is writing stating that Yehoshua owns the *mahzor*. Another *mahzor* that I was able to study at Yale, Hebrew Ms. 62, was written before 1600.

23. See fol. 15v, line 2 where the letter *kaf* is mistakenly written with a *daguesh*. On line 4 the word *bedarko* is written with *hatafkamats* under the *dalet*.

24. There are many examples. See, for instance, fol. 15v, lines 4 and 6; and fol. 17v passim.

25. There are various sources for information on Asti, including: P. de Benedetti, "Gli ebrei di Asti e il loro rito," *Il platano* 2, no. 4 (1977); M. L. Giribaldi and M. P. Villani, *Il ghetto, la sinagoga, viaggio attraverso la cultura ebraica ad Asti*, ed. F. Bellone and V. Villani (Asti, 1992); V. Malfatto and P. Rogna, *Asti nella storia delle sue vie*, 2 vols. (Savigliano, 1979); S. Taricco, "La sinagoga di Asti," *Il platano* 2, no. 4 (1977); L. Voghera Luzzatto, *Documenti per la storia del ghetto di Asti* (Asti, 1981); and L. Voghera Luzzatto, *Una finestra sul ghetto: Stefano Incisa e gli ebrei di Asti* (Rome, 1983). For Fossano, see D. Colombo and G. Tedesco, "Il ghetto di Fossano," *Rassegna mensile d'Israel* 29 (1963), pp. 129–41. Moncalvo is discussed in the following articles: P. de Benedetti, "'La gran battaja': Una poesia sul ghetto di Moncalvo," *Scritti sull'ebraismo in memoria di Emanuele Menachem Artom*, S. J. Sierra and E. L. Artom, eds. (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 135–51; D. Colombo, "Il ghetto di Moncalvo e una sua poesia," *Rassegna mensile d'Israel* 36 (1970), pp. 436–41; and S. Foa, "L'istituzione del ghetto a Moncalvo," *Rassegna mensile d'Israel* 16 (1950), pp. 188–201.



Synagogue interior, Vercelli (opened 1878, no longer in use). The synagogue was designed by Marco Treves, a Vercelli native.

Hebrew Manuscript Decoration in Piedmont from the Late 16th to the Early 19th Centuries

Shalom Sabar

Introduction

Long after the invention of printing, the Jews of Europe continued to produce richly decorated Hebrew manuscripts. This is especially remarkable in the case of Italy. Although this country had been the leading center of Hebrew book printing, producing numerous attractive illustrated books during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the art of Hebrew manuscript illumination flourished among Italian Jews uninterruptedly, almost until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Thus when the artistic genre of manuscript illumination was losing its past glory in the general society, some of the most important examples were produced on Italian soil by or for Jews. This somewhat anachronistic phenomenon stems in part from the centrality of the written word in Jewish life, coupled with the halakhic requirement to create manuscripts for daily, liturgical usage (e.g., Torah scrolls, tefillin, and mezuzot). Beyond this need, however, the desire of Italian Jews to surround themselves with objets d'arts pertaining to the concept *Hiddur Mitzvah*, or the "beautification of the commandment," gave rise to the creation of many decorated liturgical codices and single pages, such as Passover Haggadot, Esther scrolls, ketubbot, Omer calendars, and *mizrah* and sukkah tablets.

The production and decoration of Hebrew codices in the region of Piedmont follows, more or less, this tradition. Thus despite its particular liturgical tradition, Piedmont is not much different from other regions in Northern Italy. Piedmontese Hebrew manuscript decoration from the late sixteenth century on, shares many of the characteristics that typify Italian Judaica in general. In fact, in many cases it would be difficult to distinguish between the decorations in Piedmontese manuscripts and those occurring in examples from other Italian regions. At the same time every region in Italy, and some of the towns with major Jewish communities (e.g., Venice, Ferrara, Mantua, Ancona, and Rome), developed local designs and types. Accordingly, as we shall see, one may talk to a certain extent of the style of Hebrew manuscript decoration in Piedmont—a style with local features, commonly mixed with those "imported" from the neighboring Italian regions.

The Casale Pilgrim

An early dated manuscript that positively emanates from Piedmont is the so-called *Casale Pilgrim*, which was produced in the city of Casale Monferrato (in Alessandria province) in the year 1598.[1] This codex is a typical example of the discussion above. Although the late Cecil Roth presented the codex as an original work, both text and illustrations were apparently copied from earlier sources. The text of this manuscript is an itinerary to holy sites in the land of Israel, accompanied by illustrations of the main monuments in these sites (such as the Temple Mount, the Tower of David, and the Mount of Olives for Jerusalem). Roth tried to show that a sixteenth-century Piedmontese Jew had actually traveled to the Holy Land, and upon returning to Italy composed this text and illustrated the actual monuments he had visited. However, the text is clearly based on the travelogue of an anonymous writer who completed his now lost manuscript in Safed in 1537. The lost codex became known by Uri ben Simeon of Biala,[2] and versions of his copy were published in sixteenth-century Italy. And though Roth was aware of this source, he claimed that the *Casale Pilgrim* modified the original text based on his finds in the land of Israel. However, as already shown by two leading experts of the time, the historian of Jewish art Mordechai Narkiss and the archaeologist Eliezer L. Sukenik,[3] the text is copied word for word from the original composition, and the modifications simply result from the elimination of passages not relevant to an abbreviated, illustrated edition. Moreover, some mistakes in the text clearly show that our scribe did not always comprehend the text before him.

Similar problems concern the cycle of illustrations. In fact, several illustrated itinerary manuscripts, some of

which antedate the Casale codex, have been preserved.[4] It is important to note that while the unusual scroll format was adopted for the other manuscripts, the Casale example is in the shape of a little book. Evidently, our folk artist used the illustrations in such a scroll as his source. This may be deduced from the naive, stereotyped illustrations that clearly follow the conventions of this little-known genre of travelogues to holy sites, and also from the expression "and this is its design," which precedes every illustration. These words, which usually appear at the end of a paragraph above the accompanying illustration, are at times not followed by an image on the same page but rather on the next one—implying that the Casale artist had to break the natural, continuous order of the scroll to fit the page format of a codex.[5]

A good example of the charming illustrations in the Casale codex is the opening one, depicting the town of Jericho surrounded by seven circular walls in the shape of a maze. This peculiar design is based on a midrashic tradition, the source of which is lost, which apparently combined the verse "Now Jericho was straitly shut up . . . none went out and none came in" (Joshua 6:1) with the seven-fold encompassment of the city by the Israelites (6:15). The image created in this manner is known from Christian manuscripts dated from the ninth century on, and from two medieval Hebrew codices, one German (1294), and one Sephardic (*The Farhi Bible*, 1366).[6] The itinerary manuscripts carry this tradition to the Renaissance and Baroque periods; an example from the nineteenth century is known as well.[7] Also common in this context is the house of Rahab the harlot at left, appropriately shown with a scarlet ribbon hanging from the left window. Why is Jericho the first town depicted in these manuscripts? As these are hagiographic itineraries, they follow the route of the ancient Israelites and "enter" the Holy Land in the footsteps of Joshua.

To sum up, though the folk artist of the *Casale Pilgrim* did not attempt to create an original work, his codex opens a window to the spiritual world of Piedmontese Jews in this period, depicting in words and pictures their sincere desire to familiarize themselves with the holy sites in Eretz Israel.

Other Manuscripts

The special liturgy of Piedmont Jews, known as *nusah APaM*, is preserved in handwritten copies of their prayer book.[8] Most of these extant manuscripts date from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. As figurative illustration in Italian prayer books was not common in this period, the artistic enhancement of these codices is limited to floral and architectural decorations. By and large, the title page would be the only section that the scribes selected to decorate. Ornamental title pages were the norm at the time in both manuscripts and printed books. The Piedmont scribes thus employed easily accessible and well-known pictorial conventions in decorating the title pages of the prayer books they copied.

A typical example is a prayer book from Moncalvo (1799; plate 9). Moncalvo is indeed one of the three *APaM* communities, and the text is primarily comprised of the special *Piyyutim* chanted on the High Holy Days "according to the French [*APaM*] rite." This information, plus the name of the patron and the date "to the count of the children of Israel," is set in a familiar, decorative frame, drawn in the same ink as the text. Twisted columns support floral vases, which flank a crowned Decalogue. The motif of the twisted columns, whether painted or in the round, was extremely popular in Jewish art of Piedmont. Twisted columns flank, for example, the Holy Ark of the synagogues of Biella, Cherasco, and Mondovi, and support the baldachin-shaped *bimah* in the Carmagnola, Cherasco, and Chieri synagogues.[9] The popularity of this motif is generally explained in the sacred context of the twisted column in Renaissance art, associating it with the Temple of Solomon.[10] The title page of the book thus serves as a "gateway" to a higher, holier sphere, especially befitting the realm of prayer. The

gateway image in other Piedmontese manuscripts, such as one from Casale dated 1702, is inscribed with the following, appropriate verses: "Open the gates of righteousness for me" (Psalms 118:19), and "Open the gates and let a righteous nation enter" (Isaiah 26:2).[11]

The influence of the images in the printed book can be exemplified in another manuscript. This is a Haggadah from Ivrea (1806), simply illustrated by Joseph Isaac Bella. Folio 32a opens with the initial word Ha (standing for "Ha lahma'anya," or "This bread of affliction"), set in a decorative shield with an angel hovering above (plate 10). This design had appeared on the title page of a Bible published by Gad Foa in Pisa just three years earlier, in 1803.[12] The folk artist did not have a copyright problem, and apparently was content in using the new, attractive design. Moreover, he even transcribed the same verse from Psalms 92:13 in the ribbon fluttering around the shield.

Other types of manuscript illumination that came from Piedmont fall under established categories of Italian Judaica, such as Esther scrolls, sukkah tablets, and Omer calendars and books. It is not always possible to determine definitively that a given manuscript belonging to these categories was created in Piedmont, which makes the selection of examples extremely difficult. Although Jewish and non-Jewish craftsmen in Northern Italy produced some of the most attractive Esther scrolls extant, they usually did not indicate their own names and place of production. A rare example that does contain a colophon is a megillah from eighteenth-century Moncalvo, produced by Elia Joshua, member of the noted Piedmontese family Segre (plate 4).[13] Each column of the text is set in a rich floral decoration, which though familiar from other regions in Northern Italy, was especially favored by the artists who decorated ketubbot in Piedmont.

In some other cases we may rely on oral tradition in the attribution of a manuscript to Piedmont. An Omer calendar book produced around the turn of the nineteenth century is in the possession of a descendant of a Piedmontese family. Enclosed in a silver binding, the miniature book contains the calendar for the forty-nine days counted between Passover and Shavuot. Two facing pages are dedicated to each day, and each page is decorated with a simple architectural frame—the one on the right contains the text for the said day, while the facing page features motifs such as a Menorah. Several other Italian Omer books are known; they feature naively painted biblical scenes.[14] The reasons for the selection of the biblical miniatures and the other motifs, and their relation to the counting of the Omer, has yet to be investigated.

Less puzzling are the sukkah tablets. Though the custom of decorating the sukkah has been popular in many communities, not many old examples survive. In fact, most of the early extant examples date from seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Italy—attesting to the great popularity of this type of *Hiddur Mitzvah* among Italian Jews.[15] Some of the Italian panels are richly illustrated with subjects related to the holiday, as well as biblical heroes and scenes, while most others follow the pattern presented in our examples: a decorative frame surrounds relevant calligraphic phrases, blessings, and short poetic texts. Some were specifically composed and written for the tablet in question.[16] As the tablets are often inscribed with small numbers (in Hebrew letters) and the poems form a continuous text, it is clear that such panels were created as series to be placed next to each other in a given sukkah.

Piedmontese Ketubbot

The most important contribution of Piedmont Jewry to the field of Hebrew manuscript illustration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerns undoubtedly the decoration of the ketubbah. Though also here the influence of other regions in Northern Italy is strongly felt, the lavish Piedmontese ketubbot exhibit some special characteristics that typify a style of ketubbah ornamentation

that apparently developed locally and, by and large, is not known from other Jewish communities. Moreover, this style is not limited to the major communities in the region, but is found also in some of the small localities with only a few Jewish families.[17]

The text of Piedmontese ketubbot perhaps retains some of the medieval French Ashkenazic characteristics. As a rule, only a single column of text is inscribed in calligraphic, square Hebrew letters. Unlike the Italian Sephardim (e.g., in Venice or Livorno) or other local communities (e.g., Ancona), no *Tenaim* (special conditions) are included in the ketubbot of Piedmont. (In the aforementioned towns they appear either in a separate column on the left or below the main text.) As Ashkenazi ketubbot do not include *Tenaim* as well, this feature may have its roots in the medieval practice, but it may also reflect the contemporary influence of other Italian regions (e.g., Emilia) where the *Tenaim* are also lacking. Moreover, the amounts of the dowry and *Tosefet* (voluntary increment of the bridegroom) are not standardized at 50 (or 100) zuz of pure silver—as has been common among the Ashkenazim since the early Middle Ages. Standard amounts, usually of 20 *litrin* of pure silver for the two financial obligations, are used in some towns, but in the same communities (e.g., Acqui and Fossano) Piedmontese coinage appears as well. The rest of the text clearly follows accepted Italian norms, and one may not trace other characteristics that would be described as specific to the *APaM* rite.

Piedmontese ketubbot are written, as was the custom elsewhere in Italy, on a large piece of parchment. However, unlike in other Northern Italian regions, the parchment is often shaped as a decorative shield. Thus it is not the upper section of the parchment that is given a decorative contour, but its lower part. (The shaped area is usually the section of the animal's skin that is near the neck.) This feature is reminiscent of the ketubbot from Rome. However, while in Rome the bottom section is customarily pointed, in Piedmont it may be semicircular or pointed or given another decorative format.[18] In similarly shaped, non-Jewish Italian parchments the pointed bottom has a ribbon attached, which is used to tie the document in the form of a scroll, rolled from top to bottom.[19] Roman ketubbot generally attest to this function as well, but in Piedmont the ribbon (or signs of its existence) is not commonly found and appears mainly in late examples.[20] It is clear therefore that it was not function that primarily motivated the Piedmontese artists and their patrons in the selection of this design, but rather the pleasing and attractive appearance of the shield-shaped parchment.

A typical feature of the shield-shaped ketubbot is a wide border, which follows the contour of the parchment and is filled with rich, floral decorations. While in other regions the flowers are common as well, in Piedmontese ketubbot, especially those of Turin, Vercelli, and Casale, they are more naturalistically painted, and the artists even may have used illustrated botanical guides, which were popular in the period. The crowded floral frame is at times embedded with micrographic inscriptions.[21]

Not all Piedmontese ketubbot are shield-shaped and decorated with floral motifs. There are specimens that were apparently prepared elsewhere, and the text was later filled in in Piedmont. An obvious case is a ketubbah at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York (JTS), recording a wedding in Chieri in 1706. The attractive and daring border, depicting large nude figures of Adam and Eve at the top, and even the image of God in some Creation scenes, was printed from a copper engraving plate. This unusual border, which was most probably created by a Christian artist in Italy, decorates the border of four other known ketubbot, the earliest of which is from Mantua (1689; JTS).[22] The Chieri example is the latest in the group, and is enhanced by color painted over the print.

The non-Piedmontese origin can be traced also when the parchment is illustrated rather than printed. An

example is a ketubbah from Casale (1671; JNUL no. 147), which employs a most complicated decorative program, comprised of many miniatures depicting the symbols of the twelve tribes, zodiac signs, seasons, senses, the four elements, Heavenly Jerusalem, paradise, and other motifs—all combined in a carefully planned arrangement to envision a perfect Jewish cosmological picture of the world.[23] This ingenious program was most probably created in Venice just a few years before the wedding in Casale. Evidence that it was not produced locally comes also from the fact that the Casale scribe used both arches for the text of the ketubbah proper, rather than using the left arch for the *Tenaim* as was the custom in Venice. But the fact that local Jews used this border early on is significant, attesting to their will to adopt the most recent achievements in the field of ketubbah illustration, just as it was done in other leading communities in Northern Italy.

The contacts between Venice and Casale can be demonstrated in another early example, dated 1675 (formerly in the Friedenberg Collection). This time, however, it is not an "imported," ready-made parchment filled in locally, but one that employs popular Venetian designs and motifs in an independent manner. The artist used many times, for example, the motif of the labyrinth familiar from earlier (and later) Venetian ketubbot. The labyrinth, an endless knot with no beginning and end, is symbolic of love that ends with marriage (the expression "tying the knot" is also used in Italian)—a motif appropriate for a marriage contract. The biblical scenes that appear between the knots are likewise familiar from Venetian examples. The only puzzle that remains is the empty heraldic shields, implying that this border was also created in advance.[24] But since this program is not known from the many contemporary Venetian ketubbot that have survived, we may assume it was created by a workshop in Casale.

Lastly, we should briefly mention some of the exceptional, captivating ketubbot of Piedmont, of which no parallel examples are known, apparently representing the single achievement of local artists. One such example is a magnificent ketubbah (1782; New York Public Library) from the little-known community of Nice-Monferrato. Two impressive biblical scenes flank the text: Jacob's Dream (right) and the Binding of Isaac (left). Though the groom's name is Abraham Ottolenghi, the two scenes may have been selected to represent the three patriarchs at their most pious moments. Also noteworthy is the representation of the place founded by Jacob: Beth-El ("House of God"), shown as a Piedmontese palazzo of the eighteenth century.

Notable in this category are also the ketubbot of Casale, proving the major place that this community occupied in the cultural life of Piedmont Jewry. For example, a large and attractive Casale ketubbah of 1773 is entirely executed in micrography, including twisted pillars and the image of Jerusalem at top center. In an earlier example, dated 1675, the elaborate architectural and floral border resembles Piedmontese Holy Arks.[25]

Second to Casale was only Turin. Some of its eighteenth-century ketubbot include unusual biblical episodes, not known from other Italian contracts. A Torinese example of 1731 (Skirball Museum, Cincinnati), features the first meeting between Isaac and Rebecca depicted on an elaborate architectural background, which was apparently influenced by an actual Torinese monument.[26] Naturally, the scene is suggestive of marriage, as Rebecca was brought as a bride to Isaac. The more common way was to depict biblical heroes with the names of the married couple. However, in an unusual Torinese ketubbah of 1775, the selected biblical scenes, appearing in the two monumental niches flanking the text, are in honor of the *fathers* of the groom and the bride.[27] Thus on the left David, mounted on a horse and carrying Goliath's head, honors David Todros, the father of Menahem, the bridegroom. The scene at the right is for Leah Grego's father, Joseph, and shows Pharaoh appointing Jacob's favorite son to a high position in Egypt. A curious

feature is the emblem of the Freemasons above each scene, showing the new trends among Torinese Jews at the time.

Finally, a glimpse into the marriage ceremony in Piedmont is provided in a unique ketubbah from Vercelli (1776; The Jewish Museum, New York), which records the wedding between two of the foremost Jewish families in the region: Treves and Segre.[28] The wide border of this ketubbah employs a standard composition, but instead of placing biblical figures in the niches, the entire space around the text is richly illustrated with contemporary figures and lively genre episodes of musicians and courting and loving couples—all dressed as eighteenth-century Italian nobles. The illustrations in the ketubbot and the other manuscripts thus open a window to the life, beliefs, and artistic views of Piedmontese Jews in bygone times.

Notes

1. Preserved at the Library of the University of Leeds, Roth Ms. 220. The manuscript appeared in a lavish facsimile edition, published by the owner of the codex: C. Roth, *The Casale Pilgrim: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Guide to the Holy Places* (London: The Soncino Press, 1929). For a recent evaluation, see E. Fromjovic, *Hebraica and Judaica from the Cecil Roth Collection* (Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, 1997), p. 16.

2. According to Ze'ev Vilnay (*Encyclopedia Ariel*, vol. 10 [Tel Aviv, 1984], p. 19 [in Hebrew]), this is the town Biella in Piedmont. Most scholars agree, however, it is Biala in Belarus. (The scribe's name does not imply that he too is from Italy.) For the history of the oral and written hagiographic traditions, including the work of Uri of Biala, see E. Reiner, "Tradition of Holy Places in Medieval Palestine: Oral versus Written," in R. Sarfati, ed., *Offerings from Jerusalem: Portrayals of Holy Places by Jewish Artists* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2002), pp. 9–19.

3. Narkiss's review appeared in *Mizrach u-Ma'arav*, 5, 1930, pp. 205–07; and Sukenik's in *Kirjath Sepher*, 1930/31, pp. 99–101. (Both reviews are in Hebrew.)

4. E.g., Jewish Library and National University, Jerusalem (JNUL), Ms. Heb. 8 1187, 8 2370, and 8 6947; Jewish Theological Seminary, New York (JTS), Mic. 3595. On the earliest scroll at JNUL, see S. Zucker, "Yihus ha-Avot or Eleh Massa'ei: The Scroll of Holy Places," *Al Sefarim va-Anashim, Jewish National and University Library Bulletin* 10 (1996), pp. 14–15. For a discussion and detailed list of the manuscripts and printed books, some with illustrations of the holy sites, see Ze'ev Vilnay, *Matzevot Kodesh be-Eretz-Israel*, vol. 2, 3rd updated edition (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 359–99. Cf. also the second section in Z. Ilan, *Tombs of the Righteous in the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1997), pp. 85–175 (in Hebrew).

5. For example, the image of the Temple Mount. See Roth, *Casale Pilgrim*, pp. 41–42. A more recent publication with information on the Casale and related manuscripts is R. Sarfati, "The Illustration of Yihus ha-Avot: Folk Art from the Holy Land," in Sarfati, ed., *Offerings from Jerusalem*, pp. 21–29.

6. A. Yaari., "The Illustration of Jericho's Seven Walls in Hebrew Manuscripts," in *Studies in Hebrew Booklore* (Jerusalem, 1958), pp. 466–69 (in Hebrew). For the Christian manuscripts, see H. Kern, *Labyrinthe: Erscheinungsformen und Deutungen 5,000 Jahre Gegenwart eines Urbilds* (Munich, 1982), pp. 182–98.

7. The nineteenth-century example is a cutout *shivviti* plaque from Istanbul, 1838–39 (The Jewish Museum, New York). See S. Sabar, "On the Difference in Attitudes toward Visual Arts between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Eretz Israel in the Late Ottoman Period," *Pe'amim* 56 (1993), pp. 95–96 and color plate 15 (in Hebrew).

8. On *minhag APaM*, see the essay by Yom Tov Assis in this volume.

9. Color reproductions of most of these monuments appear in A. Sacerdoti and A. Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici, i luoghi, la storia, l'arte* (Venice, 1994), pp. 54–55, 75, 77, 147, 465. Note that the lavish *bimah* of the Chieri synagogue is today in the synagogue of Turin. For more on the synagogues, see N. Biddau, *Gli spazi della parola: Sinagoghe in Piemonte* (Turin: Elede, 2002).

10. Cf. R. Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 164–66; S. Sabar, *Mazal Tov: Illuminated Jewish Marriage Contracts from the Israel Museum Collection* (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 21–23.

11. Reproduced in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1972), plate 175.

12. The well-known Foa family, many members of which lived in Piedmont, was a noted family of printers for a long period. See A. Yaari, "The Printers of the Foa Family," in *Studies* (note 6, above), pp. 323–419; Yaari, *Hebrew Printers' Marks from the Beginning to the End of the 19th Century* (Jerusalem, 1943), no. 175, pp. 104, 177–78 (in Hebrew).

13. Gabriel Goldstein called my attention to another megillah with a colophon that may have been produced in Piedmont. See J. Furman, *Treasures of Jewish Art* (New York, 1997), pp. 206–07. The scribe is described in the entry (based on a reading by Sotheby's staff) as Abraham Ottolenghi of "Akoah." As there is no such town in Italy, the correct reading is certainly Acqui. The megillah is of a known type of eighteenth-century Northern Italian Esther scrolls.

14. E.g., JTS Ms. Mic. 4105 (ca. 1800) and 4243 (1803). See J. Ungerleider-Mayerson, *Jewish Folk Art* (New York, 1986), pp. 213, 214; an example from the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, is reproduced on p. 216. A fourth example is reproduced in V. B. Mann, ed., *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1989), p. 238 (for additional examples compare the entry by G. Goldstein, p. 237). A similar, naively decorated miniature Omer book (no biblical episodes) from the Island of Corfu (under Venice at the time) is preserved at JTS as well (Mic. 8233).

15. The decoration of the sukkah by "fine objects" is discussed by the noted Ferrarese rabbi, Isaac Lampronti (1679–1756) in his Talmudic encyclopedia *Pahad Yitzhak*, vol. 8 (Lyck, 1864), p. 23a. On a special group of Italian sukkah panels, see S. Makover, "The Iconographic Program of a Series of Italian Sukkah Decorations," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, division D, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 37–44. See also *Gardens and Ghettos*, nos. 108, 109, 251 (pp. 260–61, 314–15).

16. Parallel panels with extremely curious texts that still await a detailed study are preserved at the Smithsonian Institution. See G. Cohen Grossman, *Judaica at the Smithsonian: Cultural Politics as Cultural Model* (Washington, D.C., 1997), pp. 146–51 (esp. the figures on pp. 148–49).

17. For basic surveys and examples of ketubbot produced in several Piedmontese localities, see S. Sabar, *Ketubbah: Jewish Marriage Contracts of the Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum and Klau Library* (Philadelphia, 1990) (entries on Acqui [pp. 44–46], Asti [pp. 56–57], Cuorgne [pp. 80–81], Fossano [pp. 106–07], Saluzzo [p. 158], Trino [pp. 175–76], Turin [pp. 177–81], Vercelli [pp. 202–04]). A collection of Piedmontese ketubbot is preserved in the archives of the Jewish Community in Turin. On this material, see the detailed studies in M. Vitale, ed., *Il matrimonio ebraico, Le ketubbot dell'Archivio Terracini* (Turin, 1997).

18. Some published examples: Turin, 1738, 1800, 1839 (Vitale, *Il matrimonio ebraico*, plates I, II, VIII); Cuorgne, 1736, Fossano, 1716, Trini, 1798, and Turin, 1751 (Sabar, *Ketubbah*, pp. 80, 106, 175, 180); Casale, 1657, and Turin, 1706 (*Ketubbot italiane*, plates 4 and 10); Casale, 1772 (J. Weinstein, *A Collector's Guide to Judaica* [New York, 1985], color plate 30). The persistence of this design may be exemplified by a ketubbah from Moncalvo, 1792 (Sabar, *Mazal Tov*, plate 30), which is illustrated with an inverted arch, although the bottom section is rectangular. Another curious example is a heart-shaped ketubbah from Cherasco, 1846 (Vitale, *Il matrimonio ebraico*, plate XV).

19. An example (a physician's diploma from Naples, 1779, is reproduced in *Ketubbot italiane, Antichi contratti nuziali ebraici miniati* (Milan, 1984), p. 206.

20. The only examples known to me are from the nineteenth century, mostly from Casale. Two of these ketubbot, from Casale, 1843 (with the actual ribbon), and Turin, 1887 (with two slits for inserting the ribbon), are reproduced in Vitale, *Il matrimonio ebraico*, plates IX and XXIV.

21. Note that the typical, wide, floral border appears in some rectangular Piedmontese ketubbot as well: examples: Turin, 1691 (Israel Museum, reproduced in Sabar, *Mazal Tov*, plate 44); and Vercelli, 1800 (Weinstein, *Collector's Guide*, color plate 27).

22. On the Mantua ketubbah (and this border), see E. S. Saltman, "The 'Forbidden Image' in Jewish Art," *Journal of Jewish Art* 8 (1981), pp. 42–48 and figs. 1–10; S. Sabar, "Between Judaism and Christianity: The Unusual Engraved Border of a Ketubbah from Mantua, 1689," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 69 (2003), pp. 1–30..

23. On this type, see S. Sabar, "The Golden Age of Ketubbah Decoration in Venice and Amsterdam, in *The Ghetto in Venice: Ponentini, Levantini e Tedeschi 1516–1797* (Amsterdam: Joods Historisch Museum, 1990), pp. 92–96.

24. Both bridal families had, in fact, family emblems: the Segre (bride's) emblem appears in the Chieri, 1706 ketubbah mentioned above, while the Katzighin (= Clava) emblem is in the Casale, 1675 contract discussed below. For the emblems of Piedmontese-Jewish families, see Vitale, *Il matrimonio ebraico*, p. 162.

25. The 1773 ketubbah was formerly at Hechal Shlomo, Jerusalem. See Y. L. Bialer and E. Fink, *Jewish Life in Art and Tradition* (Jerusalem, 1980), p. 188. The 1675 example is in a private collection in Italy. See *Ketubbot italiane*, plate 5.

26. See S. Sabar, "The Use and Meaning of Christian Motifs in Illustrations of Jewish Marriage Contracts in Italy," *Journal of Jewish Art* 10 (1984), pp. 50, 52–53.

27. Private collection, New York. Reproduced and discussed in S. Sabar, "King David in Jewish Art," in Y. Zakovitch, *David: From Shepherd to Messiah* (Jerusalem, 1995), plate 13 and pp. 216–17 (in Hebrew).

28. Reproduced in P. and H. Goodman, *The Jewish Marriage Anthology* (Philadelphia, 1977), fig. 4 (incorrectly dated).



Synagogue interior, Vercelli (opened 1878, no longer in use). The synagogue has a large nave, high vaulting, and prominent pulpit inspired by Italian church architecture.

The Synagogues of Piedmont

Samuel D. Gruber

The prosperous Piedmontese Jewish community built numerous synagogues over a period of four centuries. Many of these, such as those at Alessandria, Asti, Biella, Carmagnola, Casale Monferrato, Cherasco, Cuneo, Ivrea, Mondovi, Saluzzo, and Vercelli still survive. Others, including those of Acqui Terme, Chieri, Fossano, Moncalvo, and Trini, have been dismantled, but many of their furnishings were saved—moved to other synagogues in Italy or to Israel.[1]

Nothing is known of early synagogues in Piedmont, though there must certainly have been prayer rooms available to the Jewish communities that were formed or expanded in the fourteenth century following the expulsion of Jews from France. Synagogues were probably single rooms in the private houses of the wealthiest members of each community. This arrangement was common throughout Italy and elsewhere in Europe. These private house synagogues were the forerunners of the more elaborate ghetto synagogues that survive throughout the region from the period of the early eighteenth century—when ghettos were formally established in many towns, including Acqui, Carmagnola, Casale Monferrato, Chieri, Moncalvo, Saluzzo, and Vercelli. These ghettos were usually formed around a large central courtyard from which most or all Jewish occupied buildings were entered, including the synagogue. This arrangement can still be seen at Chieri, Saluzzo, and elsewhere.

The known synagogues of Piedmont fall into two main groups. The first consists of smaller synagogues that date from before the emancipation of the Jews of the Kingdom of Savoy in 1848. These synagogues are usually unobtrusive—unmarked on the street and occupying residential-type buildings in the old ghettos. The sanctuaries are usually on upper floors, allowing greater security but also better lighting. While nondescript on the exterior, the sanctuaries are often ornately decorated within. Many are particularly notable for their richly carved Baroque and Rococo Arks and *tevahs*, often incorporating twisted columns, a popular device from contemporary church architecture (made famous by Bernini's baldachin in Saint Peter's in Rome), but adapted by synagogue designers to a new context. Bernini's columns were modeled after a much older set of twisted columns in the church, which had previously marked the area reputedly over Saint Peter's grave. From at least the Middle Ages these columns were believed to have come from Solomon's Temple, and this belief may explain their popularity in synagogue design.[2]

Perhaps the most typical of the older synagogues is that of Cherasco, because of its location, approach, articulation, and decoration.[3] It is one of a series of small, upper-floor, square-plan sanctuaries with ornate, centrally placed *tevahs*. The Cherasco Synagogue is on the third floor of a building entered through the ghetto courtyard of the small town. From a small staircase landing one enters directly into the sanctuary—marked by a dedication plaque from Nathan and Abraham Benedetto. The inscription, dated 1797, reads, "I will wash my hands with purity. I will encircle your Altar. O Most High!" (Psalms 26:6). Below the inscription is a sink to allow the ritual purification before entering. On the wall to the right is the Ark, with finely carved gilded doors, upon which are inscribed the Ten Commandments. The Ark is impressive in its use of the twisted columns, which appear in three sizes: small colonettes flanking the Ark doors, slightly larger columns supporting an inscribed entablature, and large columns that flank the cabinet proper and support an ornate Baroque broken segmented pediment, in the center of which is set a small oval window, surmounted by a crown. The whole framing arrangement is similar to contemporary church altars. On the walls, instead of the common biblical verses in Hebrew, one finds in Hebrew the names of the people who lived in the ghetto.

The synagogue of Carmagnola is entered from the street, and one immediately ascends a steep stairway giving entry into a small vestibule, which in turn leads directly into

the prayer hall or, via another stair, to the women's gallery.[4] The hall is a richly decorated eighteenth-century space, similar to Christian confraternities, elegant but not overdone. The almost square room (8.5 x 10 meters) is open and airy. Benches line the walls except in front of the entrance door and the Ark, which is set in the middle of the wall, to the left of the entrance. The Ark is richly decorated: the doors are decorated inside with gilded reliefs of Temple motifs. The Ark is surmounted by a Decalogue, crown, and canopy (a baldachin).

Each of the other walls has three vertical windows, closed by wooden shutters and surmounted by decorative stucco. On the walls between the windows are stucco cartouches with biblical verses in Hebrew. These would once have been richly gilded. The women's gallery is above the atrium, and is separated from the main hall by a wooden balustrade. In the center of the space is an octagonal *tevah* (dated 1766; similar to that from Chieri, dismantled in 1937 and now installed in Turin) with an elaborate, carved, open canopy supported by eight twisted columns surmounted by Corinthian capitals, festoons, and garlands. At the top of each column is a candle bracket. All the decoration was gilded.

Similar in form, though of later date, was the synagogue of Moncalvo, which was closed before Word War II, dismantled, and partially reconstructed in Israel in the 1950s.[5] Like Carmagnola, the plan was almost square, but the decoration reflected the more sober Neoclassical tastes of the mid-nineteenth century, the period when the synagogue was restored. Entrance to the sanctuary was through double doors from an atrium, above which was situated the women's section, here more fully screened from the men by means of a solid wall pierced by square windows covered with grilles. The center of the space, like that at Carmagnola, was occupied by an octagonal *tevah*, though here there were no columns and no superstructure. Again, as at Carmagnola, the Ark was situated on the wall to the left of the entrance. The arched Ark door was flanked by two proper Corinthian columns surmounted by a correct architrave and entablature, over which was mounted a small Decalogue. The walls were decorated with full-height, Ionic, applied pilasters between each window.

The synagogue of Fossano had Baroque furnishings very similar to those of Chieri. They were taken to Turin, but were destroyed during the war. The building that housed the synagogue was destroyed in 1960.[6]

The synagogue of Mondovi[7] was built in the late eighteenth century in an apartment previously occupied by Jewish families. Here too one enters from the street and ascends three levels of stairs, entering a small, square room dominated by an ornate, octagonal *tevah* in the center. The *tevah* consists of a lower enclosure of rectangular panels separated by short pilasters, which are surmounted by Corinthian columns with gilded capitals. A short, open balustrade tops the enclosure wall between each column. Five crystal chandeliers illuminate the space, which is enclosed by prayer benches that run along the walls. The eighteenth-century Ark consists of an arched central door, decorated with a large raised relief of a menorah filling both wooden door panels. These doors are flanked by the ubiquitous twisted columns. A small Decalogue surmounts the Ark. The sanctuary leads to a small balcony, which in turn leads to a tiny space reserved for women, separated from the main sanctuary by two windows.

The most impressive of the early sanctuaries is the German-rite synagogue of Casale Monferrato, built in 1595 in the center of the old ghetto, but subsequently replanned and redecorated in the eighteenth century in a rich Rococo style. The synagogue was completely restored in 1969 by the Soprintendenza ai Monumenti della Regione Piemonte, which declared it a national monument and opened it as a Jewish museum.[8]

Originally, the worshipper first entered from the street through a narrow passage to a courtyard and then through

a covered vestibule-corridor to the door at the west, opposite the Ark. The men's area was about 16.5 meters long and less than half that in width. The door, *bimah*, and Ark lay along its short axis. From the start the synagogue had a women's gallery, a separate space on the south and west that rested on the walls of the ground-floor offices and vestibule-corridor—subsequently a common arrangement in many synagogues that were set up in existing buildings.

Ancillary spaces serving a multitude of functions surrounded the courtyard in an irregular and asymmetrical manner. Community offices, well, ritual bath, school, and storage rooms all were within easy reach. The rabbi's apartment was connected to the school, and the women's section could be entered directly from Jewish-occupied houses around the courtyard, as well as from the synagogue vestibule.

The synagogue was enlarged in 1662, and the configuration of the interior was substantially transformed in the eighteenth century. A massive pulpit, added in 1765, projects from the side wall on long curved brackets above the heads of the worshippers—clearly an element inspired by contemporary church architecture. A new Ark, installed in 1787, consists of three sections. Fluted Corinthian columns frame the protruding central section, and support an elaborately carved frieze and cornice. The Ark's side panels and attic section were added in 1866.

Between 1853 and 1866 the building was further changed, in part reflecting new postemancipation attitudes and desires. The *tevah*, ceiling, and seating arrangement were transformed, and a new entrance was made closer to the street, beneath the women's gallery. The old south hall was eliminated to lengthen the synagogue on the south side. The Ark was then moved to the south wall, and the long, north-south axis—now four bays long instead of three—became the dominant spatial organizer. Thus the more traditional plan—squarer, with entry on the west—became longitudinal and therefore much closer to the basilica arrangement favored after emancipation. The Ark was set above three steps, and the *tevah* was moved immediately in front, compressing both elements into a single focal point at the end of the long axis. The area in front of this new, combined liturgical area resembles a church sanctuary, separated from the main prayer hall by an ornate wrought-iron grille and gates. It occupies about one-quarter of the space of the hall, which when lengthened measured 9.5 x 19 meters.

Congregation leaders explained that since the site was oriented southeast, the new arrangement did not interfere with the traditional placement of the Ark on the wall facing Jerusalem. They made no comment concerning the conflation of Ark and *tevah*, an innovation that was becoming increasingly common in new synagogue architecture north of the Alps. In Casale the combination of elements appears to be more one of spatial practicality than of Reform tendencies. Seating, which previously had resembled arrangements at Carmagnola and elsewhere, with benches lining the walls, was rearranged so that parallel rows of benches faced the Ark. This also allowed the abolition of separate seating for the poor (men)—who previously had been relegated to an upper level above that reserved for women.

The women's gallery had been expanded in 1720 and given delicate, gilded, latticework screens; Hebrew inscriptions on the walls in Rococo-style cartouches; and Hebrew letters in a painted sky on the elaborately decorated ceiling. All remind the visitor that this is a Jewish place of worship, worthy of one of the inscriptions that is based on Haggai 2:9: "The later splendor of this house shall be greater than the former." The marble floor, the gift of Baron Giuseppe Raffael Vitta, was laid in 1823.

Shortly thereafter another Piedmontese synagogue was remodeled in a costly manner. In 1832 a gift by Mordechai Segre enabled the rebuilding of the synagogue of Saluzzo, located on the top floor of a house off the large

court of the ghetto. The rebuilt synagogue was inaugurated by Rabbi Yaakov David Foa.[9]

A small entrance leads through a gilded wooden door into the sanctuary proper. The experience is extraordinary—as one moves through the small opening into a surprisingly vast space, intended to hold up to three hundred worshippers. This effect is accomplished by the height of the room, which is spanned by a shallow plaster vault, which in 2001 was discovered to be decorated with trompe l'oeil frescoes. The entire space, lit by eight large windows, is open and unencumbered. At the entrance end of the hall four simple Tuscan columns support a women's balcony, separated from the main space by an elaborate grille, which has a slightly semicircular, projecting bay in its center (on line with the Ark below). The top of the grille conforms to the contour of the vault, creating a visual tension between this upper curve and the austere straightness of the supporting columns and their connecting entablature. Crystal chandeliers helped illuminate the sanctuary, which was furnished with textiles and woodwork.

In many ways Saluzzo represents a transitional stage between the small, square-plan eighteenth-century synagogues and the large, basilical-plan synagogues of the postemancipation period. Here, as in the remodeled eighteenth-century interior at Casale Monferrato, the benches are arranged in parallel rows facing the Ark, as would become the norm in later synagogue design. Directly facing the entrance wall, again as in later synagogues, is the Ark. While the location and exterior of the synagogue—on the top floor of a ghetto courtyard building—were traditional, the whole interior arrangement would have recalled to the congregants the disposition of a Christian church.

Synagogues in the Age of Emancipation

The second group of synagogues (referred to in Italy as temples) consists of a series of large, some even enormous, freestanding urban structures built after emancipation. These are public monuments, signaling a Jewish desire to be accepted within the mainstream of Piedmontese society, and also aggressively expressing a Jewish belief in equality of religious status.

Trends noticeable at Casale Monferrato and Saluzzo take a more regular form in the (recently restored) synagogue of Ivrea. This sanctuary, built in 1863, is a long, barrel-vaulted hall that can seat up to ninety people. Over the entrance end is the women's section, which was entered from an exterior staircase. It is separated from the main hall only by a low parapet. The side walls are articulated with tall, Ionic, applied pilasters (similar to Mondavi's). At the far end, opposite the entrance, is a raised platform for the Ark. Immediately in front of the Ark is the *tevah*. Two columns on the sides of the Ark conceal two unusual boxes, which were probably reserved for a choir. A small, raised pulpit is set into the corner of the sanctuary to the right of the Ark. The walls were all painted to imitate marble revetment.

Nowhere was the new spirit of excessive celebration more clearly expressed than in Turin, where in 1859 the Jews of the city embarked on a massive building project that eventually threatened to bankrupt the community. The result, the towering structure now known as the Mole Antonelliana after its engineer-architect Alessandro Antonelli (1798–1888), was sold by the community to the city in 1877 before its completion. Hence it never functioned as a synagogue or served a Jewish use.[10]

Today, the Mole is a symbol of Turin, much as the contemporary Eiffel Tower is of Paris. All these late-nineteenth-century Piedmont synagogues are part of a Europe-wide movement. They emulate church building in many ways (especially, for example, at Vercelli), but almost all contain distinctive architectural or decorative details that pronounce their Jewish identity.

Following the sale of the Mole Antonelliana, the Main Synagogue (or Tempio) of Turin was begun in 1880 and inaugurated on February 16, 1884. The design competition

of 1879 makes clear the needs of a postemancipation Jewish community in a major city—it specified room for 1,000 men, with 700 seats, a women's gallery for 400, an organ, a choir area, a pulpit, a *bimah*, and an Ark. In addition, offices and annexes were needed. Engineer Enrico Petiti won the competition over Giuseppe Locarni, who had designed the synagogue in Vercelli.

Carol Krinsky notes that Petiti's design for the multi-towered, neo-Moorish-style Tempio abandoned the Renaissance style of the Mole, instead using Islamic motifs, which link the building to many new synagogues of similar size being erected in countries north of the Alps. German and Austrian publications may have played a role in this, though the example at Florence, the largest new Italian synagogue, was also at hand.[11]

New elements, however, such as the Mamluk-inspired parapets and the four rectangular corner towers with bulbous domes, are in evidence. The synagogue is serious but not somber. No doubt in a reaction to the excessive height of the Mole, the new building was only 38 meters high to the top of its domes. Interior lighting is not very good because the galleries interfere with the light from the windows. Gas and electric features were an afterthought.

The Tempio was heavily damaged by bombing on November 29, 1942. It was reinforced in 1945 and rebuilt in 1949. Today the main sanctuary is used only on festival days, and two small synagogues, located in the basement of the main structure, are the place of daily worship. These were designed in 1972. The first small synagogue is in the form of an amphitheater and incorporates the Baroque pulpit and Ark from the synagogue in Chieri. The second small synagogue houses an Ark constructed in the 1700s for a Germanrite synagogue that was located in Turin's Ghetto Nuovo.

Discussion leading to the erection of the great Tempio of Vercelli began as early as 1864 in the paper *L'educatore israelita*, when members of the community broached the subject of building a synagogue better adapted to the growing community (then about six hundred people) and the prestige of the city. The architect Marco Treves (1814–1898) was invited to study the project. A prestigious architect and a native of Vercelli, Treves had designed the classical-style synagogue in Pisa, which opened in 1863. He was subsequently active in Florence, where he had participated in the construction of its great Tempio (1874–1882), and he also served as superintendent of the Louvre in Paris. Treves's project was grandiose, but the community decided to expend even more than he projected. Ten years later, in 1874, the community invited engineer Giuseppe Locarni to carry out an expanded project.

A prayer room had existed in the ghetto of Vercelli from at least 1601, when Pope Clement VIII prohibited construction of a new synagogue. In 1630 a property belonging to the monks of Sant'Agata was outfitted as a synagogue. In the eighteenth century the synagogue was located in a house belonging to the friars of San Francesco.[12] It was this synagogue that was replaced following a decision to build in 1863. Occupying the location of the previous oratory, the synagogue was designed in the Moorish style. Because of the size and cost of the project, work went slowly. Demolition of the earlier building and new construction did not begin until 1874, and the building was completed in 1878. To celebrate the occasion, the Jewish community struck a bronze commemorative medal in the tradition of Italy's Renaissance princes and popes.

The tripartite façade is influenced by synagogues erected in Central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century such as the Tempelgasse Synagogue in Vienna (1853–1858)[13] and the Choral Temple in Bucharest (1864–1866),[14] which had a similar arrangement of a higher central bay and four small turrets. The Vercelli façade is only slightly less ornate than that in Vienna, employing a pattern of white and gray horizontal striping. This recalls the striping of the Rumbach Street Synagogue in Budapest, designed by Otto Wagner (1869–1872),[15] and many other synagogues, but also calls to

mind many famous Italian cathedrals such as Orvieto and Siena, as well as scores of other churches built from the Middle Ages to modern times.

Inside, however, the style is more traditionally classical in the Italian manner, consisting of a long central nave, flanked by aisles separated by arcades carried on columns. These aisles in turn support galleries under three high barrel vaults set perpendicular to the main nave, recalling the immense arches of the Basilica of Maxentius in the Roman Forum in Rome. The barrel vaults of the central bay help support and buttress a dome that rises on pendentives from the middle of the synagogue nave. The gallery walls are pierced by tall, round-headed windows in the end bays and by large, round windows in the central bay under the dome. The façade also has a large, round window prominently placed in its center. The nave terminates in a massive apse—open the full height of the building. Ark and *bimah* are combined within the apse and are raised several steps above the floor level of the rest of the synagogue, reminiscent of the altar arrangement in Roman Catholic churches. Halfway down the nave a large wooden pulpit is wrapped around a supporting pier—similar to what is found in typical mendicant churches throughout Italy. Only the decoration sets the building apart from contemporary Christian structures. It incorporates an odd mix of classical and Moorish elements. Hebrew inscriptions run the length of the nave arcade.

As much as does the Mole Antonelliana in Turin, the Vercelli synagogue speaks to the (perhaps overblown) aspirations of the emancipated Italian Jewish community. The fact that the synagogue stands silent today, in desperate need of repair, is moving testimony to just how misguided those aspirations were. The Piedmontese Jewish communities had always been small, and with emancipation came migration and assimilation, reducing their membership even more. Even without the effect of the Holocaust, it is unlikely that a city like Vercelli (which had a Jewish population of only 275 in 1931) could have maintained a Jewish community large enough to need and strong enough to support a building this size.

There are more synagogues in Piedmont than in any other Italian region. Varying greatly in size, plan, and decoration, together they represent the many possibilities available to Jews at different periods of Piedmont's history. Although Jews were ghettoized in Piedmont—unlike in some other regions, particularly the Papal States—they were allowed to follow a range of economic and cultural pursuits. The Piedmont communities were forced to live together cohesively, but frequently interacted with their Christian neighbors. This combination of strong Jewish identity and receptivity to artistic trends from the majority Christian culture is evident in the Piedmont synagogues. Ties to Jewish history and worship are evident especially in those ghetto synagogues where there are abundant symbolic and textual references to the Jerusalem Temple, as well as numerous Hebrew inscriptions of scriptural passages. The use of both symbols and Hebrew, however, is greatly reduced in the nineteenth-century synagogues. Overall they are more monumental architecturally, yet simpler and more sterile in their lack of recognizable, traditional Jewish elements. This change reflects the assimilation of Piedmont's Jews, or at least of those who had the means to influence synagogue design. Simultaneously, the synagogue buildings became more visible, even prominent, in their broader urban contexts, so that Jews and their houses of worship were further integrated into their larger civic spaces.

Today another transformation is under way in Piedmont's Jewish communities, and again synagogues are reflecting this change. While the number of communities is smaller, those that remain are becoming more retrospective, recognizing the value of their history in their own identity, as well as its importance in Italian culture overall. That interest in history can be seen in the efforts to preserve and

protect the old synagogues that have survived. The Italian government has welcomed the Jewish past in Piedmont as part of the national patrimony. Indeed, in the past decade there have been many collaborative efforts to restore the synagogues described above. While few of these beautiful religious spaces will ever serve again as houses of prayer or study, they will survive as a testimony to the rich Jewish past of Piedmont.

Notes

1. The most complete description of the Jewish communities of Piedmont and their monuments is Annie Sacerdoti and Annamarcella Tedeschi Falco, eds., *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici, i luoghi, la storia, l'arte* (Venice, 1994). It is illustrated with excellent color photographs by Giorgio Avigdor. This supercedes Annie Sacerdoti and Luca Fiorentino, eds., *Guida all'Italia ebraica* (Genoa, 1986). Also see the book of photographs by Niccolò Biddau, *Gli spazi della parola: Sinagoghe in Piemonte/Synagogues in Piedmont*, with texts by Mariacristina Colli and Claudia De Benedetti (Turin, 2002); and Annie Sacerdoti, *The Guide to Jewish Italy* (New York, 2003), pp. 18–47. Some synagogues are discussed in J. Pinkerfeld, *The Synagogues of Italy* (Jerusalem, 1954; in Hebrew), and some Arks in U. Nahon, *Holy Arks and Religious Appurtenances from Italy in Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1970; in Hebrew).

2. On Bernini's baldachin, see Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of Saint Peter's* (New York, 1968). On the history of the twisted columns, see R. Krautheimer, S. Corbett, and A. Frazer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, vol. 5 (Vatican City, 1976). Twisted columns appear in Hebrew printed books of the sixteenth century. See Bracha Yaniv, "The Origins of the 'Two-Column Motif' in European Parokhot," *Jewish Art* 15 (1989), pp. 26–43.

3. See Sacerdoti and Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici*, pp. 74–79.

4. See D. Colombo and G. Tedesco, "Il ghetto di Carmagnola," *Rassegna mensile di Israel* 27, no. 12 (1961), pp. 536–49, and Sacerdoti and Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici*, pp. 53–59.

5. On Moncalvo, see Sacerdoti and Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici*, pp. 109–13.

6. On Jewish Fossano, see ibid., pp. 96–97.

7. See D. Colombo, "Il ghetto di Mondovi," *Rassegna mensile di Israel* 34, no. 4 (1968), pp. 233–37; and Sacerdoti and Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici*, pp. 114–19.

8. Much has been written on the synagogue of Casale Monferrato. See G. Avigdor, "La sinagoga di Casale," *Atti del quarto congresso di antichità a d'arte* (1969); and "La sinagoga di Casale," *Studi Piemontesi* 3 (Turin); D. Cassuto, "History of a Synagogue," in R. Bonfil et al., eds., *Scritti in memoria di Umberto Nahon* (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 176–95 (in Hebrew). *La sinagoga di Casale Monferrato: Cenni storico, illustrative* (Casale Monferrato, 1969) contains a reprint of Giuseppe Levi's *Le inscrizioni del sacro Tempio israelitico di Casale Monferrato* (1914), which provides transcriptions of the Hebrew inscriptions with translation into Italian. A detailed discussion of the synagogue in English is found in Carol Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), pp. 345–48.

9. On Saluzzo, see Sacerdoti and Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici*, pp. 125–31.

10. The history and architecture of the Mole Antonelliana is discussed in detail in Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, pp. 374–77.

11. Ibid., pp. 377–78.

12. On Vercelli, see T. Sarasso, *Storia degli ebrei a Vercelli* (Vercelli, 1974); D. Colombo, "Alcuni appunti sul ghetto di vercelli," *Rassagna mensile di Israel* 42, nos. 7–8 (1976), pp. 374–77; R. Bottini Treves, *Storia del ghetto di Vercelli* (Vercelli: Società Storica Vercellese, 1993); and Sacerdoti and Tedeschi Falco, *Piemonte: Itinerari ebraici*, pp. 155–67. On the synagogue, see C. Caselli, "Il Tempio israelitico di Vercelli dell Comm. G. Locarni, "*L'ingegneria civile e le arti industriali* 14 (1889), pp. 9–15.

13. On Vienna's Tempelgasse Synagogue, see Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, pp. 191–94.

14. Ibid., pp. 153–54.

15. Ibid., pp. 159–62.



Synagogue interior, Biella (predates emancipation, remodeled 1893). View of Baroque-style Ark.

The Cuisine of the Piedmontese Jewry

Edda Servi Machlin

Before delving into the eating habits of a people, it is necessary to take at least a cursory look at their history and what might have brought about those habits.

Since the destruction of the second Temple and until very recently, diaspora Jews have lived as guests in their own countries, even when they had been born and had lived there all their lives. The well-being of their existence did not depend so much on their industriousness and good behavior, as it did on the benevolence or, more often, hostility of those who were in power, often the two sentiments alternatively acted upon by the same individual. As a rule, periods of acceptance and tolerance were quickly replaced by periods of persecutions and expulsions, which compelled the Jews either to abjure their faith or seek refuge elsewhere.

Whereas it is known that Jews were found who were well established in the south of Rome since antiquity, and in Rome proper at least as early as the second century BCE, it is not certain when they began to appear in the north. Some believe that there were already Jewish families, as in Asti, Piedmont, toward the middle of the ninth century. For sure we know that during the upheavals of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and thereafter, the map of the Jewish presence in Piedmont is quite extensive and has remained uninterruptedly so to the present. We find nuclei in several towns, smaller centers, and, of course, in Piedmont's capital, Turin. These communities were largely formed by refugees who trickled down through the Alps at various times, fleeing from the persecutions of, or being expelled from, the South of France. However, after the total expulsion from the Spanish territories of the Inquisition, which included Sicily and Sardinia, Jews from the south also began to settle in Piedmont. Later they came from Central Italy as well to escape the rigors of life in the Papal States or to seek higher education and better opportunities, as was the case of my namesake and distant relative, Rabbi Flaminio Servi, who moved there from his (and my) native Pitigliano.

When groups of Jews were compelled to move from one place in order to establish themselves in a more friendly and tolerant environment, not only did they bring with them their customs and traditions, enriching their new surroundings, but inevitably they also did, in time, adopt some of the customs and usages of the host community, establishing for themselves those subtle peculiarities that distinguished them from Jews residing in other regions. Enjoying relative freedom and prosperity under the rule of the Savoy dynasty, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Jews of Piedmont had better opportunities than in other parts of Italy to ameliorate their living conditions. This accounts in part for their having developed a sophisticated and rich cuisine in this region in particular.

However, another consideration must be factored into the equation of their food, that is, climate. Piedmont, at the foot of the highest peaks of the Alpine ranges, is one of the coldest regions on the Italian peninsula. The eating habits of the Piedmontese reflect this fact by their usage of a fatty cuisine, strong flavors, and robust wines and liqueurs. The Piedmontese Jews, in addition to having brought with them their Ashkenazic (from France) and Sephardic (from Southern Italy) eating habits, incorporated in their cuisine some of the typical fare that one associates with the dishes created in this cold climate.

According to Cecil Roth, whom I met in New York some forty years ago, the Jews of Piedmont were fond of goose, one of the fattest among the permitted animals. Although goose was very much part of what was served in my grandparents' household in Pitigliano, I was surprised to read in *Memorie di vita ebraica: Casale Monferrato, Roma, Gerusalemme, 1918–1960* by Augusto Segre: "Kosher goose salami was a specialty of Casale, known and appreciated throughout Italy."[1] (In my first book I describe the preparation of goose salami, one of the many delicacies that my grandmother Deborah Lattes made with goose.)

As young people, my brothers, my sister, and I often

debated whether our Lattes branch of the family came originally from Spain (Latis) or from the small village Lattes, near Montpellier, in the South of France. The fact that kosher goose salami was originally a specialty of Casale in Piedmont leads me to speculate that our Lattes ancestors had indeed come there from Lattes, France, and some had conceivably brought this love of goose from there to Pitigliano, thus resolving for me our long-standing dispute.

Kosher wines that are still made in Piedmont are: *moscato d'Asti, barbera, cortese, pinot brut, Asti Spumante, dolcetto,* and *gavi.*

Wines and liqueurs are used not only as drinks, but also to enhance the flavor of many sauces and main courses (a French influence) as well as in some Italian desserts, the most typical of which is *zabaione* or *sambajon,* as it is called in Piedmontese dialect.

Native to Piedmont, besides the *nocciole* or hazelnuts, used together with chocolate to make a kosher pareve cream called *nocella,* and chestnuts, which Jews use as an ingredient to make the Charoset for Passover, are many other fruits and vegetables, which are also found in other regions of Italy. Other foods widely used in Piedmont—by Jews and non-Jews alike—are butter, eggs, cheeses, rice, and truffles, the famous white *tartufi d'Alba.*

To counteract the harmful effects of all the fatty foods and the alcoholic beverages, the Piedmontese make great use of raw vegetables and garlic, the latter believed since antiquity to have powerful curative effects. White truffles enjoy great favor on the Piedmontese table to mitigate (or perhaps mask) the sometimes too strong flavor of garlic.

It was not until after the end of World War II, when I attended a Jewish summer camp in the central Alps, that I came in contact for the first time with some Piedmontese Jews. For the most part they were intellectuals (who went on to become writers, philosophers, university professors, one music critic and composer, and the like) with a definite flair for good humor and good food. And it was not until then that I heard of, and had an opportunity to taste, the famous sauce called in Piedmontese dialect *bagna caoda.*

Bagna caoda (literally, "hot bath") is a simple sauce made by slowly melting fillets of salted anchovies in oil and butter, with lots of garlic and a touch of truffle. It is sometimes finished by adding a generous portion of fresh butter, a cup of heavy cream, or a glass of dry red wine.

Another of the Piedmontese dishes I enjoyed as a young woman at the same Jewish camp, was *fondua* (obviously from the French *fondu,* meaning "melted"). The *fondua* I tasted then was a very primitive, unsophisticated version of the dish. A large wheel of fontina cheese was cut in half, and the cut part was held very near the flame of a campfire. When it dropped the first *lacrima* (tear), the person holding it would scrape the melted part with the dull side of the blade of a large knife over a few slices of toasted bread, then start the heating and scraping all over again. Of course, this was the simplest and probably oldest of the many versions of this classic of the Piedmontese cuisine. I have chosen to include in this work the one I consider to be somewhere at the center of the spectrum. However, since fontina is no longer considered kosher, I substitute it with part-skim mozzarella and cream cheese. The result is amazingly close to the real thing.

My own cookbooks, *The Classic Cuisine of the Italian Jews,* in two volumes (GiRo Press), include some of the region's typical dishes. In volume 1 on page 88 is *Salame d'Oca;* on pages 154–55 are *Fritto misto* and the two batters needed for it; on page 226 *Orecchie di Aman;* on page 243 of volume 2 is *Savoiardi.* From my upcoming publication of an all-desserts Jewish cookbook, I extracted the most typical of the Piedmontese Jewish desserts, *zabaione;* and finally, through my two brothers who live in Italy, I was introduced to a few Jewish ladies, and to the Jewish Community of Turin, who kindly sent me four more recipes (written in Italian and with very little in the way of measurements). In translating them I made sure to include accurate

temperatures and measurements, so that they would be easy to follow by the American user. Their four recipes are: *Bruscadella*, *Charoset*, *Quaietta d'pito*, and *Minestra daienu*.

When it is known, I have indicated in which holiday a recipe is more likely to be used. To further facilitate the choice of a given dish to be served at a particular dinner, I have indicated under the title of the recipes, with the letters in parentheses (M, D, P) whether a dish is based on meat or on dairy or is pareve (suited for meals that are either meat or dairy or neither).

Here then are the dozen Jewish Piedmontese recipes I have been able to gather, which I hope will enrich the cooking repertoire of the readers of this book.

BAGNA CAODA

Hot Bath

(P or D)

Bagna caoda, a characteristic fare of the cuisine of Piedmont, is indeed its most typical of sauces, generally used for antipasto. Being strictly kosher, it has been adopted by the Jews of that region who can make it pareve or dairy, according to whether butter and cream are used or not. It is served hot in a fondue dish with a flame underneath it at an hors d'oeuvres table, where each person can dip in it sticks of vegetables, such as celery and peppers.

½ pound fillets of anchovies, coarsely cut up
½ cup butter (optional)
2 cups olive oil
6 cloves garlic, sliced very thinly
1 cup heavy cream (optional)
1 cup dry red wine, such as *barbera*
1 tablespoon thinly sliced white truffle
3 large green peppers, washed, cored, and cut into strips
6 celery stalks, cleaned and cut into 7-inch sections
6 cardoon stalks, cleaned and cut into 7-inch sections

If you opt for a dairy sauce, place the anchovies in a heavy-bottomed saucepan with ¼ cup butter and 1½ cups oil. (For a pareve dish use only the 2 cups of oil.) Add the garlic and place over moderate heat. Stir for 10 minutes or until anchovies are melted, making sure that the solution never comes to a boil, and that the garlic does not brown. To finish either add the remaining butter or the heavy cream for a dairy sauce, or just a cup of wine. Lastly add the truffles. Pour the sauce into an earthenware fondue dish with a flame underneath it, and serve with the crudités.

Serves 6 to 12

FONDUA TORINESE

Turin Style Fondue

(D)

When I first arrived in New York as a tourist some forty years ago, fondue was the rage of the time at dinner parties and other gatherings. When I got married and settled in the New York area for good, one of the first pieces of kitchen equipment I bought was a stylish fondue pot and twelve color-coded fondue forks. Remembering with a tinge of nostalgia the first, primitive *fondua* I had tasted at a Jewish camp devoted to the food of the Adamello range (I was one of the handful of campers to climb to the highest point at 3,554 meters!), I began to experiment with the intent of making this fun dish more elaborate, as they make it in Turin, and kosher. In place of fontina, which is no longer considered kosher, I use part-skim mozzarella and cream cheese.

2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons butter
¾ cup warm milk
½ pound cream cheese at room temperature
1 pound part-skim mozzarella cheese, cut into small cubes
4 egg yolks
1 tablespoon thinly sliced white truffles, or 1 tablespoon crumbled dried porcini mushrooms
1 ½ pounds Italian bread, cut into chunks and

slightly toasted

Place the flour and butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over moderate heat, and when butter is melted, add the milk all at once, stirring to prevent lumps from forming. Add the cream cheese. When this is melted, add the mozzarella and keep on stirring until this is melted. Add the egg yolks and stir for an additional 3 minutes to give a chance for the yolks to cook, but not for the cream to curd. Spread the truffle slices (or porcini crumbs) over the surface and remove from heat. Pour into an earthenware fondue dish with a flame underneath it, and serve with color-coded fondue forks. Encourage each guest to pick morsels of bread with their forks and dip them into the fondue dish while the sauce is still hot.

Serves 6

FRITTO MISTO ALLA PIEMONTESE

Mixed Fried Meats and Vegetables

(M)

This is only an indication of what *fritto misto* is like. The kind of meats and vegetables to be used depends on individual preferences and on the availability of the products. It is a dish favored in every region of Italy, but in Piedmont is characterized by the addition of sweets, such as apple fritters and amaretti.

½ pound veal scallopini
½ pound calf's liver
½ pound boneless skinless chicken breast
½ pound baby lamb ribs
3 medium artichokes
3 lemons
Batter for frying meats (recipe follows)
Olive oil for frying
1 small cauliflower, florettes separated
1 pound small zucchini, washed, trimmed, and cut into small sticks
Batter for frying vegetables (recipe follows)
1 egg, slightly beaten
2 tablespoons sugar
12 amaretti or pieces of any pareve stale cake
3 large apples, peeled, cored, and chopped

Thoroughly wash the meats. Cut the veal scallopini, liver, and chicken breast into strips and dry with paper towel. Trim the artichokes so that the remaining leaves are all edible and the stems are scraped of their bitter skin. Cut in half and remove the choke if there is any, then cut each half into 4 pieces and keep them in a bath of water with the juice of one lemon until ready to fry. Prepare the batter for the meats. Heat the oil, which should be 1½ to 2 inches deep, in a large skillet. Dip the meats in the meat batter and fry until crisp and tender for about 12 to 15 minutes. Drain and place in aluminum foil in a warm oven. Dip the artichoke pieces (drained and dried with paper towel) in the *meat* batter and fry for 5 or 6 minutes. Keep warm. Prepare the vegetable batter. Dip the cauliflower florettes and zucchini sticks in the vegetable batter, and fry until tender but crisp for 5 or 6 minutes. Add the egg and sugar to the remaining batter. Dip the amaretti or cake pieces into it and fry until golden. Add the chopped apples to the remaining sweetened batter, and mix well. Spoon into the hot oil, and fry until golden on both sides. Mound the meat at the center of a large serving plate, surrounded by vegetable and sweets. Garnish with wedges of lemon and serve hot.

Serves 8 to 12

PASTELLA PER FRITTI DI CARNE

Batter for Frying Meats

(P)

1½ cups unbleached flour
1 teaspoon salt
⅔ cup cold water
2 eggs
2 egg yolks
3 tablespoons olive oil

Ground white pepper

Combine flour, salt, and water, and beat to a smooth batter. Beat together eggs, egg yolks, and oil, and add to the batter. Add pepper to taste, and mix to combine. Use as directed.

Yields about 2 cups

PASTELLA PER FRITTI DI VERDURE

Batter for Frying Vegetables

(P)

2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1⅓ cups cold water
3 tablespoons olive oil
Ground white pepper

Sift together the first three dry ingredients. Gradually add the cold water and the oil, stirring just until a smooth batter is formed. Add pepper to taste, and stir to mix. Use as directed.

Yields about 2 cups

BRUSCADELLA DI KIPPUR

To Break the Fast of Yom Kippur

(P)

In different parts of Italy people have different ways of breaking the fast of Yom Kippur. This simple yet delicious *bruscadella* is what the Piedmontese Jews use for this purpose.

12 slices of stale hearty bread
1 cup sugar, mixed with 1 tablespoon cinnamon
1 pint *barbera* or *cortese* wine

Toast the slices of bread dark and arrange them in layers in a soufflé dish, sprinkling each layer abundantly with the sugar and cinnamon mixture. Pour all the wine over the bread, and let rest a few minutes before serving.

Serves 6

CHAROSET

A Mortarlike Paste for the Passover Seder

(P)

1 pound blanched dried chestnuts
1 teaspoon salt
½ pound unblanched almonds
½ pound hazelnuts
6 hard-boiled egg yolks
3 large apples, peeled and cored
1 cup orange juice
Grated rind of 1 orange
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 regular matzoth, broken into pieces
3 cups sweet wine, such as *dolcetto*
2 cups sugar

Leave the chestnuts in a saucepan with water to cover overnight. With a sharp knife remove every bit of peel that might still be inside the crevices. Then place the saucepan with chestnuts and water over the heat, add the salt, and let gently cook for about 1 hour. Place with all the other ingredients in a food processor and process until all is well ground. If the paste is too dry, add a little wine, if too loose add some matzo meal.

Serves 20

QUAIETTA D'PITO

Turkey Galantine

(M)

Quaietta in Piedmontese dialect means quail; and *pito* is turkey. The name is given to this dish because the finished product resembles a fat quail.

Turkey, when I lived in Italy, was the very symbol of opulence. Few people could afford to buy a whole turkey and only parts of it were what I saw in my parents' household.

However, in Piedmont well-to-do Jews were great users of whole turkey, which they roasted, much as Americans do on Thanksgiving. But they also made an elegant and

delicious galantine with it. I first tasted it at the beautiful Manhattan home of the movie producer Cesare Civita, who proudly told me that he himself had prepared it. The following was given to me by the Jewish Community of Turin, but if I recall it properly, in Cesare's mixture there were also pistachios and truffles.

1 small turkey
Salt and pepper to taste
Sewing needles threaded with doubled white thread
3 hard-boiled eggs, shelled and sliced
½ pound oil-cured black olives
1 small bunch of scallions, washed, trimmed, and cut lengthwise
1 small bunch of red radishes, washed, trimmed, and cut to resemble little roses

With a sharp knife make an incision lengthwise in the skin of the turkey along the backbone. Carefully separate the skin from the rest, trying not to tear it too much. Place on a work surface, with the inside facing up. Separate the meat from the bones. Clean the meat of fat, gristle, and tendons. Coarsely grind most of the meat, and cut some of the dark meat into strips. Season both abundantly with salt and pepper. Place the ground meat over the skin, and then top with the strips lengthwise. With needle and thread, sew the skin closed. Place all the bones in a large stockpot with the turkey and water to cover. Add 1 tablespoon salt and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and cook gently for 1½ hours. Transfer the "quail" to a cutting board (reserve the broth for the following recipe, *Minestra daienu*), and let cool to room temperature. Remove all the thread and cut into thin slices. Serve garnished with slices of hard-boiled eggs, olives, scallions, and radishes.

Serves 12 or more

MINESTRA DAIENU

Daienu Soup

(M)

This delicious Passover soup is called *daienu* because the matzo is dropped into the boiling broth at the time when the leader starts to read the *daienu* chant from the Haggadah during the seder.

Broth from preceding recipe
8 regular matzoth, roughly cut into pieces
4 egg yolks
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Bring the broth to a boil, then drop the matzo pieces into it and cook for 5 minutes. Place the egg yolks in a tureen with the cinnamon, and mix well with a spatula. Gradually add the hot broth and the cooked matzo, stirring constantly. Serve immediately.

Serves 12

ORECCHIE DI AMAN

Purim Hamman's Ears

(P)

Even though this Purim dessert is not exclusively of the Piedmontese Jews, when I asked a Turin Jew to tell me what was the most typical Purim dessert made in Piedmont, the answer was, "*Orecchie di Aman*, of course!" There are perhaps as many versions of this sweet as there are Jewish families in Italy. The following is my own, but you can create variations limited only by your own imagination.

2 eggs
2 egg yolks
¼ cup sugar
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon rind
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons rum or brandy
2½ cups unbleached flour

1 cup vegetable oil for frying
Confectioners' sugar

Beat the eggs and egg yolks with sugar, salt, lemon rind, vanilla extract, and rum. Gradually add enough flour to obtain a rather soft dough. Turn out onto a floured work surface and knead 2 or 3 minutes. Roll very thin. With a pastry cutter or a very sharp knife, cut into strips 1 inch x 4–7 inches. Slowly heat the oil in a small saucepan. The oil is at the right temperature when a small piece of dough dropped into it floats and begins to sizzle. Fry a few strips at a time, twirling them to give them odd shapes, until they are lightly golden. (Tie the longer pieces into knots before frying them.) Drain and place on paper towel. When all the ears are done, transfer to a large serving plate, sprinkling each layer abundantly with confectioners' sugar.
Yields 2 to 3 dozen

SAVOIARDI
Lady Fingers
(P)

2 eggs, separated
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
Dash salt
½ cup sugar
¼ cup potato starch
¼ cup cake flour
¼ teaspoon lemon extract
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons nondairy pareve margarine

In a small bowl beat the egg whites with cream of tartar and salt until stiff and dry. In another small bowl beat the yolks with sugar until frothy and lemon-colored. Sift together the two flours, and gradually add to the beaten yolks while mixing. Add lemon and vanilla extracts, and mix well. Delicately fold in the egg whites. Grease a large piece of baking paper with the margarine, and place, greased face down, over a baking sheet. Pour all the batter into a pastry bag with a ½-inch aperture. Squeeze the bag while twisting the top closed, over the baking sheet to form 3-inch strips, placing them 2 inches apart. Place in preheated 375° F oven for 10 minutes, or until fingers are a pale gold. Remove from oven, and transfer to a cooling rack.
Yields approximately 3 dozen

ZABAIONE
(P or D)

5 egg yolks
¾ cup sugar
¾ cup *dolcetto* wine
2 tablespoons rum
1 teaspoon vanilla extract or
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ cup heavy cream (optional)
½ pint red raspberries (optional)

Beat the egg yolks with sugar until pale lemon-colored. Gradually add the *dolcetto* and rum, and keep beating until smooth. Add vanilla or cinnamon just until blended. Pour into a heavy-bottomed pot and place over a moderately high heat. Cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until *zabaione* coats the spoon evenly. Be careful not to allow the cream to reach the boiling point. Pour into flute glasses and serve immediately.
Serves 6

Note: If you want to serve *zabaione* cold, let cool a little at room temperature, add ½ cup heavy cream, mix, and place in refrigerator. Just before serving, place a few berries at the bottom of each glass, fill with *zabaione*, and top with a large berry.

Note

1. Augusto Segre, *Memorie di vita ebraica: Casale Monferrato, Roma, Gerusalemme, 1918–1960* (Rome: Bonacci, 1979).



Synagogue Ark, Mondovi. This elaborately carved and gilded Ark enhances a simple sanctuary established in 1724 on the third floor of a ghetto building.

"The Rabbi's Family," chapter two of *Memorie di vita ebraica: Casale Monferrato, Roma, Gerusalemme, 1918–1960*

Augusto Segre
Translated by Steve Siporin

Augusto Segre's Memories of Jewish Life, *the source of the following excerpt, offers the reader a rare opportunity to witness Jewish life in Italy during the first half of the twentieth century from the point of view of an articulate participant. Segre (1915–1986) grew up in the small Piedmontese city of Casale Monferrato, went to rabbinical school and university in Rome in the 1930s, fought in the Italian Resistance during World War II, and, after a career as a Zionist leader and educator in Italy, ultimately settled in Israel. What makes his memoir unique is that it chronicles the* piccolo mondo *(small world) of traditional Italian Jewry—the post-ghetto, pre-Holocaust world neglected in other works of Italian Jewish literature. "The Rabbi's Family" evokes this almost mythic world of warm human relations in the former ghetto of Casale Monferrato, but also reveals the conflicts within a changing Jewish society and the subtly dehumanizing power of Fascism during the 1920s. The complete translation of Segre's masterpiece will be published as* Memories of Jewish Life: From Italy to Jerusalem, 1918–1960 *by the University of Nebraska Press in fall 2008.*

How many years have passed since those days that are now so long ago? And why exactly, when I reflect upon my Community, are the first recollections to emerge from the archive of my memories precisely those that are bound to the weeks that precede the great solemnities of Rosh Hashanah and Kippur? I don't think it's a question of recalling moments of special religious fervor. Being young, we certainly weren't capable of having precise ideas about either "sin" or "repentance." We definitely did have ideas about the fast of Kippur, but it was a matter of first experiences and something that was strictly personal—that is to say, physical. Nor had our father, the rabbi, ever placed any special emphasis on the *guilt* of mankind; rather, from the time we were children, he had taught us that Judaism is an excellent guide to living with peace of mind, if one lives honestly. And, besides, the young by their nature always look to the future; they're optimists and always hope for great things.

The reaction—for us youths who belonged to the, let us say, less well-to-do class—was much simpler and natural: the month of September and the weeks of the *selihot* meant, though only generically, holidays. Even though it might seem like a contradiction, it really was so. September was something alive that broke through the drowsy summer period, which for us was without either the sea or the mountains and very often without even the countryside. Rich only in imagination and hope, we spent our vacations in the city, immersed day and night in the sultriness of the summer heat and the gray, insubstantial, but ever present dust of the cement works that gave our small city the appearance of an industrial center. In August the sun bore down oppressively, and in the evening there wasn't even a breath of air. Meanwhile, multitudes of mosquitoes assaulted us relentlessly with their sudden buzzing and, even worse, with their bites. The signori with their families were away—at the sea, the mountains, and the countryside. We even knew exactly where they were because the rabbi regularly received picture postcards with respectful and cordial greetings for him and his entire family. Papà was glad to be remembered, even from far away; but for us those missives never were particularly welcome.

Thus the small city was emptied, and the Community itself seemed swallowed up in the most silent abandonment. Sometimes, to the great disappointment of my father, a minyan couldn't be put together because just one of the *minianisti*[3] had deserted, maybe to avoid the heat, but also because it was certain that during those weeks no productive encounter was to be had in the House of the Lord. In an attempt to lessen the heat, we spent long hours under the small arcade of the temple, reading or sleeping, deluding ourselves that a little fresh air was circulating, while the summer heat reached us even in the shade of

the old columns of the Trincotto.[2] All around us was the most absolute silence, interrupted only by the petulant rasping of some cicada, which seemed like the monotonous beat of time passing, empty and useless. Toward evening I would ride out on a creaky, old bicycle in the direction of the public gardens, which were also semideserted. Under a great, leafy tree there was a stall with ice cream and ices (and flies), and for a few cents you could get a *gratà*, a bit of ice with mint or tamarind.

Long, slow days, without sensation and without end. Papà, on the other hand, was always busy. He still belonged to a generation for whom the problem of summer vacations had never arisen. He certainly didn't squander his time. By five in the morning he was already in his office getting through his correspondence, so he could immerse himself in the study of old texts. Shopping at the market was his specialty, and when prayers began at eight o'clock he had already written, studied, gone shopping, and walked a few kilometers. The walks, necessary and healthful he would say, were his greatest diversion in summer and winter. (He never changed his program with the changing of the seasons.) He walked with a rapid, nimble stride, gripping his then fashionable, silver-handled cane—the gift of an old friend who had left it to him as an inheritance. When he went out with Mother, she often remained a ways behind, because it wasn't easy to maintain Father's pace. Then they would repeat their usual banter, Father stressing that when "one is young" this is how one ought to walk, and mother grumbling in reply, "If you want to go for a walk, you don't need to run like you were about to miss a train." Sometimes we walked along the avenue that led to the station, the summer setting for the traditional after dinner, evening stroll. But often there was some attempt at opposition in the family, chiefly from Mother, because "at night you never know where you're going to end up," as if the city were engulfed in darkness, overrun by malefactors, and the center of every vice.

Long awaited, September finally arrived. The air became cool and fresh; the grapes matured; people returned; and the Community itself came back to life. During this period—though it happened only rarely—a trip to the country might even materialize.

Once (and it was a historical event worthy of being recorded in the annals of our family) Papà and *sur*[3] Elìa (and it must have been an exceptional event for him too) organized—who knows why—a true excursion to Manduletta, complete with a two-horse carriage. Even Mother took part in this country picnic, because she had prepared the lunch and, as she said, wanted to prevent who knows what trouble and confusion. *Sur* Elìa, who was busy with the carriage and the coachman, regarded himself as if he were the commander of a ship. When we children, almost drunk with this extraordinary adventure, began to sing and make a little noise—which by pure chance coincided with a slight rearing up of the horses—*sur* Elìa removed his glasses with a resolute gesture, withered us with a severe glare (in which, however, a good dose of fear also showed itself), and practically yelled, "Quiet, don't you know that horses understand everything and don't want to be annoyed? Woe to whoever moves! Do you want there to be an accident?" Why an accident should actually result from that one exceptional coincidence, no one could understand. Father smiled and limited himself to signaling us with his hand not to respond and to be a little calmer.

We stopped at a kind of farmhouse, set in the center of a thick forest, that served as a bar, restaurant, and dance hall. There was also a hurdy-gurdy that ran on twenty-centesimo coins. When the meal that mother had prepared was finished, the notes of the hurdy-gurdy—which never stopped playing—became interwoven with those of the *Birkat ha-Mazon* (grace after meals) that Father had begun to sing, though in a low voice. For us it was quite amusing, because even though the notes of the popular songs almost completely drowned out Father's voice, we

realized that one of the other guests—maybe thinking that this distinguished gentleman was accompanying those very songs with great diligence—had noticed him. This, at least, was mother's comment.

During this month there was no lack of opportunities for brief country outings by bicycle either. Not far from the city, in the hills, hidden in greenery, there was a cottage where an upstanding, middle-class, mercantile Jewish family—which was considered intellectual (at a university level) owing to the achievements of one of its members—came to spend their September holidays. The cottage could be reached by bicycle in about an hour. The last stretch, a climb, was made on foot, gladly, in anticipation of the ride back—all downhill along a road that wound among grapevines already filled with clusters of mature grapes.

Papà would accompany us. He was welcomed quite warmly—up to a certain point. With *sur murènu*[4] the hosts started long conversations that were boring and unbearable for us. From a distance of many years—recalling some witty remarks that by chance I happened to catch on the fly, but even more the different attitudes of the speakers—I have been able to reconstruct (at least in part and maybe only approximately) the gist of those September conversations. From one side came a volley of questions, asked with a slight, ironic smile by a brilliant university graduate, who put them to Papà to see if he would be unnerved. On the other side was the *murènu*, who responded calmly and serenely, not allowing himself to be confused by "science." The usual themes of the old and nearly "superseded" traditional Jewish world and the new, more broadly attractive horizons of assimilation reemerged in their essence, even in those drawing room discussions. My father—I would say to his good fortune—did not have a university education, but rather a solid, Jewish culture and a faith that no philosophical or scientific theory could even scratch. The hosts paraded their learning with an almost ostentatious pride and affected language, and they strained to make the *murènu* understand that many Jewish religious values were being reassessed. Nor was there any lack of allusions, more or less veiled, to the pure and simple fact that it was not easy to make oneself understood by someone who had not left the restricted circle of the Jewish camp.

Assimilation and tradition clashed even among the grapevines of the Monferrato. Reform Judaism, as it was born and had developed in Germany in the period immediately following Moses Mendelssohn, had really not had the same resonance in Italy that it had in other countries, notwithstanding some timid attempts. There may have been many reasons, but probably we should not totally exclude the hypothesis that in Italy the slide from emancipation toward assimilation had been more than sufficient in itself, without needing recourse to those reforms conducted with Teutonic and Judaic diligence.

In those conversations the hosts talked about the mitzvoth, at least a good part of them, as already outmoded, and about the usual values of the "spirit" in contrast to the "letter" of Mosaic teaching—as if the one were not closely bound to the other, as if practical, everyday life could disregard the powers of the spirit, or as if one need only take refuge in abstract values, forgetting that ideas are realized only through action. The Torah, with the mitzvoth, taught plainly how a Jew ought to live. Papà would listen patiently to the same old arguments, smoking his pipe and smiling, full of sympathy for anyone who spoke about Judaism without being more knowledgeable. He responded, citing and commenting informally upon passages from the Torah, as one does with children who need to be educated, even making use of midrashim (parables), some of which, perhaps, were invented by him (quite ably) for his hosts. The parlor, with a dainty, nineteenth-century touch—wicker chairs, lace spread throughout, and paintings—opened onto a garden. The maid, in a white apron, came in to offer coffee and, for us, fruit and country bread. Those people spoke with a certainty and a tone that seemed incapable

of admitting reasonable replies. The truths were those that they upheld, and the future would belong only to those Jews who at long last knew how to liberate themselves from all the dross of the ghetto and to become worthy of the new times. Only in this way would we be able to avoid another round of painful "surprises." But wasn't it also a tragic surprise when the homicidal Nazi hand struck even that family with violence and deportations?

Thus with September—with its coolness and the grape and peach harvest—the season of the *selihot* also returned. The small Community revived almost all at once, reawakening itself from its summer lethargy—hence our anticipation and festive joy. My father, on the other hand, thinking about the holy days of the New Year and the Day of Atonement, would remark very seriously, "We're already close to the great maneuvers." This is why those years—with the *selihot*, the morning breakfasts, and the few outings—have remained engraved in my memory and seem to me, in their totality, like a family photograph, slightly faded and sepia-toned, bringing back precious and memorable images and a period of my youth that was simple and modest, yet also basically lighthearted and happy.

Those years form a precise landmark from which I can set out to try to fish out memories of my childhood from an even earlier period, and then go forward to the time when, having finished the *liceo*, I left Casale to go to Rome and from there began my journey in the geographic and cultural world that continues today.[5] If I go backward to unearth something from among my old childhood memories, I realize that very little remains. The fog is thicker than I would have thought. But one memory is clear and shines like the small, gold Magen David (Star of David) that hung suspended from a chain around the neck of my sister Sara. I see a sunset in the old courtyard and the two of us on the balcony that ran along the house, to the right a low wall and a tall row of trees. Some branches of a fig tree, which we considered our private property, reached the balcony. I held her hand tightly, because I was still frightened by the furious storm that had just ended. A few reddish rays of the setting sun pierced the clouds, which were still as black as tar, filtered through the branches of the trees, and just grazed the leaves of the fig tree. We breathed the damp, bracing air. A reddish-pink reflection made the Magen David, with its inscription "Shaddài" ("Omnipotent"), shine. The warm, motherly clasp of the hand of Sara, who was a ten-year-old child, made me feel safe, while she showed me the wide rifts of intense blue opening among the clouds with the other hand. For many years that memory followed me. Sometimes it follows me still: the grip of her one hand and the other raised toward the sky, as if to mark out a road that in a short while Sara would travel.

The war had brought the deadly Spanish flu, an epidemic that raged cruelly. At home everyone was in bed with high fevers. Only Mother—although she too had been struck by the disease—moved about, laboriously yet without respite, to take care of us. The medicines were inadequate and scarce, and there were few doctors available, because they were at the front. Our family doctor, Fiz, was in the war zone too.

Sara left us late one afternoon at sunset. I even remember the day that she had first felt ill, as she leaned against the corner of the small sofa in the kitchen, against its dark brown, metal back. Having broken off our game—we were playing mother and son, and for her I was probably a splendid, live doll—she sat on the edge of the sofa and vomited. The hours of anguish and despair when Sara died are a memory that has never dimmed. Papà, doubled up in a small chair, abandoned himself to inconsolable crying. Meanwhile, Mother was making a heroic effort trying to comfort him, and I, clinging to his knees, afraid, said to him, "Don't act like this. Look at me; I'm here."

And then in the evening there was the kiss that we brothers, led in a line by our parents, gave to the coffin, which seemed enormous to me. A little while later I was in

the kitchen, in front of a cup of milk that I couldn't swallow, while everyone cried. The day after, during the funeral, Mother and I stayed home, leaning out the window to see the hearse pass. Mother waved a last goodbye to her little daughter. We were home alone. It was "infected," and certain risks could not be taken under any circumstances, even when one might have pretended to bring a little comfort to an anguished mother. I even remember that wandering around the house I got my head stuck, I don't know how, between the iron bars that enclosed my bed, and my mother had quite a difficult job getting me out of that uncomfortable position.

Wartime, the temple, and sitting in the last rows of benches—silent, disoriented, and maybe even somewhat emotional—were Austrian Jewish soldiers in uniform, prisoners of war, each one packed in next to the other, almost as if they wanted to take up the smallest amount of space possible, to avoid causing trouble. Their fellow Jews—the majority at the temple—ignored them. It was clear that they continued to consider them enemies of the homeland; there was not a word, not a sign of greeting. That wasn't all. When we children entered the temple, there was always someone who felt it his duty to tell us—in a low voice but with a curtness that brooked no argument and that filled us with fear—"Go straight ahead, mind you. Don't dawdle with those prisoners for any reason whatsoever!" And others would say, "They're prisoners of war; it's strictly forbidden to speak with them!" It goes without saying that passing by them, we would quicken our stride, frightened, or even begin running, if one of them reached out his hand to caress or smile at us—thinking maybe of his own children, Jews like us, or about his distant family with obvious homesickness. But it was clear that not even in the House of the Lord could they find the comfort that they mistakenly believed had been given them. They entered on tiptoe, saying hello discreetly, and went on, heads bowed, as if they were guilty of who knows what. My father, who at that point did not yet occupy the rabbinical chair, was among the very few to go near them inside the temple—to the great scandal of his fellow Jews. Outside the holy enclosure, he tried to speak with them, to learn their pressing needs, and, as far as possible, to help them. Arriving at home, he would grumble, often saying, "Here are the fine fruits of emancipation."

We frequently heard talk about the war at home. It wasn't only because news of those who had fallen at the front reached us like an endless, steady stream, but especially because this news often dealt with people we knew. The small Jewish Community of Casale Monferrato made a heavy contribution in war dead. The pain of the families, naturally, was great, and the participation of the entire Jewish Community was intense. One can hardly say it, but there was also, openly, a widespread sense, almost, of gratification for what was happening, for this finally being the great test that would show everyone that the Jews were now truly equal to everyone else. They were Italian soldiers, side by side with other Italian soldiers, committed to the supreme sacrifice in defense of the sacred ideals, and no less sacred borders, of the homeland. Although this was not the kind of talk that took place in public among fellow Jews, certain Jewish newspapers would nevertheless slightly temper the tone and color of such declarations, at times with a veneer of ancient Jewish ideals retrieved for the occasion. But sometimes and with the utmost clarity, they would exalt this historic event, inviting Jews to give their lives, as if all the proof given until then was still not enough, and only death on the field of battle could place the unique seal of authenticity on the certificate of the *italianità* of Jews emancipated from the sufferings and abuses borne for so many centuries inside and outside the ghettos:

We believe that in times like these our duty as Jews, in relation to the different civilizations in which the remnants of our dispersion live, becomes perfectly clear. We ought to be, and we instinctually are, the strengtheners of all ideals,

the exalters of all greatness. Nothing could be more out of keeping with our temperament than mediocrity, quietly fitting in, and sluggish, vile feigning during the hours in which the future is being created . . . Now is not the time to debate *the war theoretically, whether it may be good or bad; it is the time to* live *it. But in the moment of living it, one must live it as it is: as something great . . . We Jews—who are both the greatest pariahs and the greatest heroes in history—have, in our thousands of years, witnessed hundreds of wars among all peoples. This is the first time, at least on such a vast scale, that instead of witnessing as simple, passive spectators—or not rarely as victims of illegal violence—we find ourselves, because of our new juridical-political position, having to assume an active, direct, and personal role in the conflict in all the countries in which we are citizens. However tragic this, our destiny, may be, we cannot, after having accepted the premises, avoid the consequences with complete loyalty. And the civic loyalty of the Jews in all the countries of Europe in this terrible test has been above any possible reproach.*

But today we feel that with this alone, the duty of the Jews, has not yet been completely fulfilled. Precisely because of the countless events of every kind that we have witnessed over the centuries and that bear indelible marks in our flesh, and precisely because our brothers in ancestry and faith, of the past and of the future, are in all the armies that today have been unleashed to destroy each other, we are, more than anyone else, in a position to resume our classical, priestly ministry among the nations in the work of praising the greatness of the hour that is transpiring. It is as if the kohen,[6] *because of the precepts of our Torah, should drive out all the cowardly and the sluggish from the combatants' formations. Thus we ought to be the scourgers of all the depraved, the envious, and the malcontents who belittle the loftiness of the hour.*

We must have the courage to proclaim that although war may sometimes be a necessity in the life of countries, hate is never necessary; that although war can be great and stirring, hate is always small and degrading. We must remind whoever has forgotten that every soldier is a son, that every flag is the emblem of an ideal, and that every homeland is sacred. War may require out of necessity that everyone fight according to his strength, but no one need scorn or hate. Everyone should shout, "Viva!" and no one, "Down with!" Everyone should praise, and no one curse. Let this be our humane motto: that we Jews passed the trial by fire, and that we saved our Judaism intact in the hour of trial because it was intact in time of peace. Brothers, we do not hate our fellow man.[7]

In 1915 *Il vessillo israelitico* editorialized:

The hour has arrived. Our Italy has declared war. Let us not search for the reasons—they are obvious. For us the fait accompli is enough. Italy is at war, and we shall give ourselves to Italy completely. Every sacrifice will seem sweet, every privation a duty. We Jews will give everything to our homeland—our children, our property, our lives. Italy has the right to expect everything from us, and we will give everything. Italy's honor—our honor—is at stake. Our homeland must win and triumph, even if we fall, even if we die.

At this moment every debate is, to us, a crime—just as every request for compensation is a disgrace. We should give without asking for anything, because now we want nothing for ourselves. The only thing we want is for the Italian flag to fly over the unredeemed lands[8] *so that destiny will finally be fulfilled. We want civilization to shed its beneficent light upon nearby lands—so that our gentle language, and with it the immortal principles of liberty and fraternity, may spread among foreign regions. We want the Savoy dynasty—magnificent exemplar of every virtue—to be crowned with another wreath of glory. We want to win; we must win. We must show that the feeling of gratitude is deeply rooted in us, and that we are taking our place in this magnificent*

demonstration of harmony that all Italian parties are offering, with flags flying and with unshakable resolution.

To work everyone—to war![9]

In one of his sermons, the head rabbi of Turin, G. Bolaffio, turning to the passage from Psalms 45:3, "Gird your sword upon your thigh, O warrior; success to your praise and your majesty," said, among other things:

In such a grave and holy moment as this, is there really a need for me to instill patriotism in the sons of this mighty Piedmont, this Turin—of all the communes of the region or, better, of all the cities of the kingdom—the most intrepid, the most Italian? It seems superfluous to me, oh brothers, to call up the past, to turn one's thoughts to the traditions. The noble enthusiasm of grandfathers inspires their grandsons forever. The glory that this city gained for itself during the never to be forgotten wars for national independence shall not be betrayed by us in the present hour . . . We children of Israel, we of the lineage of heroes, zealously fought the bitterest of struggles against Antiochus, Titus, and Hadrian for the legitimate defense of our ancient land. Although it happened long ago we gave valuable, unexpected aid to the Ostrogoths in Naples against the army of Belisarius (A.D. 536), to the Moors in their triumphant conquest of Spain (A.D. 711), and to the Turks in the city of Buda against the Austrians (1681). The victories that were won in these three examples were, to tell the truth, due largely to the valor of the Jews. We of an indomitable ancestry, always at the vanguard of every noble initiative, will, with no less certainty, have regained the renown we enjoyed for centuries and millennia on this day in which our Italy, after long and mature reflection, has entrusted to arms the defense of its very honor, the vindication of its most sacred rights.

A note on this redaction, immediately following, informs us:

On every Sabbath since the beginning of the war, the Most Excellent Rabbi Bolaffio recites an appropriate prayer in Hebrew and Italian, pleading for the victory of the Italian forces and the attainment of the sacred ideal of our oppressed brothers' deliverance.[10]

These are just a few of the many examples we could have cited to give at least some idea of the atmosphere in which Italian Jews were then immersed. Their spontaneity, fervor, certainty, faith, and hope are moving. In 1938—that is, only twenty-three years later—a tragic storm would suddenly sweep aside almost all of those who had believed—with such faith and perhaps also a little naively—in those ideals.

In my family we also had more immediate worries about the war, even though we were far from the front. My father's sister, Aunt Fortunata, lived with her family and grandchildren in Udine.[11] After Caporetto[12] they came to us, recounting not only the glories but also the miseries and horrors of war, the savage abuses of the enemy, their pillaging, and the Italians' pillaging near their home. "War," said the veteran Alpine soldiers, "is beautiful but uncomfortable." How much wisdom is in these simple words—far greater than so many speeches!

A few years had passed. Father often received old friends and comrades from the Casale People's Trade Union in our sitting room, and with the encouragement of a few glasses of *barbera*, they would entertain each other at length. They talked about many things, even when we were around, calmly or excited by serious ideological comparisons. The words most often repeated were justice, democracy, peace, and liberty.

Those were the times when you often heard people in the streets singing: "Su fratelli, / Su compagni, / Su venite in fitta schiera . . ." ("Arise brothers, / Arise comrades, / Arise, come in a great host . . .")[13] and "Avanti popolo alla riscossa . . ." ("Forward, people, onward to the uprising . . ."). I remember,

however, that one day when I was singing these songs from the balcony of our house, my father took me by the arm, brusquely pulled me inside, and told me, "You mustn't sing these songs any longer." And to my, "But why? You sing them too," his response, accompanied by a disconsolate shake of his head and hands, had been, "Now it's forbidden; to sing them is dangerous. I beg you, obey. When you're older, you'll understand."

But I didn't have to wait that long to understand. A few days later, on the way home, I had begun to sing "Arise brothers" in a soft voice, when a fellow in a black shirt appeared right in front of me and in a thundering voice addressed me curtly: "Hey, you bastard, who do you think you are? You know what? I'm going to give you a beating!" He had already reached out a hand to grab me by the jacket, but I succeeded in freeing myself and shouted, "Help! Help!" as I fled from him. That fellow chased me a little ways, but, noticing that some people had stopped, he hurriedly quickened his pace and went about his business. Thus it was that for the first time in my life I met, or better, collided with, a Fascist, and I was very afraid. But with the passing of the years, knowing them better and better, I got used to these kinds of encounters too.

The first parades of Blackshirts and veterans, pennants and fasces flying in the wind, the Fascist hurrahs that were shouted out and were used more and more often—why not remember it, even the castor oil? Speaking of which, I was to learn that this oil was not only prescribed by the doctor for us children or even for adults who had indigestion or some other illness for which such medicine seemed to be the remedy; the Fascists violently forced anyone who had political ideas that were different from theirs to swallow it. Thus one day, in the roomy entrance to the Moderno movie theater, I saw some Blackshirts gathered around a fellow. They had put a funnel in his mouth, and while some of them poured a bottle of castor oil into it, the others tied his hands to the seat of his pants.

At the Margherita Hospital in Turin, where I was bedridden, struck down by another epidemic, the fruit of the war: polio. Opposite, a factory occupied by soldiers who shouted during the day at the masses of workers who thronged at the gates and, during quiet moments, sang, among other things, about the red flags that would be raised "over the public latrines of the city." Day and night, bomb explosions blew up windows and terrorized everyone; we children would howl—a chorus of desperate cries—while the doctors and nurses came and went, running, trying to calm us and maybe also trying to calm themselves.

In the garden of the same hospital, seated on a bench with my legs in a cast, I'm having fun with my father, who has come to see me. I'm playing with a "revolver" filled with small paper caps that made very modest bangs. A policeman who is passing by the gate stops, sees this "armed" boy in a cast, and, shouting, opens the gate and comes in to check the weapon. Then he leaves, saying that "with some things, it's better not to joke." This is a small example of the widespread terror of that time, in the midst of the general disorder that was increasingly rampant.

At home Angelino, from the Casale People's Trade Union, now came less frequently, and when he was with us the conversations with Father no longer took place in the sitting room. Both of them would retire to the study, with doors closed, and no one could enter. One time he came to us covered with bruises, his arm in a sling. I later found out that the trade union had been put to the torch by the Fascists—or "Fachists" as Aunt Albina would say—after they'd beaten everyone present with clubs, including Angelino.

It was about this time that two rusty old gates (fished out from who knows where), with a sign bearing the words, "Let's put the Jews back in the ghetto," were propped against the wall in front of a café that faced the Via Roma and was somewhat of a den of Fascists. My father, as soon as he heard about it, took his hat and cane and went out

immediately, in spite of my mother who insistently begged him not to leave. He told her simply, "Don't worry, I'm only going to see if it's true." I found out later that he had walked by those gates three times, going slowly, and that in fact he had stopped the first time like someone wanting to read a poster at leisure. My father was known to everyone, and everyone knew that he was the rabbi of the Community. Thus the Fascists, seated at the small tables or standing in front of the entrance to the café, were stupefied. And then there was a great silence when my father entered and ordered a coffee, which he drank calmly, acknowledging the few greetings with a smile; no one dared attack him, not even with words. Home again, he had replied, smiling, to the anxious and justifiable questions of my mother—who had feared the worst and asked him how it could possibly have taken so long just to see those two terrible[14] gates—"But my dear, it takes time to prepare a coffee, and then it was boiling hot and I didn't want to burn my tongue . . . "

Aunt Albina, my mother's sister, had it in for the "Fachists." Although her education was limited to the beginning elementary grades, she was a passionate reader of books and newspapers. Glancing through the news in the daily paper, she would always conclude with, "These Fachists—how repulsive!" twisting her mouth in disgust.

My aunt lived quite modestly together with Grandmother Celeste, who was always dressed in black. During the winter, whenever she went out, she wore a black scarf wrapped around her head and tied with a large knot under her chin and a long cloak that came almost to her shoes. Grandmother Celeste was a true community institution. There was no occasion among the Jewish families, happy or sad, at which this energetic and valued adviser, this dear old *nonna*,[15] was not present; she was urgently summoned as soon as any necessity outside the normal course of events arose. It wasn't only the poor who had recourse to her; so too did the upstanding, wealthy, bourgeois families, who in case of need didn't concern themselves any longer with the fact that the *nonna* came from the common people, that she was a poor woman, that she lived in difficult circumstances, and that she had often endured poverty amid countless hardships. *Nonna* Celeste would arrive at someone's home silently, find out what was happening, and immediately take charge of the situation, giving advice and orders calmly, precisely, and with great skill. "Aunt" Celeste[16] was for decades the protagonist of the major events of Jewish family life in Casale. She was tiny, with the whitest hair, which was parted in the middle and gathered in a bun held in place with hairpins at the nape of her neck. She had two dark eyes, an intensely Jewish face, and very beautiful, thin, long hands that were always active. From within her ample pockets there always appeared a piece of candy or a few cents that she would give to me, saying, "Please, don't buy *spagnolette*" (which were cigarettes).

Nonna's house: you entered through a wicket door and a short, dark stairway, which was always filled with smoke and the odor of paint coming from a workshop situated in the tiny courtyard. There were two small rooms, plus a blind room where Uncle Aristide slept. He was a bachelor, a grumbler, good, and generous—even though he was poor—living from day to day, doing odd jobs, and also serving as a *minianista*. A few glasses of wine—sometimes more than necessary—helped him forget the disappointments of life, of which he had no lack. Suffering from his feet, he would take lengthy footbaths, falling asleep promptly. He had a magnificent baritone voice, and one of his favorite songs—he was a native of Udine—was "Il ponte di Bassano,"[17] which we children accompanied in chorus until the imperious voice of our *nonna* imposed silence upon us with, "We're hardly at la Scala."

But what especially attracted me in that house was a small fireplace that, for me, had the power of magic. Sitting nearby, I stared at the crackling logs, the flames that went up and down, the sparks, the smoke, and the bricks that

once were red, but now were blackened and corroded by the fire. I played with a shovel that was used for removing the ashes, for reviving the fire, or for putting potatoes among the embers. It was a delight to search for them afterward, to fish them out piping hot, and to eat them with their blackened, crackling skin. I never got tired of staring at that magnificent scene and dreaming of so many things, even if my eyes started to water from the smoke, my face turned red, and my back got cold.

Near that fireplace I was to learn many things—not just how to tell the hours, minutes, and seconds from a clock with a carillon (which I was allowed to hear only as a reward) but also a bit of Jewish Venetian history and the *Histories of Famous Bandits*. My *nonna* told me, with a richness of detail, how the few Jews in Udine lived.[18] It's true that there was a real VIP, Senator Morpurgo, who was the pride and glory of all the local Jews; later, at almost ninety, he too was deported by the Nazis. But there was no organized Jewish Community, rabbi, or temple. They observed the seder (the Passover meal) both because matzo (unleavened bread) could be obtained and because some of them, including my *nonna* especially, knew how to read the traditional text of the Haggadah (the book that is read during the seder) fluently. But regarding the rest, an active Jewish life essentially did not exist, except on the occasion of the autumn solemnities. On Kippur, making a certain financial sacrifice, everyone went to the temple at San Daniele del Friuli. *Nonna* continued her story, and I, through the flames of the small fireplace, had the impression of seeing the carriage and my *nonna* with her family within it laden with provisions and Hebrew books. "It was always, every time," *Nonna* would conclude in a nostalgic tone, "an unforgettable Kippur." And I was convinced of it too. Now, thinking it over, I begin to wonder if I confused my *nonna*'s joy at finally being able to pray in a temple with the trip in the carriage.

Then there were the adventures of the famous bandits that my aunt would read to me—not all of them, however, because some were "not something for you."[19] They made her eyes shine in such a way that I came to think that some of the credit for those adventurous undertakings was hers as well. It was a childish enthusiasm that I was able to understand only later. But when I was a boy the thing always seemed strange to me: these bandits—at least according to the stories—almost always ended up helping the poor and those oppressed by all sorts of injustices. And there was no one better able to understand them than the poor and the oppressed—like Aunt Albina, after all. She would turn the pages of the book, bringing her big thumb to her mouth and wetting it with the tip of her tongue. She read slowly, with a certain style, and it seemed almost as if she were acting the different roles. Appreciative, I followed these stories, curled up by the fireplace, never taking my eyes off the flames, which sometimes seemed to me to take on human shapes: faces of bandits, princes, ladies, cardinals, and the poor. Naturally, they were pursued mercilessly by the carabinieri, who at those moments lost all my sympathy, even though I continued to envy their magnificent, full-dress plumes.

Frequently, the end of the story was a foregone conclusion: arrest and a life sentence or the firing squad. At this point would come my aunt's unfailing and stern comment, connecting the history of the past with the present. "These, yes, these were men, real men, because they stood up for the poor," she would say, while she carefully closed the book. "And not like these disgusting Fachists who pick fights when they're a bunch against a few, against those who can't defend themselves. And they know how to live, protected, off the rich." When I tried to take part in this commentary, asking my aunt if certain people whom I had seen wearing black shirts were also these "disgusting Fachists," she reprimanded me severely, saying, "Don't chatter so much. Always say that it's cooked."[20]

"Always say that it's cooked." Once I was having lunch at my *nonna*'s and aunt's. A pot of water with the pasta in

it was boiling over the flame. My aunt, taking a piece of the pasta, handed it to me and asked me to taste it to see if it was cooked. Remembering her teachings, I immediately said yes. When, however, the steaming pasta was distributed on plates and tasted, I realized—from the surprised faces of everyone present, who had begun to stare at me—that the adjective *cooked* should be used with great prudence—especially when dealing with food.

Fascism continued to assert itself more and more after it came to power. One evening, Alessandro, my oldest brother—who then was just over twenty—had returned home earlier than expected, frightened and upset, because he had encountered one of the best-known Fascists of the city in a café. The man had taken him by the lapels of his jacket, shaking him and insulting him and all Jews as "subversives and Freemasons." My father, after having tried to soothe him—saying to him that no one ever gained anything by losing his composure—asked in which café the business had taken place. After a quick, "Come with me," he left with Sandro (as we called him), going directly to the place in spite of Mother's supplications. When they arrived there and identified the person, my father approached him and said to him in a loud voice, "Say to me, please, what you said to my son. Certain things are better off discussed between adults, don't you think?"

Suddenly there was a great silence in the café. The worst was feared—or perhaps hoped. But a certain panic also spread, because my father, barely finished speaking, had moved his hand—was it by chance or was his gesture intentional?—to the back pocket of his pants, out of which, after a few seconds, he had extracted—and here there was a general sigh of relief—his pipe, which he began to pack carefully and studiously, as if he were at home. This moment of panic having passed—because panic it was, and many had feared the worst—the Fascist approached him, smiled, and said, "But I beg you, signor Rabbi, don't take it this way. I was joking, only joking, and your son—who after all is still a boy—didn't understand the joke." He reached out a hand with the intention of laying it on Father's shoulders in a friendly way.

Father, however—still seriously occupied with his pipe—said dryly, "Certain jokes are better left unspoken." He moved aside and was about to add something more, when the other fellow—his arm dangling in midair—forestalled him, saying to him with studied affability, "At any rate, forgive me. Let's not speak of it any longer. Come, have a drink."

"Thank you," my father responded, "but I have things to do. Another time." He left, followed by my brother and ceremoniously accompanied to the door by that fellow. Someone even stood up when he walked by.

By that time everyone at school was enrolled in the ranks of the Balilla or the Avanguardisti,[21] depending on their age. I very much liked the membership card, which I had seen in the hands of my classmates, and I often begged my father to give me the few *lire* necessary to enroll, always receiving, however, a flat "No." One day I recounted how the teacher, after having read an announcement to us, explained that from then on we had to change our way of saluting—that is, no longer raising the hand to the forehead, like a kind of military salute, but rather extending the arm forward. Then he said to us, "Let's try it. I'll go out, come back in, and then you salute me according to the new orders." He spoke the word *orders* emphatically. He went out, came back in, and there we were, ready, everyone standing with arms stretched forward. He looked at us, smiling, made a kind of small bow, and said, "Perfect, exactly so. Very good indeed!"

My father, who immediately understood the teacher's words and attitude, commented on the episode, saying, "Do you see? And you want the membership too, the Balilla membership card. Isn't the salute that you have to give enough for you?" A while afterward I had another go at it, but my father cut me short: "I don't have money to throw

away." Later, however, when he realized that I was grieving more and more over the membership card, he took me lovingly by the hand and said to me, "Come here. You're a boy who understands things well, and with you a few words are enough. But they're words that must remain between us, like a secret. Understood?" I nodded yes with my head, but I didn't speak because I was still on the verge of crying.

"Well then, listen. You're a Jew, and a Jew who respects himself doesn't take any kind of Fascist card." My father's words were spoken with much warmth and love.

"But why? There are lots who take it," I pressed.

"Yes," he responded, "today there are a lot, even among the Jews. But whoever feels truly Jewish won't join those people who are against justice and liberty. You already know that these things are among the most important of Jewish teachings. Those people love violence, and for centuries the Jew has pursued justice. It's not by chance that we've suffered for so many centuries. Those people arise from war, and they always want war; the Jew wants peace. And then there are a lot of other things that as time goes by I'll explain to you; but I think that this is enough for now. And remember, like I told you, this is a secret between the two of us."

The fact of having a secret between my father and me, right then and there, convinced me more than his arguments, which were difficult for me to follow and which essentially meant a big, fat "no" to the membership card I wanted so much. Only much later, through personal experience, was it possible for me to understand in depth the words of that secret between father and son.

But even before my own experience, the actual experience of my father was to unsettle me. During a particular period a few years later, the Fascist Party launched an enrollment drive with a lot of propaganda. The Jewish Community's council, made up of teachers, lawyers, and engineers, all of whom were enrolled in the party (although for a variety of reasons), practically forced my father to enroll. They had pressured him (uselessly) many times before, arguing that it was not possible for him to continue to hold an important office, especially in a small Jewish Community like that of Casale, where everything about everyone was known, especially given his questionable past and his friendships with certain Socialists. It was a golden opportunity generously offered on a silver plate, and it could not be refused. Nor should he forget that he represented all the Jews of the Community and that therefore he had to understand the attendant responsibilities too. To be Jews thus meant, according to the Community authorities, to be ever vigilant and attentive in following all the orders of the regime, since it would be easier to be heavy-handed with us than with others. I still remember when father came home, after having received his membership card (which immediately ended up in the stove) from the provincial party secretary himself; he walked back and forth nervously, murmuring, "Look, look at what we've come to!" This event, and especially those words, spoken with such bitterness by my father—Ezechiele or Jechezqèl to his friends—definitively clarified for me that secret between father and son.

Translator's Notes

1. A *minianista* (plural: *minianisti*) is one who obliges himself to be part of a minyan. S.v. *minianista* in Umberto Fortis, *La parlata degli ebrei di Venezia (e le parlate giudeo-italiane)* (Florence, 2006). In the Italian communities of this era, being a *minianista* was a role for elderly men, especially those who were poor. There was sometimes a slight stipend. Attending the minyan also afforded *minianisti* the opportunity to request alms from the well-to-do members, the signori—except when they were all on vacation, as in the text.

2. The old name of the building in which the synagogue of Casale Monferrato was built in 1595.

3. Piedmontese dialect form of the Italian *signor*, a respectful form of address.

4. *Murènu* is Jewish Piedmontese dialect for "our teacher," i.e., the rabbi. However, Fortis, *La parlata degli ebrei*, cites *moréno* used in Venice and references others' citations of *moreno* employed in Mantua, Modena, and Rome, as well as *morénu* for Piedmont.

5. Augusto Segre immigrated to Israel in 1979 and settled in Jerusalem. He died in 1986.

6. Priest in Hebrew, that is, a member of the priestly lineage and a descendant of Aaron.

7. "The Hour of Trial," in *La settimana israelitica*, May 28, 1915 (Segre's note).

8. The original text reads "terre irredenti," literally, "unredeemed lands." The phrase refers to areas adjacent to Italy inhabited at least partly by Italians but under foreign control (particularly Trieste and Fiume and the borderlands with Austria farther north). "Redeeming" these lands (that is, incorporating them into Italy) would, theoretically, complete the national unification begun in the nineteenth century.

9. *Il vessillo israelitico* 10 (1915; Segre's note).

10. Ibid.

11. Udine is in far northeast Italy, near the border of what then was the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thus near the front.

12. Caporetto was the site of a disastrous battle in which the Italian front facing the Austrians in the northeast collapsed.

13. According to historian and folklorist Sandro Portelli, "Avanti popolo" (also known as "Bandiera rossa" ["the Red Flag"]) was "the most important fighting song of the Italian working class." (*Avanti Popolo/Forward People: Revolutionary Songs of the Italian Working Class*, Paredon Records, 1976, P-1026, liner notes, p. 6.)

14. *Negri* (singular *nègro*), the word translated here as "terrible," was one of the most widespread terms in Jewish Italian dialects. There are citations in the literature from Piedmont (generally), Moncalvo, Mantua, Modena, Ferrara, Trieste, Florence, Livorno, Pitigliano, Rome, and Venice. The word evidently entered Jewish Italian from Spanish (*negro*: black) and has a generically pejorative meaning. There is no direct connection in Jewish Italian between *nègro* and English *Negro* except in the generally negative associations of the color black that are widespread in European folklore. S.v. *nègro* in Fortis, *La parlata degli ebrei*.

15. In Italian *nonna* is both the formal "grandmother" and the informal and affectionate "grandma," "granny," or "grammy." Segre clearly has the latter sense in mind, yet those words bear specifically American connotations. Thus I have left *nonna* in Italian.

16. "Aunt" is used here not in the literal sense but as a term of affection and respect; the word can refer to any older, female relative. Segre's text employs the Piedmontese word *magna*, not the Italian *zia*.

17. "The Bridge of Bassano." This was a sentimental World War I song about a farewell kiss on the bridge of Bassano del Grappa, the site of an important Italian stand against Austria during the war.

18. "Jewish Venetian history," in the previous sentence, refers to the history of the Jews not only in the city of Venice but also within the larger territory that once was part of the Venetian Republic, including places like Udine and San Daniele del Friuli.

19. The original text reads, "No xe cosa par ti." Segre often reported his aunt's and mother's comments in Veneto dialect, as in this case.

20. "Ti no far tante ciacole, dì sempre che la xe cotta" is a proverbial phrase spoken in Venetian dialect. The young Segre's confusion (in the following paragraph) came from taking the proverb too literally. *Cotta*, the Italian word I have translated here as "cooked," carries the metaphoric meaning (in the proverb) of done, finished, or over with. Thus his aunt meant, "Don't chatter so much. Always say that it's finished."

21. These were Italian Fascist youth movements.



Plate 1
Portrait Miniature of Consolina Valobra
G. Gennaio
Turin (?), 1897
Oil on ivory
Private collection

The sophistication and acculturation of many nineteenth-century Piedmontese Jewish families is suggested by this delicately painted portrait, with its carefully rendered skin tones, clothing, and jewelry. Consolina Valobra, born in a small town near Cuneo in 1852, was the mother of Ines Cassin Treves, whose self-portrait and wedding dress were also included in the exhibition.

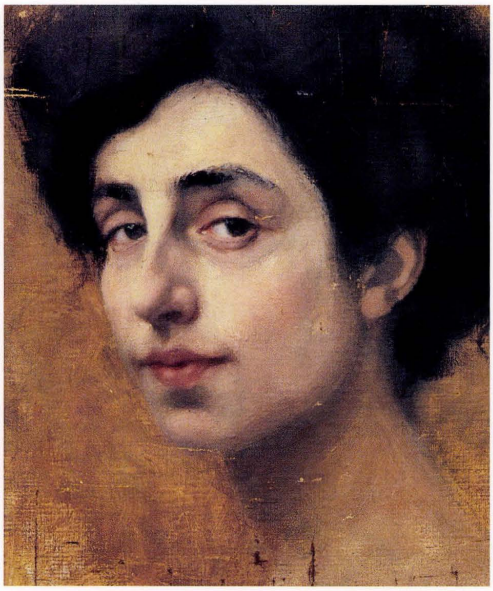


Plate 2
Self-Portrait
Ines Cassin Treves
Turin, ca. 1909
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Ines Cassin Treves studied painting with a well-known artist in Turin. She executed this self-portrait before her marriage to Elia Treves. After her marriage she stopped painting in oils, but continued to draw. The couple lived in Turin's ghetto in a home that may have formerly been the residence of the Roman Catholic bishop, which is suggested by the ecclesiastical emblem over the house's entrance. Treves, like his father, was the treasurer of the Jewish Community of Turin.



Plate 3
Ketubbah
Alessandria, 1709
Ink and gouache on parchment
Zucker Family Collection housed at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York

This marriage contract is decorated in the distinct Piedmontese style, with a shield-shaped frame filled with floral motifs. Found at the bottom of the ketubbah, the groom's family crest includes hands raised for the priestly blessing, which shows that the groom was a *kohen* (priest). The ketubbah features erasures and corrections in the dowry specification, indicating that the amount of the dowry was changed at the last minute.



Plate 4
Esther Scroll
Scribe: Elia Joshua Segre
Moncalvo, 17th–18th centuries
Ink and gouache on parchment
Gross Family Collection, Ramat Aviv, Israel

Esther scrolls with colophons specifying the scribe and place of production are unusual. In this example, each text column is set within a border richly ornamented with floral decoration. This type of decoration is familiar from objects made elsewhere in Northern Italy, but was especially favored by artists who decorated ketubbot in Piedmont.



Plate 5
Ketubbah
Mondovi, 1844
Ink and gouache on paper
Zucker Family Collection housed at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York

This ketubbah features micrographic decoration, a Jewish art form that uses tiny Hebrew letters to form images or patterns. The micrographic text is drawn from "The Woman of Valor" in Proverbs 31.



Plate 6
Ketubbah
Asti, 1900
Ink and gouache on paper
Zucker Family Collection housed at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York

The groom's initials, D.C., appear in the outer frame of this ketubbah. The artist, possibly the groom himself or a member of his family, signed it in the lower-right corner; the signature appears to be "Cingoli."



Plate 7
Portrait of Rabbi Lelio Cantoni
D. Festa after Petronilla (?)
1834
Engraving
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Giulio Cantoni, Bethesda, Maryland

Rabbi Lelio Cantoni became the chief rabbi of Turin in 1833. His official portrait was engraved shortly after he assumed the post. In it he is depicted in an elaborate costume similar to academic attire, with a capelet over his shoulders and a toque on his head. Cantoni established the Committee of the Jewish Communities of the Kingdom of Sardinia and Piedmont in 1845. An 1835 letter to Rabbi Cantoni from the community of Biella was also included in the exhibition.



Plate 8

Vue d'un des quatre angles de la maison des juifs illuminées/
Veduta d'uno de quattro angoli del ghetto illuminato

(View of One of Four Corners of the Ghetto, Illuminated)

From *La sontuosa illuminazione della città di Torino*, Turin, 1737

Hand-colored engraving

Moldovan Family Collection

The ghetto of Turin, depicted in this image, was formerly a hospital for beggars. This engraving was apparently commissioned for a collection of fourteen views of Turin published in honor of the marriage of Charles Emmanuel III, King of Sardinia, and Princess Elizabeth Theresa of Lorraine.



Plate 9
Mahzor APaM
Moncalvo, 1799
Ink on paper
Collection of the Manfred and Anne Lehmann Foundation

The liturgical rite of *nusah APaM* is a French medieval tradition that survived only in Piedmont. *APaM* is an acronym for the three cities, Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo, that maintained this tradition. This manuscript was commissioned by Michael and Aharon De Benedetti.



Plate 10

Haggadah

Illustrator: Joseph Isaac Bella

Ivrea, 1806

The Collection of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York

The frontispiece contains a Hebrew colophon that identifies the illustrator and explains that the text includes a commentary by Raphael Eliezer Olivetti from Ivrea. The commentary precedes the Haggadah.



Plate 11
Kiddush Goblet and Cover
Turin, ca. 1800
Silver: repoussé and chased
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Rafaele Lattes, Teaneck, New Jersey

The large, covered, chalice-shaped kiddush goblet used in Piedmont was unique to this region. The covers of Piedmontese kiddush cups are topped with fanciful floral sprays. (The Judeo-Piedmontese term for a kiddush cup is *bécher*, reflecting the influence of German or Yiddish.)

This cup was used at weddings of the Lattes family until recently. This family lived in Saluzzo, before moving to Turin in the early part of the twentieth century. Rafaele Lattes's forebears on both his father's and mother's sides became physicians, a profession open to Jews after the emancipation. Lattes came to the United States after Benito Mussolini imposed the racial laws.



Plate 12

Torah Finials

Turin (?), dedicated 1811

Silver: repoussé, chased, cut, and cast

Reuben and Helene Dennis Museum, Beth Tzedec Congregation, Toronto, Canada

The use of crown-form finials was unique to the Piedmont region. Most Italian communities used open, round crowns and tall, tower-shaped finials, often ornamenting their Torah silver with cast Temple implements, as seen on these examples. The closed, ribbed forms on this pair are based on Ashkenazic (Franco-German) types.



Plate 13
Torah Crown
Alessandria, 1849
Silver: pierced, repoussé, chased, engraved, and parcel gilt
Collection of the Museo U. Nahon di Arte Ebraica Italiana, Jerusalem, Israel

This crown was commissioned to commemorate the death of King Carlo Alberto, the Risorgimento leader who emancipated Piedmontese Jewry in 1848. His death was deeply mourned by local Jews. Turin's synagogue even painted its Torah Ark black as a sign of mourning. The crown is decorated with the Alessandria civic emblem and images of cannons and ammunition; Alessandria's Jewish community held a memorial service with cannon fusillade in the king's honor.

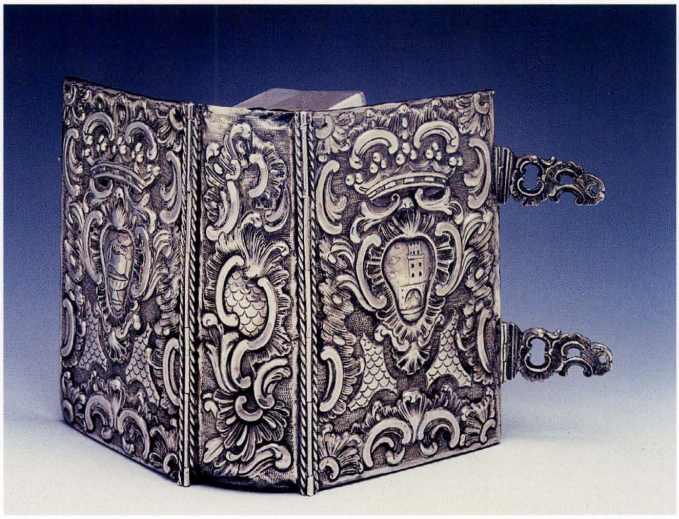


Plate 14

Prayer Book and Cover

Turin (?), 18th century

Silver: repoussé, chased, and engraved

Collection of Joseph and Karen Levine

The sumptuously bound prayer book was probably presented as a betrothal gift; prayer books bearing two family crests, representing the families of bride and groom, are known to have been given on such occasions. Several similar Roman bindings are known. The book's cover bears the Levite symbol of a pouring laver, as well as a second unidentified emblem, probably a family or organizational crest. Towers and birds in flight appear in the decoration as well. Many Italian families, most notably the Morpurgos, used towers in their crests. Some communal organizations also used symbols. The emblem with birds in flight resembles that used by the Hevrat Matir Asurim, a confraternity that redeemed Jews from imprisonment.

Some time after leaving the hands of its original owners, this book was acquired by the Lattes family.

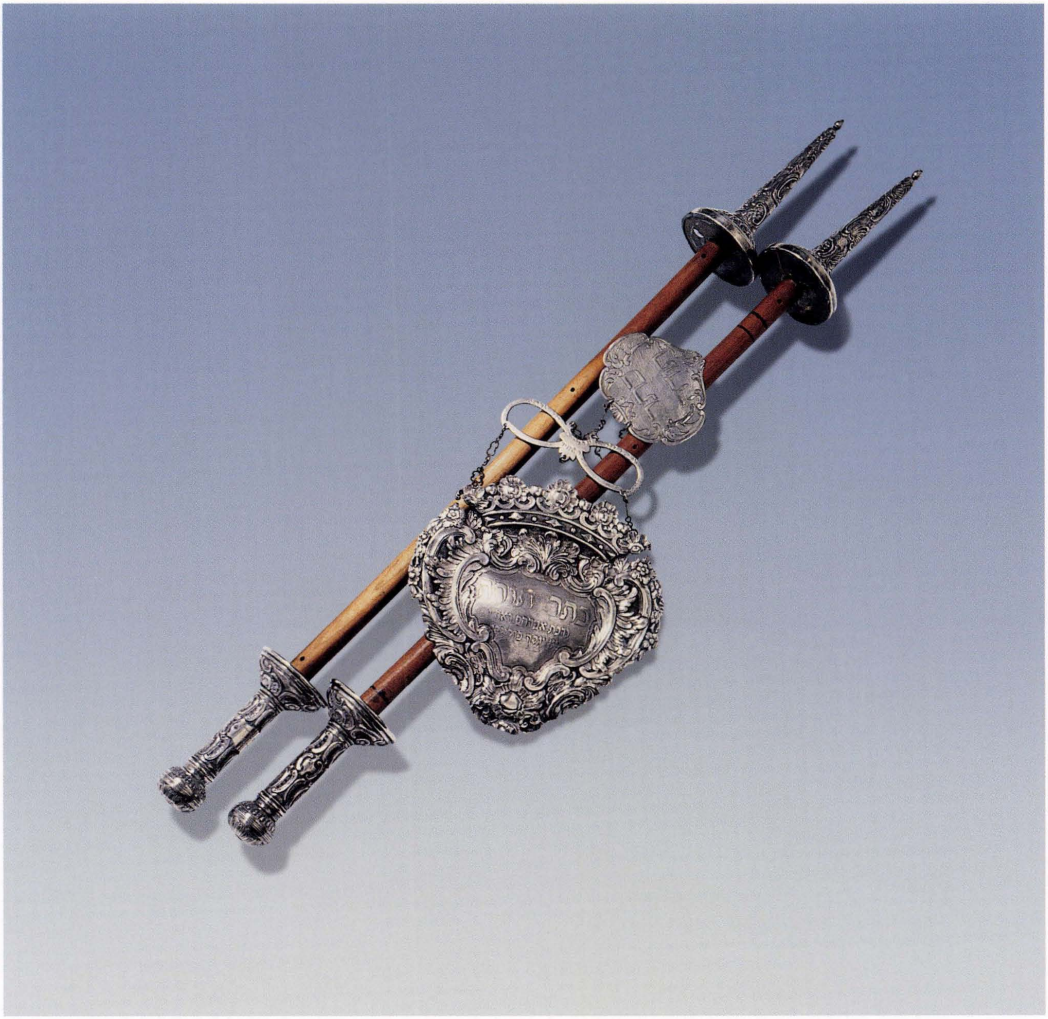
Plate 15

Torah Staves and Torah Shield

Turin, 19th century (?)

Silver: repoussé, chased, and engraved; wood

Comunità Ebraico di Torino





Piedmontese Jewish parents, like other Italian Jews, traditionally placed silver amulets adjacent to their newborn children's cradles. An amulet of this type, known as a *Shaddai* for the divine name inscribed on most examples, was believed to protect an infant. They were most frequently crafted in the Veneto and Piedmont. Many of the amulets are decorated with Temple implements; some contain Hebrew biblical or magical texts handwritten on folded or rolled parchment.

Plate 16
Amulet Case
Italy, 18th century
Silver: repoussé and chased
Private collection

This amulet case is decorated with attached Temple implements similar to those found on many examples of Italian Torah silver.



Plate 17
Amulet Case
Piedmont, 19th century
Silver: repoussé and chased
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Giulio Cantoni, Bethesda, Maryland

This case was used by the Cantoni family of Turin.

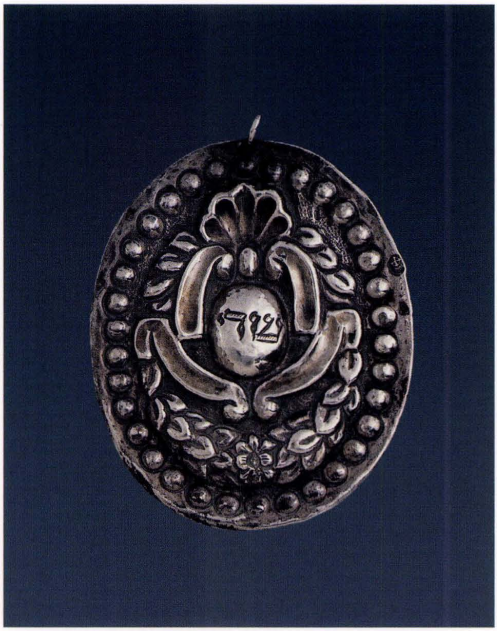


Plate 18
Amulet
Piedmont, 19th–20th centuries
Silver: repoussé and chased
Private collection



Plate 19
Amulet
Piedmont, 19th century
Silver: repoussé and chased
Private collection

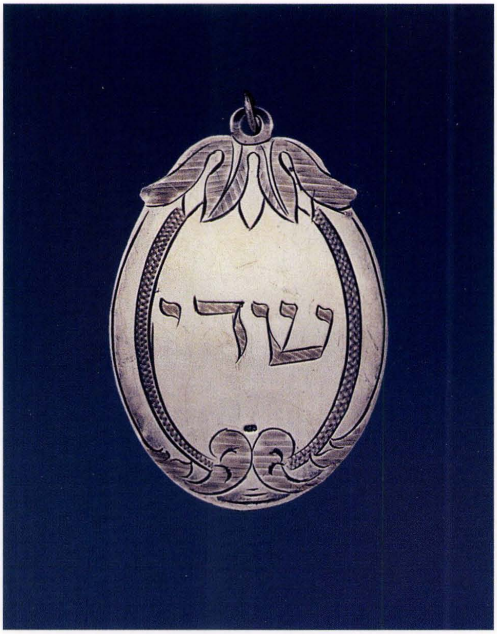


Plate 20

Amulet

Piedmont, 19th century

Silver: repoussé and chased

Collection of Vivian Wayne Henderson, New York

Many amulets are inscribed with the name of God or an angel. This amulet, which was formerly owned by the Ottolenghi family of Casale Monferrato, bears a divine name on one side and the Tablets of the Law on the other.



Plate 21

Torah Shield

Turin, 19th century (?)

Silver: repoussé, chased, and engraved

Comunità Ebraico di Torino

Piedmontese Jews used a distinct Northern Italian regional type of Torah shield. It is composed of three elements: a large shield that hangs on the front of the Torah scroll, a smaller shield that hangs on the back of the scroll, and a figure-eight-shaped device placed over the wooden staves of the scroll.



Plate 22

Ceremonial Plates

Turin, 19th century

Silver: repoussé and chased

Clockwise from upper left:

1. Private collection; 2. Silversmith: Pacifico Levi, Collection of the Jewish Museum, New York; 3. Private collection; 4. Private collection

Large, circular, silver dishes were frequently used by Piedmontese Jewish families. The shallow, oversize form appears to be a uniquely Piedmontese type popular in the nineteenth century. It was traditional in some families to use dishes of this type at the Passover seder. Dishes of this form were also placed beneath the oil lamps lit on the eve of Yom Kippur. Some dishes bear images of the blessing hands of the *kohen* (priest) or the pouring jug of the Levite, imagery that suggests the dishes may have been used in synagogues as basins for ritual washing before the Priestly Blessing.



Plate 23
Ceremonial Plate (detail)
Silversmith: Pacifico Levi
Turin, 19th century
Silver: repoussé and chased
Collection of the Jewish Museum, New York

Depicting Jacob's Dream, this detail shows one of the seven scenes decorating the object at the upper right of plate 22. That the seven biblical characters depicted correlate with the *ushpizin*, the special guests invited to the sukkah, may suggest that this plate was used in the synagogue on Sukkot, possibly for the washing of hands by the Levites. Pacifico Levi was one of twelve Jewish silversmiths nominated for membership in Turin's guild in 1817–18. He registered his silversmith's mark as a hand holding a pouring pitcher, a symbol of his Levite heritage. A similar motif is found at the center of this plate.



Piedmontese Torah mantles, crafted of elegant fabrics, have a distinctive, tall, cylindrical silhouette, a back opening, and a soft top. A separate undermantle is frequently used. These mantles are generally ornamented with metallic trim and fringe around their top and bottom edges.

Plate 24
Torah Mantle
Piedmont (?), late 19th century
Embroidery on canvas
Comunità Ebraico di Torino



Plate 25
Torah Mantle
Piedmont (?), late 18th century
Silk embroidered with silk threads
Comunità Ebraico di Torino



Plate 26

Torah Mantle

Piedmont, 18th century (?)

Silk embroidered with silk and metallic threads

Comunità Ebraico di Torino



Plate 27
Torah Mantle
Piedmont, ca. 1755–65
Silk brocade
Comunità Ebraico di Torino



Plate 28
Brit Milah Gown and Undergown
Piedmont, ca. 1889
Cotton, needle lace, and silk
Collection of Dr. Lucia Bedarida Servadio

Plate 29 (facing page)
Brit Milah Gown and Undergown (detail)

It was traditional in many Piedmontese Jewish families to dress a male infant in special garments for his circumcision. Many families handed down their heirloom textiles of the Baroque era for use by successive generations. Others purchased fashionable, fine-quality infant clothing resembling contemporary christening gowns. This gown was used for the circumcision ceremony of Beniamino Vittorio Bedarida in August 1889.





Plate 30
Textile Element: Dedicatory Inscription
Turin, 1894
Silk embroidered with silk and metallic threads
Comunità Ebraico di Torino

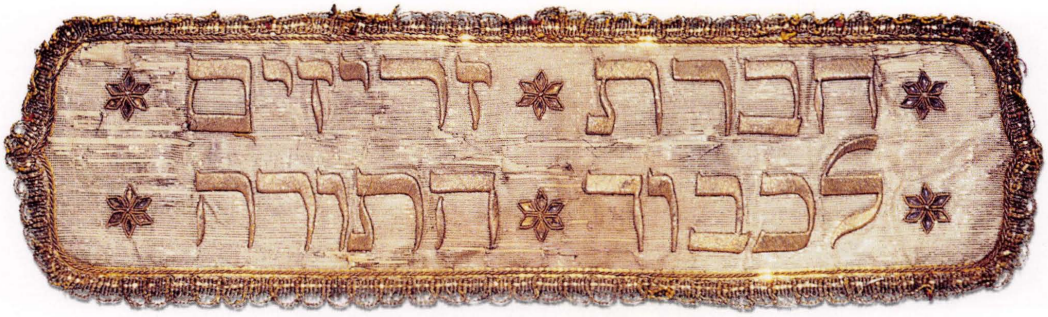


Plate 31
Textile Element: Dedicatory Inscription
Turin, 19th century
Silk embroidered with silk and metallic threads
Comunità Ebraico di Torino



Plate 32

Tallit

Turin, late 19th–early 20th centuries

Silk embroidered with silk threads

Collection of Anna Funaro Fubini

Piedmontese Jews wore decoratively embellished *tallitot*. This custom was prevalent throughout Italy, but was perhaps especially prominent among Piedmont's Jews because of their long-standing commercial involvement in the silk and decorative trimmings trade.

This *tallit*, monogrammed with the initials A F, may have belonged to the paternal grandfather of Anna Funaro Fubini.



Plate 33

Sabbath Cloth

Piedmont, 18th century with 19th-century additions

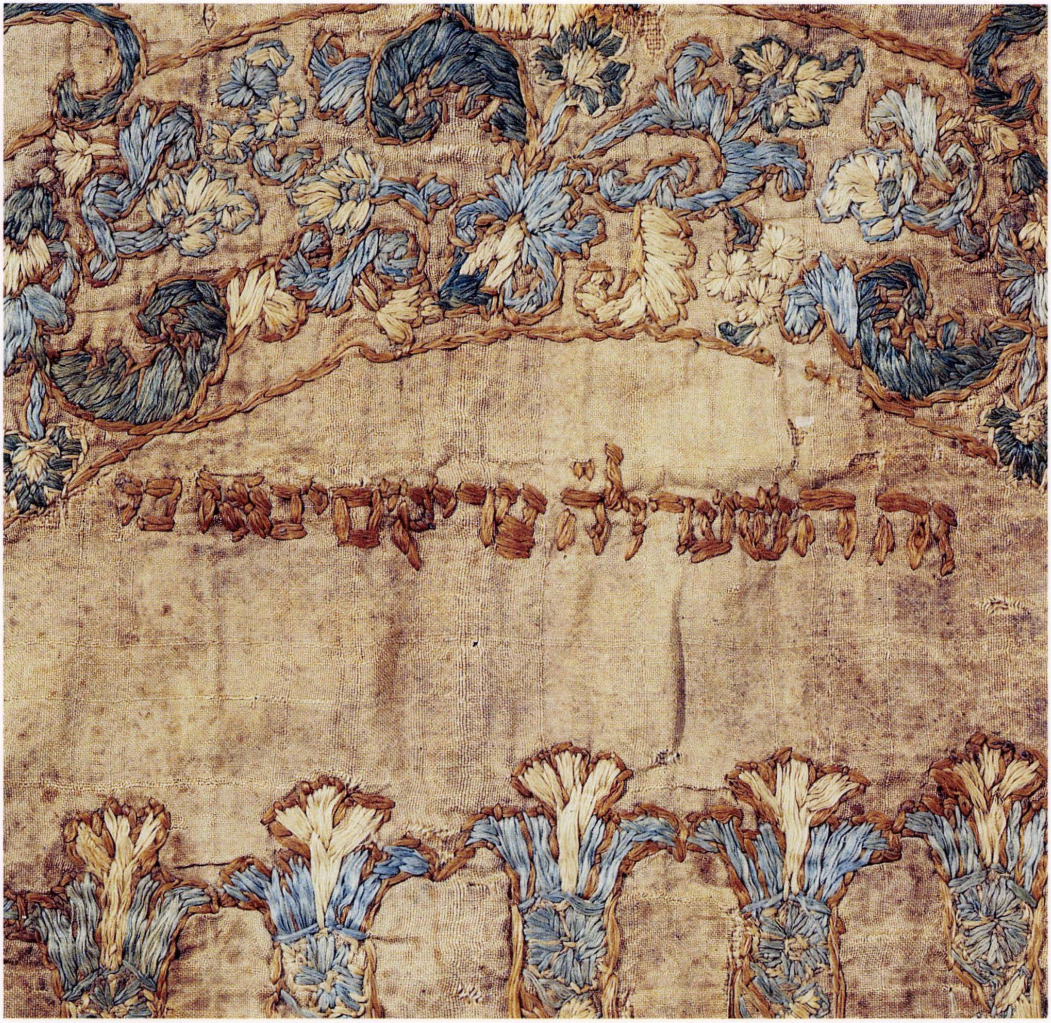
Silk embroidered with silk and metallic threads; velvet with appliqué, sequins, and metallic lace

Private collection

This lavishly decorated cloth was placed beneath the Sabbath candles in the home of Perlina Treves in Turin. In 1861 her husband, Samuele, was head of the Treves Bank in Turin. He was also the treasurer of the city's Jewish community.

Plate 34
Synagogue Textile (detail)
Piedmont, late 17th century
Linen and silk embroidered with silk threads
Comunità Ebraico di Torino

This synagogue textile, known as a *mappah*, was probably used as a Torah cover. It features biblical inscriptions as well as motifs frequently found on synagogue textiles, such as the menorah and other Temple implements.



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