Tunisian Judaeo-Arabic Essays on Religion and Ideology in the Late-Nineteenth Century

Master's Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Jonathan Decter, Advisor

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts
in
Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

by
Joshua Picard

February 2016
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to those without whose help this project would not have been possible. First and foremost I thank Jonathan Decter, who introduced me to Judaeo-Arabic studies and encouraged me to pursue research in this field. His seminar on Judaeo-Arabic literature opened my eyes to its rich and diverse history and his guidance has opened the door for me to continue studying and engaging with this fascinating material.

I am extremely grateful for the continued support of Carl Sharif el-Tobgui and Khadijah Loummou, both of whom have provided invaluable guidance in my studies of the Arabic language. Both in and out of the classroom, each has been an exemplary mentor and profound influence on my academic and personal growth. In particular, I am indebted to Professor el-Tobgui’s unceasing patience and willingness to meet me well beyond the appointed class and office hours.

My very sincere thanks go to David Karjala who, throughout the course of this project, has provided his time and immense knowledge to aid me in my efforts. I am deeply grateful for his enthusiasm for my thesis and his sustained willingness to fit me into his busy schedule.

Lastly, I express my deep gratitude to my mother, Lee Picard, whose unwavering encouragement and support, both moral and material, throughout this M.A. program have been greatly appreciated.
Abstract

Tunisian Judaeo-Arabic Essays on Religion and Ideology in the Late Nineteenth Century

A thesis presented to the department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts
By Joshua Picard

This thesis examines the genre of essays on religion and ideology that emerged in Tunisia in the late nineteenth century with a focus on the essays contained in two particular booklets. These essays represented a unique historical moment, in which the Jewish community of Tunis faced changing external conditions and produced various attempts to adapt to these changes, especially regarding the changes in education brought by the Alliance Israélite Universelle. In many cases, a new affinity toward France accompanied increasing secularization and a detachment from traditional Tunisian Jewish life.

The essays explored here are reactions to these changes in attitudes and practices, in which the authors rebuke the wayward among their community and seek to establish the enduring value of normative Judaism in the eyes of the new generation. The two booklets examined here are "Shuvah Yisrael" and "Nesah Yisrael" ("Return, Israel" and "The Eternal of Israel" respectively), both of which were published in the 1880s.

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the approaches taken by the rabbis and community leaders in attaining their objective of maintaining traditional Judaism within the community. The essays found in these books represent a number of styles, and various registers of the Judaeo-Arabic language. Translated quotations from the essays have been incorporated to provide a sense of the original materials to the reader.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii  
Abstract iv  
Table of Contents v  
Introduction vi  
The Jewish Community of Tunis 1  
Changes in Education 5  
Judaeo-Arabic Literature in North Africa 15  
Essays on Religion and Ideology 23  
The Decline of Judaeo-Arabic Culture in Tunis 42  
Bibliography 48  
Appendix 1: Selections from Shuvah Yisrael 50  
Appendix 2: Selections from Nesah Yisrael 54
Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, a new genre of writing emerged among the religious scholars and community leaders of the Jews of Tunis. This genre consists of essays on ideology and the orientation of the Jewish community. The authors note the secularization of their community with dismay, wishing to preserve Jewish traditions and laws and to defend against the vices appearing within their society. Of particular interest is that these publications emerge relatively early on in the Gallicizing process that this community underwent, perhaps foretelling the exacerbation of these issues in coming years with seemingly little success in preventing or allaying them. The Jewish community of Tunis at this time was undergoing a period of rapid change, in which a number of competing ideologies and currents permanently altered the character of this group.

Among these influences, three stand out in particular. The first is the rise in Judaeo-Arabic printing in North Africa broadly, and Tunisia specifically. This emerging literary trend democratized access to the written word, both in form and function; the Judaeo-Arabic vernacular adopted was easily accessible to the Jewish communities of Tunisia (unlike Classical Arabic, Hebrew, or at this time, French) and the contents of these books ranged from exegesis to translations of romances. The second is the increasing awareness and appreciation of French Enlightenment culture and ideals. The primary vehicle for the dissemination of such knowledge was the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a network of Jewish run schools operating based on the French curriculum. The
third is the inclusion of girls in the new system of education, which would influence linguistic and cultural shifts within this community throughout the protectorate period. This shift likewise originates with the AIU, in its commitment to Enlightenment thought.

While none of these currents intrinsically diminishes the role of Jewish religion in society, their rapid expansion and conglomeration seem to have rapidly produced a generational shift in adherence to traditional norms and expectations, prompting alarm from communal leaders. The writings in question, essays on ideology and religious orientation, respond to these societal changes. This study seeks to assess the cultural shifts underway in this community and to explore some of the responses to them as expressed in these Judaeo-Arabic essays.

The first section provides background information on the Jews of Tunis, aiming to highlight the constituent groups of this community and their relations with one another and with Europe. The next section discusses the changes in education brought by French and other European governments and private organizations. These changes include both the types and quality of education available and the increased availability of schools to groups that had typically been excluded from such institutions.

Against this background, I evaluate some essays written by concerned rabbis and community leaders pushing back against the secularization wrought by the new educational institutions and French cultural influence. These essays are drawn from books that Yosef Tobi had translated in part in "Judeo-Arabic literature in Tunisia, 1850-1950." I have translated all of the chapters that he omitted. I quote from these essays extensively in the third section, "Essays of Religion and Ideology." All block quotes, and many
shorter quotes, are original translations. In any instances where I have cited essays translated by Tobi I have provided references to his book in the footnotes.

A final section describes the continuation of secularizing trends in Tunis into the twentieth century and contrasts this secularization with the traditionalism of the conservative Jewish community of Djerba. These divergent trends in religiosity are aligned with vastly different approaches to Judaeo-Arabic culture in the twentieth century. I have not gone in depth in describing the community of Djerban Jews, but have cited this community to highlight an alternate response to the AIU and French colonial influence.
The Jewish Community of Tunis

The Jews of Tunis in the mid-nineteenth century were a mixed group, in which mutually oppositional interests vied for expression. This community accounted for more than half of the Jews living in Tunisia at the time.¹ The simplest categorization of this religious community can be done along ethnolinguistic lines, in which two groups are prominent. The more ancient of them was known as the "Twansa," literally "the Tunisians." These were Arabized Jews whose roots in North Africa extended back to the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, according to their tradition.² Numerically the most preponderant Jewish community of Tunisia, they remained primarily confined to the Jewish quarter of Tunis, "Harat al-Yahud," known colloquially as "the Hara." Their primary language was a local variety of Judaeo-Arabic, their dress and manners influenced by the local Muslim population but distinct from it. Legally, these Jews were considered "ahl al-dhimma," the general title of non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state. This

---

2. Haim Saadoun, "Tunisia," in The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times, ed. Reeva Spector Simon et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 445. Information about such inherited traditions and some evaluation of them can be found in Nahum Slouschz, Travels in North Africa (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society Press, 1927) 263. Regardless of the exact date at which this community appeared, its existence is attested to by the early centuries of the common era. Certainly, this community continued to be augmented by various waves of immigration, significantly following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the expulsion of Iberian Jews beginning in 1492.
status carried restrictions on the social and economic opportunities of these Jews, while guaranteeing them protection by the state.³

The other group was known as the "Grana," meaning "the Livornese." As their name suggests, these were Jews who had come from Livorno, often of Iberian Jewish or converso background. Livorno attracted a significant Jewish population from the sixteenth century onwards by offering them a haven from the inquisition. It thus became a focus of Sephardic trade networks throughout the Mediterranean Sea.⁴ Although many conversos reverted to Judaism, they frequently maintained their Iberian heritage as they settled in the coastal cities of the Mediterranean. Those who made their way to Tunis preserved their Sephardic Jewish culture, and remained Italian subjects with strong political ties to Livorno. As Italian subjects, they were not subject to the restrictions of the "dhimma" of their native coreligionists. They dressed as Europeans and saw themselves as such, never fully integrating into the community of the Twansa culturally or spatially.⁵

³ Ahl al-dhimma translates to "the people of the pact." The specific conditions of this arrangement have varied widely in their application throughout Islamic history, but certain features were more or less universal; minority faith communities paid a poll-tax (jizya) that exempted them from military service and guaranteed protection by the state and a certain level of communal autonomy and freedom of worship, meanwhile they lacked some political rights and faced restrictions in dress, social freedom, and construction and maintenance of places of worship. In Tunis, Jews had to wear distinctive dress, were confined to living in the Hara, and were subjected to political restrictions well into the nineteenth century. Under the pact, they had great autonomy in communal and religious matters.


⁵ Tsur notes that those of the Grana who did not maintain their economic or filial connections with Livorno often assimilated into the Twansa majority "socioeconomically, politically, and culturally." Those who maintained contact with Europe and continued to participate in Mediterranean trade remained distinct. Yaron Tsur, "Haskala in a Sectional Colonial Society: Mahdia (Tunisia) 1884," in Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era, ed. Harvey E. Goldberg. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 151. Likewise, he describes a similar phenomenon in the opposite direction, in which some of the Twansa who entered the commercial world of the Grana assimilated to the culture of the latter. Yaron Tsur, "Jewish 'Sectional Studies' in France and Algeria on the Eve of the Colonial
Unlike the Twansa, the Grana lived outside of the Hara in the European quarters of the city. Alongside cooperation between the two groups, there existed a certain level of mutual acrimony. At the base of the conflict seems to have been local envy for the status and wealth of the newcomers, and indignation on the part of the latter for their exclusion from communal administration. This rivalry ultimately found expression in social issues as well.

An agreement adopted in 1710 gave the Grana full community autonomy, the one stipulation being that the head of the Jewish community of Tunis would continue to be of Twansa extraction. In 1824 the Bey recognized the Grana as a distinct community which was to have its own qa'id, but in practice this official never matched the influence of the qa'id of the Twansa.

The precise population numbers and demographics of the Jews of Tunis are unknown. Since no official census existed before 1921, all figures reported before this date are estimates. It seems likely that there were between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews in Tunis

---

Encounter," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 4 (2009): 8-9. Saadoun notes that the Grana who stayed active in commerce spoke both Italian and Judaeo-Arabic, and kept their account books in Portuguese. Saadoun, "Tunisia," 446. It seems that these identities, though distinct, were more fluid than some accounts indicate.


7. Saadoun, "Tunisia," 446. The head of the Jewish community of Tunis was known as the "qa'id." The Grana were not subject to the poll-tax of the Twansa and had religious autonomy, but were politically organized under the leadership of the qa'id.


9. Conflicting figures have been reported for the general and Jewish population of the late nineteenth century. According to the 1921 census, there were 19,029 Jews living in the capital. Land, "Corresponding Women," 253. Migration to urban areas, as well as population increases due to improved health during the previous decades cast some doubt on relatively high population estimates in previous years, such as Mordechai Manuel Noah’s claim that 100 years earlier, 150,000 people lived in Tunis, 20,000 or 30,000 of which were Jews. Mordecai Manuel Noah, *Travels in England, France, Spain, and the Barbary States* (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1819), 289, 311.
during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Grana were a clear minority of this figure, representing an estimated 3,000 souls.\textsuperscript{10} The Jews of Tunisia displayed an out-sized influence in the economic and political life of their country given their small population size, estimated to have been no more than 3\% of its residents!\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} Various estimates can be found in Roland, \textit{The Alliance Israélite Universelle}, 48-49. Land, "Corresponding Women," 243. Saadoun, "Tunisia," 447. Tsur estimates that in the period 1873-1888 there were 13,000 Twansa in the capital and 3,000 Grana. Tsur, "Haskala in a Sectional Colonial Society," 150.

\textsuperscript{11} Land, "Corresponding Women," 245. Regarding their disproportionate influence in Tunisian society, Mordechai Manuel Noah reported in 1813, "...and yet, with all this apparent oppression, the Jews are the leading men, they are in Barbary the principal mechanics, they are at the head of the custom-house, they farm the reveues, the exportation of various articles, and the monopoly of various merchandise, are secured to them by purchase, they control the mint and regulate the coinage of money, they keep the Bey's jewels and valuable articles, and are his treasurers, secretaries, and interpreters; the little known of arts, science, and medicine, is confined to the Jews, there are many who are possessed of immense wealth, many who are poor." He goes on to note their importance in commerce and the resulting political leverage that they enjoyed. Noah, \textit{Travels in England}, 309-310.
Changes in Education

In nineteenth-century North Africa, the economic landscape influenced the status of religious education and its availability. A typical (male) child’s religious education centered on his ability to read from the holy scriptures, especially the Pentateuch and the prayer book. Higher level rabbinic study required years of advanced learning, during which a student would typically not be able to support himself financially. Thus, during the general economic decline of the region in the early modern period, families who may otherwise have supported their sons’ pursuits in religious education could not afford to do so. 12 Both the Twansa and Grana communities produced Hebrew scholarship in this period, indicating that even if religious studies faced a general decline the traditional fields of study persisted among select individuals and/or families. 13

In the middle of the nineteenth century, new educational opportunities emerged for the inhabitants of Tunis. 14 Across the region, European missionaries opened Christian schools offering education in European languages and modern secular subjects. The Jewish communities of the region were generally skeptical of these schools due to their clear Christian orientations. Despite the evangelizing nature of these schools, some Jewish parents enrolled their children believing that they would learn the secular subjects

13. Roland, The Alliance Israélite Universelle, 47.
without being influenced by the Christian religious content.\textsuperscript{15} With exceptions few and far between, such suppositions were correct and the missionaries were unsuccessful with regard to conversions.

Generally speaking, Jews of Livornese descent preferred for their children to be educated in Italian schools when this was an option. Some sent their sons to receive secondary educations at Italian universities.\textsuperscript{16} Many had the means to provide their children with private educations, and so elected not to place their children in the care of either religious or cultural missionaries.

A new phenomenon in education arose in the tail end of this century, fundamentally altering the educational opportunities of the native Jewish population of Tunis. This was the establishment of schools by Western Jewish organizations in the Middle East and North Africa, in direct competition with the Christian schools. Their appeal to the Jews of the region was manifest; they offered a modern education, including literacy in European languages, but without the fear of attempts at conversion. This appeal, however, was a double-edged sword. Their Jewish nature granted them a familiarity and legitimacy unattainable by the missionary run Christian schools, but did not prohibit them from exposing students to belief systems at odds with those prevalent in their own communities.\textsuperscript{17} This danger, however, did not always translate into resistance on the part of local Jewish communities. Many of these communities understood that European

\textsuperscript{15} Stillman notes that in the early 1890s, 400 Jewish students were enrolled in the English missionary school in Tunis. Norman A. Stillman, \textit{The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times} (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 20.
\textsuperscript{16} Roland, \textit{The Alliance Israélite Universelle}, 50.
languages and modern education on a European standard were the means to economic mobility.\textsuperscript{18}

The most significant of these Jewish educational enterprises by a large measure was the Alliance Israélite Universelle, established by French Jews in 1860 with the goal of working for the emancipation and moral progress of the Jews, and to uplift those who suffered on account of being Jews.\textsuperscript{19} Its first school was built in Tétouan, Morocco, in 1862, from where it rapidly spread and established schools throughout the region, teaching tens of thousands of students from Morocco to Iran. Its teachers were trained in Paris to teach a modern, secular curriculum. This curriculum was highly uniform, with any modifications requiring approval from the center in Paris.\textsuperscript{20} The Alliance was a private organization not directly affiliated with the French government, however its utility in advancing French colonial ambitions earned it support from French diplomats, often crucial in its operations and financing.\textsuperscript{21}

The mission of the AIU to emancipate and "regenerate" the Jewish communities of the orient brought more than modern sciences and pedagogy; it was a civilizing mission, aimed at spreading the French language and Enlightenment culture.\textsuperscript{22} Professors

\begin{enumerate}
\item[19.] Roland, \textit{The Alliance Israélite Universelle}, 15.
\item[20.] Simon, "Education," 150.
\item[21.] Roland notes that Tunisia was a special case for the AIU advancing French colonial ambitions because of the close ties of the Tunisian Jewish community with Italy. Unlike some areas in which European penetration had been minimal or non-existent, Tunis would be a battleground and France may not have been the natural European partner. This encouraged cooperation on the part of the French with the local schools. Roland, \textit{The Alliance Israélite Universelle}, 337.
\item[22.] Land, "Corresponding Women," 239.
\end{enumerate}
were encouraged to not focus merely on academic instruction, but on moral education. The "Jews of the East" were seen as morally degenerate and in need of civilized habits and conduct, alongside the intellectual component of the AIU curriculum. David Cazès, longtime director of the Alliance in Tunisia, expressed this ideology lucidly in a letter to the AIU’s Central Committee in Paris, speaking of the future of the Alliance "carry[ing] the torch of civilization" into areas not yet penetrated by French influence or authority.²³

Significantly, the French and Gallacized Jews did not refer to their Eastern brethren as an "other" in need of colonization, but as fellow Jews in need of "regeneration." Beyond its educational focus, the Alliance sought to advocate for oppressed Jewish communities and uplift them from the hardships they faced from discriminatory policies. In Tunisia, where Jews faced clear legal disadvantages, the Alliance edged its way into politics as well. In practice, most dangers faced by the Jews of Tunisia came from individual Muslim citizens and local officials rather than the central government. The Alliance sought to help these Jews by gaining them French protection and legal guarantees akin to those enjoyed by European subjects. This activity earned the resentment of the Bey, who saw the AIU as interfering with his authority and jurisdiction. The French occupation of Tunisia and subsequent administrative changes proved a boon to the organization and its ability to operate freely. The Gallicizing mission of the Alliance and its operation of functional schools at the time of the establishment of the protectorate helped secure its footing under the colonial administration.

After facing resistance from both the traditional leadership of the Jewish community in Tunis and the from the Bey, the AIU founded a school for boys in Tunis in 1878, and a school for girls in 1882, bookending the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881. Within years, these schools boasted the highest enrollment of AIU schools for boys and girls, respectively. As mentioned previously, the Grana tended to send their children to Italian schools, as a consequence of which the students who enrolled in the AIU schools of Tunis were overwhelmingly the Judaeo-Arabic speaking Twansa whom the Alliance had hoped to inculcate with its version of Francophone modernity (but not exclusively so). The Alliance schools were also open to non-Jewish pupils (in harmony with the Enlightenment values that guided the organization), although Christians and Muslims remained a minority of those enrolled both in Tunis and throughout the network.

Early conflict between the Alliance and the rabbinical establishment centered around the latter's resistance to cede its prerogative of education to the organization.

24. Land cites the "Bulletin de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle" noting that in 1880, some eight hundred children were enrolled in the boys school and in 1884, two hundred and eighty were enrolled in the girls school. Land, "Corresponding Women," 252.


26. Roland notes that non-Jewish students were typically drawn from influential Muslim and Christian families who wanted their children to have access to top quality education, citing Persia and Turkey as areas in which this phenomenon was notable. Over 300 non-Jewish pupils were attending Alliance schools in 1900. Roland, The Alliance Israélite Universelle, 24. Land breaks down the demographics of the 235 non-Jewish students enrolled across the network in Land, "Corresponding Women," 240.

27. This shift happened in the capital first. Throughout the 1880s, the AIU maintained the Talmud Torah academy of La Goulette, a suburb of Tunis. In 1890 the students from this school were merged into a new French public school. In 1907, the AIU established a Seminary of Rabbinic Law in Tunis to train rabbis for the community, however enrollment in the seminary was negligible in comparison to that of its main school. Roland, The Alliance Israélite Universelle,
In Tunis, the Alliance was able to overcome this local apprehension, and in some cases the local leadership was incorporated into the operation of the schools. An important contrast to this acceptance is seen on the southern island of Djerba, where the AIU was rejected outright. The leaders there were keenly perceptive of the danger mentioned earlier, namely in the Jewish but secular organization’s ability to divert their community from its traditional norms. This will be discussed in more detail later.

In Tunis, rabbis from the Talmud Torah schools were integrated into the AIU system as Hebrew teachers when the schools were first established. Many observers noted the relatively weak Hebrew instruction, in comparison with secular subjects. The deficiency in teaching Hebrew stood in stark contrast to the success of implementing French language instruction. Observers noted the aptitude and knowledge of the students in the latter language and its literature. Graduates of the AIU educational program were highly sought after and found work in many professions, in large measure due to their competence in the French language. The protectorate government established public schools with French curriculum, but the Alliance's early penetration in the country combined with the strength of its schools resulted in a generation of Jewish students who

279-280.

28. Two problems plagued the instruction of Hebrew at AIU schools. The teachers trained in Paris had command of the language but were not trained to teach it, while the focus on French often outweighed it in the classroom. The local rabbis who were often hired to teach Hebrew were not trained in modern pedagogical methods, and often found their students apathetic about learning the language. Rodrigue, Jews and Muslims, 125. The AIU Seminary of Rabbinic Law was founded with the goal of training future Hebrew teachers, however in large part such efforts were too little too late. By this time three decades of students had gone through the schools, and as mentioned above, few enrolled in the seminary.

29. Also at this time, some Jewish boys still learned their religious studies in the traditional Jewish elementary schools. In time, the proliferation of Zionism in Tunisia led to much Hebrew learning in the context of Zionist groups and their activities, with a focus on Modern Hebrew (as opposed to the biblical and liturgical Hebrew favored by both the rabbis and the AIU staff).
had skills in languages and arithmetic that their Muslim counterparts could not compete with; thus they had disproportionate success finding jobs in "banks, maritime agencies, commercial agencies, [and] stores and shops of all kinds."30

Let us note here that the promotion of the French language encouraged more than just multilingualism. A new language offers not just a new way to express a familiar idea, but a new way of thinking and access to a new intellectual tradition. Indeed, teachers of the AIU tended to think that Judaeo-Arabic simply lacked the capabilities of French to express elevated and modern thought; the great civilizing language of French would aid the Jews' emancipation both economically and intellectually. This prejudice equally informed their approach to the Hebrew language; while essential to a Jewish education for the ability to read scripture, it was unfit for the verbal expression of modern civilization.31 Even beyond the capability of language to open new intellectual doors, it may open an individual to a new sense of self and the place of that self in the world around him. In the words of Walters, the acquisition of a language represents a kind of "symbolic capital," allowing its speakers to claim membership in particular social groups and to identify more intimately with what they represent.32 French acquisition both taught this community new ways to think and the accompanying ideas, and lent them a new identity in which Europeanness was a central factor.

The Alliance schools changed the role of Tunisia's Jews within their country and their capabilities in the world beyond, yet its most revolutionary aspect was not the content of the teaching, but rather who was teaching it and who was being taught. The AIU's

schools modernized, secularized and broadened the education of Tunisian boys and gave Tunisian girls their first opportunity to expand their horizons beyond the home. Until the establishment of the girls school of Tunis in 1882, the Jewish women of Tunisia (much like their Muslim counterparts) were almost entirely illiterate. The attention and urgency given to the education of women had far reaching effects for this community.

The need to include girls in its program was stressed by the AIU in Tunis from its earliest years. Like the boys school, the girls school emphasized French language acquisition. Significantly, the Alliance's schools maintained clear gender based distinctions in their educational objectives. Girls did not share the boys' curriculum in religious studies and some secular subjects, but learned needlework and some domestic skills. No doubt these girls learned skills relevant to a number of vocations, however it was expected that most of these girls would be homemakers, not professionals, and their lessons were oriented toward such a future. Nonetheless, the goal was to make them enlightened homemakers, who would bring French Enlightenment thought into the Tunisian Jewish home. Their schooling would not only benefit them, but as one teacher wrote, leave its "impact upon future generations."

34. See letter from David Cazès to AIU Central Committee in Paris in 1881, translated in Rodrigue, Jews and Muslims, 179-181.
35. Land highlights the role of these girls as catalysts for change within their families. Not only did they make European dresses for themselves and their siblings, but they often inspired their mothers to wear European style clothing as well! Land, "Corresponding Women," 247.
36. Rodrigue, Jews and Muslims, 81.
Girls’ education was taken quite seriously by the network, and Tunis was exemplary in its execution of this goal. In time, the French public schools established by the protectorate contributed to (numeric) equality in education. By the early twentieth century, enrollment figures among Jewish girls and boys in school were nearly identical. In some years, girls’ school attendance exceeded that of the boys! This cannot be written off simply as a byproduct of the protectorate and modernizing trends, as the Muslim population lagged far behind the Jews in female education. Walters provides some helpful statistics: In 1889, over 3,074 Jewish children were enrolled in schools in Tunis, among them 1,187 were girls (38.6%). At this point, education for girls remained practically unknown in the Muslim community. Even by the mid-twentieth century, when Jewish girls and boys had been educated at equal rates for decades, Muslim boys still outpaced Muslim girls in enrollment three to one.37

The schools were unique not just for putting girls in the classroom, but for putting women at the head of it. The female teachers of the AIU were the first female professionals in the region.38 In the traditional, patriarchal milieu of the Middle East and North Africa, the presence of financially and socially independent women was entirely new. The idea that female students native to this region could themselves become AIU teachers was all the more revolutionary, as this necessarily entailed breaking out of the established gender roles. Up to this point, the expectation of a woman was generally that she would be involved in domestic life and little else. The world of women included its own educational component, in the way of religious knowledge, stories, and proverbs

38. Rodrigue, Jews and Muslims, 49.
passed orally among the women of various generations represented in the house. The upshot of all this was not preparation for a vocation but preparation for marriage. While boys continued to surpass girls in terms of higher education and employment, the very fact that girls were educated in such high numbers, and by women, introduced new cultural mores to the community. In large part due to the integration of both sexes in this new mode of education, European clothing became normal for Jews (in public life, if not inside the home) alongside European languages, perspectives and values.

The ascendancy of French oriented education naturally displaced traditional Jewish education, which as noted was already experiencing a period of decline. The problems facing Jewish learning became structural as Tunisian society was reformed under the protectorate. On the one hand wealthy families who might have, in another era, supported their sons’ advanced Jewish education sent their sons instead to be educated at secular European institutions. On the other, the need for proficiency in European languages and skills associated with modern occupations meant that even a religiously inclined student was prone to devote time and resources toward their study, which would likely entail a shift away from emphasis on religious fields. In the words of Zohar, "the growing professionalization of occupations made it difficult to regard Torah study as a primary vocation while earning a living through another occupation." The upshot of modernization then was a marked decline in rabbinic study, even in areas like Tunisia with a history of Jewish scholarship.

Judaeo-Arabic Literature in North Africa

The language of the Twansa, and more broadly, that of the Arabized North African Jews, formed a continuum of dialects that can be termed "Judaeo-Arabic."\(^{41}\) The uniformity in name does not imply a uniformity in usage; the vernaculars of Jewish communities across the Arabic speaking world varied much like the dialects of their Muslim neighbors. The Jewish dialects, however, were frequently set apart by lexical borrowings from Hebrew and Aramiac, a characteristic common to other Jewish languages.\(^{42}\) Likewise, they frequently differed in pronunciation and vocabulary relative to surrounding dialects, although the extent to which this affected mutual intelligibility varied.\(^{43}\)

---

41. The Grana also could speak Judaeo-Arabic and participated in aspects of Judaeo-Arabic cultural production. Tsur, "Haskala in a Sectional Colonial Society," 151. They retained Italian and Judaeo-Italian dialects as their first language, however, into the twentieth century. Their retention of Italian further enriched the Judaeo-Arabic of Tunis, via the latter’s incorporation of "numerous Italian words and phrases that dealt with material culture and leisure activities." Joseph Chetrit, "Judeo-Arabic," in The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times, ed. Reeva Spector Simon et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 130.

42. The extent to which this affected intelligibility to a speaker of the corresponding local Muslim dialect often varied with respect to subject matter. Some Judaeo-Arabic folk literature would be easily understood by another Arabic speaker; religious literature or writing of what might be termed a "higher" register, reflecting more standardized features from translations of scripture (\textit{sharh}), would typically be more noticeably Jewish. The \textit{sharh} genre, while distinct from the popular varieties of literature relevant to this study, deserves some clarification. \textit{Sharh} texts were highly literal translations of scripture into the vernaculars. Due to the inclination to preserve Hebrew structures and forms in these translations, in many cases words drawn from the vernacular language were arranged in grammatical forms foreign to that community's native speech. Likewise, emulation of earlier works in this genre could result in archaic lexical choices that would be unnatural even for a native Judaeo-Arabic speaker. The standardization of such features differentiated some written forms of Judaeo-Arabic from its spoken analogue.

43. The reasons for such variations were numerous. Different migration patterns between Muslims and Jews could lead to such variation in two ways. In some cases, as the Muslim dialects shifted with the absorption of new populations, the Jewish dialects retained now
In the Middle Ages, many literary works produced in Judaeo-Arabic represented a common register of Middle Arabic, with a relatively stable orthography. Spoken dialects surely varied more than the written material seems to indicate; while post-classical features were not uncommon, peculiar dialectal features that could inhibit understanding were less likely to appear. This register then can be considered a sort of koine for the Jews of the medieval Mediterranean world. For several centuries, major works of rabbinic, grammatical, liturgical, and popular poetic production were written in this language and widely distributed among the Jews of the Arabic speaking lands. In the later end of this period, a shift toward production in Hebrew among authors of elite literature largely brought an end to this tradition. In informal correspondence, Jews continued to write their vernaculars according to their pronunciation, resulting in relatively, but certainly not completely, consistent orthographic patterns. Among the most noticeable archaic dialect features. In other cases, Jewish migration to a city (especially if the migrants were of a comparatively high social class) could import dialect features otherwise foreign to the region. Jewish segregation and isolation from Muslim neighbors further encouraged heterogeneity. The creation of Jewish ghettos in many North African cities precluded dialect leveling between speakers of different faiths.

44. This system was highly influenced by the "Tafsir," or Bible translation, of Rabbi Saadia Gaon (d. 942 CE). His orthography, largely informed by the orthography of Classical Arabic, was widely adopted. While it provided somewhat of a standard for Jewish literary texts, it was never the sole system used as seen in texts from the Cairo Geniza. Jews, especially for less formal forms of communication, continued to write their vernaculars with orthographies that reflected their own pronunciations, in many cases deviating from the "classical" orthography of Rabbi Saadia. Yoed Tobi, "Written Judeo-Arabic: Colloquial versus Middle Arabic," in Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic: Diachrony and Synchrony, ed. Liesbeth Zack et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 273-274.


46. Tobi notes that this relative stabilization of orthography stands in clear contrast to the situation of writing (Muslim) Arabic dialects in Arabic letters, an endeavor long cast in a negative light. While these dialects are used in printed literature, no widely accepted standard exists for such a purpose. Jewish writing in Judaeo-Arabic carried no such stigma, so over the centuries many of the issues that arise in the transcription of these dialects in Hebrew letters have been resolved. Tobi, "Written Judeo-Arabic," 271-270. Especially within a particular region, these texts display a high degree of uniformity for a language with no national standard.
differences between the medieval "standard" and more colloquial forms is the inclination toward the employment of a scripta plena in which many (although certainly not all) short vowels are represented by the characters aleph, vav, and yod. This representation of the language imparts a more definitively colloquial character than the earlier system of scripta defectiva, which could be vocalized according to the reader’s usage and was thus more widely accessible (and in this way bore a stronger affinity to the orthographic tendencies of literary Arabic and Hebrew).

The use of Hebrew characters in the writing of Arabic reflected the reality of education in the premodern world. As literacy and writing were learned in the context of religious studies, the Hebrew alphabet may well have been the only one that a Jewish audience could read and write.\textsuperscript{47} The tendency to write one’s spoken language with the alphabet of his scripture was reflected in the Arabic writings of Christians in the Syriac script. It is not merely accident, however, for a community to use the alphabet of its scripture. Rather, the choice reflects and projects identity. The use of the Hebrew script unites Judaeo-Arabic, Yiddish, Ladino, and other such Jewish dialects within a shared identity no less than the use of the Latin alphabet does for the languages of Western Europe. The distinctly Jewish form of the language was used consistently in communication and for some literary endeavors throughout the Middle Ages, but experienced an unprecedented growth in its use upon its adoption as a printed language of mass communication.

The form of this language differed not only from standard literary Arabic, but also from the Jewish spoken vernacular (although it drew heavily from it). In some cases archaisms are preserved in the written style (although not always correctly used according to the usages of classical Arabic), in other cases pseudo-corrections by the authors lead to unusual and highly idiosyncratic spelling choices. Distinct Arabic phonemes that have merged in pronunciation are often, but not always, written to reflect the spoken form. As the representation of a living vernacular, it was much more amenable to foreign loan words than standard literary Arabic. As mentioned previously, Hebrew and Aramaic borrowings are significant, as is characteristic of other Jewish languages. These texts also attest to loan words from Spanish, Italian and French, reflecting the contributions of Sephardi, Livornese, and French (and French educated) Jews to this community and its culture. The unique combination of these features distinguished Judaeo-Arabic from other varieties of Arabic, both spoken and written.

The first books printed in Judaeo-Arabic appear to have been published in Amsterdam in the eighteenth century, but this was anomalous and was not directly connected to the vibrant production of the later period. More significantly, the Hebrew presses of Livorno were employed for the production of Judaeo-Arabic texts in the nineteenth century. An example of the former is the overuse of the particle of negation "lam" which is classically used only with an imperfect verb in the jussive mood. Its use is extended in these texts to include not only past and conditional negation, but even present and future negation as well as past negation with perfect verbs. An example of the latter is the curious use of the letter Ñ, which was not realized in the spoken vernacular. In some cases it is omitted from roots in which it belongs, in other cases it is written in places where no such letter exists (particularly in the place of a glottal stop).

Several words of Turkish and Persian origin are found as well, however these tend to be words more broadly absorbed and Arabized by Arabic speakers living in Ottoman or previously Ottoman territories.

Tobi cites the publication of liturgical texts in Judaeo-Arabic in Amsterdam going back to at least 1737. Tobi, "Judeo-Arabic Literature in North Africa," 216-217.
century, marking the dawn of a period of significant literary output across a variety of genres. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hebrew presses were established across North Africa, first in Algiers, then spreading to the other Maghreb countries. During this period, the publications of Livorno continued apace, it being the most important city for Judaeo-Arabic publishing of the nineteenth century. The bulk of Tunisian publishing commenced in the last decade of that century. From this point Tunisia’s efforts in Judeo-Arabic printing eclipsed those of all of its North African neighbors. The main centers of Judaeo-Arabic printing in Tunisia were Tunis, Sousse, and Djerba.

In large measure, the first books printed in the Judaeo-Arabic dialects of North Africa (especially those printed in Algiers) were liturgical texts. This was a natural first step, for their use in the synagogue guaranteed some level of demand (and therefore profitability) for them. A printed siddur would be used constantly and could serve a man for his entire life. New trends emerged with the establishment of Hebrew presses in Tunis. Of great historical significance is the publication of the Constitution of the

51. Not only were important titles published at the Hebrew presses of Livorno, but the books published there were of higher quality than some of the early publications of North Africa. Certainly, the crisp and legible fonts used added to the value and demand for these texts. Yosef Tobi, "Judaeo-Arabic Printing in North Africa, 1850-1950," in Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East, ed. Geoffrey Roper. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 135-136.


54. For information on earliest books printed by Jews in Algiers and Tunis see Tobi, "Judaeo-Arabic Printing in North Africa," 131. The earliest texts that were printed in these cities were in the Arabic script and included secular material, presumably intending an Arab readership moreso than a Jewish one. It was the establishment of Hebrew presses that is of greater concern to us.

55. Hagège mentions a Tunisian man named Hai Sarfati who in 1868 began a business of transcribing folk tales and renting out booklets of them. The high demand for these texts (this began one year after the first book of popular literature was published in Tunis) foreshadowed the demand for such works in years to come. Daniel Hagège, Littérature Judéo-Arabe Tunisienne (Sousse: Makhlouf Nadjar, 1939), 4-5.
Tunisian State in Judaeo-Arabic in 1861, the first book printed in Arabic with Hebrew characters.\textsuperscript{56} This translation of the new constitution, proclaimed by the bey, Muhammad Sadiq Basha, was intended to inform the Jews of Tunis of their new political rights, and heralded a new era of Tunisian Jewish secular cultural production.\textsuperscript{57} The publications of the Hebrew presses of Tunis in the following years skewed largely away from liturgical material; this city was the first in North Africa to develop a popular Judaeo-Arabic literature. Religious tales remained popular, however these tended to be popular stories with a moral foundation rather than strict halakhic works.\textsuperscript{58} Tunisia's expansive adoption of the Hebrew press reflects its unique geographical and political situation; the high degree of French penetration stimulated an appetite for literature, yet unlike Algeria the country was not annexed by France and its Jews retained their indigenous identity far longer.

Judaeo-Arabic's accessibility was of great importance to the wide readership of the new literary productions being printed in this language.\textsuperscript{59} As has been mentioned, written Judaeo-Arabic, especially in recent centuries, tended to correspond closely to the spoken dialects.\textsuperscript{60} Consequently, both the men who were literate in the Hebrew char-

\textsuperscript{56} Hagège, \textit{Littérature Judéo-Arabe Tunisienne}, 4.
\textsuperscript{57} Four years earlier, a "Fundamental Pact" had been issued which abolished certain restrictions on Jews, giving the Jews of Tunisia a more or less equal social footing with the Muslim population. Certain political rights remained restricted. The constitution of 1861 was more far reaching and unlike its predecessor was translated into Judaeo-Arabic. For more information on the content and historical perception of this document, see Nathan J. Brown, \textit{Constitutions in a Nonconstitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and Prospects for Accountable Government} (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), 16-20.
\textsuperscript{58} Tobi, "Judaeo-Arabic Printing In North Africa," 136-137.
\textsuperscript{59} More specifically, Judaeo-Arabic literature was easily accessible to men in its printed form. While men would learn the Hebrew alphabet as a central component of their religious education, women were generally illiterate in the Hebrew script. A text read aloud, however, would be readily understood by a Tunisian Jewish woman.
\textsuperscript{60} This is in contrast to the literary form based on Rabbi Saadia's "Tafsir," which existed more
acters and women who heard these texts recited aloud could understand their content. The high degree of mutual intelligibility among the Judaeo-Arabic dialects in the coastal region spanning Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli allowed Jews of various backgrounds to read these texts.\textsuperscript{61}

Despite the obvious divisions between the Twansa and Grana communities, the latter was of major importance in the development of Judaeo-Arabic literature in North Africa broadly, and especially in Tunisia. The Grana, with one foot in Europe and one foot in Africa, were the central link connecting the Hebrew press with the Judaeo-Arabic culture of Tunisia. The Grana provided not only the technology and the Hebrew fonts, but many individuals from this community were active contributors to the new forms of writing. One conspicuous example of Grana participation in Judaeo-Arabic literature was the publication by a Livornese Jew of the popular "Sirat Al-Malik Sayf Al-Azal," a series of Arabic tales (in Livorno).\textsuperscript{62} The cooperation in literary and cultural production calls into question accounts describing excessive enmity between these two communities.

Among the publications of both Twansa and Grana, newspapers and journals of various orientations were extensive. Hagège's composition on Judaeo-Arabic publishing in Tunis describes myriad ephemeral papers (and some longer lasting ones) which existed alongside French and Hebrew counterparts. Tunisian authors produced original works of fiction, and European works were translated into the dialect. One publication, 

\textsuperscript{61} Tobi, "Judeo-Arabic Literature in North Africa," 218.
\textsuperscript{62} This Gorni, named Eliezar Farhi, was very active in Judeo-Arabic printing. A year before he commenced "Sirat Al-Malik Sayf Al-Azal" (The King of the Sword of Eternity) he founded a monthly, then weekly, newspaper printed in Tunis. His efforts are discussed at length by Hagège.
although printed in Algeria, highlights the demand for books written in the Jews’ vernacular; Rabbi Yosef Ghenassia, leader of the Jews of Constantine, translated Bahya b. Paquda’s "Duties of the Heart" from its Hebrew edition to contemporary Judaeo-Arabic, when this book was originally written in Medieval Judaeo-Arabic! This text likewise represents an important movement within Judaeo-Arabic publishing in North Africa, namely the activity of the rabbis in bringing traditional Jewish values to a wide readership through the Jewish press. In Tobi’s words, "As soon as the traditional religious leaders became aware of the enormous power of printing, they sought to exploit it to actualize their national and religious outlook." This was executed in various forms. On the one hand, biblical, talmudic and Hasidic legends were rendered in Judaeo-Arabic to provide appealing, but religiously acceptable, stories for popular consumption. On the other, a genre of essays arose defending the virtues of Jewish practice and lamenting the secularization of Tunisian Jewish society.

63. Tobi highlights some of the many publications of this rabbi. It seems that his liturgical, halakhic, and pietistic publications were not as highly demanded by the community as were more approachable moral tales. This episode does, however, highlight the peculiarity of the dialect in use in the 19th and 20th centuries as opposed to the Medieval "standard," as well as the effort of the rabbis to reach out to the masses through this medium. Tobi, "Judeo-Arabic Literature in North Africa," 221.


65. There was also the publication of standard religious texts in the dialect. Here were are concerned with the popular forms of religious literature.
Essays on Religion and Ideology

Among the genres of Judaeo-Arabic literature that emerged in Tunisia in the nineteenth century were essays intended to have a broad appeal, calling wayward Jews back to the fold of normative Judaism. The styles of these compositions varied, but their goal was simple: to defend traditional Judaism in the face of the temptations of French secularism.

This section will focus on two of these publications in particular, both of which had been translated in part by Yosef Tobi. The first is "Shuva Yisrael," a booklet published in Livorno in 1886. It begins with a list of fourteen sins, alleged to be current among this community. These sins seem to have been chosen for the dire consequences that they posed for the community and its continued religious observance. The next section calls on the Jews of Tunis to observe the biblical commandments, positive and negative. The authors express their fear that the young generation will perceive laxity in implementation of the law as acceptable, and will cease to practice the Jewish religion.

The second text is "Nesah Yisrael," the first installment published by the Nesah Yisrael Society in 1888 promoting Jewish identity and ritual practice among the community. It includes a collection of essays admonishing Jews who denied their heritage, encouraging study of the Jewish scriptures and the Hebrew language, and advocating for the inclusion of traditional Judaism within the modern world. It likewise includes the society's charter and information on its members and finances. With the exception of
the introduction, the essays included are less critical than "Shuvah Yisrael," with a stronger focus on teaching and exciting the readers about Jewish tradition.

The essays mentioned here were published in the latter half of the 1880s, shortly in the wake of the creation of AIU schools in Tunis and the establishment of the French protectorate. They promoted Jewish ritual practice, engagement with the scriptures, and Jewish communal identity, all of which were vanishing rapidly from the community if we are to believe these accounts. Much is said criticizing the Jews' abandonment of the outward forms of religious practice. Even the leaders and supporters of Enlightenment thought in Tunis did not desire the complete assimilation of the Jews in their dress and habits, but rather emancipation of the Jews as a distinct group within their societies.66

Among the sins mentioned in "Shuvah Yisrael," some stand out against the others. In its enumeration of the fourteen sins that it claims to have been plaguing the Jewish community, the book admonishes its readers that the shaving of the beard is considered apostasy! Beyond the biblical prohibition on shaving the beard, this violation clearly struck a chord with the rabbis. The beard held special importance as a highly visible symbol of a Jewish man's faith; without it he was not so clearly identified as a Jew (laws requiring distinguishing clothing had historically been part of the dhimma pact, however these restrictions had been abolished in recent years). Thus, the one who shaves his beard is like a gentile (in both neglect of the law and in appearance), and deserves a rather severe punishment:

*This stipulation refers to shaving, specifically the one who shaves his beard. He who shaves the beard is obligated to take five lashes (of the whip). The religious judges should give him five lashes. And likewise, [this applies to]*

66. As noted the AIU encouraged "decent" European dress for its students, though not necessarily a complete mimicry of the Christians.
the man who shaves and goes to the barber so that he shaves his beard for him. He should also be whipped by the religious judges five times. And the one who shaves his beard is called an apostate. His likeness is that of a gentile, may the All-merciful protect us.57

This concern directed toward appearances appears elsewhere in the list of sins (and then in the chapter of rebuke that follows). The section on violating the prohibitions of the sabbath begins:

The second sin is the violation of the sabbath publicly, in front of people. We will enumerate the types of violation of the sabbath. The first is the one who smokes a cigarette on the sabbath. He opens his shop, selling and buying, either with money or without money. Likewise the one who opens the tavern on the sabbath, [and] those who open the cafes of the Jews on the sabbath...68

The emphasis placed on the public nature of these religious violations is significant. The very introduction to the long section on violations of the sabbath opens with the redundant phrase "publicly, in front of people." This superfluous language seeks to highlight that the rabbis are not only concerned with the [apparently numerous] varieties of sabbath violations that had become common, but with the fact that Jews are not ashamed to be seen transgressing in these ways. The authors do not specifically invoke the concern of marit ayin, being seen by other Jews while sinning, thus leading them astray. Rather it seems that the rabbis were just as concerned with Jews concealing their Jewishness or blatantly disregarding it in front of gentiles. The authors of "Nesah Yisrael" address this concern directly and explicitly, lamenting that the members of their community "are fleeing their origins and are ashamed of the word 'Jew.' They make every effort to hide their name and to clothe themselves in garb that is not theirs; they believe that indeed they have become 'European' in reality, so that the shameful and base word 'Jew' will

67. Shuvah Yisrael, 7.
68. Shuvah Yisrael, 2.
not be referred to them."\textsuperscript{69} We see in this description of affairs that among the Jews there were those who, already by 1888, wished to cast off all physical vestiges of their religion, seeing themselves not as emancipated Tunisian Jews, but as assimilated Frenchmen. Likewise, the authors of "Shuvah Yisrael" express their dismay that "the Tunisian [Jews] want to imitate the Jews of the Christian countries in Europe," but in doing so they have gone too far, for even the French and Italians denounce them.\textsuperscript{70} These rabbis were not only concerned with Jewish practice for its own sake, but also for the reputation of their community which they saw as being tarnished by the "wickedness" of its members.

In fact, the rabbis seem just as concerned about being perceived poorly by gentiles as they are about trying not to be perceived as Jewish at all. The introductory essay of "Nesah Yisrael" states explicitly that one of the society's goals is "to restore to the true path anyone who has sinned against his fellow, because in the eyes of the nations we are seen as one man, and when one of us strays, this causes harm to us all."\textsuperscript{71} There is a persistent, and characteristically Jewish, sense of communal identity that saturates these treatises. We see the authors of Shuvah Yisrael, while decrying the sin of adultery, express concern not only for the status that this confers upon the sinners and their potential children, but for the vile reputation that this would impart upon their community. "Jewry," they say, "has a fine reputation and honor among the nations, as being a people


\textsuperscript{71} Tobi, \textit{Nesah Yisrael}, 188.
of pedigree.” Such a grievous sin with its conspicuous consequences would tarnish the honor of the Jews (collectively) among the nations (externally).

Moreover, the authors of "Nesah Yisrael" chide the Jews of their community for emulating the Europeans when the Europeans, they claim, are in reality emulating the Jews. Proof texts are supplied to demonstrate that the Pentateuch first established the call for libéré, égalité, fraternité, and that what these Jews believe to be European values are merely Jewish values in European garb. An interesting parallel to this train of thought is to be found in a lecture given by Albert Saguès, an AIU teacher in Tangiers, in 1902. The principles of the Hebrew prophets, he says, "are the principles the French Revolution brought to triumph in Europe." He goes on to say that Jews are not assimilating to a foreign French mindset, but rather, "if there has been assimilation, it has been in the other direction. It is the Judaism of the Prophets that has won the world over to its ideal of justice and peace." While Saguès seems to suggest the same idea as did the Nesah Yisrael Society, he may well have represented precisely what the latter feared: his lecture aligns French and Jewish aspirations, showing no apparent concern regarding assimilation of the Jewish community to the society around it.

Daniel Hagège draws a similar connection between Jewish and French values, albeit in a rather different form. Upon listing the various Judaeo-Arabic newspapers and journals published by Tunisian Jews, he draws the reader’s attention to three of the titles: Al-Hurriyya (Liberty), Al-Istiwaâ (Equality), and Al-Ikhaawa (Fraternity). The

---

72. Tobi, Shuvah Yisrael, 179.
73. Nesah Yisrael, 12.
75. Hagège, Littérature Judéo-Arabe Tunisienne, 17.
connection that Hagège draws here between Jewish and French values makes no mention of the Hebrew scriptures, seemingly identifying his community with France (which he calls "the master of justice and fairness") more so than identifying French values with Judaism, in the manner of the authors of "Nesah Yisrael." We must note that aside from the highly distinct goals and styles of these two compositions, half a century stood between them; by the time Hagège wrote his essay the Gallicization of the Jews of (northern) Tunisia was all but complete. In this way we might see his presentation of these values as a product of its time. Alternatively, it seems that he had much in common with the young Jews to whom "Nesah Yisarel" was addressed half a century earlier; the sentiment that he expresses is exactly that which the authors had hoped to overcome.

The authors of the texts in question had attempted to reconcile the two sides of this difficult issue. On the one hand France was certainly seen as a liberator and friend of the Jews. The alignment of French values with Jewish ones would have no need to be seen as problematic. An effort was made, however, to emphasize that these Jewish values were rooted in the Jewish religion, and that this religion was the heart of the Jewish community. The performance of biblical commandments and the retention of the Hebrew language are cited as what sustains the Jewish people throughout all time. While French humanism may have borrowed central Jewish values, these values alone are no substitute for the religion of Moses. In this vein, one essay in "Nesah Yisrael" proclaims, "the language of each nation is its life and its law is its support."76

Much attention is given to the issue of language. The authors of "Nesah Yisrael" are keenly aware of their community’s deficiency in its holy language and spill much ink

76. *Nesah Yisrael*, 36.
in the pursuit of reversing this trend. Many of the essays included either promote study of the language directly, or urge the readers to study the scriptures (which necessarily involves studying the language), framing the study and transmission of Hebrew as a religious duty:

>We say to you that it is an obligation of the religion upon each Jew to learn his language. We only say to you turn to your language and to its pleasant sayings, turn to it and do not fear [for] you will not find a single fault in it, rather you will find it pure and chaste. You will learn from it the truth and the love of mankind. You will know your value and you will not diminish it. You will be authentic Jews known by your language even to those who live on the ends of the earth and your support will be firm in this world."77

As this article describes it, learning Hebrew sounds more like a privilege than an obligation. It is as if the rabbis can't fathom their community's distance from their ancestral tongue. They ask, "How could one called by the name Jew who knows nothing of the Jewish language not be wrapped in shame?"78 We must note that the promotion of Hebrew language study, while embellished with nationalist overtones, is not a call to revive Hebrew as a living language à la Zionism.79 Hebrew is described as a key to Jewish culture and heritage, to the sources of Jewish nationhood and strength. The lack of Zionist inclination is in part a product of its time (these essays were published before the Zionist movement took hold in Tunisia) and in part indicative of the prevailing mindset among this community, namely that the aspiration was for emancipation within Tunisian (or French) society rather than a separation from it.

77. Nesah Yisrael, 37.
78. Nesah Yisrael, 36.
79. I mean this in the sense of being a spoken language. As will be described later, the authors had much reverence for Rabbi Zevi Hacohen Rabinowitz and his coining of new words and phrases as needed in his Hebrew language writings for the sake of elucidating modern concepts. The rabbis and leaders behind this text certainly do not oppose creative use of the Hebrew language, but they seem unconcerned with it being relegated to the pen.
Thus we see that while attention to Hebrew education is promoted, it does not come at the expense of French. One of the essays in "Nesah Yisrael" outlines explicitly the value of learning "living languages," which could only be a reference to the French language education spreading within the Jewish community of Tunis:

_We see clearly that knowledge is the first step of liberation for all of mankind, therefore we must raise our children upon the riding-camels of knowledge drawn from two sources, [knowledge] harmoniously composed of "rationality and faith." The basis of that is Israelite knowledge and its language which is a key to every door. By means of them we attain our objectives. Likewise our law does not prohibit us from learning living languages by which our knowledge is perfected, as we see that many authors of the Talmud and some of the [rabbinic] masters among our ancestors knew living languages. Therefore we come to know that rationality and faith are not enemies to one another, but rather they are brothers of a single mother._

This essay draws a wonderful parallel; rationality and faith are drawn as analogues to French and Hebrew. Thus the language predicament is tied to a classic theme of religious writing, the reconciliation of the roles of reason and revelation. The knowledge upon which Jewish education must be based is composite if it is to be complete; rationality and faith are mutually reinforcing elements.

The tension between old and new, or sacred and profane, is manifest in many of the essays printed in this book. A clear and persistent effort is made toward the harmonization of traditional Judaism within the modern context. The intellectuals of the community behind these texts do not take a reactionary stance shunning the changes and innovations taking hold in their country. Rather they seek to integrate new modes of knowledge and societal changes within a Jewish framework.

The Nesah Yisrael Society seems to attach much value to modern education, not at all limited to the study of the French (or other foreign) language(s). A long essay in-

---

80. _Nesah Yisrael_, 42-43.
cluded in the book, "The Talmud and Civilization," describes the achievements of Rabbi Zvi Hacohen Rabinowitz who is portrayed as a model for Jews facing European imposed modernity. This prolific author combined a number of excellent traits: he remained an observant Jew in the face of modernity, he engaged with the modern world around him and studied various sciences, he wrote in the Hebrew language, and he unabashedly proclaimed the enduring value of the Talmud for the Jewish people. The explicit purpose of this essay is to excite young Jews about the Talmud, which as we might have predicted, does not hold a place of high esteem among the French-oriented younger generation. The essay begins by expressing admiration for the present time in which knowledge abounds in myriad fields. It simultaneously laments the low value that Jews were assigning to the Talmud, not realizing that the Talmud and the Hebrew scriptures are wells of knowledge no less worthy than the most modern European schools.

Highlighting the enduring importance of scripture, the essay reads:

[The books of scripture] guide toward friendship, brotherhood, and love of mankind, such as the books of divine law (the Torah) and the books of the prophets (Prophets and Writings). Those who believe in the totality of what they said have not gone astray in the world. The page is too short to write down all that benefits us from the Talmud at this time, and what will benefit us in the future, [for the extent of its benefits is so great] that all of the scholars from whom we benefit at the present time base their work upon its principles. In particular, the scholars of our nation have watered their plant with its waters and [this plant] grew, became abundant [in its yield] and cast down its fruits.

[Is it not] futile for a scholar of our nation of the present time to treat unjustly, and turn a scornful face toward, the mother and source of [all] fields of knowledge, the well from which he drinks, and the source of his knowledge, casting a stone into it? If only you drew water from the seas of the Tal-

81. The Arabic of the title is "אלאבולהאיאלוציויאליואסיינן". The choice of the French "civilisation," instead of a native Arabic term such as "hadaara" seems indicative of the influence of French thinking on the authors (or perhaps the audience), particularly with respect to the AIU’s intent to bring civilization to the Jews of the orient.
mud, oh you scholar, and had knowledge of what they contain, you would not find fault even in the point of the letter yod...  

It is evident to the authors that the dismissiveness of their community toward the Talmud stems not from genuine apathy, but rather from ignorance of its worth. Were they but informed of the "treasures" found within, they would not hesitate to become Talmudic scholars, no longer undervaluing the intellectual standing of this monumental work. When they learn of the progress of European sciences, they believe that the schools of Europe are unrivaled and unprecedented in their achievements. When they hear the Talmud mentioned, they believe it to be anachronistic and antiquated with no real use for the present day. They do not realize that the principles of brotherhood and love of mankind, and the highest level of intellectual inquiry, are readily found in the Hebrew scriptures and the tractates of the Talmud. Thus, they ignore and malign their national treasure.

Against this backdrop, Rabbi Rabinowitz is introduced to show the harmony between Talmud study (and more generally, engagement with traditional Judaism) and modern intellectual pursuits. His upbringing is described as follows:

In his earliest years he became complete in his knowledge of the Talmud, which was his sustenance day and night. Likewise [he gained proficiency] in the books of the Rambam, which were for him a foundation and pillar upon which he opened his eyes. This boy, through his education, attained insight, aspiration, and the utmost acute discernment, to the point that his plant was pollinated and its blossoms opened in their perfection in every field of knowledge. After many years, its fruits multiplied and mankind benefited from them and their vigor due to the pleasure of their different tastes...he loved to pour forth [his knowledge] for others, and he found no escape from this straight path, other than to publish books about these sciences with which he filled his belly. And in the year 1852, in which he reached the age of 29, he completed the publication of the great book of the principles of all of the sciences en masse, which is called "The Vault of Intelligence and Intel-

82. Nesah Yisrael, 22-23.
lect," and it is divided into many volumes. And these books deal with the sciences of physics, astronomy, mechanics, chemistry, geometry, and others...\textsuperscript{83}

The text goes on to list and describe the various books that Rabbi Rabinowitz published, many of which were works on modern sciences. He wrote "in the holy language, which provides the utmost elucidation and ease to the reader,"\textsuperscript{84} an indication that this language is neither obsolete nor unadaptable to even the most current of ideas in modern civilization--all the more so since it was the first choice of an author equally capable of writing in German (which the authors note he did in some cases).

The authors note that Rabbi Rabinowitz was still alive at the time of publication, and that his books could be found. The essay was clearly intended to encourage interested readers to seek out such works, and to be inspired and educated by their fellow Jew. It goes on to note that future editions will contain similar profiles of living Jewish authors, so that the readers will learn the "value and worth of Judaism" and take pride in their community. The Nesah Yisrael Society sought to embrace modern developments and engage the young people in their community by providing Jewish role models who were able to integrate their heritage with modern intellectual and cultural progress.

The last essay in "Nesah Yisrael" drives home the message of the continued importance of the Jewish traditions within the modern world. Set in Germany, it tells a story of two Jewish children whose parents disagree over how they should be educated. They reach a compromise in which the younger son is sent off to Berlin to receive a modern education (the mother's intention for the children) and the older son is to be given a traditional Jewish education (the father's intention for the children). Upon the

\textsuperscript{83} Nesah Yisrael, 25-26.
\textsuperscript{84} Nesah Yisrael, 28
return of the younger brother, the mother laments that her eldest son has wasted his formative years while her other son has become a scholar. The father is incensed by this comment and announces, "I want for my children to debate with one another in our presence, and we will see which of them is the scholar." (emphasis mine) The narrative now pits the two sons against each other intellectually; the elder son is charged with the defense of traditional Judaism and its intellectual tradition in the face of modernity.

The discussion initially revolves around the fulfillment of the positive commandment of wrapping tefillin. The younger son exclaims his wonder at seeing his brother wrap his arm in a black leather strap, wondering what good can come of it. Does his brother think that this amulet will cause G-d to grant him whatever he should seek? Of course not, explains the elder brother; the wrapping of the phylacteries is not such a superficial ritual.

*O, my brother, I see you like the Arab who found an almond tree in the field and began to cut leaves and discard the almonds. Then came a man who began to gather the almonds that the Arab had discarded. The Arab turned and said to him, 'What good is it for you to gather this wood?' And so the man said to him, 'And what good is it for you to gather these leaves?' The Arab said to him, 'I feed my livestock with them.' The man said to him, 'If you break this [shell] that you think is wood, you will find that with which to feed yourself.' Likewise, my brother, you are looking at something the meaning of which you do not know, therefore you oppose it.*

The younger son it seems, for all of his modern education, lacks the critical thinking and discernment gained from a traditional Jewish education. He sees only the shell of the act, not perceiving the pith hidden within. The elder son explains the act symbolically, demonstrating both critical thinking and his faith:

*We believe that we received our law from the Lord of the worlds. We perform all that is written in it without opposition, because every word in it holds a secret. As for the one with little faith, we must make him understand*

---

to the extent possible. Know, my brother, that everything beneficial that a person needs will always be wrapped up to be protected from corruption. You see in nature from wheat, to barley, to produce, to all that my Lord created in His sovereignty, that all are wrapped in an integument to be protected from dirt, worms, and corruption. If you were to take an egg and break its shell, not a day would pass before its edible part spoiled. And if you were to leave it in its shell, it would be able to last a month. Likewise, everything that we wish to preserve, we wrap it in paper and cloth to remain in its original state and not be altered. And our dear Torah especially must be wrapped with something to preserve it from corruption. If you see something and think it to be devoid of meaning, know that you are looking only at the shell.\textsuperscript{86}

The younger brother is impressed by his brother’s explanation. After this introduction, the older brother gets into the heart of the matter. The wrapping of tefillin is not merely a symbol to benefit mankind, but the Jew’s obligation in upholding God’s law as revealed in the Torah. He explains to his brother that the pith of the law is actually quite simple, summarized in two phrases. The first is a phrase from the Psalms, "Cease from doing evil and do good."\textsuperscript{87} The second is the famous story of Rabbi Hillel explaining the entirety of the Torah while standing on one foot. "Love your neighbor as yourself," he says, "This is our law and the rest is merely branches and twigs, [branching off] from it." He goes on:

\begin{quote}
Now that I have informed you that the basis of our law is faith in G-d and love for mankind, and that our Lord watches over His servants and saves the weak from those stronger than them, I will tell you what wearing the phylacteries signifies. It is written that the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand and passed a harsh judgment upon [the Egyptians] because they violated His law, which is to love mankind, and they tormented us. For that reason we wear the phylacteries to remember our exodus from Egypt.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

Finally, after explaining the polyvalent symbolism of this commandment and connecting the ethical and ritual components of the law, our protagonist ties the act to the founda-

\textsuperscript{86} Nesah Yisrael, 51-52.
\textsuperscript{87} Psalms 34:15
\textsuperscript{88} Nesah Yisrael, 53-54.
tional event marking the beginning of the Israelites as an independent nation. Where his brother first perceived this act as a meaningless superstition, he is now led to understand the intellectual, moral, devotional, and communal aspects of fulfilling this ritual. Upon bringing together the different facets of the commandment’s observance, the older brother returns to the biblical statute itself:

This is as the prophet of G-d commanded us in His book: And bind them as a sign and phylacteries between your eyes and upon your arm. And that indicates: First, that we wrap [the phylacteries] in accord with our law and we will never cease to do so. Second, that our Lord, exalted is He, binds the arms of the exploiter and unties the bonds of the weak with His mighty hand.89

The older brother here ties his explanation back to its source in Deuteronomy (6:8) after having successfully defended his credentials as a scholar, certainly no less than his brother. The younger brother here is the one portrayed as wanting; despite his modern education he is a stranger to his own tradition.

No subtlety is wasted upon the young Tunisian readers of this story. As other essays in the booklet and "Shuvah Yisrael" make clear, the abandonment of Jewish rituals was highly alarming to the community leadership. Certainly there were those among the audience who could identify with this discussion; immersed in French education and cultural expression, traditional religious expression fell by the wayside. "Shuvah Yisrael" specifically mentions that Jews were not wrapping tefillin, wearing tallit, or praying (in addition, of course, to a host of other neglected commandments). The fourth sin in the list given is described as such:

The fourth is the one who goes without praying for months or long stretches of time. No prayer, no tallit, no phylacteries. A Jew who remains characterized by the description, "the head of him who puts no phylacteries on" is not considered Jewish. The phylacteries are considered a sign and a marker that we are Jews. And abandoning prayer is considered a rank even lower than

89. Nesah Yisrael, 54.
And here again we see the description of this sinner as one who is not considered Jewish (like the one who shaves his beard). Similar mention is made in the discussion of violation of the sabbath. In all cases, the commandments in question are described as "signs that we are Jews" (the circumcision is described this way as well, although it is not mentioned as a commandment that was being violated by the community). As referenced above, the violations of these highly symbolic commandments was seen as not only an affront to the religion or G-d, but as the rejection of signs that define the Israelite nation.

This paragraph also includes a theme present throughout "Shuvah Yisrael," that of the Jews occupying a rank "even lower than that of [the gentiles]." While this work is of a highly derogatory nature in general, there is palpable malice in descriptions like this one. Another attack of this sort refers to Jews omitting the blessings before and after eating. The authors add, "Even the Muslim community is preferable: when they eat, they mention the name of the revered G-d." The low esteem in which these tendencies were held is made abundantly clear; the Jews have failed (and will continue to fail) to truly assimilate to French society and are on the path to becoming Muslims as they lose their own faith. Even at this they fail however, for the Muslims at least uphold devotional practices that the Jews have wantonly cast aside.

The tension in these essays is manifest; the authors are distraught at the rapid dissolution of normative Judaism and especially its external trappings among the new generation of their community but recognize the importance of engaging with the mod-

90. Shuvah Yisrael, 4.
91. Tobi, Shuvah Yisrael, 180.
ern world. There is no advocacy for regression or Jewish seclusion from their rapidly changing environment. They recognize the ideological battle being waged between French humanism and traditional Judaism and seem ill at ease with the direction in which it is moving.

One might then suspect some resistance aimed at the sources of this issue. Removed from the contemporary setting, it seems clear that the Alliance schools played a leading part in fomenting the very ills that the rabbis are lamenting. No harsh words are directed toward the AIU in either of these booklets. The only time that the organization is mentioned by name appears in "Shuvah Yisrael," in which it is praised for its criticism of the very misdeeds highlighted throughout. The organization is spoken of glowingly: "The Kol Yisrael Haverim society, the Alliance, may it stand in justice, G-d preserve them and sustain them."92 Likewise, the government of France is praised for its values and institutions. Whatever ills the rabbis may have seen in the AIU's program or the French administration, they did not make them known in these pages.

Therefore it is difficult to detect whether the rabbis, at this point, saw the AIU as the root of these issues or not. Initially, the rabbis had opposed the Alliance's efforts to open its schools in Tunis, cognizant of the loss of authority that this entailed. Within years of the schools being opened, it is not clear from these essays how they felt about this diminished role and the negative effects of it. While possible, it seems unlikely that the rabbis could not have attached some responsibility to the AIU, since it was teaching foreign subjects to students who otherwise would have attended the kuttab schools and studied Jewish texts at the hands of the rabbis.

92. Tobi, Shuvah Yisrael, 182.
Assuming that the traditional leadership did perceive the AIU to be eroding the standing of traditional Judaism and its study in the community, they had plenty of reasons not to raise those concerns in a format such as these booklets. For one, the good produced by the AIU's efforts in education and advocacy for the community may well have been seen as having outweighed its downsides. If nothing else, the Alliance schools increased the availability of education to the Jews of Tunis, even if its priorities were not aligned with those of the rabbis; without them most of the poor students would have had no educational opportunities beyond the Talmud Torah schools. The Alliance had a close relationship with the colonial administration and had a history of intercession on behalf of the Jewish community preceding the opening of the schools. Above all else, the Alliance schools were extremely popular among the Jews of Tunis. The organization was firmly rooted within the community by this point, and would not be displaced by the rabbis even if they had desired such an end. 93

It would seem that the rabbis had no interest in reviving lost battles with the AIU, and chose to take their message directly to their flock via the press. The popularity of Judaeo-Arabic literature provided them an excellent medium with which to engage their community on issues of religion and society. Even if the rabbis played a subdued role in the schools themselves, there was no reason why they could not still guide the new generation's religious education. Much of "Nesah Yisrael" argues for the worth of traditional

93. Roland notes a different iteration of this fact in the Jewish press: The French language newspaper "La Justice," a strongly secular and anticlerical publication, repeatedly called for the closing of the AIU schools and for Jews to be educated in public French institutions. Despite how frequently these attacks against the AIU were repeated in the French edition, the Judaeo-Arabic edition of the paper made no mention of them. Roland adds, "Perhaps the group knew perfectly well that the masses would not accept [the elimination of the schools]." Roland, The Alliance Israélite Universelle, 290.
religious observance within a modern context. Seeing that the current generation and their successors were to be educated in a French mold, the authors of these essays accommodate this reality. This is a pragmatic stance on their part; they recognized not only the implicit worth of a modern education, but also their inability to dislodge the program in place. In this light, their praise of France and the AIU makes sense alongside their criticism of deficiencies stemming from them.

"Shuvah Yisrael" praises the French state for not merely tolerating, but rather encouraging, Jews and Muslims to maintain their religions. If the young generation is so caught up with emulating the French, they would do well to note that France actively supports Jewish practice (both in France and its overseas territories). Examples are provided of the French government assisting its Jews in the preservation and rejuvenation of their religion, such as financial support for the construction of a synagogue in Marseille. The repeated claims that French humanistic values are really just imported Jewish values flows from the same mindset. The rabbis understood the prestige that France had in the minds of their flock; instead of undermining this perspective they turned it to their advantage.

The conciliatory stance taken by the religious leadership of Tunis is noteworthy for its reflection of deeper trends within Tunisian Judaism. In the northern part of the country, no stark divide emerged between Enlightenment thought and Orthodoxy in the manner witnessed in many European countries (the rabbis of the south, particularly on the island of Djerba, maintained a tighter monopoly on acceptable Jewish religious expression). Far from clerical rejection of the new, these rabbis sought to adopt what was beneficial of modernity without sacrificing their religion. This approbation had parallels
among the Tunisian Muslim intelligentsia as well. In turn, the Jewish community did not express strong feelings of anticlericalism. As many turned away from halakhic Judaism and embraced heterodox lifestyles, there seems not to have been much in the way of pushback against the rabbis as a class. Certainly there were clashes between the teachers and directors of AIU schools and the local rabbinic leadership, yet challenges of authority and influence seem to have driven this friction rather than ideological ones.

Within this framework, essays of different styles and with different goals were published. Some sought to admonish the Jewish community for its misdeeds, some sought to educate them on a particular issue, some more generally sought to engage the lay reader with religious issues. The tone of "Shuvah Yisrael" is highly insulting and combative. The essays of "Nesah Yisrael" vary in their forms, although none are so disparaging as "Shuvah Yisrael." Taken collectively, the tone alternates between despair over the negligence of the community and offering a hopeful vision of a better future. One trait that characterizes much of this writing is having direct appeals to the reader. The essays do not read as detached exposés, but rather as calls to action with a clear sense of urgency. It would be of great value to know how these texts were received and what kind of circulation they achieved (although we can safely assume that they never had the readership of heroic epics or love stories). As we have observed, the community as a whole did not significantly shift its orientation away from secularism, but if these texts had a wide readership perhaps they could have made an impact on a smaller scale. Whether or not the community adopted any of their recommendations, these texts give a voice to the rabbis at a time when that voice was being diminished.
The Decline of Judaeo-Arabic Culture in Tunis

The AIU, as reflected in the correspondence of its teachers, had little interest in the use or preservation of Judaeo-Arabic (as well as the other Jewish languages of the Mediterranean Basin), which they considered to be a corrupt jargon rather than a language of culture or prestige. One teacher of the Alliance in Casablanca lamented that the local Judaeo-Arabic was "a jumble of expressions from Arabic, Chaldean, Spanish, even Berber, composed without logic, mixed together in a small number of molds so narrowly formed that it is impossible to put a new idea into them." The inculcation of French was seen as vital not only to integrate North African Jews into Francophone modernity, but to impress upon them culture and civilization and expand their minds in ways that Judaeo-Arabic was believed to be incapable of. The teacher continued, "It is imperative that their jargon be completely discarded...and that the French form be imposed."94

This attitude is reflected among the generations who were students of the Alliance schools. Nahum Slouschz noted in 1910 that "most of the older people still cling to their Judeo-Arab literature," but that the new generation "is rapidly throwing off the Arab influence."95 Literary production in French rapidly replaced that of Judaeo-Arabic in the capital. By World War I this shift was more or less complete, with Judaeo-Arabic publications still originating in Sousse and Djerba, and ultimately just the latter. Tobi

94. Rodrigue, Jews and Muslims, 126-127.
notes that Judaeo-Arabic publications in Tunis were "a springboard to something else: an attraction to European, or more precisely, to French culture."\(^{96}\)

As has been described, the AIU put great stress on the need to educate Jewish girls, recognizing their roles as the mothers of future generations. In turn, the enrollment of girls in the AIU's educational program came to match that of the boys. This egalitarian spread of the French language had a profound impact on a society in which distinct gender norms were the rule. Walters aptly notes that for women subject to such patriarchal norms, the "mastery of French represented new and important kinds of economic, political, and symbolic capital for them and their families." Indeed the education of women played a central role in the rapid movement away from Judaeo-Arabic culture and toward a French orientation and identity.\(^{97}\) Knowledge of the language and culture led many young Jews to identify themselves with this culture and to use the language outside of the school environment. The impact was felt even more strongly on the next generations.

In homes in which both parents had attended a French school (AIU or otherwise), children were raised in an environment where French supplanted Judaeo-Arabic as the everyday language.\(^{98}\) This choice of the language did not stand in isolation, and was linked with changes in naming practices for Jewish children and in dress. A similar shift was not observed among the Muslim population. Changes in naming and in costume were no doubt perceived as manifestations of the wider trend of secularization. Jews were losing their distinguishing characteristics (whether they had intended to ap-

pear more like gentiles or not). The education received by entire generations predisposed them to see Europe as the representative of modernity, and France as the leader of this civilizational paradigm. Through the internalization of this worldview and its adoption across generations, the Judaeo-Arabic culture of former years rapidly lost significance and relevance in the community that was once the home of its literary output.

A certain crisis of identity was surely felt among the younger generation of Tunisian Jews, raised with a European orientation but unable to dissociate completely from their Tunisian roots and legal status. Due to the extreme difficulty of achieving French naturalization, even the most westernized native Jews occupied a position between European and native. Tsur writes that unlike the trend among the Grana of the previous generations to have one foot in both cultures, this younger generation strove to assimilate to European standards by shunning aspects of culture that reflected "nativess," one factor of which was Judaeo-Arabic and the material and literary culture associated with it.99

With the loss of this uniquely Jewish culture came further regression in religious expression and communal identity. The rabbis and leaders who wrote of their heartache over the loss of Jewish expression, religious and cultural, correctly foretold the direction in which such an orientation would lead. Despite their essays of rebuke and recommendation, the community that they sought to lead continued its course. These essays failed to convince wide segments of the population to reorient their aspirations and actions, but they are of great value to us in illuminating the hopes and fears of the religious leaders at a pivotal moment in the community’s evolution. In many ways, the authors ex-

press Enlightenment ideals, seeking a future in which the Jewish nation is rejuvenated without being assimilated. Their resistance to new modes of education and cultural expression is not leveled against the import of foreign ideas and disciplines; it is leveled against excesses in assimilation and deficiencies in preserving the cultural treasures that had sustained and defined this ancient community for millennia.

The rabbis were vindicated in their admonition that the Jews, no matter how they styled themselves externally, would not be able to escape association with their ethnic roots. One of the great ironies of the AIU’s program was that attempts to emancipate the Jews that were built on European norms had the effect of distancing the Jews from their Muslim compatriots. The Jews of Tunis oriented themselves toward France, seeking to cast off their Tunisianness, and were in turn distrusted by Muslims. The French, for their part, strove to limit the naturalization of Tunisians, never welcoming them in sizable numbers as they had the Jews of Algeria. Thus the Jews found themselves detached from both Tunisia and France, and from their own unique culture; surely this was the destiny that the rabbis had sought to preclude.

The dissolution of Judaeo-Arabic culture and normative Jewish practice seen in Tunis may not have been the inevitable fate of this community. A fascinating foil can be seen in the Jewish communities of the island of Djerba. The Jews of Djerba retained not only their religious traditions, but also their standing as a center of rabbinic study beyond the period of the protectorate. To be sure, structural factors helped influence this outcome: as a relatively remote community in the south, the island never attracted the European settlement and cultural penetration of the capital and other cities in the north. Likewise, the residents of the island, including the Berber Muslim population and the
Jews, were a fiercely independent bloc that took pride in its unique traditions. As a whole, the island was far less amenable to change than the diverse and cosmopolitan capital.

The reaction of the Jews of Djerba to French influence was nearly opposite that of the community in Tunis. The rabbis rejected the AIU's attempts to open a school and displayed much hostility toward attempts to import foreign ideologies. This absolute refusal to let the Alliance operate was unique among the Jewish communities of Tunisia. Slouschz reported being met with hostility upon arrival at Djerba, where he was suspected of attempting to establish a modern school. In his words, "The Jew of Jerba fears nothing more than the founding of a modern school, which he looks upon as a focus of irreligion and demoralization."100

The effects of this rejectionist policy are manifest. In terms of religion, the Djerrban were able to maintain not only Judaism, but their distinct traditions long after the communities of the north had been Gallicized and secularized. In terms of culture, the Jews of Djerba maintained Hebrew presses publishing texts in both Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic throughout the French period. This activity was unlike that in the north, however, as publishing was focused on the production and dissemination of religious texts, the presses having been established "for the purpose of countering the secular trends in the north."101 Due to a tighter control on literary production, many of the new genres popular in the north never emerged in the south; especially in the case of the essays on religion and ideology studied here, there was no need to rebuke this community for its reli-

gious laxity! Different as the character of publications may have been, Djerba was the last community to maintain Judaeo-Arabic publishing in North-Africa.\textsuperscript{102}
Bibliography


*Shuvah Yisrael*. Livorno, 1886.


Stillman, Norman A. "Middle Eastern and North African Jewries Confront Modernity: Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation." In *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jew-


Appendix 1 - Selections from Shuvah Yisrael

These are the stipulations of repentance with the strength and help of G-d, such that G-d, his name be praised, forgives us and removes his scathing anger from us and is merciful to us, forgives us, and grants us life, amen.

The first sin is adultery, [for which] the sinner's judgment is overtaken by Satan in order that he commit this sin. He goes to the religious judges and exposes himself concerning what no one has heard, and the religious judges seek an explanation and they divorce her from her husband. And he accepts for himself that he will not repeat this sin again. And he distances himself from her because this wife of another man is forbidden to him, even after divorce. Forbidden to him. And he confesses his sins and he says, "I have sinned!" And he can fast some days and perform very good deeds. And all of his life he gives alms to the extent that he is able. And for as long as he lives, he cries over his sin, which is a very great sin, one for which the religious judges would have prescribed death in the time that the temple stood. And in this time of the exile, it is [still] a very great sin, one that includes two sins. The first that he committed a transgression with the wife of [another] man. And the second is that he caused a great sin, namely that he caused a man's wife to be divorced from her husband...especially if she had children by this man. This is what has been wrought by the man who committed this sin with the wife of [another] man.

And if he does not do what we have said and does not expose himself to the religious judges such that they divorce the woman from her husband, he takes this sin upon himself throughout [the rest of] her life because she is forbidden to her husband. And he leaves her husband with her, and all the children that he conceives with her are considered illegitimate children because she is forbidden to her husband. He is accountable for this sin, and for [the rest of] his life, G-d will not forgive him and in the end he becomes miserable and dies an unnatural death, may the All-merciful protect us.

The second sin is the violation of the sabbath publicly, in front of people. We will enumerate the types of violation of the sabbath. The first is the one who smokes a cigarette on the sabbath. He opens his shop, selling and buying, either with money or without money. Likewise the one who opens the tavern on the sabbath, [and] those who open the cafes of the Jews on the sabbath. G-d, his name be praised, commanded us in the ten commandments that we rest on the sabbath, refraining from the work that we do during the year. And the one who does not rest on the sabbath deserves divine cutting-off, like the one who eats chametz during Pesach. And it seems to most people that this is a minor sin. And [regarding] this sin, the one who opens his store on the sabbath is like the one who smokes a cigarette on the sabbath. And the one who sells foodstuffs such as oranges, pomegranates, and the yield of branches or the yield of the land such as vegetables and other things. All of this is a violation of the sabbath.

And observance is obligatory half an hour before the sunset on the eve of the sabbath, for this is considered [part of] the sabbath. And that which is forbidden to do during the sabbath is forbidden for the half hour before sunset. And likewise, at the end of the sabbath on Saturday evening, observance is obligatory for half an hour after the sunset, for this is when the sabbath ends.
And traveling on the railroad on the sabbath, either with money or without money, riding the carriage on the sabbath, riding the omnibus on the sabbath, especially if the omnibus is owned by Jews and its animals are owned by Jews and the workers [operating it] are Jews. All of these, whether the owners of the omnibus, or the one who rides on it, they are all violating the sabbath, a major violation, and all of them currently violate the ten commandments, enjoined upon us by G-d...

And the one who does not pray on the sabbath, and does not go to pray and see the sefer torah on the sabbath. This is a violation of the sabbath.

And prostitution on the sabbath - the one who has a transgression that he leaves for the sabbath day. He visits his prostitute on the sabbath day. This is a very great sin, entailing two sins... In contrast to the one who keeps the sabbath day holy, who goes to pray, hears the sermon, and hears the words of the torah, this wicked person transgresses the sabbath. He goes and engages in prostitution on the sabbath, committing two sins. The first is the sin of prostitution, the the second is the sin of violating the sabbath. He defiles the sabbath, heaven forbid. Woe to him, woe to his soul, may the All-merciful protect us.

The third sin is speaking wickedly of others. It is the sin of the one who speaks foolishly, of which there is no greater sin than this. There is no benefit in it, nor comfort to the soul. The sin of prostitution is still forgivable, because the natural impulses of mankind push one toward it. And however he repents, it is possible for him to be forgiven by G-d. In turn, this sin of foolish speech is very difficult to excuse, because [the one who commits it] defiles his mouth without any benefit or pleasure to his body, such that the one who performs this sin of foolish speech, by this sin [he performs several] sins, [and] many (young) men die. And the one who speaks such foolishness is the cause of their deaths and is always held responsible by the heavenly court. The (young) men who die by way of this sin seek their rightful due at the heavenly court from this man who spoke foolishly and was the cause of their deaths they seek revenge against him in that world, may the All-merciful protect us.

The fourth is the one who goes without praying for months or long stretches of time. No prayer, no tallit, no phylacteries. A Jew who remains characterized by the description, "the head of him who puts no phylacteries on" is not considered Jewish. The phylacteries are a sign and a marker that we are Jews. And abandoning prayer is considered a rank even lower than [that of] a gentile, because the gentiles believe in, pray to, and worship G-d, His name be praised.

The fifth is the one who leaves his wife [ritually] pure [but] in very shameful clothing. She is a man's wife, remaining naked as her husband perceives her, and likewise another man, not of her household, sees and perceives her [in this state] and as such he desires to perform a transgression with her, may the All-merciful protect us. Her husband is held accountable for this sin. On account of this [sin] most men return in repentance and procure very long clothes and outer-garments to cover their women from [the gaze of other people] people such that they [wear] long clothing, like the dresses of the land of the Christians.

The sixth is the one who insults the religion for no reason. He makes himself angry and beings to insult the religion of Moses our dear teacher, who is our strength and our light among the nations. Also, the one who mentions the name of our dear Master one hundred times in vain for no reason. And especially...the one who, after mentioning the
name of G-d, speaks wickedly and foolishly. This is a very strong sin, [in fact] there is no greater sin than this.

† The seventh sin is those people who sit in the cafes with the intention of looking upon the wives of other men... This sin is considered to be three sins. [First]...he emits seed for naught. This is a very great sin. The flood would not have come to the world if not for the sin of the emission of seed for naught. Second, by way of this desire he violates one of the ten commandments, in which the dear Torah said do not covet your companion's wife. Third, the one over whom Satan takes power...loses money beyond measure in order to commit a transgression with this woman whom he desired. All of this stems from that accursed desire. He defiles himself, the one who desires the wives of [other] men, may G-d save us.

¶ The eighth sin is homosexual intercourse, [the sin of] the one who follows after young men. That is an odious sin, more odious than all others. His life is cut off in this world and the hereafter; may G-d save us.

¶ The ninth is the one who is not merciful to the poor, especially on the sabbath and the holidays, during which we are obligated to rejoice. And we are likewise obligated to gladden the poor among us, as it is said in the verse: and you shall rejoice in your feast, you, etc., and the orphan, and the widow, etc.103 We share with the poor from our expen-
diture for the holiday and the sabbath. The people...of Tunis, may G-d preserve it and G-d protect us, amen, used to distribute to the poor of the community, may G-d sustain and guard it... Such that the poor will be glad on its account on the holiday[s]. And the oth-
ers, the cruel people...neglect this commandment may G-d, his name be praised, over-
come them.

† The tenth is the one who is mean toward his Jewish cousin, [one] weak and poor. He is mean toward him, insulting him or hitting him and throwing him down. Or he is mean to him, withholding his money from him seeing that that he is poor and does not have a compassionate shoulder and chest [upon which to lean]. Or the one who is mean to his cousin, encroaching upon his property, overreaching into his house or his shop, driving him out from it. This is a very strong sin, for which there is no forgiveness. He has disre-
garded one of the Ten Commandments, "Do not covet your neighbor's house." Do not covet your friend's house, and even more evil [than that] is the one who wrongs his cousin and gets the upper-hand over him unrightfully. Especially the one who gets the upper-hand over his cousin, taking his error and speaking of it, divulging his affairs, [thereby] cutting off his life. All of these sins are unforgivable, even if [the one who com-
mits such a sin] seeks forgiveness from his friend and removes the harm that he has done to him.

κ† The eleventh believes that he is Jewish [but neglects] these three signs [that] remain with him, by which we are Jewish. The first is acts of lovingkindness. He gives alms as long as he is healthy. And wherever he meets a Jewish cousin...unrightfully imprisoned, he does all he can in accord with his bodily health in order to liberate and see his cousin. The second is that he be reserved, meaning that he...is humble to the one who is not greater than him....and he does nothing disgraceful in front of people. The third is that he

103. This is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 16:14
be compassionate, meaning that he has mercy and compassion upon all of his Jewish brothers. [The one characterized by] these three things is a man of Israel, meaning generous, reserved, compassionate. The one who has these three things is considered [a son of] Israel, considered Jewish. And the one who does not have them is not considered Jewish.

The twelfth is the one who defiles himself [by] walking with his wife while she is menstruating or makes himself disgraceful with her or approaches her this is a very great sin. He must quarantine her [from herself] until she goes to the bath and immerses. Also, the one who defiles himself [by] walking with a Christian woman or with a Muslim woman and has intercourse with this girl of the diaspora, may the All-merciful protect us. He turns in repentance to the one who created him, and he accepts for himself a to perform fasts to the extent that his bodily health permits if he is able. He performs charity and no more will he repeat [his sin] and he continues to cry over this sin because it is a very great sin.

The thirteenth - this stipulation refers to shaving, specifically the one who shaves his beard. He who shaves the beard is obligated to take five lashes (of the whip). The religious judges should give him five lashes. And likewise, [this applies to] the man who shaves and goes to the barber so that he shaves his beard for him. He should also be whipped by the religious judges five times. And the one who shaves his beard is called an apostate. His likeness is that of a gentile, may the All-merciful protect us. And after his death, in the hereafter his punishment is that a pair of plucking cows will lay him on the ground and pluck out his beard. They stand on his heart until they pluck out the hairs of his beard. [This] was revealed to our master Yahuda HaHasid, peace upon him, in a dream concerning the verse, "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard." The acronym from the first letters of the words is "cows," may G-d save us, amen.

The fourteenth - this stipulation stands in the place of all others, for it is [very] great. The dear Torah which is the prize of our hearts... [This paragraph is not clear; but discusses the need to respect the Torah and its scholars]

These are the fourteen stipulations of repentance, if with the help and succor of G-d we accept upon ourselves these stipulations and we establish them...G-d, his name be praised, will forgive us, grant us (long) life, and not hold us accountable for past sins...speedily and soon, amen!

---

104. This is a play on words גבר ישראל = זמלה, בישה, רחמנ. This acronym comes from "פרות ראתכם ולא תשקית" giving us (cows).
Appendix 2 - Selections from Nesah Yisrael

The Composition of a Princess Concerning the Truth of the Jews

In vain our haters and our oppressors have multiplied from the days of old to the present. And in vain they have fabricated faults concerning us and they told a great lie for which there was no basis, and they swept away our standing, even in the region of France, the [divinely] guarded, in which all of the Jews in their various ranks had enjoyed a long period with no persecutor. These days the evil of anti-Semitism has sprouted in it as a result of the dangerous composition published by the enemy Édouard Dru- mont about the Jews... He knew the character and intellect of the French, inclining toward the fabricated accusations, and he gathered them like the thresher of wheat, and he piled them up in bales in his book "La France-Juive" (Jewish France). The French, when they saw this treasure, fell upon it like the a swarm of locusts, this is the reason that the possessions of the enemy have increased and his heart has risen when his composition was printed approximately one hundred and sixty times... But the French, after they filled their bellies with this rotten grain, grew fearful from it and did not profit by it. Many of the intelligent people of France and its religious leaders responded to him in his ignorance and injustice and cut off the hopes of his dreams, and their words entered the hearts of this intelligent people... All should take an interest in the fine composition published in this period in Paris named "Juives [sic] et chrétiens," which means the Jews and the Christians, and this composition was published by a princess named Grafin Natalie Ouvaroff, of the capable house of Gortschakoff in the kingdom of Russia, the niece (on one side or the other) of Gortschakoff, the minister of the pen in the country of Russia. The author Dr. Adolf Blumenthal spoke about the duty of raising this composition in the newspaper "םה ת"unar; and he took the utmost pride in it, and brought a gift to the readers from the beauty of its words. And these are his words:

"When we began to ponder the fine words of this book, resplendent like an ember, and striving to witness the truthfulness of the Jews, and pouring that ember upon the heads of those who hate them, doubt fell upon us. Do you believe it to be true that this composition was published by the aforementioned lady or not? And after we realized its beauty, it became clear to us that these fine words were published by the pen of this lady of great measure of the women of Russia. The Lady Natalie Ouvaroff holds the Hebrew language dear with all that is in her heart and soul, and she knows how to read from the Tanakh in Hebrew. And in her last summer vacation in one of the resorts she expended much effort to learn the Hebrew language from the rabbi of that city."

It is a rare, strong, and strange sight, when we see a princess of Russia endow a charitable agency for the Jews publicly. Certainly, this composition urges us to take some of its chapters and copy them for the readers. In the beginning of her words the author says that she wants to investigate this nation whose attributes were not been corrupted when it became dispersed among the nations. It appeared to have mingled with them, but never assimilated to them. After that, the aforementioned princess praised the important kingdoms that do not distinguish between religious groups... "Previously," said the lady,
We had pictured in our minds and that the Jew was a rotten weed, obsessed with gold, from which he had previously made the calf. These days passed, and at this time the Jews have entered into [many] societies as residents of many lands. France and Italy honored them... In the Jew's settling among another people, it is true that the he is able, but not required, to break free of the yoke of his religion... In his thinking, Jerusalem is the city of his ancestors and the land of his spiritual birth, [yet] he remains faithful to the land in which he lives and he works...

I believe that the Jew arrived to the greatest extent of intelligence and the love of mankind. It appears to me that the time has come the for deeds of the nations, in the midst of which the Jews reside, to improve... But the nations, instead of doing this, they do the opposite, and lay upon the Jews fabricated sins and errors that they never sinned nor erred...

Le Juif n’a pas de vices!! (the Jews are free of sin)... [Who is this people, among whom] the child, from his infancy, is obedient and performs what is required of him? Have you found that thankfulness has a home among the Jews? Does a numerous people find its bounty with life and death like the people of the Jews? If a single Jew strays, do not many individuals of his group rush to redirect him? Does one find in the hearts of the nations true faith like that which is found in the body of the Jews, who have a divine goal, remaining for eternity? And when they err, they return and repent for it every time... They read the law in poverty and in suffering and without remuneration other than for obedience of my Lord alone, and they think about it throughout their lives...

From their holy books the Jews know that for all their existence, there is none other like them in the world, nor like their faith nor their aspiration...

With words like the sparks of the fire emerging from her mouth, the author Gortschakoff calls to all the nations to turn from their errant ways and they abstain from wronging the Jews. Whether the greatest of the Jews like Rothschild, Fould, and others of standing, [or those who live in poverty and humiliation]...

The author of the composition continues to call out:

It is obligatory for us to remember that Shem and Japheth were brothers, and every individual among the Jews is our brother even if he is he is not called by the name Rothschild or Fould and even if he were poor, weak, and destitute...

From the Jews salvation will come, and the days are coming when the Jews will be a light among the nations...

She says that,

The Jews can turn to bygone days...in which they performed good deeds abundantly. And we, the Christians, have to avert our eyes away from the coming time.

The author finishes her text in her composition with these words:
[As for] the sins that we attribute to the Jews, we are the ones who performed them, and as for their truthfulness, it is due [only] to themselves. And if the Jews committed but a quarter our errors, they would no longer be mentioned... [Our suspicion is] because it is easier to oppress one thousand Jews than to correct the ways of one Christian (anti-Semitism).

We haven’t the mouth to recall much of the goodness of this author who stood in opposition to our enemies publicly for no remuneration. We request that our Lord hear [our plea] from the mouth of this weak people that he exalt the standing of the Lady Gortschakoff, amen!

**The Talmud and Civilization**

How much do we love this fine time in which all of mankind turns to the light of intelligence to benefit from it, and everyone desires to open up his sight and uncover the secrets that were concealed from many creatures, and many of our brothers who benefited from this great light that emerged forth from the European schools of sciences. They thought that it was one and not another, unique with none behind it, an original light, unprecedented by one like it in the past, and wherever they hear or see something written in the Hebrew books and in the Talmud from the rest of the sciences of which they are not informed, many of them despise it... The reality is that the Talmud and some of the Hebrew books are a spring of knowledge, and the basis of all intelligence...[in them we find] all that is conceivable of medical knowledge, and of legal, political, and literary knowledge... And likewise the rest of their sections guide toward friendship, brotherhood, and love of mankind, such as the books of divine law (the Torah) and the books of the prophets (Prophets and Writings). Those who believe in the totality of what they said have not gone astray in the world. The page is too short to write down all that benefits us from the Talmud at this time, and what will benefit us in the future, [for the extent of its benefits is so great] that all of the scholars from whom we benefit at the present time base their work upon its principles. In particular, the scholars of our nation have watered their plant with its waters and [this plant] grew, became abundant [in its yield] and cast down its fruits.

[Is it not] futile for a scholar of our nation of the present time to treat unjustly, and turn a scornful face toward, the mother and source of [all] fields of knowledge, the well from which he drinks, and the source of his knowledge, casting a stone into it? If only you drew water from the seas of the Talmud, O you scholar, and had knowledge of what they contain, you would not find fault even in the point of the letter yod...

Professor Rabbi Zevi Hacohen Rabinowitz dedicated his precious time to the goal of benefiting the people of his generation, his cousins, by protecting the obscure sciences for them, which are difficult for those who do not know foreign languages. He explained for them these secrets in the holy language, to lift up their standing and the standing of their nation...

In his earliest years he became complete in his knowledge of the Talmud, which was his sustenance day and night. Likewise [he gained proficiency] in the books of the Rambam, which were for him a foundation and pillar upon which he opened his eyes. This boy, through his education, attained insight, aspiration, and the utmost acute discernment, to the point that his plant was pollinated and its blossoms opened in their perfection in every field of knowledge. After many years, its fruits multiplied and mankind benefited
from them and their vigor due to the pleasure of their different tastes... He loved to pour forth [his knowledge] for others, and he found no escape from this straight path, other than to publish books about these sciences with which he filled his belly. And in the year 1852, in which he reached the age of 29, he completed the publication of the great book of the principles of all of the sciences en masse, which is called "The Vault of Intelligence and Intellect," and it is divided into many volumes. And these books deal with the sciences of physics, astronomy, mechanics, chemistry, geometry, and others of the sciences of arithmetic and others which we will mention in this chapter.

The foundation upon which Mr. Rabinowitz based his work was knowledge of the Talmud, and it is the well from which he drank... We will print some of his words in this chapter, to show our brother the reader the warmth of this person's blood toward his nation and people... [Some of the titles are given with minimal explanations of the books' content]

If our hearts join to one vision, and one goal, without doubt our situation will improve and our banner will be raised. And some of its fine words which are printed in the journals, we will reproduce, with the help of G-d, in the following section.

**The Charter of the Nesah Yisrael Society**

The first section, concerning its foundation.

All who wish to enter the aforementioned society are bound by what is established in the aforementioned sections below:

1. [Each member] will pay one franc each month to dues collector, after which he will receive a receipt as confirmation written by the collector.
2. He attends every meeting that is held and he cannot be absent from four sessions without an acceptable excuse.
3. He assists the society with body and mind as he is needed.
4. He will consider the view of each member, even if it is devoid of meaning, and respond to it...
5. He does not interrupt somebody else's speech, but rather waits until he stops. After that he responds to him if he has an objection to what was said.
6. Each chapter is printed about a need that many have agreed upon.
7. If many were to come together in opposition to his opinion, he must submit [to the group's opinion] and not press on to prove his incorrect speech.

The Second Section - Concerning the Election of the Society's President

1. A president, two deputies, two writers, and a [dues] collector will be named.
2. Their naming will be by vote and apply for just one year, after which another vote will be taken...

The Third Section - On the Organization of Work and Meeting Times

1. They will establish a place to meet...
2. They will have time in which to settle all [issues] that come up in the meeting
3. They will keep a box at the door of the center, so that anyone who would like to write them a letter may put it therein.

4. The key to the aforementioned box will by held by one of the deputies, and every incoming letter for the organization will be put in the hand of the president. When the members come for the meeting they will read it and be informed of its contents. If they should find it useful, they will respond to the one who wrote it with abundant blessings...

5. The [dues] collector must present to the organization, every time that they assemble, all that has come to him since the last meeting with the name of each person who paid.

6. Meetings are to be held each Friday, and if appears prudent to the president to hold a second session [within the week], he will inform the organization of that with an announcement or at the end of the official [Friday] session.

**The Eternity of Israel**

The word of our G-d exists forever.

Who is like the Israelite nation, an old an ancient people? The first before all others...who accepted onto his neck the yoke of his Lord and took upon itself to perform His commandments...as is mentioned in the Torah (Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and Mine ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live by them: I am the LORD)\(^{106}\)...

We do not think that our existence has come to an end, and that our hope has been cut off from the good of our Lord...

How much has our misfortune increased wherever we see some men of our nation fleeing from our noble descent, being swallowed in the midst of the nations. By their words it is easy for them to bear the scorn and humiliation that come to the Jew from his enemies...

In this time of ours, in which the sun of rationality shines, the trace of hatred and enmity is cut off from mankind. And whosoever hates and despises is one who lacks intelligence and judgment, and attains nothing of knowledge, and without doubt he knows nothing of the way of civilization...

We see clearly that knowledge is the first step of liberation for all of mankind, therefore we must raise our children upon the riding-camels of knowledge drawn from two sources, [knowledge] harmoniously composed of "rationality and faith." The basis of that is Israelite knowledge and its language which is a key to every door. By means of them we attain our objectives. Likewise our law does not prohibit us from learning living languages by which our knowledge is perfected, as we see that many authors of the Talmud and some of the [rabbinic] masters among our ancestors knew living languages. Therefore we come to know that rationality and faith are not enemies to one another, but rather they are brothers of a single mother...

Sacred History

*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.* -Deuteronomy 29:28 [http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0529.htm](http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0529.htm)

The concealed things in our law belong to our Lord, and what is revealed belongs to us and to our children forever, that we may do what is written in it, and walk on the path that leads us to righteousness.

It is known that all culture, politics, and knowledge are but taken by man from those who preceded [him] in time, or from those who had taken them previously, because man is not born of his mother's belly knowledgable and cultured, such that every creature establishes the love of his children in accord with the upbringing that he received in his childhood... If we truly believe that we, the Israelite nation, are living in accord with the principles of our upbringing, that our ancestors established for us follow with our children, we see that it is the foundation of our lives and our continued existence upon the earth on account of what we find in it with respect to spirituality, and it is reticence, generosity, and a kind heart; these are the true signs with which they are marked. We are of an important lineage, this being the lineage of the great master Abraham, peace be upon him, in whom we see these these noble characteristics, and likewise in his progeny after him. By way of these, he surpassed all other created individuals, and G-d distinguished him, that He would take from his offspring a chosen people from among the nations. Likewise this master (Abraham) received the aforementioned upbringing from those who preceded him (Shem and Eber) and also by his preoccupation with the history of the world from its beginning, he learned that there is only one [entity] directing the whole world in generosity and mercy, and he strove to make His name known among mankind, because that was his goal.

Likewise we, the Israelite people who descended from this noble stock, must turn to the deeds of our forefathers to walk in their footsteps because this is the way of our lives, meaning that we are generous and merciful to others (even to our enemy)... We will not err and say, "What has this sacred history brought us of knowledge and culture?" [In] the journal "The Divider Between Sacred and Profane" [we find an article containing] descriptions of the creation of the world and if we are unmindful, we will ask, "What is the intention of that? Since this is a book that elucidates the principles of the law and its statutes, the basis of which is mankind acting beneficently toward one another, what is intended by descriptions of the creation of the world? And how does that benefit us?"

The answer is that in the description of the creation of the world, we see that the intention of [creation] is for all created individuals to act mercifully and generously toward one another... And the purpose of the creation of mankind is for man to follow the way of his Lord, to be generous and merciful toward his nation, as is made clear in the verse: (And G-d created man in His own image, in the image of G-d created He him etc.) 108 And the Lord created in the essence of man a divine likeness, resembling the image of his Lord, a great image and a generous heart... We see also Moses our master asking G-d to

show him Himself and what did he show him? His actions of beneficence and his way with created beings!

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to emulate what is written in [that] precious book, and to understand its beneficial words, by which we are able to find treasures, the basis of which is the love of mankind, generosity and mercy, and it is what they call "civilization" in our time...

We take the confirmation of our words from the sayings of the venerated prophets. Moses our master, peace be upon him, stipulated for us: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations, etc." Recall earlier days and reflect on what transpired in previous generations, seek answers in the books of your father... Similarly, Isaiah said, "Remember the former things of old, etc." Recall earlier times that have come to pass, and from them you will learn what is to come. Likewise Jeremiah cried: "Thus saith the LORD: stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said: 'We will not walk therein.' Stand upon the ways (the scriptures) and seek from them the ancient and old, and from it you will know, such that you stand in accordance with the truth and are guided to certainty, from which salvation will ensue...

The one who is learned and intelligent does not take sacred history by its external shell, but rather emulates what results from it with respect to uprightness and decency such as is beneficial... We continue to take great hope for the future, and that our situation will continue to improve if we walk in the way of our dear forefathers, which they bequeathed to us, this being the pursuit of our beneficial Torah... If [our enemies] would but look upon our beneficence, it would overcome their enmity. At such a time, the light of the Lord will shine over all of creation, and they will realize that one god created us and one father begat us, [so] why should we hate one another? And the light of freedom will beam in its perfection over all of mankind, speedily and soon, amen!

**The Debate of the Brothers**

This is a tale that occurred in the city of Wittenberg in the year 1862.

There was a man named Isaac Mars, and he was a Jew of conviction. He cherished all creatures and showed mercy to all who needed him. And he held a place of high esteem due to his honesty and honor. And he was married to a woman of Berlin named Elizabeth, with whom he had two children, the older was named Ephraim and the younger Gabriel. A disagreement arose between the woman and the man on the subject of raising their children. The man wanted to raise his children in accord with Jewish law and teach them the language of the city and the subjects that a man needs [to know]. As for the woman, she wished to send them to Berlin to stay with her family and learn the foreign sciences because she did not agree with her husband and thought that there was no benefit in [learning] the Jewish sciences. And so the argument carried on between them

for six months. After that they came to this decision: The older child would be raised by his father, and the younger would be sent to Berlin with the woman's family to be raised how she wanted.

Then, after ten years, the children finished their education and the younger child returned from Berlin equipped with arguments in the sciences with which he had contended during the period of his absence. And they threw a party and they invited their friends and loved ones and they sat to speak with him. And the woman said to her husband, "Do you regret what you have done with our son Ephraim? His formative years have been spent [studying] futile matters whose time we are coming to the end of, matters no longer mentioned as they once were. He was among people who remain ignorant and walk in the darkness, and the light of intellect of this century of ours has not yet dawned upon them. Or among the scholars who wish to study antiquated things, like the graves of the kings of Egypt, and ancient coins and rocks, and other things like that. If only you had sent him to Berlin, he would have become a scholar like his younger brother George." And she turned to her younger son and she said to him, "O my son, you shall not respond to the one who calls you by your old name Gabriel."

And so the man grew exceedingly angry and said to her, "I want for my children to debate with one another in our presence, and we will see which of them is the scholar." He turned his face to George and said to him, "Do your mother's words please you, and do you agree with them?"

George - "Yes, just as today I saw my brother wrap a strap around his arm I was most pleased."

Ephraim - "O, my brother, I wish for you to clarify your words for me so that I understand the cause of your pleasure."

George - "Permit my asking, do you think, in your mind, that that by the wrapping of your arms your Lord will grant you what you ask of him?"

Ephraim - "No, nor do I wrap it a hundred times a day meaninglessly."

George - "Alright then, tell me, what is the reason for wrapping your arms? If you had some swelling in it and the doctor prescribed that for you, would you not dress it with a piece of cloth rather than with a strap of black leather?"

Ephraim - "O, my brother, I see you like the Arab who found an almond tree in the field and began to cut leaves and discard the almonds. Then came a man who began to gather the almonds that the Arab had discarded. The Arab turned and said to him, 'What good is it for you to gather this wood?' And so the man said to him, 'And what good is it for you to gather these leaves?' The Arab said to him, 'I feed my livestock with them.' The man said to him, 'If you break this [shell] that you think is wood, you will find that with which to feed yourself.' Likewise, my brother, you are looking at something the meaning of which you do not know, therefore you oppose it."

George - "I would like to know what is in your phylacteries."112

112. Written תפלימך, I presume this to be a typographical error.
Ephraim - "If your conversation with me is for the sake of...making people laugh, I will not continue my words with you. And if your intention is to learn, then I will respond to anything that you ask of me."

George - My intention is to learn everything from its source, and I wish for you to please tell me why it is beneficial to wear the phylacteries every day."

Ephraim - "We believe that we received our law from the Lord of the worlds. We perform all that is written in it without opposition, because every word in it holds a secret. As for the one with little faith, we must make him understand to the extent possible. Know, my brother, that everything beneficial that a person needs will always be wrapped up to be protected from corruption. You see in nature from wheat, to barley, to produce, to all that my Lord created in His sovereignty, that all are wrapped in an integument to be protected from dirt, worms, and corruption. If you were to take an egg and break its shell, not a day would pass before its edible part spoiled. And if you were to leave it in its shell, it would be able to last a month. Likewise, everything that we wish to preserve, we wrap it in paper and cloth to remain in its original state and not be altered. And our dear Torah especially must be wrapped with something to preserve it from corruption. If you see something and think it to be devoid of meaning, know that you are looking only at the shell."

George - "O, my brother, your words please me, and I did not think that I would hear such words from you."

The father was delighted with each of them and looked at his wife, beneath her eye, and her eyes were lowered as a look of denial appeared upon her face.

George - "It necessarily follows from what you said that wearing the phylacteries points to something finer and greater, and [the phylacteries have] a basis other than [being] a means of preservation?"

Ephraim - "Yes, my brother, by means of that we attain that which is sought."

George - "And what is [being] sought?"

Ephraim - "The law! Just as the master of the prophets received in strength and wrote it in his book: (And it shall be for a sign upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes; for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt) So it will be a sign for you and and phylacteries between your eyes and upon your arm, so the law of the Lord will be in your mouth, because with great power the Lord freed you from Egypt."

George - "And to what end is the law concerned with your arm?"

Ephraim - "I think that you cannot understand my words before I teach you what the law is and what its purpose is. Know, O brother, that G-d almighty gave us His law for our benefit and wellbeing and so that man knows what his Master seeks from him in what distinguishes between him and his companion. This is the law, and it can be summarized in these two sayings: "Cease from doing evil and do good." and it is said in one phrase "love your neighbor as yourself," as said by the master of the scholars, lover of

his people, Hillel the sage, to someone who asked him to teach him the law while he was standing. He said to him, 'My son, "love your neighbor as yourself," this is our law and the rest is branches and twigs from it. And if one person or an entire nation found someone exploiting one weaker than him, our Lord, glorified and sublime, would save the weak person and untie him and break the strong arm of the exploiter with his might, as happened to us when Pharaoh and his people tormented our ancestors horribly, and our Lord released us with His mighty hand. And He broke the hand of Pharaoh and his oppressive army.

"Now that I have informed you that the basis of our law is faith in G-d and love for mankind, and that our Lord watches over His servants and saves the weak from those stronger than them, I will tell you what wearing the phylacteries signifies. It is written that the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand and passed a harsh judgment upon [the Egyptians] because they violated His law, which is to love mankind, and they tormented us. For that reason we wear the phylacteries to remember our exodus from Egypt by overcoming the enemy, and what happened to him. So we affirm the law and that we love and cherish every creature and that we do not perform evil as Pharaoh and his people did. And this is what is written in His book. By the command of G-d, the best of mankind and the leader of the prophets, Moses, peace be upon him, [said] recall your exodus from Egypt, where you were held captive, by the power of G-d, and what he did with them for your sake. And write it and make it phylacteries between your eyes and upon your arm, so that the law of the Lord (to love mankind) is forever in your mouth, because your Master brought you out of Egypt, for your sake, with a mighty hand and destroyed the Egyptians, who tormented you and violated the law."

George - But can you not put them on without the [ritual] wrapping?

Ephraim - This is as the prophet of G-d commanded us in His book: And bind them as a sign and phylacteries between your eyes and upon your arm (And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes)\(^{114}\) and that indicates: First, that we wrap [the phylacteries] in accord with our law and we will never cease to do so. Second, that our Lord, exalted is he, binds the arms of the exploiter and unties the bonds of the weak with His mighty hand.

The mother turned to Ephraim and said to him, "O my son, you continue to weary yourself with your brother George to teach him to do good and cease from doing evil... And with your words he will not be caught up in things in which there is no benefit.

The father - "You acknowledged yourself that our son Ephraim is a scholar, but [said] that his brother George does not need his knowledge." He turned his face to George and said to him, "is your mother’s response convincing?"

George - "No, my father, because my brother Ephraim said in the beginning of his explanation: [As for] the thing that we want to be preserved, we must wrap it in something else, and this is its support and [the source of its] permanence, and we cannot be remiss in its wrapping if we wish that the precious thing will be preserved." And he turned to

\(^{114}\) Deuteronomy 6:8 www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0506.htm
his brother Ephraim and said to him, "I ask you, my brother, do you believe in G-d and His law in your heart and soul?"

Ephraim - "Yes, my brother, I believe in my heart, without a doubt, in G-d and His law as described by our masters the sages in the Talmud and the rest of the scriptures."

George - After you have believed in G-d and realized the intention without doubt that you would not violate the law, what compels you to do something that brings you degradation and hatred, and [something that] all who see you perform it think that you are weak of intellect?

The mother - "O my son, enough of the debate, some of those invited have come to eat with us on this wonderful day, on which you have to come to us in health and wellbeing, so let's now go to the synagogue to meet them.

So they all got up and left the house that they were in, the mother in the front with Ephraim just behind her, whose hand was in the hand of his brother, and behind them all was the father. They entered to pray and greeted those present. The mother stepped forward and said, "O my son George, do you still recognize these people who came to sing due to your safety and take part in our joy for you?"

George - "The only one of them that I recognize is my cousin David, and I still recall the day that he pushed me on the stairs and I fell from the first to the last, and he wounded my forehead because I took a rose of his of the blossoms that he gathered from the garden."

Someone who heard [this] - "And how could you forget me, the one who healed you of this wound with the help of G-d and remained with you in treatment for a period of three months, and every day I visited you twice and every time, I brought you a gift. And furthermore, I am your relative, the husband of your aunt Esther."

[George] - "The well! My aunt's husband! Forgive me my dear! This is the nature of man; a good deed is forgotten along with the one who did it, even if he persisted with it. And a bad deed remains in his thoughts, even if the one who did it did not intend to do so. You see that I forgot you and I remember my cousin, because he was the one who harmed me, even if unintentionally."

A big man among those present said, "My son, on account of that our masters required of us that every night before we go to bed, the first thing that we do is forgive everyone who opposed us or harmed us in any possible way, even if [he did so] intentionally. And after affirming the unity of G-d and coming to terms with our sins and errors toward Him and asking forgiveness for them, we entrust our affairs to Him and feel at ease.

George - "Who are these men who exert such influence, even over your hearts, that they compel you forgive the one who harms you, even if [he did so] intentionally? No, this is not oppression or a lack of justice. If someone were to oppose me even with a single word that offended me, I would challenge him and I would fight him until I killed him or he killed me, and this is just, so how could I show one who harmed me peace and not seek revenge upon him?

The conclusion is coming [in the next installment].