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On Marranos and Sabbateans: A Reexamination of
**Charismatic Religiosity – Its Roots, Its Place and Its
Significance in the Life of the Western Sephardi
Diaspora**

Descriptors: charismatic religiosity, conversos, heterodoxy, Marranos, Western Sephardi Diaspora.

Abstract

Broadly speaking, heterodoxy and political struggle within “traditional” Jewish society in the Diaspora has manifested itself in two directions – one, a move away from the intervention of the supernatural in nature and human affairs, the other, a growing attraction to charismatic religion. Most scholarship has focused on the former and the impact of individual thinkers such as da Costa, Spinoza, and Prado on Judaism. The research takes issue with the assumption that this was the dominant form of heterodoxy in Jewish life among Sephardi communities in the 17th century – at least from a quantitative standpoint. The research investigates the scope of attraction to the ‘other outlet’ – charismatic religion, manifested in the mass attraction within Sephardi communities – among all sectors of society, but particularly among ex-conversos -- to the messianic Sabbatean movement. Examination of primary sources - both books written by supporters and opponents of Sabbtai Zvi and records of Sephardi Jewish communities in the Amsterdam and Hamburg – bear witness not only to the temper of the times, they shed light on a host of previously undiscussed psychosocial factors both within the Jewish community to which the ex-conversos had returned and the Christian society from which they had come, that made this messianic movement so attractive to conversos – including the grounds upon which one can understand the extraordinary tenacity of faith exhibited by former Marranos in the Western Sephardi Diaspora in the Sabbatean vision even after the apostasy of its leader.

The research begs the question whether there is not room for a more balanced picture of heterodoxy at this juncture in Jewish life, and a reassessment of the widely accepted view that the dominant challenge to *halakhic* Judaism and the Establishment among Sephardi communities in the 17th century was the 'rationalist path'.

Furthermore, the work challenges prevailing opinion that classifies the Sabbatean movement and its mysticism as part of the status-quo, aligning it with traditionalist and conservative forces within the *halakhic* Establishment, suggesting that in fact, the form Sabbateanism adopted among the Western Sephardi Diaspora, linking messianicism and an actual return to Zion, constituted a conceptual 'return to history' of Jewish life. In doing so, it constitutes a heterodox challenge the status-quo of *halakhic* Judaism and the Diasporism *halakhah* 'supported'. In doing so, it was, in essence, a revolutionary forerunner to the process of secularism – and even an early form of 'political activity or initiative that would ultimately revolutionize Jewish life.

Introduction

Broadly speaking, heterodoxy and political struggle within "traditional" Jewish society have taken two main directions: One – adoption of a critical-rationalist orientation, the second - charismatic religiosity

The critical-rationalist orientation can be described in Weberian terms - as "**disenchantment with the world**" or its "**desacralization**".¹ The main features of this process are the growing stress on rational and ethical norms of behavior and thought, and the tendency to play down the direct intervention of the supernatural in natural and human affairs.²

The second direction is charismatic religiosity, which Weber defined as based on "awareness of an unmediated religious destiny". This type of religiosity articulates those dimensions of human existence that tradition – in the case of Judaism, the ruling *halakhic*-rabbinic frameworks - either negates completely or relegates to the margins: the mystical aspects of religion, or even the stress - if only in intellectual terms - on symbols of primordial association. In this context the association would be the pre-*halakhic* principles of national-ethnic ascription. Apart from religion, the

¹ On the concept of "disenchantment" (Entzauberung), see Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* Oxford University Press, New York 1958, pp. 129-56.

² M. Heyd, *Between Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, M. Nijhoff, The Hague 1982, pp. 9-10.

most pronounced elements of ethnic group identity are race, common origin, and shared historical experience (a common bond to the ancestors of the nation - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) at a time when the very notion of Judaism, viewed from a modern historical perspective, was not even in existence. Since, from the point of view of the traditional *halakhist* (whether mystically inclined or not) fully-fledged, institutional *halakhic* Judaism both ascends to Moses and was indeed already implemented, intuitively, by the patriarchs themselves, all the more potent for being left unarticulated, save by a few of the avowed skeptics. Historically, this direction is associated with expressions of extreme subjectivism and individualism.³

Public support for the Sabbatean movement in Western Sephardi Diaspora

A number of historians have overlooked the significant of the charismatic trend within the Western Sephardi Diaspora of the 17th century, by overly stressing the critical-rationalistic trend among certain intellectuals of the Western Sephardi Diaspora circles whose break with normative Judaism of the time led them towards a position of skepticism, and even atheism and nihilism. Thus, for example, I. Sonne describes the struggle of Western-Sephardi Jewish heterodoxy in the 17th century as that of 'rationalist Jews' against 'a rabbinic establishment' whose dominant orientation was a mystical one. Similarly, in his discussion of the same heterodoxy, E. Rivkin highlights the processes of rationalization that took place in the West, emphasizing the links between Protestant ethics and the rise of modern capitalism, as formulated by Weber.⁴ Both overlook – or at least underestimate, the strength and extent of the support for the messianic movement of Sabbetai Zvi.

In a similar vein, J. Kaplan asserts that the common denominator in these Sephardi Diaspora communities in terms of forms of heterodox criticism of rabbinic orthodoxy was the attempt to arrive at a "non-confessional Judaism" parallel to the lines discussed in L. Kalokwski's work *Chretiens sans Eglise*. The focus of his work are da Costa, Spinoza, and Prado, as the

³ S. N. Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies*, "Revolt, Heterodoxy and Political Struggle in Traditional Societies", pp. 60-61. Also, J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, pp. 9-10

⁴ I. Sonne, "Leon Modena and the Da Costa Circle in Amsterdam", *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXI (1948), pp.1-28; E. Rivkin, *Leon da Modena and the Kol Sakhal*, Cincinnati 1952, pp.3-4; and see also Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Scribner, N.Y. 1958.

most prominent representatives of the non-confessional trend.⁵ The fact that the biographies and the writings of Prado, Spinoza and da Costa serve as examples - even extreme examples of a particular social type, or group, is not disputed. The question is solely one of proportion, magnitude and degree: What was the true extent of the social impact enjoyed by these individuals?

Extensive support for the movement of Shabbetai Zvi within Western Sephardi Jewish society is indicative of the strong attraction of charismatic religion, rather than the critical-rationalist approach.

In his work *Zizat Novel Zvi*, Rabbi Jacob Sasportas, a contemporary describes the surge of faith and the messianic enthusiasm he witnessed in Amsterdam:

And all of the city of Amsterdam pulsated and was under the fear of the Lord. They increased the joy with drums and dances in the market places and streets and in the synagogue, dancing with joy, and all of the Torah scrolls were taken out of the arks with their beautiful jewels, without paying attention to the danger of the envy and hate of the nations. On the contrary, they would make public declarations and speeches to the nations...

As for Hamburg, according to Sasportas' testimony:

"What was done was very much greater than in Amsterdam, and the great sound was arousing and the sound from the holy temple resounding and ringing...saying, this is the end of wonders and David King of Israel does live". (p. 17)

"And I with my very own eyes did see...that they unleashed their tongues against the non-believers and called them heretics, in a way that made my hands tremble, and I could not speak for my followers were few ...and even they did not speak aloud but in secret. And the masses were stronger than their leaders and there was no one to talk back to them, and on many occasions they desired to excommunicate the non-believer". (p. 47)

Sasportas' identification of the supporters of Sabbetai Zvi in *Zizat Novel Zvi* with the "masses" or "mob" is biased; as an anti-Sabbatean, he had a vested interest in exposing the ignorance and lack of balanced judgment he assigned to some of the Sabbateans. In his letter to Rabbi Isaac Nahar,

⁵ Y. Kaplan, "Ha-Kehilah ha-Portugalit be-Amsterdam", *Divrei ha-Akademia ha-Leumit ha-Yisraelit le-Mada'im*, Volume 7, Notebook 6, Jerusalem 1986., pp.169-72. See also L. Kolakowski, *Chretiens sans Eglise - La Conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIe siecle*, Paris 1969, pp.9ff.

however, Sasportas does say that other sections of the Jewish community - the upper classes, the rich, intellectuals, including the rationalists - were also swept away by the messianic fervor, but he dismisses them as not well versed in the Torah, and intimates that their support for Sabbetai Zvi involved, among other things, opportunistic considerations. Furthermore, Sasportas argues that at least the sages of Amsterdam were rationalists who, despite their denial of the *Kabbalah*, believed in the Messiah and his prophet (Nathan of Gaza) on the basis of *Kabbalistic* learning.⁶

It appears that Sasportas' account of the extent of the messianic enthusiasm which swept the Western Sephardi communities is not exaggerated, even though his information about the bearers of this religious fervor is not always accurate. His reliability in this area is questionable especially with regard to the cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of true believers in Sabbetai Zvi, and certainly concerning the rationalism of Amsterdam rabbis and their poor knowledge of the *Kabbalah*.⁷

Indeed, the writings of Bacharach, Shapira and other messianic authors of the period were tinged with criticism of the rich. But it is no less true that most of the Amsterdam and Hamburg Jewish patriciate, including Joao de Yllan, Abraham Pereyra and Nunes de Costa, was a part of the general intoxication.⁸ One piece of evidence of the messianic fervor which gripped the Western Sephardi communities in 1666 - the year of the appearance of Sabbetai Zvi, is the stormy and feverish debates which took place (among other places) in the Beit Israel community of Hamburg: The burning question on the agenda was whether or not an "embassy" should be dispatched to the Levant in order to pay homage to "*nosso rey Sabettay Seby ungdio do Dio de Jaacob cuja coroa seja exaltada*"⁹ According to the records of the *Livro da uniao geral*, the *Mahamad* of the Beit Israel community called for an assembly of all heads of households (*cabecas de cacal*) to discuss the question of sending an "embassy" to the Levant. The dispatch of the mission was postponed, a decision on timing was left to another assembly, and ultimately the mission was called off. Yet shortly

⁶ 6. Sasportas' letter to Rabbi Isaac Nahar on the 4th of Adar I 5426 (1666), in his *Zizat Novel Zvi*, Bialik Institute Jerusalem, 1954, pp. 40-44. On the struggles of Sasportas himself over the issue of Shabbetai Zvi's messiahship, see his letter to Rabbi Samuel Aboab, *ibid*, pp. 62-68.

⁷ See for example I. Sonne, "Leon Modena and the Da Costa Circle in Amsterdam", *Hebrew Union College Annual XXI* (1948) pp 1-28.

⁸ See J. I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism (1550-1750)*, Oxford 1985, pp. 212, 227.

⁹ *Livro da Uniao Geral*, 26 Adar 1666

thereafter, the same *Mahamad* adopted a decision to sell off all the buildings owned by communal institutions, since "with the grace of God, we hope to set out soon" (to the Land of Israel).¹⁰

In the same year a Sabbatean booklet authored by Gideon Abudiente, *Fin de los dias* - a collection of sermons on the imminent redemption - was circulated in Hamburg; members of the *Mahamad* feared that the booklet could harm the community's relations with the surrounding Christian society.^{11 12} Junta Grande ('The Great Council') therefore resolved to impound all copies circulating in the community; the impounded books were then to be packed up and the package sealed. The decision called for the censored books to be deposited in the cupboard of the communal treasury, where they would be kept "until such time which we await anxiously and which God would certainly bring to pass speedily". In this context we should bear in mind that only ten years earlier the *Mahamad* had burnt a very scandalous (*muy scandaloso*) book by Manuel de Pina; the Junta Grande had not been convened on this occasion, for at the time, this institution did not exist.¹³

The idea of selling houses owned by the Hamburg community was not put into practice, possibly due to the split in the leadership. The decision not to dispatch the "embassy" to Istanbul was motivated by possible negative consequences of such a move in terms of the safety and wellbeing of the local community: Apparently the Jewish governing boards became seriously alarmed at the prospect of violent outbreaks among ordinary Christians who initially had shown some interest in the messiah, but whose attitude had gradually turned hostile.¹⁴

In the year of Sabbetai Zvi's appearance, sales of property, including buildings, took place in Amsterdam and Hamburg, mainly by well-to-do *Iehidim* (individuals) who planned to embark on the journey to the Land of Israel. Among them was the mystic Abraham Pereira, who set out for Venice and from there planned to travel to the Land of Israel to find there his messiah.¹⁵ Sir Henry Finch, the son of the author of *The World's Great*

¹⁰ Ibid, ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 3 Elul 1666.

¹² Ibid, ibid.

¹³ Ibid, 25 Av 1656.

¹⁴ Ibid, 23 Adar 1666.

¹⁵ S.A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, Cincinnati 1970, Vol I, pp 42-3.

Restauration (1621)¹⁶, who belonged to millenarian-philosemitic circles in England, reported to London from Florence in April 1666, that "many families of Jews have come to Livorno" in order to embark on a journey to the Promised Land.¹⁷

The involvement of Marranos in Christian charismatic religious movement: Christianity and Judaism as frameworks of reference

Consciousness of an unmediated religious destiny did not emerge in the Western Sephardi Jewish Diaspora in response to what is sometimes described as the disappointment felt by former Marranos following their encounter with a Catholic-like Jewish establishment in "the lands of Judaism" (the lands of freedom of worship).¹⁸ This argument appears, for instance, in da Costa's statements in *The Specimen of Human Life*, as well as in Modena's *Magen ve-Zinnah*, but it is also put forth by contemporary historians. H. H. Ben-Sasson describes Aboab and Sasportas as representatives of a very rich 'Catholic', conservative Jewish culture, whose reaction to heterodoxy and whose patterns of behavior were a blend of Judaism and "Catholicism".¹⁹ In fact, the sources of this behavior and these attitudes should be sought in their lands of origin on the Iberian Peninsula. More precisely, it developed as a reaction to religious isolation under conditions of political pressure, as well as in response to the failure, or at least partial failure, of the integration of the *converso* population into the general Christian-Catholic majority.²⁰

A discussion of the social and theological expressions of charismatic religiosity in the Iberian stage of the Sephardi communities under

¹⁶ Henry Finch, *The World Great Restauration, or: The Calling of the Jews*, Published by W. Gouge, London, 1621; On him see P. Toon (ed.) *Puritanism, the Millennium and the Future of Israel*, chap. II, pp. 33-34; F. Kobler, "Sir H. Finch (1558-1625)", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society in England*, Vol. XVI (1952), pp. 101-120.

¹⁷ Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, op. cit., p.212.

¹⁸ "Catholic-like" refers to penetration by religion of all spheres of life with the concomitant blurring of the distinction between the 'holy' and 'profane'. The distinction in *halakhah*, however, between *kodesh* and *hol* is distorted by the conventional equation with the Western categories 'sacred' and 'profane'. *Halakhah* presupposes *kodesh* and *hol* both form part of the divinely ordained economy.

¹⁹ Leon de Modena, *Magen ve-Zinnah*, p. 3a-b; H. H. Ben-Sasson, *Rezev u-Temurah*, op. cit., "Moreshet Yahadut ha-Mizrah", p. 82.

²⁰ This is a fact which Y. Baer notes in his *Galut*, Y. Baer, *Galut*, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1980, "The Turn of the Middle Ages", pp. 56ff. More detailed is H. Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain*, N.Y., 1965, pp. 62-100.

discussion leads us not only to the participation of *conversos* (or ‘New Christians’) in the protest movement within their own reference group, which was (at least formally) the Christian majority, but also to activities and movements for which Jewish society and Jewish concepts and notions served as their framework of reference.

Thus, for example, the *conversos* took an active part in the anti-establishment mystical trend of the sect of "*dejamiento*" (abandonment) in the 1520s and 1530s (whose followers were called "*dejados*" or "*alumbrados*" - illuminists). Their presence is also recorded in movements for reform in the early Church which emerged in the mid-16th century, and which moved towards the Erasmian doctrine of "justification by faith alone", although it never formally rejecting Catholic dogma.

The mingling of mystical, Erasmian and heretical influences made the 1520s and the 1530s a unique period rift with both freedom and tension. The Spanish inquisitors sought Lutheran ideas everywhere, and found them in the views of some of the "*dejados*". More significant for inquisitors, perhaps, was the fact that nearly every person implicated in those groups was a *converso*: the beata Isabel de la Cruz, Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, Maria de Cazalla and her Franciscan brother Juan, and auxiliary Bishop of Avila, Bernardino Tovar, the beata Francisca Hernandez, the Franciscan preacher Francisco Ortiz, and many others.

In fact, such movements enjoyed powerful patronage of the great nobility. Thus, for example, the Mendoza, the duke of Infantado in Guadalajara extended his patronage to the Cazallas, Tovar, Ortiz, Alcaraz and Hernandez. Another great noble, the Marquis of Villena, extended his patronage to a parallel group active in Escalona. *Conversos* are also to be found in reform movements of the 1550s such as that of the Italian Carlos de Seso, who served as *Corregidor* (Civil governor) of Toro. The beliefs of Carlos de Seso were not a simple extension of the illuminist or Erasmian attitudes of the previous generation, but rather a clear rejection of most Catholic dogma.²¹

²¹ Kamen, *ibid.*, *ibid.*, does not confine his account of the term *alumbrado* to the discussion of the *alumbrados* of Guadalajara alone. The "*dejamiento*" is a trend which originated in the Franciscan orders, but which was condemned as heresy by the general chapter of the Franciscans in 1524. See also A. Marquez, *Los Alumbrados. Origenes y filosofia (1525-1559)*, Madrid 1980. On the *alumbrados* movement that crystallized among Franciscans of Jewish descent, see M. Bataillon, *Erasmus y Espana*, Mexico - Buenos Aires 1966², pp. 61-71, 180-182; A. Dominguez Ortiz, *Los Judeoconversos en Espana y America*, Madrid, 1971, p. 89ff. In regard to the link between the Alumbrados and the Erasmistas, see J. Caro

It seems that the fact that so many sons of the *conversos* joined the Alumbrados and the Erasmistas prompted imposition of regulations of "purity of blood" within various religious institutions, and placing of limitations on the entrance of New Christians to these institutions: In 15th century Castile under Isabella at least four bishops were of *converso* origin; so was the Archbishop of Granada, Hernando de Talavera, and the Cardinal Juan de Torquemada - uncle of the first Inquisitor-General, who was it turns out, of Jewish descent, too. The master of the Order of Santiago was Don Juan Pacheco, Marquis of Villena, a New Christian. The same was the case within the Order of Calatrava, which was headed by Pedro Giron, also a New Christian. Pablo de Santa Maria, the ex-Chief Rabbi of Burgos, who was converted along with his brothers in 1390, took holy orders and eventually became Bishop of Cartagena, Bishop of Burgos and papal legate. The former rabbi's eldest son, Gonzalo, became Spanish delegate to the Council of Constance, serving in other positions in the Spanish Church as well, while Alonso de Cartagena, his second son, succeeded Pablo de Santa Maria as Bishop of Burgos.²²

During the 15th Century, there was also a great rush of *conversos* to Franciscan and Dominican Orders and spirituallistic monasteries, such as the those belonging to the Jeronimite Order and, for example, those of La Sisle and Guadalupe. Towards the end of the 15th Century, joining of these monasteries by *conversos* was blocked through regulations of "purity of blood"²³

On the surface, the joining of monasteries by *conversos* could be an expression of a deep identification with lofty religious values of Christian society; in actuality, it was often tied with finding a good 'cover' for covertly carrying out Jewish religious commandments.

The spiritualistic bent of the Jeronimite Order - an order accustomed to solitary prayer murmured in seclusion – made it possible for any New Christian who wished to say Jewish prayers, to do so. In general terms, behind a monkish cloak it was possible to also keep the Sabbath and the

Baroja, *Los Judios en la Espana Moderna*, Madrid, 1962, II pp. 223-224; *ibid*, p. 221.

²² H. Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain*, op. cit., pp. 19-20; C. Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*, London 1937, p. 30.

²³ See J. Caro Baroja, op. cit., Vol. 2, ("Estatutos de los Ordenes religiosas y del Santo Oficio"), pp. 273-276.

festivals.²⁴ Whether due to the regulations of "purity of blood" or due to the rumor of "judaizantes" in various monasteries, more and more monasteries began to be cautious – not accepting New Christians in their ranks, and even limiting the advancement of those already belonging to the order.

Already in 1495, the Jeronimite Order had begun employing regulations of "purity of blood"; in 1531 similar regulations were introduced in monasteries in Toledo and in Nieba. While by 1592, when the Inquisition had already transferred its focus from "judaizantes" to other more-threatening sources of heterodoxy (Protestants), regulations of "purity of blood" continued to spread and were introduced that year into Jesuit monasteries. This step was taken, despite the fact that the statutes of "purity of blood" were in contradiction to Jesuit principles, and notwithstanding the fact (or perhaps precisely because of it!) this order was established largely thanks to the intense activity of many New Christians who joined Loyola.²⁵

At the same time, however, the *conversos* also participated in messianic movements whose declared aim transcended the borders of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as local rebellious movements which often manifested a messianic orientation; historians such as Y. Baer and H. Beinart described the latter as possessing a "Jewish facet".²⁶ Similarly, S. G. Payne, in his discussion of the connection between New Christians (*cristaos novos*), and the movement of Dom Sebastiao during the reign of the Portuguese King Felipe II, points out that fears that the king might intensify the already harsh measures taken by the Inquisition in Portugal underlay the reappearance of a *Jewish-derived* messianism focusing on the figure of the Portuguese, anti-Castilian, and less inquisitorial savior.²⁷

²⁴ H. Beinart, "The Judaizing Movement in the Order of San Jeronimo in Castile", *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, VII (1961), pp. 167-192; A. A. Sicroff, "Clandestine Judaism in the Hieronymite Monastery of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe", *Studies in Honour of M. J. Bernardete*, New York 1965, pp. 89-125.

²⁵ A.A. Sicroff, Les Controverses des statuts de "purete de sang" en Espagne du XVe au XVIIe siecle, *Etudes de litterature etrangere et comparee*, Didier, Paris 1960, pp. 270-290.

²⁶ Y. Baer, *Mehkarim u-Massot be-Toledot Am Yisrael*, The Israel Historical Society, Jerusalem 1986, "Ha-Tenu'ah ha-Meshihit bi-Sefarad bi-Tekufat ha-Gerush", p 381ff.; H. Beinart, "Tenu'at ha-Nevu'ah be-Kordova ba-Shanim 1499-1502", in H. Beinart, S. Ettinger, M. Stern (eds.), *Sefer Ha-Yovel le-Y. Baer*, The Israel Historical Society, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 190-200; *ibid.*, "Agudo, Kehilat Anusim be-La Mancha", *Tarbiz* 50 (1981), pp. 423-49.

²⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *Spain and Portugal*, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1976, Vol. I, pp.244-45.

The more we extend our scope chronologically from the mass expulsions at the end of the 15th Century, the more problematic it becomes to differentiate activities and movements by focusing upon their reference groups (Judaism vs. Catholic Christianity). Thus, towards the 17th Century, there was a marked increase in the number of "judaisers" among the *conversos* tried by the Inquisition.²⁸ This fact may be indicative of growing recognition of the impossibility of social integration, more than a phenomena driven by any Jewish intent. Kamen describes the development of a strange cultural situation, in which many former *conversos* were (in H. del Pulgar's words) "living neither in one law nor the other". Indeed, many *conversos* were condemned for beliefs that orthodox Judaism would have regarded as heretical, such as denying the immortality of the soul.²⁹

"Community of faith" vs. "natural community"

Whether we consider a messianic movement as a historical and social phenomenon, or treat a messianic awakening as a movement *in statu nascendi*,³⁰ what matters in this context is the "language" it employs, or the use it makes of specific symbols which a given culture or tradition bequeaths to its descendants. In other words, we are less concerned here with the residue of a Jewish orientation in a religious awakening, particularly one of a messianic nature.

To adopt the distinction made by the historian of religion Thomas W. Ogletree,³¹ the difference between a "natural community" and a "community of faith" lies not only in national vision or political content,³² but mainly in the very symbols of primordial association. Whereas the "natural community" is founded upon the family, the "community of faith" is essentially a "gathered community" in the sense that it is sustained by evangelistic testimony. The evangelistic witness addresses himself not to families but to individual persons.³³ At the same time, however, Ogletree does note that communities which are formally Christian may exhibit the essential characteristics of the Jewish heritage: family units, a distinct

²⁸ . See the figures presented by Kamen, op. cit., p.185, which pertain mainly to Saragossa, Toledo, and Galicia between the years 1540 and 1700.

²⁹ Kamen, *ibid.*, p.198, but also on pages 219ff. Kamen draws on the English edition of Baer's *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Part II, pp.350-56.

³⁰ R. J. Z. Werblowsky in his introduction to the collection of articles Z. Baras (ed.), *Meshihiyut ve-Eskhatalogia*, Zalman Shazar Centre, The Israel Historical Society, Jerusalem 1983, pp. 21-24, especially p. 22.

³¹ T. W. Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1984, "The Eschatological Horizon of Moral Understanding", pp.92-177.

³² See D. Flusser, "Hishtakfutan shel Emunot Meshihiot Yehudiot ba-Nazrut ha-Kedumah", in: Z. Baras (ed.), *Meshihiyut ve-Eskhatalogia*, *ibid.*, pp.103-134.

³³ Ogletree, *Ibid.*, *ibid.*, pp.181-82.

linkage to particular racial and ethnic groups and to specific social classes, and preeminent concern with the maintenance of a received tradition.³⁴ It should be kept in mind that this description refers primarily to radical trends of the Reformation in Central and Western Europe, and even to the civil religion of America,³⁵ rather than to realities of the realm of Catholicism.³⁶ Furthermore, and with greater relevance to our discussion, one must also distinguish between "distinct linkage to particular racial and ethnic groups", which may bear Jewish characteristics, on the one hand, and the fundamental feature of *Judaism as an ethnic religion* from its beginning (the Law of Moses, but also the histories of forefathers), on the other hand.³⁷

The yearnings of the Portuguese Marranos of the 16th and 17th Centuries for the Kingdom of David ("Casa de David seu moco") which appear in versions of prayers preserved in the files of the Portuguese Inquisition,³⁸ are reminiscent in their spirit of the "saudade" (a concept which denotes expectation, but nostalgia and sadness as well), widely prevalent among various groups among the Portuguese nation in the period of the young Dom Sebastiao I (1557-1578). This includes the historical vitality of the mythic symbol of the "intemperate prince", who is expected to return to the stage of history after his death.³⁹ Yet, in addition to the nostalgic yearning for the Davidic Kingdom (in the era prior to its partition into the Judean and Israelite Kingdoms) there are prayers which refer to the forefathers of the nation (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) as historical figures, as related in biblical narratives. All the national and religious meanings which had come to be associated with forefathers of the Jewish people are expressed in these prayers. This applies both to the Divine promises made to the Patriarchs to turn their seed into a "great nation" (promises which open the cycle of stories relating to each one of the patriarchs and serve as a kind of prologue

³⁴ Ogletree, *Ibid.*, *ibid.*, p.182.

³⁵ For example the Anabaptist sects, and see J. M. Stayer, *The Anabaptists and the Sword*, Lawrence, Kansas, 1972. See also Bernard S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarism*, London 1972.

³⁶ For example, the trends on which H. Mechoulam comments in his article "L'alterite juive dans la pensee espagnole (1550-1650)", *Studia Rosenthaliana*, VIII, Nr. 1 (1974), p.50ff.

³⁷ H. H. Ben-Sasson, *Rezev u-Temurah*, *op. cit.*, pp.418-19.

³⁸ E. C. de Azevedo Mea, "Oracoes judaicas na Inquisicao Portuguesa - Seculo XVI", in: Y. Kaplan (ed.) *Jews and Conversos, Studies in Society and the Inquisition*, pp.149-78.

³⁹ S. G. Payne, *Spain and Portugal*, Vol. I, pp.244-45. On similarities between "Marrano" messianism and Portuguese Christian messianism, see Yerushalmi's remarks in his *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, N.Y. & London, 1971, "Sabbatianism and Sebastianism", pp. 306-16.

to them - "*E jura que jurou a Abrahao que se daria a nos para que seu tener dos nossos inimigos o servissimons em santidade e justica todos os nossos dias..*").⁴⁰ and to important events in their lives such as the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah ("*Falou Adonay a Abrahao e disse-lhe : Abrahao, Abrahao, toma o filho Isac que amaste, vai te ao monte Horial [it should be Moriah - E.K.] o qual dos montes eu te mostrei e delle faras sessao e sacrificio..*").⁴¹ In Hebrew Bible exegesis, as well as in traditional Jewish thought of other times and in different geographical regions, this event is regarded as prototypical of Jewish devotion.

The fact, for example, that the Portuguese Marrano Antonio Vaz mentions together Jerusalem along with Bethlehem and "the good Jordan" (*bom jurdao*),⁴² demonstrates how under the influence of the Christian environment and in conditions of cultural isolation, certain traditions are likely to undergo Christological 'emendations' or lose their Jewish characteristics. This is a phenomenon known from other sources as well, such as the vision of the prophetess Ines of Herrera on the revelation of Elijah "carried upon the clouds of the heavens" – imagery that resembles the New Testament's description of Jesus appearing on a cloud.⁴³

However, in general, when focusing on bonds to a national tradition within the cultural, social and historical context under discussion, we are speaking of symbols of association and 'historical heroes' as they have been preserved in the popular consciousness and in the popular imagination - not necessarily their 'archaeological' manifestations.⁴⁴ Thus it is in this light that one should accept the Marrano traditions concerning Queen Esther (Sancta Ester), who does not forsake her people or her homeland at the court of King Ahasuerus. The story of her success is designed to express the belief in the certainty of God's mercy on the righteous of Israel, including it would seem the 'assurance' that behind the conversion of the Marranos hides a secret Divine purpose that surely will be revealed in the future.⁴⁵ Other such traditions concern Moses whom it is held - is buried at

⁴⁰ E. C. de Azevedo Mea, "Oracoes judaicas na Inquisicao Portuguesa - Seculo XVI" in J. Kaplan (ed) *Jews and Conversos*, p. 161 ff.

⁴¹ E. C. de Azevedo Mea, "Oracoes judaicas na Inquisicao Portuguesa - Seculo XVI", op. cit., p. 63.

⁴² Ibid., ibid., p. 177.

⁴³ As demonstrated by H. Beinart in his article "Ha-Neviah Ines u-Tenuatah be-Herrera Moladetah".

⁴⁴ For the distinction between historical truth which reveals the "forces at work in the life of society", and archeological truth, see Asher Ginsburg (Ahad Ha-am), "Moshe", in: *Al Parshat Derakhim*, Dvir Pub. Co., Jerusalem 1975, pp.207-27.

⁴⁵ See Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, Introduction.

Mount Sinai (in the Bible: Mount Nevo, Deut. Chap. 34) which "changes its place" so that his burial site will remain unidentified⁴⁶ so they would not remove his body. Last but not least are the plethora of 'Ten Lost Tribe' stories that circulate among Western Sephardi Jews. While preoccupation with the Ten Tribes is a phenomenon singular to this community, one encounters location of the lost Ten Tribes "on the other side of the river which throws stones" (the Sambatyon) mentioned by the Marrano Alvar Gonzalez of the Canary Islands.⁴⁷ The same applies to stories about tribes located in the Andes mountains of South America, in the horn of Africa, or in the Arabian peninsula. The underlying idea in all these stories is restoration of political independence. Evidence to that effect is to be found, for example, in the story of the former Marrano Aaron Halevi (Antonio de Montezinos) who testified under oath before the leaders of the Amsterdam community, that during his sojourn in Quito, Ecuador, he had come into contact with people from the tribe of Reuben from whom he learned of the location of the tribes of Menasseh and Ephraim in the sea islands. In another case, in his letter to King Joao III, David Hareuveni informs him that he was sent from "the desert of Havur as an emissary of the King Joseph", who was supposed to be also his brother and in whose army there were "close to 300,000 good warriors".⁴⁸

Under conditions of religious isolation and political pressure one should not search for 'core Jewish components' necessary for observance of commandments by individuals who, in the Maimonidean sense, perform in

⁴⁶ From the testimony of Francisco de Baeca at the trial of Alvar Gonzalez, which took place in 1525-1526.

On the role of Moses in messianic redemption and the source of beliefs in an eschatological Moses, see Y. Heinemann, *Aggadot ve-Toldoteihen* Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem 1974, pp.109-14.

⁴⁷ H. Beinart, *Ha-Anusim bi-Sefarad u-ve-Eiropah ha-Ma'ravit ba-Me'ot ha-16 ve-ha-17*, p.27. The tradition of the return of the lost ten tribes, who were exiled by Shalmaneser King of Assyria, is already found in the *Vision of Ezra* which is taken by scholars to have been written in the generation following the destruction of the Second Temple; see, Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. Philadelphia 1909-1938, vol. 5, p.408.

⁴⁸ On Aaron Halevi see Manasseh ben Israel, *Mikveh Israel, Esto es, Esperanca de Israel*, Amsterdam 1650, pp.II-IV.

On Hareuveni see S. Schwarz, "O Sionismo no Reinado de Joao III", in: *Ver e Crer*, 3 (1946), p.105.

Y. H. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, op. cit., p.306, speaks of the appearance of "pueblo cerrado" also in other geographical contexts, such as India (near the Ganges) and Turkey, and he bases himself - at least with regard to India - apparently on statements we find in the book *Zizat Novel Zvi* by Jacob Sasportas. See note 91 below.

order "to believe in the truth for the sake of truth".⁴⁹ Rather one should also or mainly seek observances of Jewish commandments that are significant in terms of the succession and continuation of the society operating under these constraints.⁵⁰ The existence of the "praying community" does not depend only on common religious practice, but also common national symbols of allegiance. In Marrano society the *ontological* status of such symbols grows stronger in direct relation to the weakening of *ritual* religiosity, under the historical and social circumstances determined by the expulsions.⁵¹ Thus, for example, in a testimony concerning statements by Juan Falcon, the "Elder", we are told that he would read a Hebrew book and cry, or that he reproached a Marrano woman for being wayward in maintaining relations with a Christian man, despite the fact that ostensibly (in a different testimony) he appears to have been sceptical about a number of traditional views, including the existence of the Garden of Eden stating: "Do not allow anyone to lead you to believe that there is another Garden of Eden".⁵²

The deep involvement of former Marranos in the Sabbatean movement following the conversion of Sabbetai Zvi to Islam

The scholarly literature which claims that Marranism was based on the social and theological factors at work in the Sabbatean movement generally refers to Sabbateanism after the conversion of Sabbetai Zvi to Islam.

All discussions of Sabbatean Marranos tend to focus on the psychological predisposition of former Marranos towards anti-nomistic, at times nihilistic, tendencies within the Shabbatean heresy.⁵³ This applies particularly to the

⁴⁹ *Commentary on the Mishnah*, the introduction to Perek Helek, and cf. also *Guide to the Perplexed*, part 3, Chap.51, and *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah*, Chap. 1, halakhah 1 (near the end) and elsewhere.

⁵⁰ H. Beinart raises this point in his book *Anusim be-Din ha-Inkvizizia*, op. cit., pp.197-98.

⁵¹ H. Beinart, *ibid.*, "Yahasam shel Anusei Ciudad Real la-Nazrut ve-Olam De'otehem ve-Hashkafoteihem", pp.227-36.

⁵² H. Beinart, *Anusim be-Din ha-Inkvizizia*, p. 172, 235. See H. Beinart (ed.), *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, 3 Vols, Jerusalem 1974 - 1981, vol. 1 (1483-1485), pp.433-434, on the involvement of Juan Falcon in teaching the customs of the Jews to Marranos in Ciudad Real.

⁵³ According to G. Scholem, the theory that by betraying his religion the Messiah was actually fulfilling the mission of redemption, led to a "destructive paradox", which contained within itself nihilistic implications (*Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, op. cit., p. 800). I, for one, concur with Y. Tishbi, who holds that acceptance of the paradox of a converted Messiah did not necessarily entail plunging into destructive nihilism.

view whereby the Marranos contributed significantly to the acceptance of the concept (dominant in Christianity, even though of Jewish origin) that the Messiah is first to be humiliated.⁵⁴ A possible explanation for this tendency may be sought in the fairly conspicuous involvement of Marranos in the movement at the stage when it became enmeshed in what Scholem labeled a "destructive paradox" of the apostate Messiah.⁵⁵

However, it has been shown that there was wide public support for the Shabbatean movement in Marrano centers in Western Europe and in the Levant as soon as the movement came into existence. At this early stage the Messianic idea ("in its pure Jewish form") succeeded, as G. Scholem put it, "in stirring the depths of the souls of large masses"; it was only later on that it was transformed from a messianic mass movement into "an esoteric, mystical heretical movement".⁵⁶ Y. H. Yerushalmi argues that due to their experience, the Marranos were probably better equipped than other Jews to perceive conversion as "a mask for an inner existence of a radically different order," - perhaps explaining why the rationalization of the Messiah's conversion would be more intelligible - even welcome, among former Marranos.⁵⁷ Yet, this explanation does not fit well with G. Scholem's findings that it was their religious compulsion to atone for a Christian past which attracted former Marranos to the Sabbatean movement in the first place.⁵⁸

Disavowal of Sabbataeanism after the conversion of Sabbetai Zvi to Islam was, as Tishbi points out, the 'natural, logical response'.⁵⁹ The fact that some ex-Marranos and other Sabbatean Jews, should have chosen to adhere to the Shabbateanism even after it became involved in the paradox of an apostate Messiah appears unnatural and illogical. A possible explanation of the persistence of Sabbatean belief is the suggestion that it was precisely in

⁵⁴ For the origins of the Christian representation of the coming of the Messiah, in contrast to that which prevails in Judaism, see, for example, Ephesians 5:2, and Galatians 2:20.

⁵⁵ G. Scholem, "Mizvah ha-'Ba'ah be-Aveirah", *Keneset*, II (1937), pp.347-92.

⁵⁶ G. Scholem, "Ha-Historion ha-Yehudi ve-ha-Kabbalah", in: *Devarim Be-Go*, op. cit., pp. 231-32, and see also his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, op. cit., p. 307ff.; Y. H. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, op. cit., p.303.

⁵⁷ Yerushalmi, op.cit., p.304.

⁵⁸ Scholem deals with the idea of atoning for a Christian past (in association with the idea of repentance in Sabbataean propaganda) in his book *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, op. cit., chapter 2, and 5).

⁵⁹ Y. Tishbi, *Netivey Emunah u-Minut*, op. cit., p.238.

these circles that commitment to the messianic idea was so deep that its failure to be fulfilled in reality was likely to be especially painful.⁶⁰

In any case, the inherent contradictions in the beliefs of ex-Marranos' exposed in the works of Yerushalmi, Scholem and Tishbi are indicative of the 'havoc' resulting from trying to accommodate two far-from-complimentary world views within the same psyche – all the more so over a very 'charged' issue and under particularly trying circumstances.)

Needless to say, the opponents of Shabbetai Zvi, such as Rabbi Jacob Sasportas, regarded his conversion as the act of God, who in His providence had pushed the false messiah into an act of treason. Sasportas said that had he merely been killed:

"...his believers would have waited for his salvation forever, saying that he was still alive and that death had no sway over him, and it was our deeds which caused him to ascend to the heavens in a whirlwind, and at the right time he will be sent from the heavens and deliver us".⁶¹

For the Sabbateans, on the other hand, the conversion of the Messiah Shabbetai Zvi to Islam was transformed from a treacherous act into a vital event, even an imperative - a necessary phase in the process of redemption:

"For the King Messiah wanted nothing other than to sanctify God's name and the Turkish king wanted nothing other than according to his counsel to dress him in garments of shame. Thus he was violated (*anus*) in every way and from every quarter. And the reason for our iniquities, and the prime secret to which we are obligated by the Torah is that all of us must be *anusim* before we leave the *Galut*, as it is written in the Torah that 'you shall serve other gods of wood and stone'...and of their abandoning Torah, defamation was destined for the Messiah the son of David so that he will be forced against his will in such a way that he will not be able to obey the Torah..".⁶²

The view that the "King Messiah will come to power by signs, and miracles, and wonders" was now regarded "a great error" (Sasportas: "...and you shall know that the sages say that in the future Israel will sing,

⁶⁰ This explanation is based upon the theory of cognitive dissonance as formulated by L. Festinger, H. W. Riecker, and S. Schachter. *When Prophecy Fails*, Minneapolis 1956.

⁶¹ *Zizat Novel Zvi*, p. 205b.

⁶² In a letter from Cardoso to his brother, in: J. Sasportas, *Zizat Novel Zvi*. pp.293-94.

but will not do so until the Messiah be abused, and it is written: wherewith they have taunted the footsteps of Thine anointed.."63), and was replaced by the notion of the humiliated Messiah – in the words of Nathan the Prophet just prior to his conversion: "...oppressed among the *kelippot*, to cleanse all our sins, to repair all that we have injured".64

In the concept of a Messiah who sacrifices himself for the purpose of redemption we recognize, of course, the influence of the Christian notion of the suffering of Jesus and the atoning power of his death (which appears unequivocally in the original layer of the synoptic tradition only in Mark 10:45 and 14:24). This view made its way into Sabbataeanism apparently via ex-Marrano channels. G. Scholem, however, is more inclined to view it as an *independent* parallel Jewish development emanating from the biblical image of the suffering "Servant of God" (Isaiah 53). However, more significant is G. Scholem's premise that the descent to the "depths of the *kelippot*" in order to redeem the sparks, expresses the very need for confrontation with the alien, non-Jewish reality for the purposes of the internal aim of redemption.65 The internal aim of redemption was not to be achieved even through the distinction made by Nathan of Gaza between the redemption of Israel and the redemption of the *Shekhinah* ("...for we are still in *Galut*," while the *Shekhinah* is already "dwelling in joy" over its return 'to the ultimate source'). Not even the claim of Nathan of Gaza that "it is not mentioned by the Sages that [God - E. K.] promised that the *Shekhinah* will not go forth from the *Galut* except together with the people of Israel," or a more rigorous argument made by the former Marrano Abraham Cardoso for whom Israel in the *Galut* exists "without a true God," would help to attain this consciousness.66

This type of consciousness would be brought about through a real confrontation with a distinctly non-Jewish way of life, a socio-cultural cycle which is not at all dependent upon the Jewish cycle, as we already find with the former Marrano Solomon Molcho, more than one hundred years earlier, and even with Don Isaac Abravanel – who left Spain with the last exiles. Thus, Abravanel speaks of a Messiah who is to be born in one of the Christian countries, and tortured and humiliated like his Jewish

⁶³ J. Sasportas, *Zizat Novel Zvi*, p. 291.

⁶⁴ Nathan the Prophet, in his letter on the fast of Tisha B'Av, which was written close to the conversion, in: A. Amarillo, "Teudot Shabta'iot", *Sefunot*, vol.5 (1961), pp. 253-54.

⁶⁵ G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p.304ff.

⁶⁶ G. Scholem, "Mizvah ha-Ba'ah be-Averah", op. cit., p.365ff.

brethren,⁶⁷ while Molcho (formerly Diogo Pires) speaks of a Messiah actually born into Christianity.⁶⁸

The need to adapt to an alien environment in order to advance the redemption process is also discernible. For example, in *Iggeret Magen Avraham*, the mission of the faithful servant is to deliver the fiancée of the king from her captivity, while the servant is "dressed in the clothing of each and every nation among whom he passes, so that the enemies might not recognize him".⁶⁹ However, the same theme already appears in Molcho in the stories of his disguises when sitting on the banks of the Tiber in Rome.⁷⁰

Sabbateanism as utopian religiosity which opened up the ghetto society
Y. Baer's argument that the messianic idea delayed "any practical action" in Jewish history, because people who identified strongly with it pinned their highest hopes upon the intervention of an ex-historical power on the historical stage,⁷¹ is not germane to what we know about manifestations of messianism within ex-Marrano circles.

It was precisely the recognition of the necessity to take action, to squarely face a devastating political reality even beyond the boundaries of Jewish society, that led Molcho to his confrontation with objective, historical reality both ideologically and through the medium of political negotiations.⁷² Later, a similar recognition led Cardoso to take an active part in and even assume leadership of the Sabbatean movement as a "movement of rebellion against the limited life in the ghetto".⁷³

⁶⁷ "Yeshu'ot Meshiho", Königsberg 1861, pg.23b. And see Baer, "Ha-Tenuah ha-Meshihit bi-Sefarad bi-Tekufat ha-Gerush", in *Mehkarim u-Massot be-Toledot Yisrael*, op. cit, p. 393.

⁶⁸ Molcho considered himself as only the Messiah son of Ephraim. In the vision *Hayyat Kaneh* he was killed in his attempt to turn the "grey doves" (the Marranos) into "white doves" (Jews), A. Z. Eshkoly edition, unnumbered pages, Paris, pages 2 and 3.

⁶⁹ "Iggeret Magen Avraham", p. 24b. Published by G. Scholem in the anthology *Kovetz Al Yad*, vol.2 (12).

⁷⁰ *Hayyat Kaneh*, Molcho's second letter, pp.11-30.

⁷¹ Y. Baer, "Erez Yisrael ve-Galut be-Einei ha-Dorot shel Yemei ha-Beinayim", *Zion* (Old Series), 6 (1934), pp.149-171 (p.165).

⁷² Concerning the aspect of political negotiations in Molcho's mission, see the statements of Joseph Ha-Kohen, *Sefer Divrei ha-Yamim*, Amsterdam, 1833, 91a.

⁷³ . G. Scholem, *Sabbetai Zvi, The Mystical Messiah*, p. 798, and many other places.

It is ironic that the very comparison which Y. Baer makes in his book *Galut* between the Marranos and their contemporaries - Western European co-religionists,⁷⁴ overlooks the fact that it was precisely the Marranos who were destined to play a theological and social role not only in a rebellion against the regime of *halakhah* in Rabbinic Judaism, but even in the very abolition of the Diaspora. Whether or not they did play this role hinges on the validity of two assumptions: 1) That the ex-Marrano element was an influential and vital factor in the Sabbatean movement, and 2) that by dwelling upon specifics of the messianic era, Sabbatean messianism developed *political* significance. In any event, although Baer does acknowledge that "Spanish Jews, including the Marranos, were the bearers of the movement to abolish the Diaspora", in this context he speaks only of their well-developed political sense and many-sided talents which were instrumental in the settlement and building up of the Land of Israel. One example is Don Joseph Nasi who promoted the building up of Tiberias, and rumors of his activities in the Land of Israel led to a messianic awakening.⁷⁵

The extraordinary cognizance (said notable awareness) among former Marranos of the problems of Jewish society as problems that from the outset did not concern Jewish 'religion', can be elucidated against the background of the following two facts: 1) They belonged originally to what can be described as a separate cultural-ecological enclave, and, 2) They were somewhat distanced from the recorded tradition, that drew its sustenance from having been cherished by numerous generations in the past, and that adamantly insisted that the past held undisputed authority over life in the present. As is well known, this tradition not only enjoins the faithful to keep the memory of their past alive ("Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but make them known unto thy children and thy children's children" - Deut. 4:9). It not only prescribes punishment for forgetfulness. It also makes a distinction between passive forgetfulness ("because he was forced") and active forgetfulness ("turning astray in his heart")⁷⁶

The former Marranos' tendency to combine current-political elements with eschatological and messianic hopes, is evidenced in writings of the period,

⁷⁴ Y. Baer, *Galut*, New York 1947, "The Turn of the Middle Ages", pp. 56-57.

⁷⁵ Y. Baer, *ibid.*, "The New Hope of Redemption", p. 69.

⁷⁶ See *Babylonian Talmud*, Menahot 99a: Reish Lakish: "Anyone who makes himself forget one thing transgresses a negative commandment...Rabina: two negatives". And compare with tractate

Avot 3:8: Rabbi Dostai bar Yannai: "Whosoever forgets one thing of his learning is liable for his life".

such as the letters of Abraham Cardoso or the theory of redemption of Molcho (as formulated in *Hasefer Hamefo'ar* and even earlier in the vision in Molcho's work *Hayyat Kaneh*).

In Cardoso's letters we find not only repeated emphasis on the fact that the Torah "as it now exists" will soon "no longer be necessary", but also on the need to throw off the yoke of Exile and all it entails. As G. Scholem pointed out in his essay "Redemption through Sin" (p. 106): "...negating the exile meant negating its religious and institutional forms as well as returning to the original fountainheads of the Jewish faith."

The view whereby Exile corrodes the religious content of Judaism also appears in Molcho's *Hasefer Hamefo'ar* and in his *Hayyat Kaneh*. Redemption of the Jewish people as set forth in *Hasefer Hamefo'ar* is linked above all with the return to the innocence of the First Man in the Garden of Eden (i.e. before he sinned). However, not only that the Jewish people was identified here with the First Man himself - in contrast to nations of the world who appear in the guise of animals); redemption of the Jewish People, (i.e. return to paradise) manifests itself in the return to the Land of Israel. Moreover, this return is linked by Molcho with fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham (Genesis ,15,19) whereby Israel would inherit the ten Canaanite tribes, whereas Edom and Ishmael would be destroyed and obliterated. The reference to Edom (Christianity) is of particular significance in view of the danger even veiled references such as this poses for the Jewish world in general and the Marranos in particular.⁷⁷ In the vision *Hayyat Kaneh* Molcho goes out to save the "grey doves" (the Marranos) from the bullets of the soldiers in the field. Some of the doves which were white (Jews), became black (converted), while in *Sefer Hamefo'ar* the return of the Marranos to Judaism becomes a precondition for redemption.⁷⁸

Moreover, this tendency is also evident in the interweaving of actual 'external' political events with messianic propaganda among the ex-Marranos. One encounters this in messianic propaganda which dealt with Muslim conquests in the East – an event that made a great impression upon the Marranos of the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the 15th Century. Thus, for instance, Juan de Pineda, sent from Spain on a diplomatic mission to

⁷⁷ *Ha-Sefer Ha-Mefo'ar*, Amsterdam, 1719, 7, p. 4; 11, p. 4 - 12, p. 1.

⁷⁸ R. Schatz, "Zizat Novel Zvi u-Mahadurato ha-Shlemah", op. cit., p. 62, Cf. Y. Jacobson, "Ha-Geulah ha-Aharonah be-Aspaklaria shel Adam ha-Rishon lefi Hakhmei Italiah bi-Tekufat ha-Renaisans", *Da'at*, 11(Summer 1983), pp.73-78 (on Molcho).

Rome by the Spanish monarch, gathered information on political events that were taking place in 1486 in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, suggesting "you do not know who is the Turk. If God wants to work on his behalf, in another year and a half he will be king in Castile...for this man is called the destroyer of the Christian religion and the protector of the Jewish religion, and he is the Messiah".

In a similar vein, Juan de la Sierra said: "In the land of the Turk and in other lands any Jew, Moor, or Christian can live according to his religion and faith".⁷⁹ Similar interpretations were advanced with regard to political developments taking place within Europe itself as the result of the Reformation.⁸⁰

Charismatic religiosity in ex-Marrano circles should not be 'short changed' - relegated to the level of a kind of esoteric, history-fleeing mysticism which happened to contribute, as it were, to the re-enchantment of the world and the social order. In fact, charismatic religiosity among ex-Marrano circles was closely tied to freedom, creativity, and personal responsibility - central variables in Weber's typology of charisma⁸¹ - and played a significant role in contributing towards spiritual creativity and social change, as well as to the process of the destruction of institutions.

The widespread, enthusiastic support given to Sabbataean movement in centers of former Marranos in Western Europe and the Levant is not only linked to the idea of repentance - the urgent need to atone for a Christian past - or even to the sense that the Sabbataean awakening provided "something of the messianic fervor (this time in a legitimate, Jewish form, as it were) which had filled the atmosphere of their youth".⁸² The response to the call of the movement of Shabbetai Zvi, and to the Shabbateanism in general (as it evolved after his apostasy and later, after his death), can be viewed as a case of religious renewal and creativity that in its pure form, is

⁷⁹ Y. Baer, *Mehkarim u-Massot be-Toledot am Yisrael*, op. cit., p. 384; on Juan de la Sierra see Beinart, *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, p.231.

⁸⁰ In his *Galut*, "The Marranos", p. 96, Baer directs us to the testimony of S. Usque (1530-1596), *Consolacám as Tribulacoens de Israel*. 3 Vols., Coimbra, 1906-7.

⁸¹ Max Weber, On Charisma and Institution Building, *Selected Writings*, Ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt, Chicago University Press, 1968.

⁸² G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, p. 485. Even though Scholem *does not explain* what were the social and theological manifestations of that messianic fervor which filled the atmosphere of their youth.

antithetical to routine, to sober rational thought, and to "daily maintenance" of organized institutions and social relations as defined by Weber.⁸³

While referring to Jewish mystics as "the representatives of the traditionalists and the conservatives among the presiding religious leadership", G. Scholem, notes (in the way that Weber's interpretation of charisma does) that there is no complete dichotomy between 'institution' and 'organization', on the one hand, and the idea of 'charisma', on the other. Despite the role he assigns mystics as part of 'defenders of the status-quo', Scholem also emphasizes that under conditions of extreme social change, Jewish mystical activity tends to undermine existing institutional frameworks.⁸⁴

The importance of the Sabbataean movement derives from the fact that it emerged at a time when the scope for utopian vision in *halakhic* Judaism was extremely limited. As Scholem put it, *halakhic* Judaism "replaced the political and national utopia without actually abolishing it," and it "wished to protect the Jewish ghetto against the reality of the world which had already in effect broken through the barriers of the ghetto..."⁸⁵

It may well be that Spinoza was aware of this special function when he made his famous claim regarding the Shabbatean movement in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*:

"Moreover, if the fundamentals of their faith had not mollified their souls, I would definitely believe that one day..they would reestablish their kingdom, and that God would choose them anew".⁸⁶

But Spinoza did not go as far as the apostate Abner of Burgos who claimed that ostensibly the Jews do not desire redemption or the resumption of the

⁸³ Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, Selected Papers edited and with an introduction by S.N. Eisenstadt, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1968, "Charisma and Institutional Structure", pp.46-80.

⁸⁴ G. Scholem, "Ha-Mistorin ha-Yehudi ve-ha-Kabbalah", in: *Devarim be-Go*, op. cit., p.232. This idea recurs in Scholem in several instances.

⁸⁵ G. Scholem, *ibid.*, *ibid.*, pp. 77-78; *Sabbatai Zvi, the Mystical Messiah*, p. 798.

⁸⁶ *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, p.43., Spinoza makes a comparison in this regard with the Chinese who, he claims, will regain their political sovereignty from the Tatars. The comparison to the Chinese (even regarding the pigtail, as a sustaining ritual, in parallel to circumcision among the Jews, see note 101, shows us that according to the approach of Spinoza there is no special Providence over the Jewish people, and that Jewish history is bound by the same laws operating upon cultures and societies.

Temple cult, and that they are satisfied with their social and economic position in the Diaspora.⁸⁷ As S. Pines argues, Spinoza's views contain something of a reference to the nature of Jewish tradition in its 'dialectical relation' to the question of the renewal of political independence.⁸⁸

The heterodox critique of (halakhic) Judaism: A pathway to the secularization of Jewish society?

News of Shabbetai Zvi's messiahship is usually said to have reached first the Jewish communities of Western Europe, especially ex-Marrano centers. The news spread in stages which corresponded to the development of Shabbetai Zvi's own messianic activity. Thus, for instance, G. Scholem suggests that the first tidings of Shabbetai Zvi's messiahship reached Western Europe only towards the end of 1655, because only in May of that year did Nathan the Prophet proclaim the messianic nature of Shabbetai Zvi in public.⁸⁹

I. Tishbi, by contrast, feels that the date must be set earlier, since the initial messianic awakening associated with Shabbetai Zvi preceded the meeting between Nathan and Shabbetai Zvi in Gaza and dated back to the time of his visit in Egypt a year earlier.⁹⁰ In Egypt, according to Tishbi, Shabbetai Zvi married Sarah the Ashkenazi "bride of the Messiah," who was brought from Livorno with the help of Rabbi Moses Pinheiro of Livorno and Raphael Joseph of Egypt. And, it was from Egypt that rumors spread of Jewish tribes fighting and winning battles in the deserts of Arabia and elsewhere. These rumors had reached Western Europe some two months before Nathan the Prophet's proclamation of Shabbetai Zvi's messiahship. The Ten Tribes were rumored to appear also in Morocco, according to a testimony which originated there. In contrast, Egyptian Jews preferred to locate the army of the Ten Tribes in the Arabian desert which was close to them. Before long the information from Morocco and Arabia was integrated together: the army in Arabia was to prepare the ground for

⁸⁷ Y. Baer, "Erez Yisrael ve-Galut be-Einei ha-Dorot shel Yemei ha-Beinayim", op. cit., pp.149-71, p. 166. Reprinted in *Mehkarim u-Massot be-Toledot Am Yisrael*, The Israel Historical Society, chapter 3.

⁸⁸ S. Pines, *Bein Mahshevet Yisrael le-Mahshevet ha-Amim*, Jerusalem 1977, p.299. Cf. R. Schatz, "Zizat Novel Zvi u-Mahadurato ha-Shlemah", op. cit, p. 54. See also Werblowsky's introduction to Z. Baras, (ed.) *Meshihyyut ve-Eskhatologiyah*, op. cit.

⁸⁹ G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, p. 469, and pp. 217-222.

⁹⁰ Y. Tishbi, *Netivey Emunah u-Minut*, "Al Mishnato shel Gershom Shalom be-Heker ha-Shabta'ut", pp.270-75.

another army advancing from Africa. In Arabia, Mecca was reported to be besieged by the army of the Tribes.⁹¹

Concerning the transmission of these rumors from the East, G. Scholem states that in general, the news was sent via Italy - mainly through Venice and Livorno - and from there to other European countries (Germany, Holland, England, etc.). He contends that in addition to close commercial ties between communities in Italy, Holland, and Turkey they were also linked by extensive geographically-dispersed and well-branched family connections. The Sephardi Jews, particularly descendants of the Marranos, were spread out in all these countries; far from being concentrated in one place, members of the same family would settle in Holland, in Hamburg, in Italy, and still others in Turkey.⁹²

This information, mainly the data at our disposal on Sephardi concentrations in Turkey, including Constantinople and Izmir,⁹³ raises the possibility that fragments of information and rumors concerning the early messianic awakening of Shabbetai Zvi in Izmir (1648-1650) and later in Constantinople (1658) could have reached centers of former Marranos as early as the 1650s. Thus, the fact that Oldenburg in his letter to Spinoza in December 1665 takes an interest not only in Spinoza's opinion about the information from Constantinople concerning "the return of the Jews to their land after more than two thousand years in exile", but also in the issue of "what have the Jews of Amsterdam heard, and how has it influenced them", should, perhaps, be viewed in the context of the special position of Amsterdam as a place where it was possible to obtain current information on events in the East.⁹⁴

After all, in Izmir itself, the city of Shabbetai Zvi, there were former Marranos, some of whom, as was demonstrated by G. Scholem, were among the close associates of Shabbetai Zvi in his youth. These included R.

⁹¹ Tishbi, *ibid.*, *ibid.*, pp.270-72.

⁹² G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, p. 469-470.

⁹³ S. Rosanes, *Divrei Yemei Yisrael be-Togarma*, part.1, Tel-Aviv 1930, p.316; *idem.*, *Korot ha-Yehudim be-Turkia ve-Arzot ha-Kodesh*, pt.4, Sofia 1934-35, p.421; A. Galante, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, Istanbul 1937, Vol. I, p. 77; Y. Barnai, "Anusei Portugal be-Izmir be-Me'ah ha-17", in: *Ummah ve-Toldotehah*, Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Zalman Shazar Centre; Jerusalem 1983, Part I, pp.289-98. For Oldenburg's letter to Spinoza see note 92 below.

⁹⁴ See Oldenburg's letter to Spinoza and Scholem's interpretation in Note 92.

Moses Hacoen Isaac Silveyra (who belonged to a well-known Portuguese Jewish family of bankers in Europe), the physician Abraham Barukh, and even Rabbi Moses Pinheiro, who Y. Barnai identified as a Portuguese Jew and a former Marrano.⁹⁵

The very presence in Izmir of Portuguese ex-Marranos at an early stage in the life of Shabbetai Zvi, and his close relations with some of them when he first embarked on the study of the Kabbalah and began to perform his "strange acts",⁹⁶ can perhaps place the Marrano-Shabbatean connection in a new light.⁹⁷ More specifically, it is possible that there were contacts with Sephardi Jews (former Marranos) at the early stages of Shabbetai Zvi's activities in the course of the development of his messianic career. This even if we agree with Scholem that in his early days in Izmir, Sabbetai Zvi was not yet active on a messianic level but conducted himself as an eccentric kabbalist, until he met Nathan in Gaza.

The attempt of various historians to present the intellectual ferment and political struggle in the Western-Spanish Diaspora in terms of a "Protestant" religiosity - that is, a religiosity which comes out against the "all-encompassing secularisation of the all-encompassing religion,"⁹⁸ overlooks three important facts:

First - it overlooks the fact that in contrast to the Catholic Church, 'Catholic' Jewish society - with a small 'c', in the sense of the all-encompassing character of religion) - certainly the one under discussion here, had no central governing body that set down and safeguarded those articles of faith held to be binding upon all religious Jews.⁹⁹ (Note change in sentence structure)

Second - it ignores the national character of the 'catholic' Jewish religion, which is problematic at least from the perspective of the Iehidim (i.e. those who are fighting against the "all-encompassing secularization of the all-encompassing religion" without relinquishing their Jewishness.) This was

⁹⁵ G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, pp. 144-145. Concerning the family of Isaac Silveyra, who was a supporter of Shabbetai Zvi even after his conversion, see J. C. Boyajian, "The New Christians reconsidered: Evidence from Lisbon's Portuguese Bankers 1497-1647", *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 23 (1979), pp. 129-56.

⁹⁶ G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, pp. 162-167.

⁹⁷ Idem, Op.Cit., p. 167.

⁹⁸ Regarding religiosity of a "Protestant" type as opposed to a "Catholic" one see, for example, E. A. Simon, "Ha-Im Od Yehudim Anahnu", *Masot u-Mehkarim*, ha-Kibbutz ha-Artzi Publishers, Merchavia and Jerusalem 1952, pp. 97-129.

⁹⁹ E. A. Simon, *Ibid*.

contrary to Protestant Christians who could claim that a Christian is not born, but comes into being (*Christianus fit non nascitur*).¹⁰⁰

Third, it overlooks the fact that while the Reformation can appear to aim at returning to the original form of Christianity (evangelistic Christianity), 'Protestant' Judaism cannot claim to be striving for a revival of any original form of Judaism. This is due, perhaps, as E. A. Simon argues, to the fact that in Christianity there was a fundamental difference between the revelational character of the Bible, on the one hand, and the Church's traditional interpretation of it, on the other; however authoritative the latter, it was not conceived as revelational.¹⁰¹ In Christianity the distinction between Holy Writ and interpretation was inherent in the principles of faith engendered by ancient Christianity itself. In contrast, Judaism insisted on the revelational status of rabbinic tradition and to relinquish the life style prescribed by *Halakhah* was deemed to challenge the revelational nature not only of the Oral but even of the Written Law.¹⁰²

What was common to Spinoza, da Costa, and other heterodox thinkers, however diverse their views, was the fact that their critique of the particularistic morality of Judaism, as formulated in *Halakhah*, and the isolationist lifestyle it proscribed,¹⁰³ was not embedded in any alternative *Jewish* theological system. Instead, their critique of Judaism was prompted by the matrix of the *surrounding Christian culture* which, in this case, consisted of both secular and theological concepts and arguments.

¹⁰⁰ This is the reason why the Anabaptists, for example, demanded that the ceremony of baptism signifying the act of joining the Church be performed on adults who have attained the age of reason, and not on every infant automatically. The term "Anabaptist" was given to them by their rivals who thought they stood for an additional baptism. J. M. Stayer, *The Anabaptists and the Sword*, Lawrence, Kansas, 1972.

¹⁰¹ E. A. Simon, "Ha-Im Od Yehudim Anahnu", op.cit, in the continuation. Although one can say that the authority of church tradition (Catholic Christianity) is linked to the authenticity of papal succession to St. Peter, and is therefore quasi-revelational. In Catholic Christianity, the authority of tradition is analogous to that of the *Halakhah*, since the link with St. Peter corresponds to the alleged Sinaitic origin of the oral Torah. In a dictum, preserved in Matthew's Evangel (chapter 16, verse 18), Jesus addresses Peter (Simon Cephas) saying: "Thou art Peter (Cephas - E.K.), and upon this rock I will build my church."

¹⁰² Idem, *ibid*. This is in contrast to Mendelssohn who denies Judaism the "veracity of a revealed faith". Spinoza, too, describes the Law of Moses as a human creation (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, op. cit., chapter 4: "On Divine Law", p.47), which was accorded divine status only afterwards.

¹⁰³ See E. Schweid, *Ha-yehudi ha-Boded ve-ha-Yahadut*, op. cit., part 2, "Mul ha-Tekufah ha-Modernit", pp.144ff; Y. Baer, *Galut*, "The Marranos", p. 103.

Thus, theologically, Spinoza's account whereby particularism of Judaism meant separation from and hostility to the non-Jewish environment, is an elaboration of the Pauline conception of Judaism.¹⁰⁴ Originally this approach was not anti-Jewish, but it ultimately led to a total negation of Judaism as, for example, the Letter to the Thessalonians (II:15-16) in which the Jews were accused of "killing the Lord".¹⁰⁵ To buttress his argument in which he rejects the traditional Jewish aim of describing Jewish history as one continuum, Spinoza assigns an important place to evidence embodied in the Hebrew Bible. He points out that separation from and hostility to the non-Jewish environment were the source of a sizable proportion of the biblical commandments. According to Spinoza, the Law of Moses amounted to a 'political constitution' which was given to the people of Israel in a specific historical situation, and for the purpose of achieving specifically local goals. The Mosaic law was well suited at that time for a people which had just come out of the House of Bondage. However, as a guideline for properly constituted social life or for the ethos of enlightened men, the Law of Moses is irrelevant. It should be noted, in this context, that Spinoza's elaboration of the Pauline argument did not necessarily mean his wholehearted acceptance of it; he was aware that this line of argument was likely to appeal to his audience, and he made use of this strain of the Christian tradition to make his argument more persuasive. In any event, although Spinoza accepts the value of the Hebrew Bible as a 'political charter' and cultural heritage, he portrays it as lacking factual foundations and scrutinizes it in the light of historical relativity.¹⁰⁶ His statements about the possibility of a revival of the Jewish kingdom, on which Jewish historiography and thought has dwelled at length, even to the point of calling him "the first Zionist",¹⁰⁷ were a response primarily to the

¹⁰⁴ According to Schweid, only in the rarest of cases do we find a Jewish sage who had to grapple directly with Christian dogma, or the organization of the church, or Christian ritual, or even the ethics of the New Testament. *Ha-yehudi ha-Boded ve-ha-Yahadut*, part 2, "Mul ha-Tekufah ha-Modernit", pp.144ff; see also note 26, *ibid.*, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ See D. Flusser, *Yahadut u-Mekorot ha-Nazrut*, Sifriyat Poalim, Tel-Aviv 1979, "Paulinizm ezel Paulus", p. 368.

¹⁰⁶ See D. Flusser, *Yahadut u-Mekorot ha-Nazrut*, Sifriyat Poalim, Tel-Aviv 1979, "Paulinizm ezel Paulus", p. 368.

¹⁰⁷ Beginning with Moses Hess in *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*, trans. by R. Waxman, Bloch Publishing Co., New York 1945, who refers to Spinoza's statements at the end of chapter three of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* ("Moreover, if the fundamentals of their faith had not mollified their souls, I would definitely believe that one day..they would reestablish their kingdom, and that God would choose them anew") as an

intellectual ferment among the Christian Millenarianists in Europe who were inspired by rumors of the appearance of Shabbetai Zvi;¹⁰⁸ only subsequently was it a reaction to the Sabbataean movement itself.¹⁰⁹

Da Costa, who focused in the beginning on what seemed to him to be the lack of authenticity of the Oral Law, and who attempted to intellectualize the commandments of the Torah,¹¹⁰ finally arrived at (or returned to) "justification through faith", which is central to the Pauline teaching of grace, in contrast with the law (*nomos*) as represented by the Torah.¹¹¹

Internal Jewish critiques of the halakhic framework

The challenge posed by the heterodox Sephardi Jews to *halakhic* Judaism represented an attempt to relinquish Judaism as a way of life binding upon all Jews; it also represented a certain tendency to integrate within non-Jewish society and culture. Thus, for example, by rejecting any mythic-national symbolism of the *kehillah*, Da Costa thereby rejected the notion of the unique position of the *kehillah* as a link between the believer and God. This is quite consistent with his total disregard for any special position of the Jewish People. A corollary of this view is that in his system of thought there is no difference between the theological status of the Karaites, Muslims, or the Gentiles in general, and the theological status of the Jewish people. He even makes use of Gentiles' books and statutes in order to explain Jewish customs and *halakhot*.¹¹² At the same time, however, Da Costa's argument cannot be thought of as a trail-blazer of 'Jewish

expression of the continuity of the national idea, and including Z. Wislawsky, "Barukh Shpinoza ve-Nidduyo", in: *Orot ba-Derekh*, Tel-Aviv 1961, p. 121.

¹⁰⁸ On 8 December 1665 Oldenburg sends a letter to Spinoza, which he concludes with a report of the reactions aroused by the rumors of the Sabbataean movement in London, see E. Shmueli, ed., *Iggerot Shpinoza*, Jerusalem 1964, p. 166). Spinoza's reply, if there was one, is lost. However, his views on the Mosaic Law can serve as a type of indirect response to Oldenburg's interest in this question. Concerning this, see G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, chpt. 2; Z. Levi, *Shpinoza u-Musag ha-Yahadut*, Sifriyat Poalim, Merhavia - Tel-Aviv 1972, p.29.

¹⁰⁹ See R. Popkin, "Shpinoza ha-Aher", *Zemanim*, 13 (Autumn 1983), History Dept. of Tel-Aviv University and Zmora Betan Publishers, Tel-Aviv, pp. 54-65.

¹¹⁰ And see, for example, his "Hasagot al Masoret Yisrael", op.cit., or in C. Gebhardt, *Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa*, Heidelberg and London 1922, pp.3-10.

¹¹¹ And see, for example, Josephus Flavius, *Contre Apion*, texte etabli et annote par T. Reinach et traduit par Leon Blum, "Les Belles Lettres", Paris 1930: I, 2.

¹¹² See, for example, *Magen ve-Zina*, op. cit., p. 1b, the second question on circumcision (Milah), or in C Gebhardt, *Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa*, Amsterdam, Heidelberg and London, 1922, pp 4-5, 7.

secularisation¹¹³ - at least with regard to Western Sephardi Jewry. For this argument neutralizes those Jewish national and cultural elements which might establish within Judaism a certain alternative to *Halakhah* as the framework in which the national, political, and other dimensions of Jewish identity are revealed.¹¹⁴

One should stress: The tendency to criticize the particularistic morality of Judaism is found not only in Spinoza, da Costa, and Prado (and even Orobio de Castro, who of course is not considered heterodox at all¹¹⁵), but also in the humanistic "early Enlightenment" of the late Renaissance period, of which individuals such as Solomon Ibn Verga and Leone di Modena are outstanding representatives.¹¹⁶ Thus, the first reference to Jewish isolationism which leads to hatred by non-Jews is not Spinoza's, in Chapter 3 of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.¹¹⁷ Both in Modena's *Kol Sakhal* and, even earlier, in Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*, there are critical references to Talmudic Jews on the same plane: here, instead of the distinctive ritual of circumcision (*brit milah*) as discussed by Spinoza,¹¹⁸ the issue is prohibition on the wines of the Gentiles (*setam yenam*):

"The only Jews responsible for this are the Talmudic Jews who put chains of steel on their legs and made things so severe, that it became impossible to find even a means of livelihood. It is true that the Bible condemns those 'who did eat of the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offering,' but they did not understand that this referred only to the sacrifices and drink offerings dedicated to the sun and the moon, before the time of Jesus. [Therefore] the Talmudic Jews said that wine offered in any cult

¹¹³ The term coined - albeit in a different historical and social context - by J. Katz in his article "Ofyah ha-Yehudi shel ha-Hevrah ha-Yisraelit", in: *Le'umiyut Yehudit*, p.106.

¹¹⁴ On this issue, see U. Ornan, "Ha-Toda'ah ha-Yehudit - Hirhurei Kefirah", *Ha-Hinukh*, Nr.5-6, Summer 1976.

¹¹⁵ J. Kaplan, *Mi-Nazrut le-Yahadut*, chap. 6: "Bein Sefeikot le-Vada'ut", pp.105-108.

¹¹⁶ See Shulvass, *Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, Leiden Chicago 1973, pp.299-303.

¹¹⁷ "As to their continuance so long after dispersion and the loss of empire, there is nothing marvelous in it, for they so separated themselves from every other nation as to draw down upon themselves universal hate..". Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, "Of the Vocation of the Hebrews", Chapt. III, p. 55.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, and it continues: "Not only by their outward rites, rites conflicting with those of other nations, but also by the sign of circumcision which they most scrupulously observe... The sign of circumcision is, as I think, so important, that I could persuade myself that it alone would preserve the nation for ever". *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Chapter III, pp. 55-56.

other than their own was forbidden. Moreover, even though they were not certain whether or not the wine had been used for cultic purposes, they forbade it on the grounds of doubt."¹¹⁹

However, while Ibn Verga and Modena are critical of Jewish society from an *apologetic* stance - grappling with the rationalist critique of Judaism by virtue of both being at home in the Renaissance culture even though Ibn Verga may never have set foot in Italy), Spinoza, Prado, and da Costa criticize Jewish society as individuals who have, as we know, already released themselves from the religious concept of "a nation with its Torah" (*umma be-toratah* - a formulation suggested, among others, by Rabbi Saadya Gaon in his *Emunot ve-Deoth*) both in its religious sense and in its national sense.¹²⁰

The attempt to present the intellectual ferment and political struggle in the Western Sephardi Diaspora from the perspective of Jewish non-confessionalism in terms of "the second reform" in Europe - that is, a type of Jewish parallel to the attempt of individuals and groups to achieve a 'non-confessional Christianity'¹²¹ - overlooks, as we shall see, not only some of the unique characteristics of the Jewish religion, and its national aspect in particular, but also the central historical forces at work in this society.

True, the failure, as it were, of religion in the public domain ('catholic'-structured Judaism) created the social need for safeguarding religious rights for individuals, as championed in Spinoza's *Tractus Theologico-Politicus* :

"We will not, however, accuse the sectaries of impiety because they have adapted the words of Scripture to their own opinions; it is thus that these words were adapted to the understanding of the masses originally, and everyone is at liberty so to treat them if he sees that he can thus obey God in matters relating to justice and charity with a more full consent: but we do

¹¹⁹ Solomon Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, annotated and elucidated by Azriel Shohat, edited and prefaced by Y. Baer, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1947, p. 31. On the same subject see also Y. Baer, "He'arot Hadashot la-Sefer Shevet Yehudah", *Tarbiz*, 6, (1947), p.152ff.

¹²⁰ Spinoza, op. cit., p.42: "...They definitely do not have anything which they can attribute to themselves over the other nations". And also, "The hatred of the nations sustains them"; see also, Y. Baer, op. cit., p.93. Concerning Uriel da Costa see notes 110 and 112 above.

¹²¹ J. Kaplan, "Ha-Kehillah ha-Portugalit be-Amsterdam ba-Me'ah ha-17", op cit., pp.169-72.

accuse those who will not grant this freedom to their fellows, but who persecute all who differ from them, as God's enemies.."¹²²

Uriel da Costa, when arguing that "opinions held among Jews which are not worthy of being called in the name of God", or speaking of "the judges who need those qualities which Jethro quoted to Moses, men of valor, wise, and so forth, who are in need of an understanding heart", also alludes to the failure of religion as a public enterprise.

However, in Judaism of the period in question, we discern another social goal, which is certainly more significant in terms of its social scope, as we have shown: that of raising collective social and political interest to such a degree that the redemption of the society becomes a cosmic need, a need of the Divine Spirit itself.¹²³

Thus, the 'evidence' for the process of undermining the social framework is not to be sought primarily in the critical views of individual "atheists," "deists," or simply *estudiantes*,¹²⁴ or even Jews "*por razon de estado*".¹²⁵ Such 'evidence' is to be found precisely in the deployment of the *basic concepts of Judaism* - the uniqueness of the people of Israel, redemption - in a new context and configuration: not in their dogmatic (i.e. *halakhic*) meanings, as predetermined givens, but in their *historical* and *social* meanings, and as the means for something else, for the sake of the nation.¹²⁶

It is not accidental that 'messianic issues' are located mainly in Maimonides' *Hilkhot Melakhim* (Laws of Kings 11:12) and not in his

¹²² In Chapter 14 ("Definitions of Faith, the Faith, and the Foundations of Faith..") of *Tractus Theologico-Politicus*, pp. 147-153.

182-183; L. de Modena, *Magen ve-Zinnah*, A. Geiger's edition, Breslau 1856, pg.3a-b.

¹²³ See G. Scholem, "Le-Havanat ha-Ra'ayon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael", in: *Devarim Be-go*, I, pp. 155-90, p.188ff.,

¹²⁴ On the "estudiantes" as "purveyors of great iniquity", see Moses Hagiz, *Sefat Emet*, Joel Salomon, Jerusalem 1891, p.2a, 5b.

Regarding the "Karaite" ideology as a "call for a return to divine revelation, the source which has been befouled by men", see S. Rosenberg, *Emunat Hakhamim*, op. cit., p. 293. On the term *adversaries*, see Immanuel Aboab, *Nomologia o Discursos Legales*, Amsterdam 1629 (5389), p. 312.

¹²⁵ Abraham Israel Pereyra, *Espejo de la Vanidad del Mundo* (Amsterdam 1671), p.269ff. See also, *ibid.*, *Discurso Tercero*, Cap. VI: "Lamenta el poco zelo de algunos, que tienen mas el nombre de Judios, que las obras".

¹²⁶ Y. Leibowitz, "Li-Shemah ve-she-Lo-Lishma", in his *Yahadut, Am Yehudi u-Medinat Yisrael*, pp.311-314.

Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah, despite the fact that he too accepts redemption as a definite fact for the future, and even makes the coming of the Messiah one of the principles of the Jewish faith.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ On messianic redemption in the teaching of Maimonides, see Y. Leibowitz, *Emunah, Historiyyah ve-Arakhim*, pp.89-101; G. Scholem, *ibid.*, "Le-Havanat ha-Ra'ayon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael", and particularly pages 175-76, 181-86. See also Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1986, chapter 1.