*Portuguese Marranos– Models and Polar Paradigms: Dona Gracia Mendes and Uriel da Costa*

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1. **Introduction**

In an odd and paradoxical twist of fate, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New Christians were the chief protagonists in the early modern and modern periods of Jewish history, “in the most dramatic and extreme sense of the word,” as Professor Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi put it.[[1]](#footnote-1) In this context, it is fascinating to note the polarized history of the Portuguese Marranos or *Anusim*—during the period spanning their immigration or flight from Porto and Lisbon until their integration (some with relative ease and some with great turmoil) into various communities of the Sephardi Diaspora. The dichotomous paradigms adopted by Dona Gracia Mendes (1510–1569) and Uriel da Costa (1585–1640) should shed light on the processes integral to the early modern period. These in fact, provided the foundations for major developments of the modern period—from the genesis of the messianic idea and in its wake the rise of Zionism[[2]](#footnote-2) to the crystallization of traditional Jewish learning and the subsequent arrival of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin, Jerusalem, and Paris.[[3]](#footnote-3)

I would like to demonstrate how, on the one hand, Dona Gracia Mendes, along with her Ottoman Empire colleagues, became a firm proponent of the messianic idea and normative Jewish learning in the sixteenth century, both establishing and strengthening them. On the other hand, contrast, I aim to show how the seventeenth-century thinker Uriel da Costa became a firm proponent of the skeptical approach to Jewish beliefs, opinions, and traditional learning,[[4]](#footnote-4) a position that he adopted in the context of the chaotic processes fueled by the Sabbatean messianic idea. By comparing these two figures and their centuries we will be able to more precisely clarify the correlation between the sixteenth-century Spanish Diaspora and the modern period, in contrast to the correlation between the seventeenth-century Ashkenazi Diaspora and the modern period. Finally, we will elucidate the reasons and circumstances leading to this correlation.

**2. Marrano Origins, the Messianic Idea, and Traditional Jewish Learning**

**2.1 Dona Gracia Mendes Nasi Taking the Normative Route in a Normative Century**

Dona Gracia Nasi, the sixteenth century’s leading Jewish, female figure, was born in Lisbon (1510) to a family that emigrated from Castile to Portugal due to the Spanish Expulsion and was forced to convert in 1497 along with about 100,000 other Jews. She was born into an Anusim identity from which she strove to extricate herself and her Iberian Peninsula community throughout her lifetime. Thus, she not only played a central role in transmitting Jewish memory to the next generation by continuing to live a Jewish lifestyle and faithfully preserving her family secrets, as other women on the Iberian Peninsula did,[[5]](#footnote-5) but, through her exceptional and formidable female leadership, she strove to provide her people with a glorious future based on the intense messianic fervor that characterized the New Christians in Portugal,[[6]](#footnote-6) who envisioned the restoration of the nation of Israel to its ancestral homeland.[[7]](#footnote-7)

A second thread in her life stretches from her childhood and youth in Lisbon, which paradoxically combined greatness and grandeur with existential hardship. Lisbon was Portugal’s vibrant port city, the capital of a naval power on the rise, a capital of international trade and voyages of discovery, and the capital of Renaissance creativity. All this in a period in which many great women shaped the horizons of the young girl and lady, Dona Gracia de Luna of the House of Nasi, even regarding gender equality.[[8]](#footnote-8) This is the very Lisbon in which Dona Gracia came face to face with the enormous pain and suffering caused by the abovementioned phenomenon of forced conversions that had begun in Lisbon in 1497. This grim reality reached especially menacing heights during the Easter Massacre in Lisbon (April 19–21, 1506) in which three thousand Jews and Anusim were hunted and slaughtered by a mob of Catholics and foreign sailors whose ships had docked in the harbor. Although King Manuel I was appalled by that massacre, executed five hundred rioters, and closed down the monastery responsible for the incitement, the young Dona Gracia had one inescapable conclusion etched into her brain. That was, that the New Christians’ conversion and baptism into Christianity would not prevent their slaughter, for according to the Christians, the Jews remained the reason for the series of disasters afflicting Portugal. Indeed, the Jews’ desperate situation only deteriorated further when the younger and crueler sister of Queen Isabella of Spain (1480) established the Portuguese Inquisition in 1536.[[9]](#footnote-9) This horrifying realization quickly led Dona Gracia to another fundamental insight: she must fearlessly come to the aid of the Marranos living on the Iberian Peninsula. They represented a significant portion of world Jewry, and for her, their rescue was of crucial importance, as their loss could have a decisive impact on the future of the Jewish people.[[10]](#footnote-10)

At the same time, the image of Dona Gracia was carried upon a wave of Jewish and messianic sentiment, for the latter had the power to proclaim the “Eternity of Israel” and to instill hope among the people in those dark days in Portugal. Tolosana and David Reuveni inspired the Iberian Peninsula’s Jewish population during the transition from the fifteenth into the sixteenth centuries, permeating it with the message of devotion to community and with historical-messianic yearnings.[[11]](#footnote-11) Tolosana, who was believed to be Dona Gracia’s great-grandmother, the widow of Don ben Benveniste de la Caballeria, one of the wealthy inhabitants of the Aragon region, was a model of commitment to preserving the Jewish nature of her community, notwithstanding many of her contemporaries converting to Christianity (sometimes by force) in the wake of the Massacres of 5151 (1391). In her will, written in 1443, she instructed that if the synagogue she had established was repurposed to house a church—a common occurrence in those days—any monies associated with it should be distributed to other Jewish communities in the Aragon region. This legacy of activism would prove to run very strong in Dona Gracia’s family.[[12]](#footnote-12)

During this period, in which the messianic idea seems to have metamorphosized from a magical to an historical one, the figures of David Reuveni and Solomon Molcho seemed to offer both a real and historical response to the pain and suffering that were a fixture of Portuguese Jewish life, and a means to repel it. According to this new conception of messianism, the realm in which the messianic would unfold was no longer the Supernal Worlds, as the kabbalist Abraham ben Eliezer had argued,[[13]](#footnote-13) but rather the realm of history.[[14]](#footnote-14) The dramatic encounter between Reuveni and the King of Portugal,King João III, occurred in 1525. It captured the hearts of the Anusim, including Diogo Pires, later to be known as Solomon Molcho, and to no less a degree the heart of Dona Gracia. The notions of reconquering the Land of Israel and the ingathering of the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland struck a chord with the Portuguese Anusim.[[15]](#footnote-15) The archives of the Inquisition attest to the messianic fervor among the Anusim that began with David Reuveni’s visit and continued for several decades thereafter.[[16]](#footnote-16) Furthermore, the dramatic relocation eastward from the Christian lands to the Islamic ones that the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, Sardinia, Provence, and Naples underwent, as foretold by Don Isaac Abravanel, which also coincided with the fall of the Byzantine Empire and the rise of the Ottoman one were interpreted as part of the messianic upheaval of the times.[[17]](#footnote-17)

This historical background explains the reasons for and the depth of Dona Gracia’s indefatigable commitment and leadership, the militantly activist approach she took on so many levels. Among her accomplishments were her smuggling of Anusim from the Iberian Peninsula to safe harbor in the Ottoman Empire or in Northern Europe[[18]](#footnote-18) and her economic boycott of the port of Ancona (1556)—which also took into account the international implications of such a blockade—to avenge the Inquisition’s burning of twenty-five Anusim in Ancona.[[19]](#footnote-19) She also established a settlement in the Lower Galilee, supporting emigration to the Land of Israel via her fleet of ships, with the help of her promising nephew, the Duke of Naxos, Don Joseph Nasi.[[20]](#footnote-20) Finally, she was also responsible for the founding of yeshivot, support of Torah scholars, the establishment of soup kitchens in the Ottoman Empire and in the Land of Israel, the latter related to her connection with Rabbis Joseph ibn Lev and Joseph Caro.[[21]](#footnote-21)

All these rabbis were proponents of the original, normative form of messianism, as the messianic idea, in is original appearance, is essentially a normative, historical formula for the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. This was the paradigm that was a given for Maimonides, as he writes in *The Laws of Kings and Wars*,[[22]](#footnote-22) that the King Messiah is a political figure who, in restoring Jewish sovereignty, acts in the earthly realm of historical, rational, concrete processes. Clearly, Maimonides denigrated those who perceived the messianic idea as abstract and utopian, inextricably tied to miracles and wonders.[[23]](#footnote-23) This concept became a central component of Jewish history and the basis for the Jewish belief in national redemption. Serving as a vector for universal salvation, it attained considerable influence following the Spanish Expulsion. Dona Gracia and Don Joseph Nasi brought this ideology to life in a pragmatic and coherent fashion.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Along with this messianic route taken in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, we also find Jewish scholarship—led by the illustrious scholars of Safed and supported by Dona Gracia—forging a path and even reaching a crossroads in the early modern period.[[25]](#footnote-25) Mordecai Breuer aptly corroborates my position on this matter:

In the history of the yeshivot—and you might say, even in other fields

of Jewish history—the Sixteenth Century seems to be the beginning

of the modern period. Torah centers gained strength in regions where

they had not been in continuous operation during the Middle Ages and the character of the yeshivot took on various new hues, both in terms of their form and their curriculum. During this century, the number of yeshivot in the Land of Israel—in Jerusalem and Safed—multiplied. This increase was fueled by the yeshiva movement that sprung up among the Spanish exiles who found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Each new wave of immigration to the Land of Israel witnessed the opening of new yeshivot and study halls especially after the Ottoman conquest (c. 1517), for the ideal of studying Torah “in sanctity and purity” in the Holy Land strongly motivated the very desire to ascend and settle there.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Indeed, Dona Gracia belongs on the list of formidable women who founded yeshivot and supported them, and in so doing, she once again enabled Sephardi Jewry to be at the forefront ahead of Ashkenazi Jewry, as Mordecai Breuer notes.[[27]](#footnote-27) Dona Gracia founded yeshivot in Constantinople—headed by R. Joseph ibn Lev— and in Salonica, headed by R. Samuel ben Moses of Modena (the Maharshadam). She acquired the concession for the barren lands around Tiberias with the hopes of establishing a yeshiva there as well.[[28]](#footnote-28) In addition, she also supported the Safed yeshiva of R. Samuel ben Isaac de Uçeda, the author of *Midrash Shmuel* on Ethics of the Fathers. The Torah scholars of her time referred to her with epithets befitting royalty: “Lady Gracia, May her glory be exalted.”[[29]](#footnote-29) Thus, Dona Gracia’s biography is characterized by its stormy beginnings and its calm ending, which together allowed her to create the foundations for the messianic idea and normative Jewish scholarship as well as to restore stability to the Jewish communities in the Sephardi Diaspora, in general, and the Ottoman Empire, in particular.

* 1. **Uriel da Costa, Forging a Path in a Chaotic Century**

In contrast to his predecessor, Dona Gracia, the New Christian Uriel da Costa (1585–1640) trod a path that was constantly shrouded in fog and fraught with pervasive skepticism. While Dona Gracia embodied the normative, messianic idea with all her strength, at the time at the margins of normative, traditional, Jewish scholarship, Uriel da Costa embodied the tempest that overtook Jewish scholarship with full force in the seventeenth century. Of course, the most powerful furor to unbalance the messianic idea came twenty-six years after he committed suicide, when the false Messiah, Shabbetai Tzvi (166) converted to Islam. During his brief life, Uriel da Costa had two anchors that helped him find his way back through the storm back to Judaism—his mother and the University of Coimbra. However, it is possible that these may also have been the sources of his heretical digressions from the core beliefs of normative, sixteenth-century Judaism, beliefs that stirred the staunch opposition of the Venetian and Amsterdam rabbinates and the lay leaders of both communities.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Uriel da Costa’s lineage on the maternal side, as recorded in the Coimbra Inquisition’s archives, indicates an abiding desire to secretly return to Judaism,[[31]](#footnote-31) with the women in that familial line, including his mother Sarah-Branca da Costa, functioning as the main vector for transmitting the Jewish tradition. This parallels the gender-based tendency regarding loyalty to Judaism we pointed out above in Dona Gracia’s case.[[32]](#footnote-32) The influence that Uriel da Costa’s mother had on him also resonated on those surrounding him, as the Inquisition archives repeatedly attest that many of his friends noted his significant role in their return to crypto-Judaism.[[33]](#footnote-33) His mother remained tirelessly and supportively by his side throughout his life, from Porto to Amsterdam.

In contrast, in his autobiography, da Costa claims that his father, Bento da Costa, was an ardent Catholic who was part of the Portuguese aristocracy of the time. Thus, his father’s death in 1608 seems to have been a life-altering event that dramatically changed the spiritual path of most of his family members, leading to their return to Judaism and their flight from Porto to Amsterdam. This decision was the result of several, overlapping factors. Financially, the move to Amsterdam—the world’s financial center at the time—was necessary in order to save the da Costa family’s international business ventures that were tied to the Dutch metropolis. In terms of identity, the Da Costas’ desire to return to the religion of their ancient forefathers and escape the terrors of the Inquisition made Amsterdam—the symbol of liberty, freedom, open-mindedness, and even of throwing off the yolk of religion—the ideal destination.[[34]](#footnote-34) In this bustling city, there was already a Jewish community willing to absorb Anusim wishing to return to public Jewish observance forming.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The venerable University of Coimbra, founded in 1289, moved from Lisbon to Coimbra and back several times before finally establishing itself in Coimbra in 1537. [[36]](#footnote-36) Uriel da Costa received his education in Jewish Studies at Coimbra between 1601 and 1608, attending the Hebrew Department in the faculty of Theology and the Study of Holy Scriptures. He alternately studied Canon Law with Antonio Homem, a professor of law, and held an ecclesiastical post in Porto. Homem was suspected of secretly teaching the city’s Anusim Judaism, and he was burnt at the stake in 1624. While Uriel (Gabriel, at the time) da Costa was not named in the tribunals of the Inquisition as someone who was nourished by Homem, it can be assumed that he was close with the group of Anusim that was. In fact, not long after Homem was first called upon to appear before the Inquisition (1614), the da Costa family fled from Portugal in 1615.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Coimbra University was the only institute in sixteenth-century Portugal that granted doctoral degrees, and it was in this very university that the Anus Diogo Pires, later known as Solomon Molcho, received his Jewish education about one hundred years before da Costa did.[[38]](#footnote-38) During his course of studies, da Costa was exposed to the study of the Bible. Heretical thoughts began to germinate in his mind regarding the Christian interpretation of the Bible, in particular, and the Christian faith, in general. As a result, he gradually began developing an independent Jewish consciousness.

Be that as it may, the university was another source of knowledge that determined the tempestuous journey that was his life—from Catholicism to *Anisut*[[39]](#footnote-39) to Orthodox Judaism to ‘Saducee’ Judaism to Natural Deism, as he wrote in the autobiography he penned just before his death-suicide, *Exemplar of a Human Life*.[[40]](#footnote-40) This voyage led him to deny several of Judaism’s major principles of faith: the immortality of the soul, the uniqueness of the nation of Israel, Divine Providence, and the status of the Oral Law[[41]](#footnote-41)—and made him into one of the harbingers of atheism, secularization, and biblical criticism.[[42]](#footnote-42) His intellectual oeuvre gives voice to the crisis that the returning Anusim underwent in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century, Spanish-Portuguese Diaspora in Western Europe. They had forgotten the Jewish chain of transmission and Jewish religious law. They were also surprised to find significant and unacceptable gaps between the Judaism they had imagined and the harsh, unyielding Judaism that the community of returnee’s leadership in North-Western Europe was shaping.

Da Costa was among those Anusim influenced by philosophical schools of thought that placed skepticism and epistemology front and center. In contrast to the earlier Anusim who identified wholly with the new Jewish world and all its nuances and legal minutiae or with those Anusim who, without fanfare, chose to selectively observe the Jewish legal norms and beliefs of the community, these Anusim faced a serious dilemma. Da Costa’s three consecutive works, written as quickly as they were being relentlessly attacked and banned, delineate the convoluted path and worldview he adopted in the face of the perplexing Jewish scholarship of his time: *The Eleven Theses*, *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions*, and *Example of a Human Life* were a multi-pronged assault on the Oral Law—on Jewish religious law—focusing on even the most minute issues, including the manufacture of phylacteries and mezuzot, the “sucking of the blood” at the circumcision, the annulment of vows, the Talmudic principle which held that “an eye for an eye” referred to monetary compensation, and the observance of the second festival day of the Pilgrim Festivals in the Diaspora. Furthermore, he argued against fundamental Jewish principles of faith, including the immortality of the soul, the transcendental revelation of the world’s Creator and the master of history (“Torah from the heavens”).[[43]](#footnote-43)

The drama that unfolded in Amsterdam was fueled by Uriel da Costa’s attack on the Oral Law in a garb all-too familiar to his audience: rhetorical language taken from Christian, anti-Pharisaic polemics. The communal leaders reacted to this Inquisition as a threat to the very existence of Amsterdam’s restored Jewish community. They were especially diligent in guarding the bastion of the Oral Law, for they perceived this to be the guarantor of the Anusim community’s complete return to traditional, normative Judaism.[[44]](#footnote-44)

In summation, Uriel da Costa’s conduct became both a symbol for veneration and a model for imitation in his own time and in the generations to come. It signaled the upcoming movement to fundamentally challenge normative Judaism and the cry for militant secularization in the Ashkenazi Diaspora and throughout Christendom[[45]](#footnote-45)– a culture clash that played out very differently in the Sephardi Diaspora and the Islamic lands where, as we shall see, pragmatic secularization was the order of the day.[[46]](#footnote-46)

**3. Comparing the Sephardi Diaspora and the Lands of Islam with the Ashkenazi Diaspora and Christendom: The Identity and the Sociology of the Jewish People in the Early Modern Period**

We began our discussion with both a sixteenth-century Portuguese Anusa (female, singular for Anusim) who integrated herself into the Ottoman Empire with great success, and a Portuguese Anus (male, singular for Anusim) who had considerable difficulty in conforming to the beliefs of Amsterdam’s seventeenth-century Jewish community. These figures may help us identify various, different paradigms for the historical processes that occurred in these diasporas in the early modern period—processes, which may be considered the foundations and roots for major historical processes found in the modern period in these very same diasporas.

**3.1 Rabbi Y. L. Ashkenazi’s (Manitou) Typological Distinction between the Diasporas**

The Jewish people’s exile from the Land of Israel also led to their split into two distinct branches: Ashkenazi and Sephardi. In his work on the theory of Engenderment, R. Y. L. Ashkenazi (Manitou) set forth a typological—though, not necessarily, historical—distinction between these two branches which “derive from the [temporal and geographical] division of the diaspora two thousand years ago: apparently the Ashkenazim descend from the Babylonian exiles [the destruction of the First Temple], while the Sephardim descend from those exiled from Judea [following the destruction of the Second Temple].”[[47]](#footnote-47) This has implications for how the two diasporas interpreted the theological belief in the messianic redemption. The First Temple exiles, who had despaired of Israelite sovereignty because it had failed, deferred the long-awaited redemption to the End of Days, while the Second Temple exiles, who had not given up on the idea of such sovereignty, repeatedly tried to restore the Jewish body politic in its homeland.

To use Manitou’s terminology, “the Jewish experience” is essentially an exilic one; namely, Jews experience their identity as a function of their struggle with the Islamic and Christian cultures. Jewish identity experienced this way remains true to the original Hebrew identity. However, the very fact that it is always in conflict with different cultures sharpens the Hebrew identity’s various components—which is the ultimate goal of such an interaction. When the exilic period in the lands of Islam and Christianity would finally end, with the Hebrew identity’s components becoming clear—for they could only have been revealed under such challenging conditions—the Jewish people could return to Zion and once again construct the “refined” and “purified” Hebrew identity. Manitou expressed this concept poignantly in an interview in which he declared: “We are the last of the Jews, and we even find ourselves at the end of Jewish history,” that is to say, “we are witnesses to something of great seriousness and of a radical nature: the end of Jewish history.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Manitou clarified his words, emphasizing that, be that above all, during the return to Zion, the most important thing for Jews to do is maintain their Hebrew roots and the most important thing for Israelis to do is not to forget their Jewish ones:

While Sephardi Jewish culture inherently challenged Islamic culture on societal, religious, spiritual, and cultural grounds, in the Edomite exile, Jewish culture was also forced to adopt tools to grapple with and survive its predominantly Christian habitat. Furthermore, [during this process] Hebrew culture, which had been doomed too exile, was transformed into Jewish culture. And when this culture returned to the land from which she had been sold, it once again became Hebrew culture. Therefore, we are the last of the Jews of the past and the first of the Hebrews of the future, so we are the last of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Just as the correlation between the Hebrew nation and humanity’s living in peace in Antiquity was unequivocal, so too the return to Zion was to be intertwined with the integration of the different diasporas and a harmonious pluralism of identities that were fashioned while the Jews sojourned among the nations of the world. The phrase “world-nation,”[[50]](#footnote-50) is thus extremely apt. Furthermore, the return to Zion allows for the clarification of the authentic Hebrew identity—the identity of Israel—and, as a result, the imitations of this authentic identity too. The Jewish identities in Christendom and the Islamic lands were forged by the different challenges each community faced. While in Christendom Jewish identity was threatened by the surrounding Christian culture that claimed to be the “true Israel” (*Verus Israel*), in the Islamic lands the Jews’ status was threatened by the surrounding culture that granted the Jews a dhimmi status, positing them to be inferior, but tolerable. While Judaism was conceived to be a religion in Christendom[[51]](#footnote-51)—and, consequently, the fundamental characteristic of Jewish sociology became conflict—in the Islamic lands where Judaism was perceived to be a nation, Judaism was characterized by inclusive cohesion and intellectual freedom.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Among the Sephardi Jews who remained loyal to their own selves, the organization of both their thought and ritual is clearer. And this is because they did not face their [the Islamic population’s] opposition to their identity in the first place. The phenomenon of the Anusim, as paradoxical as this may sound, is more characteristic of the Ashkenazi sphere as it was concerned with the Jewish soul thrown into a landscape rife with Christian opposition, whether it was religious or secular… the life of the Ashkenazi Jew was more tragic, in the Greek sense of the word…while Jewish suffering was common to both of them, Ashkenazi Jewish suffering had a grimmer aspect…throughout the ages during which the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews developed their Hebrew cultures, the true [Jewish] theology only flourished among the latter; it was as if the Ashkenazi sphere treated theology as forbidden turf which was temporarily ceded to Christianity; while in the Islamic cultural climate, there was no reticence of this sort. In fact, we (both the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim) only know what we believe due to the good services of the Spanish theologians who lived during the Spanish Golden Age: Maimonides, Ibn Gabirol, and primarily Rabbi Judah Halevi, the author of the *Kuzari*…Judah Halevi took the king’s highway and the Maharal from Prague followed in his footsteps, and in our day Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook from Jerusalem, who was the high priest of the restored Land of the Jews [followed him]… Hence, the overall differences in ritual and mindset…derive from the very way in which Ishmael, on the one hand, and Esau, on the other, related to Judaism. Jacob’s prayer to Esau is different than Isaac’s to Ishmael because the unique problems that each society had to solve were fundamentally different [literally, did not go in the same direction]…[[53]](#footnote-53)

**3.2** **The Cultural Difference between the Diasporas and Their Origins**

Beginning in the sixteenth century—the century in which the two aforementioned Jewish diasporas coalesced—the fundamental reason for the difference between the Sephardi and Ashkenazi Diasporas was rooted in both the primacy of the study of Tanakh and Kabbalah in the Sephardi sphere, and in the primacy of the study of Oral Law in the Ashkenazi one.[[54]](#footnote-54) The study of Tanakh and Kabbalah is imbued with a fundamental historiosophical and educational orientation that shapes a Jewish identity expecting and striving for the redemption of Israel and humanity together with a and coherency and perspective promoting a spirit of synthesis to Jewish learning. In contrast, the study of the Oral Law promotes an analytical mindset that deconstructs the material under discussion into its component parts with a characteristic hyperfocus that lacks all perspective.[[55]](#footnote-55)

In addition to this fundamental orientation, we will discuss four of its offshoots that, on the one hand, suggest different, characteristic paradigms for these diasporas, and, on the other hand, embody the processes signifying continuity or discontinuity between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Due to these fundamental underpinnings, an intellectual continuum runs—albeit with some gaps—from the normative, messianic concept present in the sixteenth century to the organic rise of Zionism in the Sephardi Diasporas. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental disconnect between the chaotic, messianic presence in the seventeenth century and the rise of secular Zionism in early modern Eastern, Western, and Central Europe.

Both parallel and alternatively, sixteenth-century Jewish learning constantly guided the Sephardi Diaspora, engaging with it unimpeded until the modern period, when the twentieth-century school of rabbinic thought promoted by the rabbinic father and son Kook duo and the Paris School of Jewish thought aspired to echo the past and return the luster to its crown. In contrast, seventeenth-century Jewish learning began to construct built-in loci of conflict and division over these centuries, especially within the Ashkenazi Diaspora, where the Berlin and Jerusalem Schools of Jewish thought in the modern period sought to echo these crises and even strengthen them through their academic research. The Sabbatean and Frankist crises, the attitude towards the three oaths and the Messiah ben Yosef, and the Spinoza controversy are foundational to the cultural differences distinguishing these two diasporas.

**3.2.1** **The Sabbatean and Frankist Crises (1666, 1756)**[[56]](#footnote-56)

The Sabbatean and Frankist crises blackened the reputation of the biblical and normative messianism, which became associated with anarchy, chaotic impulses, moral corruption, megalomaniacal adventurism, and an apocalyptic dimension. The conversions of Shabbetai Tzvi and Jacob Frank stunned the Jewish world and led most of their followers to abandon faith in them. However, many of their followers were also seized by despair at the false messiahs’ apostasy, and as a result, there are many recorded cases of Jews converting to Christianity or Islam in their thousands.[[57]](#footnote-57)

When the turmoil abated, the different Jewish diasporas took diametrically opposite positions on the very essence of the messianic idea. Thus, the Sabbatean crisis, in particular, became a watershed moment for Jewish history in the early and late modern periods. As a rule, due to the central role the normative, messianic idea played in the Jews’ national identity, the Sephardi Diaspora adopted the position that the messianic idea had to be rehabilitated and reinterpreted in light of its biblical meaning. For them, it still was to be adhered to as a political idea rooted in history and in this mundane world. Thus, its primary significance, as mentioned above, would be the aspiration to restore Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.[[58]](#footnote-58)

In contrast, in the Ashkenazi Diaspora, the mainstream preferred to bury the disgrace: communal records (*pinkasim*) were destroyed and erased, and it was prohibited to mention Shabbetai Tzvi’s name. To prevent another person from proclaiming himself Messiah, the Eastern European “Council of the Four Lands” placed strict restrictions on the study of Kabbalah, so that only those knowledgeable in Talmud and Jewish law were permitted to study it, thus preventing people from erring.[[59]](#footnote-59) As a rule, messianic expectations were deferred to the End of Days and ceased to function as a concrete idea in the here-and-now because of the fear that grasped this diaspora lest new false messiahs proclaim themselves.[[60]](#footnote-60) This deep-seated fear led to a “model of division.” In fact, it was the basis for the model of division that was at the heart of Ashkenazi, Jewish society’s response to the modern period: secularization versus religiosity; Hasidism versus Mitnagdism; Orthodoxy, neo-Orthodoxy and ultra-Orthodoxy in contrast to Enlightenment, Reform, and the Conservative movement; tradition versus modernity. This fragmented and dichotomous worldview also caused the antagonism between Zionism and anti-Zionism. Anti-Zionism was born in the Ashkenazi religious sphere because for Zionism to become a reality in the Ashkenazi Diaspora, it had to rebel against the religious norms—which was not the case in the Sephardi Diaspora.[[61]](#footnote-61)

**3.2.2 The Three Oaths**

The three oaths[[62]](#footnote-62) restrain the Jewish people from initiating an ascent en masse to the Land of Israel (“They shall not go up on/as a wall”: ascending “on a wall”—by force—or “like a wall,” en masse) and in so doing “precipitate the End of Days.” However, not one of the great scribes ever ruled that these oaths were legally binding: neither R. Isaac Alfasi nor Maimonides, neither the Rosh nor the Tur, nor the *Shulhan Arukh*. The Rishonim (11th–16th century rabbis) made no mention of this in their writings on this passage in *Ketubot*, neither Nahmanides, nor Ritva, nor Meiri. Rashi in his commentary on Song of Songs 2:7 does not mention the three oaths. In fact, R. Zeira, who attested to the three oaths tradition, repudiated this teaching when he ascended to the Land of Israel, as R. Mordechai Atiyah writes in his book *Sod ha-Shevu’ah* [Secret of the Oath].[[63]](#footnote-63) According to R. Atiyah, R. Yohanan and the sages of the Land of Israel maintained that the Jewish people is obligated to ascend to the Land of Israel “as a wall,” for R. Yohanan claims that the Jewish people took an oath obligating them to ascend as a wall, that is to say, together and en masse: “R. Yohanan said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: ‘I shall not enter Jerusalem above until I enter Jerusalem on earth down below.’”[[64]](#footnote-64) To this, R. Elazar [R. Yohanan’s disciple] responded: “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the Jewish people: If you fulfill the oath, it is good, and if not, I will abandon your flesh [and all will devour you] like the gazelles and like the hinds of the field.”[[65]](#footnote-65) Indeed, Mor Altshuler, in her study of R. Joseph Caro, emphasizes that in ascending to the Land of Israel, this famous man of the law made it clear that he did not recognize these oaths as legally binding.[[66]](#footnote-66) At no point in time in the Sephardi Diaspora did the three oaths function as an impediment to ascent. In fact, the opposite is true. As we have mentioned above, the oath mentioned by R. Yohanan actually obligates the Jews to “ascend as a wall.”

Nonetheless, the three oaths continued to dissuade the leaders of Haredi communities in Europe from ascending to the Land of Israel. Even the remarks of R. Meir Simcha Hakohen from Dvinsk (the author of the *Meshekh Hokhmah*) after the San Remo Conference in 1920—“the fear of the oaths has departed, [[67]](#footnote-67) and with the princes’ license, the commandment to settle the Land of Israel—which is considered to be equal in weight to all the commandments in the Torah—becomes obligatory for us again.” To our great sorrow, his fervent cry remained “a voice calling in the wilderness.”

**3.2.3** **The Meaning of “Messiah ben Yosef”**

The restoration of Israel is a graduated, dialectical process that requires the completion of two phases with the second built upon the first.[[68]](#footnote-68) Both levels, though, are independently vital and are “equally” important from a historical perspective. The period of Messiah ben Yosef (literally, the Messiah descended from Joseph) precedes that of Messiah ben David (literally, the Messiah descended from King David), not because the former is less important than the latter, but rather because of the developmental nature of the process of restoration and its very essence. The period of Messiah ben Yosef is one in which the mundane aspects of the restoration occur: sovereignty, military and economic might, and the institutions of state; the period of Messiah ben David is one in which the spiritual aspect is restored—the Hebrew identity is made whole, comprising all of Israel and possessing a universal imprint:

In the areas under Christian influence, the Jews became accustomed to speaking about the messianic figure in only one way, while, in fact, the Jews traditionally lived in expectation of the advent of many messiahs—though primarily for the advent of two specific ones, Messiah ben Yosef and then Messiah ben David. These central figures are referenced in the Midrash, in the Gemara, and, of course, in kabbalistic thought, but they are rooted in the tale of Joseph and his brothers found in the book of Genesis. For the European Jews who lived under Christian, religious influence, messianism became part of the esoteric Torah. This was the result of the Ashkenazi Torah scholars’ decision to stop teaching the topic lest their flock become confused by the contrasting versions of Christian and Jewish messianism. Consequently, the very topic of messianism became the stuff of myth and fairytale—until Theodore (Benjamin Zeev) Herzl arrived on the world stage and proclaimed, “if you will it, it is not a dream (literally, “not a fairytale”).”

In contrast, for the Jews living in the Islamic lands, the study of messianic thought was part of the exoteric Torah. In my youth, the students in the study hall learned about messianism by studying Midrash and Gemara, even though they were also aware that there were additional kabbalistic sources. Every novice knew with the simplest of faith that the Jewish people were awaiting the advent of Messiah ben Yosef first and then, after the period known as “The Days of the Messiah,” for the advent of Messiah ben David and the Resurrection of the Dead… As long as Sephardi Judaism in the Islamic lands learned the Torah in Arabic, messianism remained part of the exoteric Torah, as I have mentioned. However, when Sephardi Jewry began to study the Torah using the language of the Ashkenazi sphere, messianism was also relegated to the realm of esoteric Torah there as well. As I have mentioned, the main reason why the sages prohibited discussing these matters in public was the tremendous risk that Jewish people might confuse their own conceptual world with that of the Christian tradition. As in many other realms of Torah study, keeping the matter a secret, led to forgetfulness.

Therefore, when the events alluded to in the classical Jewish texts began to occur, most of the nation of Israel (with the exception of the kabbalistic circles) had no way of figuring out their significance, and most importantly, Zionism’s connection to them. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook,[[69]](#footnote-69) was the first Torah scholar, since the time of R. Isaac Halevi Horowitz (the *Shelah*), to elucidate these matters. When he delivered the eulogy for the man who envisioned the state, Dr. Herzl, on the day he died, Rabbi Kook hinted to the fact that Herzl’s efforts were part and parcel of Messiah ben Yosef’s sphere.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Rabbi Y. L. Ashkenazi (Manitou) defined Messiah ben Yosef as a process associated with the Jewish resettlement of the Land of Israel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To make his case, he cited Rabbi Chaim Shvili:

The Gemara explains that the eulogy is going to be given for the death of Messiah ben Yosef because he is apparently going to be murdered. This notwithstanding, in the Sephardi kabbalists’ prayer book, the *Tefillat ha-Hodesh* prayer book from Livorno, in the blessing “Builder of Jerusalem,” there appears a *kavvanah* to pray for Messiah ben Yosef’s life. Even though the kabbalists are well aware of the Gemara, they believe that this tragedy may be averted through prayer…According to the Midrash, Messiah ben Yosef is going to be killed by a Roman general, Armilus the evil one.[[71]](#footnote-71) Armilus is the name the Midrash adopts for the Latin name Romulus, or in other words, for Rome. In other words, the Midrash foretells that during the period of Messiah ben Yosef there will be a war between Rome and Israel and in the course of this war, Messiah ben Yosef will be murdered by a Roman general. R. Chaim Shvili, of blessed memory, a Jerusalemite kabbalist of Georgian stalk whom I knew, explains in his book *Heshbonot ha-Geulah*,[[72]](#footnote-72) that in our very own generation, during World War II, the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel was at risk of being destroyed by the Italian and German armies. The man at the head of this military force was named General “Rommel.” Rabbi Shvili hinted that Messiah ben Yosef’s life may have been in danger in our very own time, and he was saved by the thousands of years of prayer, by the recitation of this kabbalistic *kavvanah*.

When R. Kook eulogized Herzl in Tammuz 1904, he proposed an interpretation that for the Ashkenazi Diaspora was truly a novelty, a *hiddush*[[73]](#footnote-73) that ironically had been part of the Sephardi Diaspora’s daily hopes, dreams, and prayers for many years. In stressing the existence of Messiah ben Yosef, R. Kook alluded to Herzl’s labors.[[74]](#footnote-74)

In this respect, R. Kook was the exception that proved the rule. He adopted a worldview that had been ubiquitous in the Sephardi Diaspora for many years but had been beaten down for many years in the Ashkenazi Diaspora because of the Sabbatean crisis. Curiously, the Maharal (R. Judah Loewe ben Betzalel, 1520–1609) and the Shelah (R. Isaiah Halevi Horowitz, 1558–1630), members of the Ashkenazi Diaspora, citizens of the sixteenth century, and bearers of the normative messianic idea, were left behind. The nineteenth-century rabbis did not use them or their ideas to link their predecessors’ century to their own.[[75]](#footnote-75) However, R. Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook would nurture himself on their works, and in the early twentieth century, utilize their thought to shape his own. After World War II, Dr. Jacob Gordin and R. Isaac Hutner would succeed him, putting great store in his ideas and disseminating the Maharal’s oeuvre in France and in the United States of America, respectively.[[76]](#footnote-76)

**3.2.4 The Spinoza Crisis**

The Spinoza Crisis (Baruch Spinoza, 1632–1677)—inspired by the Uriel da Costa crisis and its natural continuation—had a decisive effect on the entirety of Jewish learning in the modern period and, even more impressively, made its intellectual mark on the Hebrew Enlightenment and the Zionist leadership. Simultaneously, Spinoza was deemed the “philosopher’s philosopher”[[77]](#footnote-77) by many of Europe’s nineteenth-century philosophers[[78]](#footnote-78) and writers,[[79]](#footnote-79) who considered him to be the father of skepticism, secularity, and modernity. His thought cut away at the very core of the Jewish principles of faith and was an all-out attack on the principle of revelation, joined by an apology for Pantheism, biblical criticism, a critique of the Jewish Oral Law, and arguments on behalf of Christianity and its founder. Indeed, long before Baruch Spinoza—a member of a Portuguese family of Anusim that returned to Judaism, a student of R. Menasseh ben Israel in Amsterdam’s Talmud Torah and a student of R. Saul Morteira in Amsterdam’s Etz-Hayyim Yeshiva—composed his infamous oeuvre, he began to fraternize with Christian individuals and circulate in Christian circles, and he ceased observing the commandments. The community leadership viewed his these encounters as not only problematic but also as a significant threat to the community, so at the age of twenty-four, a harsh ban was placed on Spinoza, and he was even excommunicated from the people of Israel (1656).

Several factors shaped Spinoza’s worldview before the ban—the Christian Collegiant study groups, the Jesuit Franciscus van den Enden, and the philosopher René Descartes. After the ban, Spinoza was influenced by a two missionary groups—the Quakers and the Mennonites. We should stress that the Quaker missionary Samuel Fisher’s seven-hundred-page book *Rusticus ad Academicos*,or *The Country Correcting the University and Clergy* (1660) had a tremendous impact on the biblical criticism found in Spinoza’s “Theological-Political Treatise” (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, 1670).[[80]](#footnote-80)

Spinoza had many influences, but the influence of two men in particular was decisive: the former *Anus* Dr. Juan Daniel Prado, who opposed observing the Jewish commandments, denied God’s historical revelation, and held pantheistic views, and the Jesuit Franciscus van den Enden, a teacher of rhetoric and the rector of an academy for the study of the classics in Amsterdam. The latter introduced Spinoza to the philosophy of René Descartes, which honed Spinoza’s pantheistic outlook. Spinoza contended that there is no transcendental-revealed deity and there is no personal God who issues commands and watches over creation. We should note that Balthazar (Isaac) Orobio de Castro was the only thinker in Spinoza’s time who engaged in a heated polemic with him and with Dr. Juan Daniel Prado.[[81]](#footnote-81) While the Jewish Enlightenment figures Moses Mendelssohn, Salomon Maimon, and Abraham Krachmol adhered to Spinoza’s philosophy, Rabbis Elijah ben Amuzag and Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook maintained that even though Spinoza’s thought was derived from Judaism and the Kabbalah—from R. Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari*, R. Hasdai Crescas’ *Or Hashem*, and R. Abraham Herrera’s *Sha’ar ha-Shamayim*—Spinoza distorted their thought and came to erroneous conclusions that contradict the fundamentals of Judaism.[[82]](#footnote-82)

The author and poet Goethe, prizing human freedom above all else, considered Spinoza[[83]](#footnote-83) “the most Christian of Christians.”[[84]](#footnote-84) Goethe said:

I sense a spiritual kinship between myself and Spinoza, even though his soul is deeper than mine. His thought endows the world with tranquility and silence, and it seems to me that he possesses the tranquility of the Divine or the tranquility of Nature, but I do not dare presume that I have properly understood him, he who was a student of Descartes and ascended via the mathematical and rabbinic cultures to the highest levels of thought.

Simultaneously, the author and poet Heinrich Heine, the Jew, adopted more ambivalent language to describe Spinoza. In his customary fashion, Heine hints at deeper strata that explain the German philosophers’ attraction to Spinoza’s Pantheism:

As for the Hebrew Bible, Spinoza conveys an emotion similar to that of someone witnessing the immensity of Creation serenely teeming with life… Spinoza’s writings are filled with wonder as if the winds of the future blow upon us. Perhaps the spirit of the prophets rested upon their great-great-grandchild…

But Heine immediately recognizes the other pole, the dangers of Pantheism:

While for Spinoza this was an abstract metaphysical principle, the Romantics related to it in concrete terms and began to see divinity reified in plants, animals, and, at its most glorious, in human beings. Germany is the most desirable land for Pantheism. Pantheism is Germany’s secret religion.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Spinoza understood Judaism to be a legal-political framework and not a religious faith, an approach that was particularly attractive to the supporters of Zionism and the Zionist movement. They interpreted his thought as a rousing endorsement for the separation of nationalism and religion, and even of the separation of religious and secular Judaism. His reputation as a heretic and as an oppositional figure who did not abandon his beliefs despite the enormous pressure put upon him was exactly the image the Zionist movement was looking for in its European leaders and emissaries. Spinoza was well suited for this role. He maintained that the redemption of Israel could be an earthly one brought about by political activism, the ingathering of the exiles, and the founding of a state. It is also possible that he had been influenced by Shabbetai Tzvi.

Indeed, many of the Zionist movements, nineteenth and twentieth century, Eastern European leaders and thinkers were enamored of Baruch Spinoza’s thought—Micah Joseph Berdichevsky, Joseph Haim Brenner, Nahman Syrkin, Nahum Sokolov, and David Ben-Gurion. The latter, in an article published in the *Davar* newspaper (Summer 1953), advocated for “straightening that which is crooked,”[[86]](#footnote-86) annulling the ban on Spinoza and translating all of the thinker’s writings into Hebrew so they could take their rightful place as cultural assets in the new Hebrew culture.[[87]](#footnote-87) Professor Joseph Klausner advocated for annulling the excommunication in 1927, even before Ben-Gurion did: “The ban is annulled! Judaism’s wrongdoing against you is hereby lifted, and your sin against her shall be forgiven. You are our brother. You are our brother. You are our brother!”[[88]](#footnote-88)

**4. The Swing of the Pendulum: Changes in Academic Jewish Studies during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries as a Function of their Various Diasporas**

**4.1 The Swing of the Pendulum: Shifts in Academic Jewish Studies in the Modern Period—Berlin, Jerusalem, Paris**

At the end of the last section leads to the very important issue of the earthquake that the world of academic Jewish studies underwent in the modern period. This section focuses on one fundamental insight: that is, the correlation between the sixteenth-century Sephardi Diaspora with both R. Kook’s thought and the Paris School of Jewish thought, on the one hand, and between the seventeenth-century Ashkenazi Diaspora and the Berlin and Jerusalem Schools of Jewish thought, on the other.

The sixteenth century witnessed the creation of the great Jewish diasporas—in Poland and Lithuania, and in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and Ital. This century was one in which both diasporas established themselves and prospered on all levels, an era in which all the systems in society underwent “modernization, calibration, and fine-tuning.” This certainly includes the study of Judaism and the normative messianic idea, whose teaching was foundational to the restoration of the people of Israel to the Land of Israel. Stretching from the Maharal of Prague and R. Isaiah Halevi Horowitz (the *Shelah*) via R. Luria Ashenazi (the Ari) and R. Solomon Alkabetz and up to Don Isaac Abravanel and Dona Gracia Mendes. Harmony reigned throughout this vast intellectual space, spanning the area between the Council of the Four Lands to the much-feted Safed. R. Moses Isserles deemed R. Joseph Caro to be the reigning rabbinic authority of the Land of Israel and ceded primacy to him, as his Torah was the Torah of the Land of Israel. Therefore, R. Isserles placed his legal work, the *Mappa* (literally, tablecloth) upon R. Joseph Caro’s own legal masterpiece, *Shulhan Arukh* (literally, the set table), as a mark of his respect and honor.[[89]](#footnote-89)

However, the tempestuous seventeenth century introduced disharmony into this tranquil state—from the devastating flood from the decrees of 1648–149, through the Sabbatean and Frankist crises up until the Spinozan turning point. Mercilessly, chaos struck both diasporas with great force, destabilizing the established ways of Jewish learning and the Jewish messianic idea. Fundamental beliefs were uprooted, and the messianic idea became chaotic at the same time as a crisis of faith in the rabbinic elite occurred and the slow process of corrosive secularization began eroding traditional society. The seventeenth century was a watershed moment for the early modern period. For both historical and sociological reasons, each diaspora reacted in its own way. The Sephardi Diaspora overcame all of the above and decided to rebuild the ruins while at the same time adopting a unificatory approach. In contrast, the Ashkenazi Diaspora confronted all these challenges while developing a policy of division or fragmentation. The different responses were a result of their surrounding milieus: in Ashkenaz, Christianity threatened Jewish identity and in the Islamic lands, Islam threatened the Jews’ status. On the one hand, the climate of intellectual freedom native to the Islamic lands facilitated the rehabilitation of Jewish learning and the normative, biblical messianic idea, as well as the adoption of the unificatory approach. This milieu nurtured the revival of sixteenth-century Torah and the perception of Judaism as a nation. On the other hand, the adversarial climate throughout Western European Christendom and the perception of Judaism as a religion there led to an ideological clash and the aforementioned fragmented approach.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Berlin (1819) and Jerusalem (1919) Schools of Jewish thought aspired to reshape their encounter with Jewish studies by applying the prisms of emancipation and nationalism, each in their turn, so they quite naturally turned to the seventeenth century as their model. The earlier seventeenth-century Jewish scholars had introduced the chaos-inducing skepticism that destabilized Jewish principles of faith. These later nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars wanted to play the same game, but this time dressed in the attire of scientists rather than of philosophers. Thus, Professor Gershom Scholem wanted to rehabilitate the reputations of both Kabbalah studies and Shabbetai Tzvi, whom he characterized as the “father of change in the new age,” while demonizing R. Jacob Sasportas as “the Jewish inquisitor” for his long and bitter fight against Shabbetai Tzvi and Sabbateanism. With similar intent, Professor Joseph Klausner (1923) and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion sought to annul the ban placed on Spinoza and to treat him with unconditional brotherly love.

In contrast, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook’s school of thought (1904) and the Paris School for Jewish thought wanted to wage war against the cultural crises and destruction wrought in the nineteenth century, between the two World Wars, and following World War II. With their goal of returning to a balanced Judaism, to a Judaism where normalcy prevailed over polarization, they turned to the normative sixteenth century in an effort to revitalize its foundations and principles. Thus, a new era of Maharal and Shelah study was born and Lurianic Kabbalah became the “mother of all fundamental insights” in the fields of Jewish studies and the normative, messianic idea.[[90]](#footnote-90)

The Berlin School of Jewish thought—*Wissenschaft des Judentums*—championed an emancipationist agenda. This school planned to accommodate Jewish custom to Christian society, to show German and European society the beauty of ancient Jewish thought, and to mitigate the sense of foreignness it evoked among the Gentile members of society. The stumbling block that prevented them from accomplishing this was that as far as they themselves were concerned, this tremendously beautiful culture had lost all relevance and timeliness. Paradoxically, they wished to comport themselves as German citizens who could take pride in their membership in an ancient culture, albeit one that was now outdated.[[91]](#footnote-91) Thus, as Moritz Steinschneider (the father of Hebrew bibliography) put it, [[92]](#footnote-92) they wished to conduct “a glorious funeral for a glorious culture.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

Later, the members of the Paris School of Jewish thought would use metaphors, to make the diametrically opposite point. Professor André Neher wrote, Judaism is not an “archaeological artifact” or “a cemetery of archives”; Emmanuel Lévinas, following in the footsteps of Jacob Gordin, the father of this school of thought, said that the Berlin School placed 5000 years of Jewish history on note cards to finally arrive at “an enormous Hebrew epigraph and in order to collect gravestones.”[[94]](#footnote-94)

The Jerusalem School of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, active in the first half of the twentieth century, inherited a great number of its fundamental principles from the Berlin School. However, since it was imbued with the spirit of Jewish nationalism,[[95]](#footnote-95) it was able to mitigate[[96]](#footnote-96) the inherent problematic aspects of the German School. Nevertheless, in addressing the history and historiography of the Jewish people in the modern period, the Berlin/Jerusalem and Paris Schools of thought, helped the Jewish people transition from an identity rooted in Jewish law to one rooted in history.[[97]](#footnote-97)

In grappling with incredibly polarizing events—modernity, the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel—the Paris School of Jewish thought began the rehabilitation process of ancient Jewish wisdom. However, in contrast to its predecessors, the Paris School believed that this wisdom demanded obedience and was more relevant and contemporary than ever.[[98]](#footnote-98) This school of Jewish thought aspired to clarify the contents of this wisdom, and believed that far from compromising its scientific integrity this agenda actually empowered it. It accomplished this by broadening the range of possible study in a number of ways. First, it added a host of investigative tools, analysis, and methodology. It also encouraged scholars to glean new critical insights that are at the very heart of the logic of Jewish studies as it is conceptualized, and to achieve conceptual precision in analyzing the contents of Jewish thought, whose original meaning, the academy presumes, has been distorted or blurred over time. We will demonstrate that according to this school of thought, academic Jewish studies cannot be summed up as merely a science characterized by critical-textual-philological-historical analysis, for academic Jewish studies demands certain prior understandings without which the subject under investigation becomes corrupted and truly lacking.

This problematic situation demands a “third path” to Jewish wisdom, the path developed by the Paris School, which swings like a pendulum between the sphere of academic Jewish studies and the yeshiva world. Simultaneously, the Paris School does not ignore the tremendous achievements made in those academic fields of study but rather respects them and sometimes criticizes them, all to achieve the ultimate goal, which, for the Paris School, is the seal of truth.

The Paris School’s innovation stems from its confident approach, rooted in a fealty to tradition. This school rejected s formulation that identified academic Jewish studies with militant secularism or reform. It assumed Judaism’s universal dimension and its overarching and all-inclusive legislative agenda. In addition, it placed Tanakh and the relevance of the prophetic-kabbalistic tradition at Judaism’s core.[[99]](#footnote-99) For the Paris School, academic Jewish studies had a purpose—not just the responsibility to perform pure research, which in and of itself was a worthy goal, but also to shape a creative identity in these times of radical change.[[100]](#footnote-100) The range of research principles was expanded: no longer would academic Jewish studies engage merely in the detached textual-historical-philological analysis that was at the core of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* project; rather, it would engage in research based on the foundations of the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, including, for instance, the study of world and Jewish history as well as research into non-Jewish and Jewish philosophy: “Thus, the importance of studying the writings of R. Judah Halevi and the Maharal [becomes apparent], for they provide us with the ability to understand historical events or to evaluate a certain school of thought.”[[101]](#footnote-101) This approach includes the study of prayer, which Manitou believed was congruent with prophecy; and research into Midrash, which according to Manitou, held the cipher to unlocking the code of universal history.[[102]](#footnote-102)

The school of thought developed by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook and his son Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Hakohen Kook[[103]](#footnote-103) initiated an intellectual revolution that affected every bit of the Ashkenazi Diaspora; as Avidor HaCohen correctly remarked, they were “swimming against the current.”[[104]](#footnote-104) The “pattern of division” dominating the Ashkenazi Diaspora had created a tremendous number of dichotomies that no one had succeeded in resolving except for the Kook duo: secularism, Haredi Judaism, a model for re-entering world history beyond the traditional Jewish orbit—socialism, liberalism, and the national and Zionist movement. The Rabbis Kook focused their acumen on all of these and deemed them modern phenomena that demanded compromise and elucidation. Friedrich Nietszche, on the one hand, and Joseph Berdichevsky, on the other, were indications of the secularizing tendency in both the wider and the Jewish worlds. Their dialectical thought presented the Kook School of thought with a genuine challenge. The Kooks’ conception was not only at odds with the Haredi, Orthodox, and neo-Orthodox *weltanschauungs*—which perceived secularization as the quantitative expansion of traditional heresy or deemed the secularists to be “children who had been taken captive” and did not perceive Zionism and the foundation of the State of Israel as historical turning points that required new ways of thinking—but also with the last 150 years of Jewish philosophy.

Only the Kooks saw Zionism as a positive innovation and an incredibly important political-religious turning point in Jewish history in the modern period. This perception also distinguishes the Kooks’ thought from important thinkers like Hermann Cohen and Franz Rozensweig, who banished Zionism to the margins of Jewish history. The issue of modernity is addressed by the Kooks as it relates to philosophy, the natural sciences, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Their roots in kabbalistic thought and their direct, spiritual, and intellectual descent from R. Judah Halevi and the Maharal’s oeuvre enabled these rabbis to profoundly grapple with these philosophical streams while reshaping the “unificatory model” to overcome the “model of fragmentation” rampant in the Ashkenazi Diaspora. In reformulating the former model, they addressed the tension between the holy and the secular, the holy and the holies of holies, between Messiah ben Yosef and Messiah ben David, between Zion and “*Degel Yerushalayim*,” and between the Land of Israel as a refuge for the Jewish people and the Land of Israel as the Jewish people’s land of destiny, among the many issues these schools of thought had grappled with.[[105]](#footnote-105)

**5. Concluding Remarks: “Your Heart Will Fear and Rejoice”[[106]](#footnote-106)**

Both schools of thought—the Kookian (1925)[[107]](#footnote-107) and the Parisian (1957)[[108]](#footnote-108)—which demanded interaction between the yeshiva and academic worlds, still voiced concern about the Jewish materials exiting the private Jewish domain and entering the public one—the public sphere inhabited by collective humanity. For the Kooks, the broad-hearted spirit was accompanied by fear, an instinctive reticence born from the memory of prior attempts: “When we look back on the previous generations, and reckon with hindsight, we realize that neither the fear nor the rejoicing [literally, the expansiveness of our hearts] was in vain. [Clearly,] we gained in some areas and [we] lost [not a little] in others in our confrontation with foreign cultures,” declared R. Kook in his famous speech at the inauguration of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.[[109]](#footnote-109)

In contrast, R. Ashkenazi (Manitou) wrote:

We must unite our forces: We must acknowledge that the Torah is one, the Lord is one and the people of Israel is one and that this realization demands we end our seclusion, our withdrawal from broader society….we must courageously state the truth. The Tanakh did not hesitate to do so…. It is desirable that the yeshiva sages to meet the professors of Jewish studies, whether they are believers or not, in order to jointly arrive at the language that is vital for our generation and our future generations. The former believe that the Divine seal is truth, and the latter believe in their own “truth”—it is fitting that both of these authentic trends come closer to one another. It is right that the university scholars who toil over the texts and find in them much of interest to the scientific and literary worlds acknowledge that the yeshiva rabbis experience the texts through faith and know why they believe in them…there is a lot to be learned from them. Such a maneuver would demand a tremendous amount of love of Israel—and it is found in the desire for life that is implanted in the nation of Israel…. The time has come to really—in truth—read our Torah. And we must tell our rabbis: “the time for the morning recitation of ‘Listen, O Israel’ has arrived.”[[110]](#footnote-110)

These concerns and worries, which are mixed with a genuine openness, are not unfounded. Indeed, the Sabbatean and Spinozan syndromes have made their way into the academic institutions in Israel and throughout the world—for they are the heirs of the Berlin and Jerusalem Schools of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

The distinction between the normative messianic idea and the chaotic and apocalyptic become blurred, with scholars manipulatively neutering the normative, messianic idea and highlighting the chaotic narrative over the normative one.[[111]](#footnote-111) In this way, the academy gained political power by creating a battering ram to classify academics as “messianists,”[[112]](#footnote-112) along with establishing a “house of creation” for the mass-production of historical theses “free of all messianism” that led to the “normalization of history.”[[113]](#footnote-113) A dialectical and paradoxical agenda characterizes Israeli academic scholarship. On the one hand, it transforms the messianic idea into a mythical, allegorical, abstract, and metaphysical[[114]](#footnote-114) one, and, on the other hand, it normalizes the Zionist idea and secularizes it, removing all of its redemptive sting.

In so doing, the academy attempts to blur the duality between normative and chaotic messianism and tries to normalize the history of the Zionist enterprise and characterize it as a national liberation movement, one of many prevalent in the modern period.[[115]](#footnote-115) There is no doubt that Gershom Scholem led the charge in accomplishing this,[[116]](#footnote-116) since his fundamental conceptualization of messiansim was that of “a messianic crisis perspective.”[[117]](#footnote-117)

Gershom Scholem’s work was heavily criticized by both academicians and spiritual leaders. Shabbetai Ben Dov engaged in an extremely harsh critique that focused on Scholem’s misrepresentation of the notion of redemption and his attraction to anarchistic messianism at the expense of political messianism.[[118]](#footnote-118) Professor Eliezer Schweid focused primarily on negating Scholem’s philosophy and his conception of Kabbalah as a primary school of thought that turned the wheels of history.[[119]](#footnote-119) Under the pretext of pure scientific research,[[120]](#footnote-120) Scholem’s successors in the fields of Kabbalah and History continued and strengthened his agenda, while in reality, the Sabbatean syndrome nipped at the heels of their Jewish[[121]](#footnote-121) and political[[122]](#footnote-122) identities.

We should note that Baruch Kurzweil deserves credit for being the first to debate Gershom Scholem’s position.[[123]](#footnote-123) He had already discovered weak points in Scholem’s argument as early as the 1950s: the arrogance of the science of Jewish studies to claim objectivity as it constructed a secret, new historiography for Judaism, wherein secularization was immanent in traditional Judaism. Kurzweil claimed that by rehabilitating the controversial figure of Shabbetai Tzvi, Scholem sought to present him as a legitimate leader and to attribute progressive opinions to him, just as Scholem had presented the figure of R. Jacob Sasportas, Shabbetai Tzvi’s eternal opposition, as a “Jewish inquisitor.” Thus, the scholar who attacked the Berlin School’s apologetics was himself infected by identity apologetics stemming from his unadulterated secularism. The scholar who wished to endow historical scholarship with the ultimate authority to determine historical reality, “distracts us from the true spiritual fountains of human spirituality—religion, on the one hand, and poetry and art on the other—and causes us to immerse our souls in an impoverishing attention to detail, in academic spheres far removed from the world of the human spirit.”[[124]](#footnote-124)

In keeping with this, in academic discourse, chaotic messianism and chaotic Spinozan learning are granted legitimacy and even sublimated, with the emphasis being placed on crowning Shabbetai Tzvi and Baruch Spinoza as the heroes of Zalman Shazar, Yitzhak Ben Tzvi, David Ben-Gurion, and Nahum Sokolov. The Zionist leaders and the historians flew the Sabbatean banner, depicting these figures as those who had forged the way. “Their hearts were drawn to the heretical figures. They considered the Sabbatean movement to be a proto-Zionist messianic movement, filling the historical void between the Bar Kokhba rebellion and the Zionist one,” to use their language. They wrote that Scholem's attraction to Sabbateanism stemmed from his affinity for spiritual anarchism:

This anarchism contributed to the renewal of Israeli society, for this was chaos that subverted the ordered structures of the law, these were ground waters that threatened to destroy the world. This was the messianic fire that the Jewish tradition carried in its heart: from primordial chaos—*tohu va-vohu*—to “Let there be light.” This is the predominant move in Jewish messianism. This is the dialectic between construction and destruction.[[125]](#footnote-125)

In conclusion, Dona Gracia and Uriel da Costa were the harbingers of two distinct and diametrically opposed processes that unfolded in the two largest Jewish diasporas in the early modern period. These processes were the harbingers of the profound developments that would shape Jewish history in the New Age as well as the emerging Israeli society with regard to its messianic component and the form of learning that would become normative there and in future generations. It appears that this knowledge can aid us in promoting normative, balanced processes, thereby preventing the ascendance of polarizing and divisive ones, not to mention chaos. Some may view this attempt as historical psychoanalysis. Others may perceive it to be the cry of a historian at the gates. I believe that it may make a modest contribution to deepening the historical perspective necessary to construct a better future.

1. Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, ‘Introduction,’ in S. Usque, *Consolations aux Tribulations* *d’Israël* *1553* (Paris: Editions Chandeigne, 2014), 7–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Yossef Charvit, “The Sabbatean Syndrome, Messianic Idea and Zionism,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* (in press). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yossef Charvit, “Hokhmat Israel in France in the Twentieth Century, through the Prism of R. Askénazi: Between Berlin and Jerusalem,” in *Jewish Studies – Forum of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 51 (2016), 131–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We will discuss the mark that Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), another Portuguese emigree, made below. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Meyuchas Genoa, “*Nashim be-Kehillat ha-Mumarim le-Natzrut bi-Sefarad shel ha-Mea’ah ha-Shesh-Esreh”* [Women in the Community of Converts in Sixteenth Century Spail] *Pe’amim* 46–47 (5751), 169–189. Renée Levine-Melamed, “Sixteenth Century Justice in Action: The Case of Isabel Lopez,” *Revue des Etudes Juives* 145 (1986), 51–73. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews*, (Albuberque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 99–134, 217–42, 507–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. T. Tsayhak, “Dona Gracia Mendes-Nashi: Political and Economic Leadership in the 16th Century,” dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan 577; A wave of messianic hopes washed over the communities of Israel following the fall of the Byzantine Empire and the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks (1453). See: A. Miyochas Jinao, “Women in the Community of Converts to Christianity in Spain in the 15th Century,” *Times*, 46–47, (5591), p. 184 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A list of reknowned women who played a role in international politics and finance includes Queen Isabella of Spain, Lucrezia Borga, Isabella d’Este, Mary Tudor, Catherine de Medici, and the Jewish learned women who achieved gender equality in European Jewish communities, such as Pomona da Modena, Bienvenida Abravanel, the niece of R. Isaac Abravanel, the leader of the Jews expelled from Spain, and Leonora, the daughter of the King of Naples’ viceroy and later her counsellor. Bienvenida Abravanel redeemed captives who had been captured by pirates and met with Dona Gracia in Ferrara. See Andree Aelion Brooks, *The Woman Who Defied Kings, The Life and Times of Dona Gracia Nasi – A Jewish Leader During the Renaissance* (Minnesota: Paragon House, 2002), 25–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A. Brooks, *The Woman Who Defied Kings*, 37–46; Y. H. Yerushalmi, “Introduction,” 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, p. XVIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A. David, *A Historian in Turmoil: The Personality and Character of the Historian Joseph Ha-Kohen, Author of Vale of Tears, as Reflected in a Collection of his Personal Letters* (Jerusalem: Beit David, 2005), Hebrew; J. Hakohen, *Emek Habakha* [Vale of Tears] (Genoa: n.p., 1575). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. A. A. Brooks, *The Woman Who Defied Kings,* 28–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A. Yisraeli, “*Eretz Yisrael – Ben Kedushat ha-Makom le-Taharat ha-Adamah: Gishot u-Megamot be-Mistika ha-Yehudit Bimei ha-Beinayim*” ["The Land of Israel – Between the Holiness of the Place and the Purity of the Land: Approaches and Trends in Jewish Mysticism in the Middle Ages], *Derekh Aggadah* 9 (5766), 117–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. M. Benmelech, *Shlomo Molcho: The Life and Death of the Messiah Don of Joseph* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 2016), pp. 91–120, 187–228, 267–306. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. D. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit,* 99–134, 217–42, 507–22: *“*As a rule, the Crypto-Jews faith was based upon five principles: monotheism; the Messiah had not come but was yet to come; belief in Moses’ Torah anticipates individual salvation; the observance of the commandments is necessary in addition to belief; Judaism is the preferred religion. These five principles accompanied the Anusim for the 250 years following their expulsions from Spain and Portugal during which time most of them assimilated.

    As for the messianic idea, most of the New Christians rejected the belief in Jesus as Messiah. They believed that the Messiah—a scion of the Davidic dynasty, not the son of God—had not yet come and would come in the future. He would be able to prevent the Inquisition from carrying out its heinous deeds via a slew of apocalyptic events, including the Resurrection of the Dead, renewing the youth of those still alive, and the redemption of the entire world. The sins of Israel had delayed the Messiah’s advent and if they atoned for their sins, he would appear. In their own words, their greatest sin was converting to Christianity. The natural order itself would be radically altered by the Messiah, culminating in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the instantiation of the vision of world peace with the nation of Israel at the top of the pyramid. The King Messiah would be a miraculous figure who would ingather all the dispersed Jews and rule a flourishing, harmonious state in which the Torah laws would be observed. The rabbis lamented the fact that the nation of Israel was not yet worthy of his coming. The End of Days were conceived of as a time of societal upheaval and violence—the Decrees of 1391, the Disputation of Tortosa, the fall of Constantinople (1453), the founding of the Inquisition, the Spanish Expulsion, David Reuveni’s 1525 visit to Portugal, the fall of the charismatic Portuguese King Sebastian in 1578, all seemed to portend such a messianic era. The King Messiah would liberate his people from the oppressive Inquisition and take them to the Promised Land. A two-fold dream would come to fruition for the Jews and the Anusim, as one—liberation from the lands of oppression and the return to the land of liberty at whose center would be a rebuilt Jerusalem. Upon leaving the lands of oppression, the Anusim would experience a seven-year-long drought…. the King Messiah would sit on his golden throne surrounded by the holy martyrs of the Inquisition whom he would bring to the Promised Land. The Jews and Anusim believed that progress on these matters would be immediate. The Spanish Expulsion engendered a belief in a two-fold process—departing the Iberian Peninsula to travel towards the Land of Israel. The Messiah would ensure the Jews a prosperous, flourishing livelihood and would end the famine. The Jews also expected the ten lost tribes to be redeemed. The messianic expectations applied on both historical and communal levels—they would take place in the real world, in contrast to Christian messianism, which emphasizes the redemption of the soul and the individual sphere.

    There were also some who rejected Jesus as Messiah, abandoned the political and human dimensions of the messianic idea and focused on the miraculous and spiritual dimensions of the Messiah who would not only restore Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel but would also save the souls of Israel. They conceptualized him as the anti-Christ who would destroy the Christian Church. Elijah the prophet appears alongside the Messiah as he redeems the people of Israel from their lands of captivity and returns them to the Promised Land. On the way to the Promised Land there will be one river flowing with milk and another with water. A dip in those rivers will transform the swimmers into twenty-five-year-olds again. The lands behind them will tremble. Elijah will bring storms and earthquakes upon the Old Christians. The Anusim will be asked whether they remained faithful and believed in Moses’ Torah without abandoning it—this being the condition upon which the Return to Zion is contingent. He will dress them in white (shani lavan?) clothing and white shoes. Midway through the journey, Elijah will take the boys and girls into a cave where/as? they eat matzot (unleavened bread). When Elijah appears, the sun and moon will be blotted out for three days and there will be three days of darkness…. In order to hasten the Redemption, the Jews must scrupulously observe their fast days. It was no accident that self-proclaimed messiahs appeared in Spain, Portugal, and Europe, among them Shabbetai Tzvi, the preeminent among them*.*” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Y.H. Yerushalmi, “Introduction,” 31–32, 36–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. J. Hacker, “*Yotzei Sefarad be-Imperiah ha-Oth’omanit be-Me’ah ha-15–18*,” [Emigrating from Spain in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th–18th Centuries], in *Ha-Pezurah ha-Sefaradit Aharei ha-Geirush* [The Sephardic Diaspora after the Expulsion, ] (Zalman Shazar Center: Jerusalem, 5753): 27–72. Ben Zion Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 195–260. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. M. Orfali, “Doña Gracia Mendes and the Ragusan Republic: the Successful Use of Economic Institutions in 16th Century Commerce” in *The* *Mediterranean and the Jews* – *Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times* II, eds. E. Horowitz and M. Orfali (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2002), 179; Aaron di Leone Leoni, *The Hebrew Portuguese Nations in Antwerp and London at The Time of Charles V and Henry VIII. New Documents and Interpretations* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 2005), 88–96. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Tzvi Schaick, “Dona Gracia Mendes-Nasi, Political and Economic Leadershup in the Sixteenth Century” PhD diss., (Hebrew; Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 5770), Hebrew: 190–211. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid., 212–52. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Y. Harozen, “*Don Yoseph Nasi Boneh Tiveria*,” [Don Yoseph President of Boney Tiberias] *Sinai* 30 (5612): 177–82; Ibid., *Don Yoseph*: *Nesikh Naxsos, Moshel ha-Iyim ve-Shalit Yam ha-Tikhon* [Prince of Naxos, Governor of the Islands and Ruler of the Mediterranean Sea ](Massadah 5720), 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Mishneh Torah*, Book of Judges, Laws of Kings and Wars, Chapter 11: “King Messiah will arise and and restore the kingdom of David to its former state and original sovereignty. He will rebuild the sanctuary and gather the dispersed of Israel. All the ancient laws will be reinstituted in his days; sacrifices will again be offered, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years will again be observed in accordance with the commandments set forth in the Law.” See D. Schwartz, *Ha-Ra’ayon ha-Meshihi be-Hagut Yemei ha-Beinayim* [Messianism in Medieval Jewish Thought] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan UP, 5765); D. Berger, “Some Ironic Consequences of Maimonides’ Rationalist Approach to the Messianic Age” [Heb], *Maimonidean Studies 2*(1991): 1–8 (Hebrew section). English translation in *The Legacy of Maimonides:* *Religion, Reason, and Community*, ed. by Y. Levy and S. Carmy (New York, 2006), 79–88. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Israel Knohl, *Mahloket ha-Mashiah. Le-Mi Mehakim ha-Yehudim?*[The Messiah Controversy. Who are the Jews Waiting For](Dvir, 5779), 170–182: “Do not think that King Messiah will have to perform signs and wonders, bring anything new into being, revive the dead, or do similar things which the fools claim” (Book of Judges, Laws of Kings and Wars 11:3) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Don Joseph Nasi approached the community in Cori, Italy: “[telling them] that he was looking for Jewish craftsmen to settle and restore the Land [of Israel] by settling it….for with the grace of God the Tiberias region had come under his control, **for she [Tiberias] had been chosen by the Lord as a sign and wonder of our salvation and the redemption of our souls, as Maimonides had ruled. And Don Joseph Nasi commanded them and they planted many mulberrry bushes to feed the silk worms, and he also instructed that wool be brought from Spain so as to produce clothing [in Tiberias] just like the clothing that is produced in Venice [emphasis added],**” Joseph Hakohen, *Emek ha-Bakha* [Vale of Tears] (Genoa: n.p., 1575). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. On the link between the messianic idea and traditional Jewish scholarship, See R. J. Tzvi Werblowsky, : “R. Joseph Caro, Solomon Molcho, Don Joseph Nasi,” [Heb] in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart (Magnes Press: Jerusalem, 5754), 513–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Mordechai Breuer, *Oholei Torah: Ha-Yeshiva Tavnitah ve-Toldoteha* [The Tents of Torah: The Yeshiva, Its Structure and History] (Hebrew; Zalman Shazar Center: Jerusalem, 5764), 38–39. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., 304, 306, 327. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. R. Eliezer ben Yochai, the head of a Safed yeshiva, apparently also headed the yeshiva in Tiberias. The yeshiva in Tiberias continued to make its mark for many years: R. Zekhariah Eltzahari reported that the yeshiva in Tiberias was up and running and there were Talmudic scholars and students of theoretical Kabbalah. Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (known as Chida)writes about the founding of the yeshiva in Tiberias in the seventeenth century. Dona Gracia was in contact with R. Joseph Caro; when his work was published in Venice, she requested a copy for herself. See S. Sheba, *Eretz Yisrael Otobiographiyah* [Autobiography of the Land of Israel] (Dvir, 5761), 250–271; T. Schaick, Dona Gracia, 228–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Responsa of the Maharshadam, EH § 17, HM § 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Eventually, Da Costa would attack the “Pharisees” “who he perceived to be Amsterdam’s rabbis and yeshiva heads who had been invited to teach Judaism to the community of Spanish and Portuguese Anusim and heal the deep fissure that had opened between them and the rest of world Jewry in just a few generations….his anti-Pharisaic rhetoric had an intrinsically Christian character, attesting to the antisemitic literature the university students at Coimbra filled their bellies with in his youth, when he prided himself on being an ecclesiastical officer in the Catholic Church.” (See M. Dorman, *Menasseh ben Israel*, *Sifriyat Hillel ben Chaim* [Bnei Brak: Kibbutz Hameuchad, 5749], 24.) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. I.S. Révah, “La Religion d'Uriel da Costa. Marrane de Porto (d'après des documents inédits),” *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 161/1 (1962): 55–56, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The women in question were Dionisa de Vitoria, Sarah da Costa’s step-sister, and Margarita Dinis and Guiomar Rodrigues, Uriel da Costa’s aunts. (Ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid.,63, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. M. Benmelech, “Uriel da Costa, Anus Ben ha-Yehudim,” [Uriel da Costa, An Anus among the Jews] *Segulah* Website, *The Jewish History Magazine* (5779): 2–13. Professor Michael Harsgor stresses that “Holland succeeded in breaking the Spanish Empire, upon which the sun had still not yet set. The Dutch flag flew in North America—in New Amsterdam, later to be called New York; in South Africa on the Cape of Good Hope; in Sri Lanka and in Ceylon; in Indonesia (Jakarta) and in Surinam and Curaçao. The Dutch republic containing just one million inhabitants triumphed over the Spanish Empire which comprised Spain, Portugal, Milan, Naples, and Belgium (which was allied with Germany), and possessed an empire that stretched from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego, the archipelago at South America’s southernmost tip. Holland rose to prominence as an economic sea power before England did. It was a capitalist, economic empire in which religion was a private affair. As Voltaire wrote, they just did business. If someone wanted to publish a book, he went to Holland. The Jews integrated well into the largest Jewish community in the world—Amsterdam. It was a truly unique community, for all the Jews were Anusim—former Catholics, who perceived the world from two distinct vantage points, Jewish and Christian, as one.” (*Sha’ah Historit* [History Hour],” *24, Galei Tzahal*). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. One of Uriel’s close maternal relatives, Joaqim Rodrigues, already lived in Amsterdam at the time (1598). See Dorman, *Menasseh ben Israel*, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. M. Benmelech, “Solomon Molcho: The Life and Death of Messiah Ben Joseph,” (Ben-Tzvi Institute: Jerusalem, 5777/2016), 129–130. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. I.S. Révah, *Uriel da Costa et les Marranes de Porto: Cours au Collège de France, 1966-1972*, (Lisbonne et Paris, 2004), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Benmelech, *Solomon Molcho*, 131; It should be noted that Révah, Uriel da Costa’s pre-eminent historian, identifies another person who had an impact on Da Costa’s study of Judaism, the renowned Francisco Rodrigues Vilareal (See Révah, *Uriel da Costa et les Marranes*, 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. When Uriel da Costa left Catholicism, he did not return to biblical or rabbinic Judaism but rather to an amalgam of Marranoism-Anisut which he taught and disseminated. Its main components were a symbolic approach to the Sabbaths, the Day of Atonement, the Festival of Booths, Purim (three days as Esther requested, a sign for the Anusim), and Passover (during which they ate unleavened bread, fish and eggs, but no meat). They fasted on the Seventeeth of Tamuz and on the Ninth of Av. They possessed their own unique liturgy, fasted twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays and did not consume meat at the end of the fasts. on Christmas Eve, They separated challah (part of the dough), avoided forbidden foods, and koshered meat. They observed the interdiction on eating the sciatic nerve and Jewish death rites, and held the belief in the coming of the true Messiah. See I.S. Révah, “La Religion d'Uriel da Costa,”67–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Its credibility is in doubt: *Exemplar Humanae Vitae* [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. M. Orfali, “Emunah u-Serarah be-Ma’avak ak ha-Yahadut ha-Rabbanit be-Venitziyah bi-Tekufat ha-Barok,” [Faith Prevailed in the Struggle for Rabbinic Judaism in Venice during the Baroque period],*Pe’amim* 80 (5759): 44–59. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Y. Yirmeyahu, “Uriel da Costa: Au delà de Toute Identité” in *Spinoza et Autres Hérétiques* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1991), 66–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Orfali, *Emunah*, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Dorman, *Menasseh ben Israel*, 30–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Avinoam Roznik, *Zehiot Mitnagshot: Nisuei Tarovit: Nituach Philosophia, Teologia, ve Machsavot Hinuhiot* [The Clash of Identities: Intermarriage – A Critical Study in the Light of Philosophy,Theology, and Educational Thought] (; Jerusalem: Carmel, 5783), Hebrew; “The Jewish Enlightenment Period, Secularization and Assimilation” 171–174; “On Secularization: Exalting Religion and Hollowing It Out” 175–180. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Shai Finer, *Shorshei ha-Hilun:* *Matiranut ve-Safkanut be-Yahadut ha-Me’ah ha-Shemonah Esreh* [The Roots of Secularism: Permissiveness and Skepticism in 18th-Century Judaism] (Zalman Shazar Center, 5771), 13; Rosenak, The Clash of Identities; “Anusei Sfard: Krisat shel Tor HaZahav veOdef Ratzionaliot” [The Spanish Anusim: The Collapse of the Golden Age and the Surplus of Rationalism], 169–170; L. Poliakov, *L'Histoire de l'Antisémitisme. De Mahomet aux Marranes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961), 246–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Y. L. Ashkenazi, “Yisrael be-Galut ha-Islam ve-ha-Natsrut,” [Israel in Islamic and Christian Exile], *Shevet ve-Am*, Second Series 1(6) (Jerusalem, 5731): 85–87. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Yossef Charvit, *Le Judaïsme Algérien – Reflexions* (Jérusalem: Editions Eliner, 1997), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. *Weltgeschichte des Judischen Volkes* is a series of volumes written by the historian Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) that covers Jewish history. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought*, (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2011); A. Malakh, “The Study of Nationalism and the Jewish-Israeli Case” [Heb], *Iyyunim bi-Tekumat Yisrael*, Vol. 26 (2016): 151–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Y. Charvit, “From Monologues to Possible Dialogue, Judaism’s Attitude towards Christianity According to the Philosophy of R. Yéhouda Léon Askénazi (Manitou)” in *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art, and Literature, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series*, Volume 17, eds. David Golinkin, Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz & Freek van der Steen (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), 319–36; Ibid., “The Moral Problem in Islam and Its Resolution according to the Philosophy of Rabbi Yéhouda Léon Askénazi (Manitou)” in *Jews And Muslims in the Islamic World*, eds. Bernard Dov Cooperman & Tzvi Zohar (Maryland: University Press of Maryland, 2013), 145–158. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ashkenazi, *Yisrael,* 89–90. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. This distinction is manifest in the material adopted for daily study in the two respective diasporas: *Hok le-Yisrael* in the Sephardi realm and *Daf Yomi* in the Ashkenazi one. These customs derive from profound historical processes that transpired in medieval Spain and Ashkenaz. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Yossef Charvit, *Hebraism and Beyond, An Intellectual Portrait of Rabbi Y. L. Askénazi (Manitou)*, (1922–1996), (Tel Aviv: Idra Press, 2019), 152–160; Z. Zermati, *Une Kabbale de Vérité, La Transmission du Sod en Algérie et Afrique du Nord. Un Dernier Entretien avec le Rav Léon Yéhouda Askénazi (Manitou)*, (Jerusalem, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Charvit, “The Sabbatean Syndrome.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. R. Elior, *Yisrael Ba’al Shem Tov u-Benei Doro – Mekubalim, Shabbeta’im, Hasidim, u-Mitnagdim* [Israel Ba’al Shem Tov and his Contemporaries *–* Kabbalists, Shabtaiim, Hassidi, and Mitnagdim], 1–2 (Jerusalem: Carmel, 5774). Rachel Elior argues that the messianic idea’s increasing popularity in this era makes sense as a reaction to the Massacres of 1648–1649 (*Gezerot Tah ve-Tat*)—as the avenging messiah wages war with the Jews’ Gentile persecutors, a notion, that she claims, is also based on the *Zohar*. This mood characterizes Shabbetai Tzvi’s rhetoric (Interview with Professor Rachel Elior, Jerusalem, 5780); Idem., in her introduction to Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer’s *Ha-Ra’ayon ha-Meshihi me-Az Gerush Sefarad* [The Messianic Idea from the Expuslion from Spain] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. “When rumors began to circulate about the new Zionist movement in the Oriental lands, these groups joined without hesitation, though in a somewhat spartan manner, since they had already had contact with Enlightenment Jewry and been informed of the new spirit of nationalism in Europe—even though they were completely unaware of the new Zionist ideology disseminated by Herzl and his coleagues. These groups, and to be even more precise, the entire Sephardi Jewish population, related to political Zionism as a traditional, Jewish movement whose goal was to fulfill the ancient vision of the prophets.” (Tovi Yosef, “Shorshei Yahasa shel Yahadut ha-Mizrah el ha-Tziyonut” [The Roots of Eastern Jewry's Relationship to the Zionist Movement] in *Temurot be-Historiyah ha-Yehudit be-Et ha-Hadashah* [Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness], eds. S. Almog et al (Magnes Press: Jerusalem, 1987), 169–192, citation from page 170); See H. Shariki, “Ha-Toda’ah ha-Leumit shel Hakhamim Sefaradim be-Mafneh ha-Me’ot ha-19 ve-ha-20” [The National Consciousness of Sephardic Sages at the Turn of the 19th and 2nd Centuries], PhD diss., (Hebrew; Bar-Ilan University: Ramat Gan, 5782). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Y. Halperin, *Pinkas Va’ad Arba Aratzot: Likutei Takkanot, Katavim, ve-Reshumot* [Register of four Countries: Compilations of Regulations, Writings and Records],(Introduction: Shmuel Ettinger, 2nd edition corrected and expanded: Israel Bartal) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 5750); R. Elior, *Yisrael Ba’al Shem Tov*. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. S. Hamburger, *Meshihei ha-Sheker u-Mitnagdeihem* [The False Messiah and Mitnagdim], (Bnei Brak: Makhon Moreshet Ashkenaz, 5769). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Yossef. Charvit, “Uncompromising Zionism in North Africa,” *Israel Affairs* 29:3 (2023): 602–17, DOI: [10.1080/13537121.2023.2206231](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2023.2206231) [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. BT, *Ketubot* 110b–111a. Translations of the talmudic passages in this article are based on The William-Davidson Edition of the Talmud found at Sefaria.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Sod ha-Shevu’ah* (Jerusalem, 1964). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. BT, *Ta’anit* 5a. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. R. Atiyah writes that this passage alludes to the Holocaust. See, at length, Atiyah, *Sod*, 15–20; Avraham Livni, *Shivat Tziyon Nes le-Amim* [Return of Zion – Miracle to the Nations](Jerusalem, 5755), 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. M. Altshuler, *Hayyei Maran Yoseph Karo* (Tel Aviv: UP, 5777), 169–173. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Note R. Meir Simcha's wording—the fear of the oaths, not the prohibition created by the oaths—for there was never any legal prohibition, merely a psychological sense of doom hanging over the heads of the people with regard to mass immigration. A. Fitznick, *Ha-Gaon Rebbe Meir Simhah ztz”l Al Hibbat ha-Aretz ve-Pahad ha-Shevu’ot* [Hagaon Rabbi Meir Simcha zt'l on the Love of the Land and the Fear of Shavuot], (Barkai Aleph, *5743*), 37–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The verse “and made you walk upright [*komemiyut*]” (Lev24:13)—in the plural—hints at these two phases or “floors of the building.” A *komah* is a building floor or story in Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Hazon ha-Geulah* [The Vision of Redemption], (Jerusalem, 5734), 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Y. L. Ashkenazi, “Masped le Meshiach?” [Eulogy for the Messiah?], (Hebrew; Manitou Center, 5766), 35–36. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. BT, *Sukkah* 52a. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. C. Shvili, *Heshbonot ha-Geulah* (Jerusalem, 5728), 4th edition, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The Satmar and Lubavitch Hasidic sects maintain that from a strict legal perspective there is only one messiah, Messiah ben David. This conclusion is based on their reading of Maimonides “Laws pertaining to Wars and Their Wars.” See Menahem Mendel Kasher, *Ha-Tekufah ha-Gedolah* [TheGreat Era], (Jerusalem, 5729). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Ma’amarei Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kuk*, “*Ha-Misped bi-Yerushalayim*” [Articles of Rav Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook: The Jerusalem Eulogy], Part One, 5744, 94–99. For an English translation, see Rabbi A.I. Kook, “Rabbi Isaac Ha-Kohen Kook: Invocation at the Inauguration of the Hebrew University,” Shnayer Z. Leiman (trans.), *Tradition* 29.1 (Fall) 1994: 87–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Benjamin Gross, *Le Messianisme Juif dans la Pensée du Maharal de Prague* (Paris, 1994) (“Le ‘Sionisme de Maharal,’” VI-XIV. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Jacob Gordin, *Ecrits – Le Renouveau de la Pensée Juive en France***, (**Editions Albin Michel: Paris, 1995) (Textes réunis et présentés par Marcel Goldman). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Y. Ben Shlomo, Spinoza HaPhilosph haPhilosophim [*Spinoza – the Philosophers’ Philosopher*], (Hebrew; Israel Department of Defense, 5743). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. The greatest among them were Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, his contemporary, Freidrich Hegel, Friedrich von Hardenberg-Novalis, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, Samuel Taylor Coleridge—all citizens of the nineteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The greatest among them were Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Heinrich Heine. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Yirmeyahu Yovel, *Spinoza et Autres Hérétiques* (Edition du Seuil: Paris, 1991); L. Poliakov, *L'Histoire de l'Antisémitisme. De Mahomet aux Marranes*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961), 268–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Yosef Kaplan, *Mi-Natstrut le-Yahadut: Hayyav Po'alo shel ha-Anus Yitzhak Orobio di Castro* (Magnes Press, 5743). There is an English translation: *From Christianity to Judaism. The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* translated from Hebrew by Raphael Loewe, (Oxford 1989) Do you wish to cite it? [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. “The hand of God was upon the leaders of the Amsterdam community to expel from the Jewish nation he who wished to cause the people to forget the ideals of ‘calling on the name of God’ by proclaiming the shocking call to selfhood….had they not expelled Spinoza from Jewish society via the ban then he would have been considered one of the sages of Israel, his books would have been considered books faithful to the legitimate enterprise of divine investigation—books that would have been worthy of entering the community…” (*Eder Yakar*, 130–141) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Years later, Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi’s chief ideologue, along with many other Nazis wondered how Goethe could have erred, how the genius who embodied German culture could have been an enthusiastic fan of Spinoza. (See I. Yalom, *The Spinoza Problem* [Modi’in: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan, 2012].) [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Indeed, Azriel Carlebach cites Yaakov Kletzkin, a Spinozan scholar, who cites the “Theological-Political Treatise” in which Spinoza heaps praise on the founder of Christianity: “Moses did not instruct them in the straight path, he gave them a Torah of enslavement and not a Torah of freedom. So, Jesus is preferable to Moses. Unlike Moses he did not promise a material reward but a spiritual one.The Israelite prophets only saw God in a vision, while He was revealed to Jesus through his soul’s ascent. Moses only demands deeds, but Jesus also demands intent, internal thoughts. Moses gave a temporal Torah, while Jesus gave an eternal one. Moses’ Torah does not involve itself in ethics, and only Jesus’ Torah is worthy of that name…therefore, every person who walks the straight path lives in Jesus’ spirit.” (See E. Carlebach, *Profiles* [Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Maariv Press, 1959], 28–29.) [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Y. Lossin, *Heine:* *A Dual Life* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 2000), 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. “We will straighten out the crooked. It is our obligation to return to Israel’s busom the original thinker and the deepest philosopher who the Hebrew nation ever produced.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Carlebach, *Profiles*, 24–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. J. Klausner, “Me Plato ad Shpinoza – Maasot Philosophiot” [From Plato to Spinoza—Philosophical Essays], *Madda* (Hebrew; 5715), 329. Following in these footsteps, in 1987, Professor Yirmiyahu Yovel founded the Spinoza Insitute—later to be moved as the Spinoza Center to the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute—dedicated to furthering historical and philosophical study of Spinoza’s thought. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Gerard Nahon, *La Terre Sainte au Temps des Kabbalistes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Yossef Charvit**,** *Hebraism and Beyond*, 137–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. A. Rosenak, *The Clash of Identities*; “On Wissenschaft des Judentums: Mehkar al ‘Etz ha-Da’at’ mul Mehkar she-Yesh bo gam ‘Etz ha-Hayyim[ On the Wisdom of Israel: A Study on the “Tree of Knowledge” versus a Study That Also Contains a “Tree of Life”], 568–77; “Manitou: Hovat ha-Zikah le-Universali ve-Yihud Yisrael” [Manitou, The Duty of Affinity to the Universal and the Uniqueness of Israel], 675–78. “Manitou: Al ha-Kedushah ve-Lashon ha-Kodesh” [Manitou: On the Sacred and the Sacred Language], 679–89. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Inspired by Hegel, Yom Tov Lipman Zunz in his article entitled “Mashehu al Sifrut ha-Rabbanit” [Something about Rabbinic Literatue] summarizes that this is the appropriate time to summarize rabbinic literature; he details the process in which the Jews were en masse assimilating into German culture as “a funeral procession for Hebrew literature” and, therefore, he claims that “science appears and demands an accounting from that [cultural phenomenon] which has reached its end.” See Lossin, *Heine*, 48–65. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. For methodological reasons, I have chosen to dwell on the harshest and most severe challenge thatthe *Wissenschaft des Judentums* issued; however, I should note that the *Wissenschaft* was not made from whole cloth, as it contained different forces and channels—some threw off the yoke of any educational-cultural approach; some believed that the intellectual process of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* would have cultural consequences;some believed that academic Jewish studies were meant to provide a “respectable burial”; and some believed in the righteousness of translating a classical, traditional culture for the benefit of the modern audience. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Victor Malka, *André Neher, un dur Bonheur d'être Juif* (Paris: Editions le Centurion, 1978), 91–96; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficile Liberté* (Paris, 1984), 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. According to Professor Jacob Barnai, “the most common terms employed by the Jerusalem School of thought were “continuity,” “uniqueness,” “the unity of Jewish history,” and “the centrality of the Land of Israel.” See Jacob Barnai, *Shmuel Ettinger, Historian, Teacher, and Public Figure*, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2012), 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. While Gershom Scholem bitterly criticised the Berlin School, “the rationalism and anti-Zionism that derived from the desire to assimilate among the nations of the world, led to the counterfeiting of her historical character and to the minimizing of mysticism’s place in Jewish culture,” this does not manage to conceal the fact that the Jerusalem School was the heir of the Berlin one, both in terms of its scholarly methodology and its mindset. (See Gershom Scholem, *Mi-Tokh Hirhurim al Hokhmat Yisrael*, *Devarim Bego* [From Reflections on the Wisdom of Israel, Deuteronomy in xxx], Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved: 5735), 385–404. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, *Zehuyot Yehudiyot: Teshuvot Hakhmei Yisrael le-Ben Gurion* [Jewish Identities: The Answers of the Sages of Israel to Ben-Gurion] (Sde Boker: Mercaz le-Moreshet Ben*-*Gurion, 5761), 4–8, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. L. Askénazi, *Introduction à la Pensée Juive: Création – Révélation – Rédemption*, Collection *Mayanot* 12*,* (Jérusalem, 2006): 12–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. I. Shouraqui, ed. *Jewish Heritage in Modern Times* (Rishon LeZion: edioth Sefarim Press 2009), 9–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. “If so, we are speakng of three categories [Creation, Revelation, and Redemption] that weave a tapestry together composed of the different aspects of Jewish studies: wisdom that reveals what is expected of the created that reveals the foundations of morality and messianism. These three terms have a characteristic in common—they stem from the ethical experience. Their intellectual dimension is secondary; they are not the natural conclusion of human thought, but the product of revelation. Because of this, a unique and separate identity of a universal nature is formed in the busom of humanity.” See L. Askénazi, *Introduction à la Pensée Juive*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. J. Gordin, *Ecrits* – *Le Renouveau de la Pensée Juive en France*, (Paris: Albin Michel,1995), 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Y. L. Askenazi, *The Secret of the Midrash. A Hebraic Moral Identity* (Jerusalem: Miskal, 2009), 147–163. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. A. Rosenak, *Ha-Rav Kook* *Gedolei ha-Ruah ve-ha-Yetzira ha-Yehudit* (Zalman Shazar Center, 5766). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. S.A. HaCohen, *Against the Stream*, (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Miskal, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. A. Rosenak, *Ha-Halakhah ha-Nevu’it*. *Ha-Philosophiyah shel ha-Halakhah be-Mishnat Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook* (Magnes Press, 5767). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. As the prophet Isaiah foretells (Isaiah 60:4–5): “Raise your eyes and look about: They have all gathered and come to you.Your sons shall be brought from afar, Your daughters like babes on shoulders. As you behold, you will glow. Your heart will fear and rejoice—for the wealth of the sea shall pass on to you; the riches of the nations shall come to you. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. See R. Abraham Issac HaCohen Kook, “Speech at the Inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1925” *Maamarei Hareiayah*, Part II (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Golda Katz Foundation, 1984). 306–308. Translation by Shnayer Z. Leiman, “Rabbi Isaac Ha-Kohen Kook: Invocation at the Inauguration of the Hebrew University,” *Tradition* 29.1 (Fall) 1994: 87–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. L. Askénazi, *La Parole et l'écrit, (II. Penser la vie juive aujourd'hui)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005), 315–321 (“L'Héritage du Judaïsme et l'Université”). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. A. I. Kook, “Speech at the Inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1925”. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Askénazi, *La Parole,* 320–321. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. In a lecture uploaded to YouTube, “Shabbeta’im, Hasidim, u-Mitnagdim ve-Hanhagat ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit be-Me’ah ha-18”[Shabtaiim, Hasidic and Mitnagdim and the Leadership of the Jewish Community in the 18th Century],Professor Rachel Elior describes this agenda very accurately. In her remarks on the messianic conception’s lack of any normative content and affinity to built-in crises, she states: “Messianism blooms and prospers when the real world is absurd and impossible to cope with…” messianism enagages in speculation about alternative worlds, hidden utopian ones.” Furthermore, Gershom Scholem’s study of R. Joesph Caro is highly representative of this agenda: “The internal integration of Jewish law and Kabbalah in R. Joseph Caro’s consciousness explains why Gershom Scholem—the greatest academic scholar of Kabbalah—spent so little time on his writings. As far as Shalom was concerned, Kabbalah is an invasive form of knowledge that threatens Jewish law and destabilizes the ordered world of rabbinic Judaism. Therefore, the charismatic kabbalist who toils by the grace of God constantly clashes with the authority possessed by the scholars of Jewish law.” (M. Altshuler, *Hayyei Maran* [The Life of Maran Joseph Caro], p. IX. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. D. Ariel-Yoel, M. Leibowitz, Y. Mazor & M. Inbari, eds. *Milhemet Gog u-Magog, Meshihiyut ve-Apokalipsah be-Yahadut—Be-Avar u-be-Yameinu* [The War of Gog and Magog, Messianism and Apocalypse in Judaism – Past and Present], (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Aharonoth-Sifrei Hemed, 2001); M. Feige, *Shtei Gadot le-Gadah: Gush Emunim, Shalom Akhshav ve-Itzuv ha-Merhav be-Yisrael* [Two Banks to the West Bank: Bush Emunim, Peace Now and the Design of Space in Israel], (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 5762), G. Aran, *Kukizm, Shorshei Gush Emunim, Tarbut ha-Mitnahalim, The’ologiyah,Tziyonut, Meshihiyut bi-Zemanenu* [Kookism, the Roots of Gush Emunim, Settler Culture, Theology, Zionism, Messianism in our Time] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 5773), 332–82; M. Oriel, *Mi-Malon Park le-‘Mahteret ha-Yehudit*.’ *Mekomam shel Mitnahalei Kiryat Arba Hevron be-Itzuv Darkah ha-Ideologit shel ha-Hitnahalut be-Yesha, 1967–1984* [From the Park Hotel to the Jewish Underground. The Place of Kiryat Arba Hebron Settlers in Shaping the Ideological Path of the Settlement in Yesha, 1967–1984], PhD diss., (Hebrew; Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 5775). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. # Israel Bartal, *Galut ba-Aretz, Yishuv Eretz Yisrael be-Terem Tziyonut, Masot u-Mehkarim, Ha-Sifriyah ha-Tziyonit* [Exile in the Land, Settlement of the Land of Israel before Zionism, Essays and Studies], (Jerusalem: Sifrei Zioni, 5755), 236–64. I. Etkes, “Kavim li-Demutah shel ha-Tziyonut ha-Meshihit”[Outlines of the Character of Messianic Zionism], in *Avnei Derekh, Masot u-Mehkarim be-Historiyah shel Am Yisrael, Shai le-Tzvi (Kuti) Yekutiel* [Essays in Jewish History Dedicated to Zvi Yekutiel], eds. I. Etkes, D. Assaf, Y. Kaplan (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2015), 363–78; Y. Harel, “Tziyonut shel Masoret? Le-Birur Ofyah shel ha-Pe’ilut ha-Tziyonit be-Kehillot Asiyah ve-Afrikah,” [Zionism of Tradition? Clarifying the Nature of Zionist Activity in the Asian and African Communities], Ibid., 321–336. I. Etkes, “Ha-Gaon mi-Vilnah ve-Talmidav ke-‘Tziyonim Rishonim’—Gilgulo shel Mitos” [The Genius from Vilna and His Students as the “First Zionists” – The Reincarnation of a Myth], *Zion*, 8:1 (5775): 69–114. See his even more forceful presentation in I. Etkes, *Ha-Tziyonut ha-Meshihit shel ha-Gaon mi-Vilnah*. *Hamtza’atah shel Masoret* [The Invention of a Tradition: The Messianic Zionism of the Gaon of Vilna] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 5779).

     [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. 114 B. Eraqi-Klorman*. Meshihiyut u-Meshihim: Yehudei Teiman be-Me-ah ha-19* [Messiansim and Messiahs: The Jews of Yemen in the Nineteenth Century], (Bnei Brak: Kibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, Hillel Ben Haim Series, 1995), Hebrew; H. Saadon, “Ha-Kemihah le-Tzion v-ha-Aliyah” [The Longing for Zion and Ascension] in Teiman, Kehillot Yisrael be-Mizrah be-Me-ot ha\_Tesha-Esreh ve-ha-Esrim, [Yemen, Israel’s Communities in the East in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries ed. H. Saadon] (Jerusalem: Ben-Tzvi Institute: Jerusalem, 5762): 115–25.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. As a national liberation movement in the best case scenario, and as a colonialist movement in a worse case one. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. 116 Scholem highlights the messianic fervor and the hegemony of Lurianic Kabbalah in Safed, deeming them a result of the trauma inflicted by the Expulsion from Spain—although his scholarship pays scant attention to the political, messianic byways in Lurianic Kabbalah. (see Zeev Greis, *“*Sofro shel Meshia-Aharon Zeev Eshkili” [The Messiah’s Scribe: Aaron Ze’ev Aescoli], *Pe’amim* (Summer 2004), 147–157; Gerard Nahon, *La Terre Saine au Temps des Kabbalistes*, 129–130. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. M. Jonatan, “Messianic Movements: Unknown Lectures by Gershom Scholem from 1947” [Hebrew], *Dehak: Journal of Hebrew Literature 10* (2018): 395–459. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. B. Pelach, *Ketav Ha-Et Sulam le-Mahshevet Malkhut Yisrael—Ben Kabbalah le-Politikah* [The Journal *A Ladder to the Thought of the Kingdom of Israel* – Between Poetics and Politics, PhD diss., (Hebrew; Department of Hebrew Literature, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 5770), 256–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Eliezer Schweid, *Mysticism and Judaism according to Gershom G. Scholem: A Critical Analysis*, Series of Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, Supplement II (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. A. Raz-Krakotzkin*,* “Hakikah, Meshihiyut, ve-Tzenzurah: Hadpasat ha-Shulhan Arukh ke-Reishit ha-Moderniyut,” [Legislation, Messianism and Censorship: Printing the Shulchan Aruch as the Beginning of Modernity],in *Tov Elem: Memory, Community and Gender in Medieval & Early Modern Jewish Societies*, eds. Elisheva Baumgarten, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Roni Weinstein(Jerusalem: Bialek Institute, 5771): 306–335. M. Altshuler criticizes the anachronism employed by Raz-Krakotzkin in adopting the later Orthodox understanding of the *Shulhan Arukh:* However, later Orthodox interpretations of R. Caro’s intent do not conform to the goal R. Joseph Caro proposed for his work: “He did not plan to establish a virtual ‘community of law’ to replace the hoped-for actual ingathering of the exiles in the Land of Israel by writing the *Shulhan Arukh*. Actually, he believed that the contemporary ingathering of exiles was the beginning of the Redemption. His codification was intended to provide the exiles gathering in Israel, and those who would arrive in the future, with the basis for a unified legal system…. In R. Joseph Caro’s opinion, his *Shulhan Arukh* completed the process of historical rabbinic decision-making and ushered in the era of messianic halakhic rulings….The logical conclusion of *Shulhan Arukh*’s nationalist-messianic goal was the development of a simulacrum of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish High Court of Law)…thus, *Shulhan Arukh* provided the foundation for an earthly Sanhedrin with the hope of bringing the words ‘and your children will comprise a Sanhedrin in the Chamber of the Hewn Stone’ to reality—an outcome devoutly to be wished that did not decrease with the composition of *Shulhan Arukh* but actually increased.”(See Altshuler, *Hayyei Maran,* 354–355) [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Professor Israel Knohl’s *Be-Ikvot ha-Meshiah* [In the Footsteps of the Messiah] (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 5760) and Eli Shay’s *Meshihiyut shel Gilui Arayot:Historiyah Hadashah u-Bilti Metzunzeret shel ha-Yesod ha-Mini be-Mistikah ha-Meshihit ha-Yehudit* [Messianism of Incest: A New and Uncensored History of the Sexual Element in Jewish Messianic Mysticism] (*Yedioth Sefarim-Sifrei Hemed*, 5763) were disccused on a television program called “Bekriyah Rishonah – Meshihiyut”[First Reading *–* Messianism] (YouTube). Both these works conformed to the aformentioned agenda. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. M. Idel, “Al Aharon [Adolph] Jellinek ve-ha-Kabbalah” [About Aharon Jellinek and the Kabbalah],  *Pe’amim* 100 (5764): 15–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. In his article “Ba’ayot Yesod shel Sifrutenu he-Hadashah” [Problems of our New Literature] (1958) which appears in his book *Sifrutenu he-Hadashah:Hemshekh O’ Mahapekhah?* [Our New Literature: Continuation or Revolution?] (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House,1959) and in his other book *Be-Ma’avak al Erkhei ha-Yahadut* [Struggle for the Values of Judasim] (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 5729). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. A. Malakh, “Al ha-Lev shel ha-Emet ha-Historit—Kurzweil Neged Gershom Scholem,”[The Heart of the Historical Truth – Kurzweil vs. Gershom Shalom], *Musaf Shabbat*, *Makor Rishon* 26.12.2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. This conversation between Professors Avi Elkayam and Tzahi Weiss (*Shabbetai Tzvi*, YouTube 28.07.2011) is symptomatic of this stance. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)