Chapter 11

Prayer, Literacy, and Literary Memory in the Jewish Communities of Medieval Europe

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Our knowledge and understanding of the popular history of the Jews in Christian Europe during the high Middle Ages has been significantly enriched in recent years, largely due to new archival research.[1] Nonetheless, large gaps remain. The partial results that are sometimes presented on the basis of rabbinic literature reveal the methodological problems inherent in sketching popular history on the basis of the literature of the rabbinic elite, whose educational levels were presumably much higher than those of the average person. Much can be learned from the rabbinic oeuvre about the lives and the intellectual capabilities of scholars. Far less can be learned about the common folk, whose achievements (and frustrations) are not typically included or reflected in this corpus.[2]

With regard to the literacy of the Jewish layman in the medieval period,[3] a number of scholars have assumed that many (or even most) males could read, since they participated in the recitation of the liturgy in synagogue services throughout Europe and the East.[4] It is impossible, however, to demonstrate this contention with any certainty on the basis of the sources or texts that have been adduced to this point. Needless to say, prayer stands at the heart of Jewish tradition and custom. Liturgical formulations are found within the Bible itself, and talmudic and rabbinic literature attribute aspects of the daily prayer order (as well as occasional liturgies) to various biblical figures. This study seeks to understand the dynamics of how medieval Jewry negotiated and sustained the performance of these traditional rites in light of the realia and educational levels of the period, which did not so easily support this endeavor.

Passages that discuss various public prayer practices from the twelfth through the early fourteenth centuries, in both Ashkenaz and Sefarad, have not been analyzed in terms of lay literacy. Although these texts are found in rabbinic works, they summarize and describe popular customs and practices, as well as the attempts of rabbinic scholars and halakhic decision makers to come to grips with congregational prayer practices that appeared to contradict talmudic and post-talmudic legal formulations and traditions. Judging by the efforts of the leading rabbinic authorities and scholars to justify and integrate these popular practices, we can learn about the level of lay literacy or, more precisely, literary memory (*memoria ad verba*). Mary Carruthers has argued that this concept, which connotes people's ability to remember great quantities of written material precisely and to recite it by heart, was closely linked with people's ability to read.[5]

In the mishnaic and talmudic periods, orality was valued as a means of preserving the accurate transmission of the body of the Mishnah and various talmudic texts.[6] The state of affairs in pre-Crusade Ashkenaz is difficult to trace, at best, although the written text of the Oral Law as an accurate repository of talmudic teachings surely made important strides through the eleventh century.[7] By the twelfth century, the rabbinic elite of medieval Ashkenaz did not eschew written texts as a means of preserving rabbinic teachings and traditions. To the contrary, even though texts were not always available, the Tosafists presumed that they were generally the most accurate records of the Oral Law, and their interpretations and analysis proceeded according to the best readings available to them.[8]

To be sure, medieval rabbinic scholars still had to commit a great deal of material to memory, owing to the paucity or shortage of texts. As the following citation from mid-thirteenth-century northern France demonstrates, scholars welcomed the opportunity to check particular readings in written texts as they became available: "When I arrived in northern France (Tsarefat), I saw in the *Bereshit Rabbah* [text] of my teacher R. Yeḥi'el [of Paris] and also in the *Bereshit Rabbah* [text] of my teacher R. Tuvyah [of Vienne] that [the phrase in question] was found in them as it was in my [copy]."[9]

Carruthers characterized *memoria* as an aid to or as an outgrowth of the reading of texts (rather than as a hindrance).[10] These models would seem to apply equally to rabbinic scholars as to monastic scholars and their successors in the cathedral schools, as characterized, for example, by Jean Leclerq.[11] Rabbinic scholars during the High Middle Ages studied from written texts, or memorized those texts on the basis of a written version.

There is no doubt that the Tosafists themselves (as well as their rabbinic counterparts in Islamic and Christian Spain during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) were literate. The vast written corpus they produced makes it clear that they could make sense of unfamiliar Hebrew texts and compose new ones. These highly literate rabbinic figures provide the data and context for the main issue to be discussed in this study: What was the literary memory of laymen with respect to prayer? Although laymen have not left us records of their own abilities or of deliberations in this matter, the assessments of the rabbinic scholars emerged from and were meant to address the broad ranks of Ashkenazi and Sefaradi society. This is not an instance of elite rabbinic figures ruling or commenting only for themselves or for their closest followers and confidants.

Although the bulk of the discussion will center on laymen's capacity to recall liturgical texts (*memoria*) and will not often refer to full-fledged literacy, this study has implications for both the capacity of laymen to recollect Scripture more broadly and for their overall literacy level as well. When prayer books, or *maḥzorim*, were more widely available in Ashkenaz (for example, on the High Holidays and other festivals, when the complexity and uniqueness of the prayers required written versions), rabbinic authorities report that lay members of the congregation were able, on the whole, to read from them without difficulty.[12]

Reciting Liturgical Verses by Heart in Ashkenaz

Let us begin our analysis with a passage found in a fifteenth-century collection of Byzantine sermons that preserves earlier Ashkenazi material. The passage will help us to understand the nature of an ongoing halakhic problem related to public prayer, as well as the solutions that medieval Jewish scholars proposed: "[T]he German Pietists were accustomed to reciting the *Shema'* from a written text, as was the communal prayer leader (*shaliaḥ tsibbur*) in particular. R. Me'ir of Rothenburg [d. 1293] wrote that it is prohibited to recite [the *Shema'*] without a written text, and certainly [it is forbidden to recite] other Torah portions [that are part of the liturgy without a written text]. Therefore, Ashkenazi prayer leaders in all locales recite the *Shema'* to themselves [*be-laḥash*]."[13]

The halakhic dilemma that stands at the center of this passage emerges from an uncontested talmudic ruling stating that sections from the Written Torah or Law ("written matters") may not be recited by heart.[14] The German Pietists suggested that this difficulty could be solved if the congregation, and especially the cantor or prayer leader, read all the biblical verses found in the liturgy from a written text. The (unnamed) Pietists apparently preferred that everyone present read from a written text, not merely the cantor, since if the cantor alone read from a written text, others would fulfill their obligation to recite the verses by listening to his reading—and thus not from a written text. Me'ir of Rothenburg remained concerned that, in most instances, even the cantor would be forced to recite biblical verses in the liturgy by heart because of the relative paucity of prayer books. Thus the passage states that, in cases where the cantor does not have a written prayer text in front of him, he should recite the verses by heart quietly to himself, in a low voice, so that other worshipers will not be able to hear him and will therefore not attempt to fulfill their obligation through his recitation. Me'ir of Rothenburg's formulation suggests that members of the congregation could recite the verses in the liturgy by heart for themselves, at least in a situation in which no prayer books were available.

That people throughout northern France and Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries could, in fact, do so is made explicit by two parallel Tosafot texts.[15] Both discuss the talmudic stricture against reciting "written matters" by heart and interpret it as applying only when the person reciting the biblical verse(s) by heart intends to help others fulfill their obligation. But, they say, reflecting the view of Ri (R. Isaac of Dampierre, d. 1189), this prohibition does not apply to those who recite verses by heart only for themselves, suggesting rather strongly that this was a widespread practice.

Ri derived his view from a talmudic passage according to which the high priest was allowed to recite the final part of the Torah reading for Yom Kippur by heart and was not required to read it from a Torah scroll.[16] The reason was that the high priest read the Torah only for his own sake, not in order to fulfill others' obligation to hear the reading. Ri extends this allowance to cover verses of the liturgy.[17] The Tosafot texts conclude: "The custom is to recite the *Shema'* silently, and every member of the congregation should recite it for himself. The prayer leader may not recite verses [aloud] by heart in order to help the congregation to fulfill their obligation."

Other texts make it clear that the question of reciting written texts by heart was a widespread concern among rabbinic leaders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For Eliezer b. Samuel of Metz (d. 1198), even the unlearned knew the verses of the *Qedushah* prayer by heart, although it appears that many of them knew other liturgical verses by heart as well.[18] A number of other contemporaneous scholars also commented on the relationship between orality and writing in the synagogue liturgy. R. Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi (Rabiah), a leading German halakhist in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, writes that the prohibition against reciting verses from the Written Law by heart applies only to a prayer leader "who wishes thereby to fulfill the obligation of his congregation." Rabiah also writes that the entire congregation was accustomed to reciting the biblical verses preceding the morning *'Amidah* as well as the *Shema'* prayer by heart, provided that the cantor did not specifically intend to fulfill the obligation of others through his recitation.[19]

Another Tosafot passage composed in northern France attests that the prohibition against reciting the Written Law by heart should be narrowed along similar lines.[20] The concluding observation in this text is that "one need be concerned [about violating the prohibition] only when others are fulfilling their obligation [on the basis of his recitation by heart]."[21] Although the primary aim of this passage is to delineate the scope of the talmudic prohibition, this Tosafot formulation (like those of Ri, R. Eliezer of Metz, and Rabiah) notes (and justifies) the widespread practice in the synagogues of northern France and Germany: most, if not all, of the worshipers (including the cantors) typically recited the prayers by heart, including the various biblical verses that were part of the liturgy.

As they did in other cases, Ri of Dampierre and his Tosafist successors in northern France and Germany preserved the long-standing practice of reciting liturgical verses from memory by limiting or neutralizing a potentially problematic talmudic prohibition through a somewhat novel understanding of the talmudic texts in question.[22] All the Ashkenazi formulations and interpretations that we have seen to this point understood the talmudic prohibition that "written matters" may not be recited by heart as a public or congregational prohibition only. Moreover, we have evidence of this practice as early as the first half of the twelfth century. The earliest German rabbinic scholar to justify and allow it was R. Eliezer b. Nathan (Raban), a leading figure in Mainz. Raban was asked by his son-in-law, Samuel b. Natronai, "How is it that we recite the scriptural portions of the sacrifices, *Shema'*, and *pesuqei de-zimrah* each day [by heart]" in light of the talmudic prohibition against reciting "written matters" by heart?[23] Raban suggested two ways of resolving this dilemma.

First, where it is impossible to observe the talmudic prohibition on reciting verses of the written Torah by heart without jettisoning a religious obligation—for example, when one has no text and is forced to attempt to fulfill his religious obligations by reciting scriptural verses in the liturgy by heart—one may ignore the talmudic prohibition; this is based on the scriptural and rabbinic notion that "there is a time when, in order to act for the Almighty, one is bidden to abrogate Your Torah."

Similarly, in order for the masses to continue to pray effectively, as they were accustomed, the talmudic prohibition may be set aside. Raban links this resolution to a talmudic passage that relates to the converse prohibition that the Oral Law may not be written down.[24] The rabbis allowed the Oral Law to be written down when it became impossible for it to be properly remembered without committing it to a fixed literary form. As Raban notes, "when the later generations of the amoraim saw that the capacity for study had decreased, and in order that the [Oral] Torah not be forgotten, they asserted the principle that 'it is time to act for the Almighty.' For a similar reason and concern, reciting liturgical verses by heart may also be countenanced." Although the talmudic passage does not specifically extend the permissive rationale "it is time to do for the Almighty" to the prohibition on reciting "written matters" by heart, Raban proposes its extension to the parallel prohibition of writing down "oral matters" to justify the common prayer practice in Ashkenaz. To this end, he musters additional talmudic texts as well. As far as I can tell, however, only one other Ashkenazi authority (his own grandson, Rabiah) cited or endorsed this approach.[25]

Raban's second explanation is closer to the standard approach among Ashkenazi Talmudists, namely, that the talmudic prohibition applies only when one is attempting to fulfill the obligations of others. Raban bases this interpretation on two talmudic passages. The first permits the *anshei mishmar* (who oversaw the Temple service) to recite verses by heart.[26] The second concludes that even though a blind man may not write a Torah scroll because Scripture must be copied from a written text, Rabbi Me'ir (who was blind) could copy a Scroll of Esther because "Rabbi Me'ir was different. Since the words of the biblical text were entrenched (*shegurim*) and clearly established (*meyusharim*) in his mouth so that he could write them properly, it was as if he was writing them on the basis of a written text."[27] In a parallel ruling, the Talmud concludes that a scribe may write the Torah passages that are to be placed in tefillin or mezuzot by heart because these portions are relatively short and are entrenched in the memories of all. According to this approach, all biblical verses that are firmly established in the memories of the members of the congregation may also be recited by heart, for the people will not err in their recitation.[28]

A nearly identical explanation is preserved in *Sefer or zarua'* and *Sefer Mordekhai* in the name of Rabbenu Tam, a slightly younger contemporary of Raban in northern France. "How do we recite the Song of the Sea and the sacrificial portions in the synagogue by heart? As we know, the Written Law may not be recited by heart. Rabbenu Tam responded that the situation of prayer is different, since the prayers are easily and accurately recited."[29] Similarly, Ri of Dampierre also preserved in his legal rulings the loosened prohibition as formulated by his uncle Rabbenu Tam: "Although we hold that the Written Law may not be recited by heart, the *Shema'* and other verses in which people are proficient are permitted. The Talmud rules similarly in tractate *Megillah* that tefillin and mezuzot that are written not on the basis of a written copy are permitted, since the [biblical verses included in] prayers are easily and accurately recited."[30]

We have thus far identified two dominant interpretations or justifications among the Tosafists and leading halakhists in medieval Ashkenaz: that "the prayers are established in the mouths of all" and thus do not require resort to written texts; and that the prohibition of reciting verses by heart applies only when fulfilling the obligation of others. Both these approaches suggest a shared reality: most, if not all, of the people in the synagogue, including the cantors, did not have written prayer books in front of them. Moreover, both rabbinic approaches assumed that the vast majority of people could recite the many liturgical verses by heart without any difficulty. For this reason, the cantors in Ashkenaz could be instructed to lower their voices when reciting verses so that the congregation would not be able to hear their recitation. Similarly, the approach that "the prayers are established in the mouths of all" presumes that the verses included within the prayer service were fixed in the memories of most of the congregation.[31]

A Paucity of Prayer Books in Ashkenaz

What was the situation in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Ashkenaz with respect to the availability of prayer books?

Israel Ta-Shma has demonstrated the general dearth of prayer books through the end of the thirteenth century and beyond in Ashkenaz. Although the earliest known Ashkenazi prayer book was copied in England at the end of the twelfth century, it and others like it could be found only in the hands of wealthy people. Although prayer books (for the regular prayers and for festivals) were copied in increasing quantities during the thirteenth century, the average person "in the pews" had neither a prayer book nor a copy of the Torah or other biblical texts in his hands during synagogue services.[32] In addition, no comprehensive collections of biblical verses were written on the synagogue walls.[33]

The German Pietists, who were inclined toward stringency, required at least the cantor (if not the rest of the congregation) to pray from a written text so that the obligations of anyone listening would be fulfilled according to the strict interpretation of the halakhah. Similarly, *Sefer Ḥasidim* itself writes that "a person who cannot have the proper intentions during prayer if he does not have a prayer book, as well as a sated person who cannot recite the grace after meals with proper intention [without a written text before him], should read these [from a prayer book or] from a book that has the grace after meals text in it. If the individual did not have the proper intention during his silent recitation of the *'Amidah*, he should have the proper intention during the cantor's repetition and recite every word along with him."[34] In this passage, *Sefer Ḥasidim* is suggesting that a written text helps to focus a person's intentions during prayer, this being a lofty goal for the German Pietists. More importantly for our purposes, it suggests that if an individual has no prayer book, he may fulfill his obligation by reciting the words along with the cantor's repetition of the *'Amidah*. However, as far as any biblical verses are concerned, the cantor may undertake this role only so long as he has a written prayer text in front of him.

To be sure, it is clear from these and other sections that *Sefer Ḥasidim* preferred that a capable individual pray by heart and concentrate very deeply. This level of concentration would facilitate counting the letters of the prayers and other pietistic techniques designed to unlock their hidden meanings and intentions. *Sefer Ḥasidim* also suggests postures for initiated worshipers, for those relatively unfamiliar with the act and mechanics of reading and praying, and for the pietistic adept who wished to achieve pietistic goals.[35] Indeed, even the pietist mode of prayer depended on the availability of proper written texts for the counting of letters. Thus, several sections in *Sefer Ḥasidim* stress the importance and effectiveness of copying siddurim. As in other issues of religious practice, *Sefer Ḥasidim* expresses the concern that prayer texts be copied only by appropriate, worthy people.[36]

There were locales in Ashkenaz in which the community owned a siddur or a *maḥzor* for the use of the prayer leader. In addition, leading rabbinic figures possessed or compiled *maḥzorim* to establish and direct the components of the communal prayer services as well as to fix customs and procedures related to prayer.[37] Nonetheless, during the days of Me'ir of Rothenburg (late thirteenth century), a widow's bequest of a large prayer book to the community for the use of the cantor was still considered noteworthy.[38] In reality, twelfth- and thirteenth-century Ashkenazi cantors were thought of as "living prayer books" who could faithfully present the daily and Sabbath liturgies by heart, in addition to providing appropriate liturgical poetry for a range of occasions.[39] The paucity of siddurim and *maḥzorim* suggested by these examples corroborates the situation we have noted in the rulings of the Tosafists and other Ashkenazi halakhists: the members of the congregation typically prayed by heart.

There were, however, distinctions with respect to the prayers on festivals and the High Holidays. Rabiah writes that on the three pilgrimage holidays (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot), cantors could simply say, "as it is written in Your Torah [*ka-katuv be-toratekha*]," which would obviate the need for them to recite the biblical verses that described the sacrificial service as they applied specifically to each festival. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, however, the cantors recited all appropriate biblical verses in the liturgy, since they (and many of the congregants) had written copies of the *maḥzorim* in front of them.[40] It is clear that in such a situation, the congregants could fulfill their obligation to recite the verses by means of the cantor's recitation from his *maḥzor* even if they did not have their own *maḥzorim*. Nonetheless, the implication of this passage is that there was an effort to copy *maḥzorim* for the High Holidays in particular, in order to obviate this problem entirely. Moreover, this passage serves to confirm that the congregants were sufficiently literate to read from *maḥzorim* and siddurim when they were available.[41]

A passage in *Sefer Mordekhai* (late thirteenth century) makes a similar distinction between the daily prayers and those of the High Holidays: "Although the *'Amidah* is recited silently throughout the days of the year (as per the talmudic characterization of the prayer of Hannah), on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur it is recited aloud so that each congregant will thereby teach the other to pray with proper intention. We are not afraid that they will cause one another to err, since they have *maḥzorim* and prayer books in their hands."[42] Here again, the passage confirms the situation that we have described: for weekdays, Sabbaths, and perhaps on the festivals as well, most people in the congregation did not have siddurim.[43]

The logistics of synagogue lighting in medieval Ashkenaz also had implications for the use of prayer books. Isaac b. Moses of Vienna, the author of *Sefer or zarua'*, cites a passage from the *Sefer ha-terumah* by Barukh b. Isaac (a northern French Tosafist, d. 1211) on the prohibition against reading on the Sabbath near a lamp, lest the reader tilt it.[44] The passage also discusses the use of lamps in the synagogue on Yom Kippur and on the festivals:

> On Yom Kippur eve, the congregation recites *Seliḥot* and supplications by candlelight, and each person reads from the [prayer] book by himself (*ve-qor'in ba-sefer yeḥidi*) without being concerned lest he tip the candle, since, in this case, the fear of Yom Kippur is upon him, as well as the fear of the congregation [who are standing by] and the need to recite many supplications. But on the eve of a festival that occurs on the Sabbath, the cantor *cannot* recite the *Ma'ariv* prayer and its liturgical poem from the *maḥzor* alone by the light of the candle, since there is not such a pressing need to recite the poem. And similarly, when the first night of Passover falls on the Sabbath and one wants to recite the Haggadah alone, he must have another person reading along with him. If, however, the other person with him cannot read at all [or if it is a woman], his presence is not helpful in this regard. And if, by perusing each section from the text in advance, he can then finish reciting it without [the text], that is a good thing.[45]

The underlying presumption of Barukh's ruling is that most males could and did read from written prayer texts when they were available to them (as on Yom Kippur in the synagogue, or for those who had a Passover Haggadah for their use at home).

Isaac *Or zarua'* ruled even more leniently in the public contexts just described. The cantor may recite by candlelight the liturgical poems for a festival that falls on the Sabbath (and not only the *Seliḥot* for Yom Kippur). Isaac's reasoning is that any individual in the congregation (and not only the cantor) can be confident that he will not tip the lamp, since "it is impossible that no one from the congregation will see this and not prevent him from doing so. Therefore it is permissible on Yom Kippur eve for everyone to pray from his prayer book. And the cantor may recite the poem by candlelight . . . when a festival coincides with the Sabbath [as well], since the fear [and vigilance] of the congregation are upon him."[46] The presence of *maḥzorim* on Yom Kippur was, then, not uncommon.

Up to this point, we have described the relationship between Jewish law and actual ritual performance as reflected in Ashkenazi prayer practices. Tosafists and other rabbinic authorities resolved the contradiction between the talmudic prohibition against reciting biblical passages by heart and common practice by asserting that the Talmud had, in fact, meant to apply the prohibition only when the recitation fulfilled the obligation of others. They also maintained that there had never been any prohibition on an individual writing down teachings and formulations of the Oral Law for his own use. Only when it became necessary to provide a textual version of the entire corpus of the Oral Law for everyone's use did it also become necessary to invoke a large-scale allowance based on the principle that "there is a time to act for the Almighty."[47] A second prevalent view held that the prohibition of reciting verses by heart did apply to an individual who was doing so for himself, but the prohibition could be set aside (or perhaps had never been established) for verses deeply etched into the memories and mouths of those praying (*shegurim be-fihem*).[48] Both these approaches presumed that many or most members of the communities in medieval Ashkenaz could recite the verses found in the liturgy by heart. Within the broader Ashkenazi community, *memoria* (as an indication of basic literacy) was considered to be strong and active.[49]

Literary Memory in Sefarad

The situation in medieval Iberia at first blush appears similar. Sefaradi rabbinic scholars suggest that the availability of prayer books was, generally speaking, rather limited. Thus, for example, David b. Joseph Abudarham of Seville notes in several places in his overarching commentary to the liturgy (ca. 1340) that neither the cantor nor the members of the congregation had prayer books in front of them.[50]

In fact, Sefaradi talmudists and legal authorities reacted differently from their Ashkenazi counterparts to the talmudic prohibition against reciting "written matters" by heart. Rabbenu Yonah of Gerona (mid-thirteenth century), a leading rabbinic figure and communal leader in Catalonia, wrote that the prohibition applies only in the absence of an absolute halakhic or customary requirement to recite the verses in question. If they are required, however, one may recite them by heart. This is the opposite approach from what we have seen among the Ashkenazi rabbis, who were troubled by the talmudic prohibition precisely when the verses in question were required. Rabbenu

Yonah based his position on a different understanding of the permission given to the high priest to read by heart the final part of the Torah reading on Yom Kippur. According to the talmudic passage, the high priest was required to read the verses and therefore permitted to recite them by heart. Only when the recitation of verses was completely optional was it necessary to read them from a text (and thus prohibited to recite them by heart). According to this approach, one person could recite liturgical verses by heart on behalf of another, provided that the verses were part of the standard, required liturgy.[51]

To be sure, the Sefaradi rabbis did not always agree with one another on the specifics of the prohibition, even if their positions reflect a shared material reality. R. Yom Tov b. Abraham Ishvilli (Ritba), one of the leading Sefaradi talmudic interpreters and legal authorities (d. ca. 1325), cites a passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi that stresses that the high priest could recite by heart only the final part of the Torah reading on Yom Kippur, the sacrifices recorded in Numbers 29:7–11, instituted to give added meaning and significance to the events of the day.[52] The first (and main) part of the Torah reading had to be read from a scroll. Similarly, Ritba argues, the verses that are part of the daily liturgy are not considered to be an obligatory public reading on par with the main part of the Yom Kippur Torah reading. Rather, they are additional praises and statements of thanksgiving that are added to the core prayers to give them greater substance, import, and beauty. Thus, all these verses may be recited by heart.[53] While Rabbenu Yonah permits obligatory readings or verses to be recited by heart, Ritba proscribes it.

Both their solutions presuppose that the average Sefaradi congregant could not recite liturgical verses by heart. According to both, the cantor was permitted to recite all verses on behalf of the congregation, even if he was doing so by heart. This was, in fact, the common practice in medieval Christian Iberia, as we shall see shortly.

In Ashkenaz, however, cantors were forbidden from reciting verses on behalf of the congregation, and all the various Ashkenazi authorities whose views we have surveyed denied the permissibility of this practice. One early German Tosafist, R. Isaac b. Asher (Riba) ha-Levi of Speyer (d. 1133), cites the passage from the Talmud Yerushalmi on the basis of which Ritba allowed the cantor to fulfill the liturgical obligation of the members of the congregation by reciting verses by heart. However, neither Riba of Speyer nor any other Ashkenazi scholar cited the passage for this purpose.[54]

The differences between the Sefaradi and Ashkenazi approaches to the question are even more striking when we consider that both Rabbenu Yonah and Ritba were familiar with Ashkenazi traditions. Rabbenu Yonah had studied at the Tosafist study hall in Evreux, Normandy, and was well aware of the teachings of various northern French Tosafists. Ritba also received a great deal of Tosafist material from both northern France and Germany and cites it throughout his talmudic commentaries. But both are conspicuously silent when it comes to the Ashkenazi approaches to the matter of reciting "written things" (biblical verses) by heart. This development reflects, to my mind, a fundamental difference between Ashkenaz, where worshipers possessed a high level of literary memory, and Sefarad, where the level was lower.[55]

In ignoring Ashkenazi precedent, were Rabbenu Yonah and Ritba influenced by earlier Sefaradi sources or precedents? To the best of my knowledge, no Sefaradi sources prior to Rabbenu Yonah address this issue directly. Perhaps Rabbenu Yonah was moved to raise this halakhic problem explicitly based on what he had seen and learned from his teachers in northern France, even if he did not propose their solutions to the problem. Even Maimonides, the most systematic and comprehensive Sefaradi authority in his treatment of halakhic problems, does not mention the talmudic prohibition against reciting "written matters" by heart. Interpreters of Maimonides have suggested that he omitted it because he linked it to the related prohibition against formulating "oral matters" (*devarim she-be-'al peh*) in writing.[56] That prohibition could not ultimately be upheld: because of the vicissitudes of the times (so the rabbinic argument runs), it became necessary to write down the Oral Law (or at least to formulate it in a unified literary form). Similarly, these commentators suggest, Maimonides held that the prohibition of reciting biblical verses by heart had also fallen into disuse owing to the troubles of the day and thus never mentioned it in his writings.[57]

Although Maimonides omits the prohibition on reciting "written matters" by heart, he does mention in a responsum the principle that "there is a time to act for the Almighty" in order to justify a synagogue practice in effect in exceptional cases: on festivals when a large number of congregants were present, or even on a weekday when the hour was late, the cantor would commence his recitation of the *'Amidah* out loud immediately, without first engaging in silent prayer. He would thereby fulfill the obligation for all those present, both those who did not know how to pray (*einam beqi'im*) and those who did (although the latter were expected to recite each word quietly to themselves together with the cantor). The questioners had informed Maimonides that there were certain congregations in Egypt in which the cantor recited the *'Amidah* in this manner even on behalf of those who were generally capable of praying for themselves (for example, in the *Musaf* service on Rosh Hashanah), so that they would not err.[58] His answer suggests that he did not expect everyone to know the prayers by memory.

In another responsum, Maimonides was asked about locales in which the cantors prayed aloud twice, first to fulfill the obligations of those incapable of praying and second to uphold the obligation of "repeating the *'Amidah*." Maimonides responded that it would be better to have only one recitation by the cantor.[59] In neither case does he mention the prohibition on reciting biblical verses by heart. His silence perhaps served as a halakhic precedent for Rabbenu Yonah and Ritba, who effectively detached the prohibition from the recitation of prayers, and retained it only with respect to the study and recitation of biblical texts for their own sake.

Gaonic Precedents

All these Sefaradi authorities presume that prayer books were rare, even if they presume that congregants had different levels of competence in reciting the liturgy from memory. This shared presumption may seem surprising, given that several of their predecessors, including the Iraqi ge'onim 'Amram bar Sheshna (d. 875) and Se'adyah al-Fayyūmī (d. 942), had authored prayer books, copies of which were sent to individuals and even entire communities within their orbits. Nevertheless, it seems that the average Jew in the Islamic world during the seventh to eleventh centuries did not have a prayer book in his hand when he prayed.[60]

This observation is at the core of an article by Louis Ginzberg, who reaches the somewhat radical conclusion that the general absence of prayer books during this period resulted from a purposeful halakhic ruling rather than the high cost of copying books or the absence of qualified copyists.[61] The Talmud prohibits an individual from holding anything in his hands while reciting the *'Amidah* lest he be distracted.[62] For this reason, according to Ginzberg, Yehudai Ga'on (mid-eighth century) ruled that the cantor himself should never hold a prayer book, except on the High Holidays and other similar occasions when the liturgy is more complicated than usual. Two ge'onim at Sura, Sar Shalom (d. ca. 859) and Natronai (d. 865), omitted the recitation of sacrificial verses during the *'Amidah* on Sabbaths and holidays for a similar reason: they thought that it would be impossible for cantors to recite all of them correctly by heart. The presumption is that cantors did not have prayer books in front of them.[63]

Ginzberg's theory is difficult to accept. He assumes that the ge'onim were prospectively legislating that the cantor should not hold a prayer book. But it seems to me more reasonable to suggest that they were simply reacting to a state of affairs in which prayer books were unavailable because of cost or difficulties in production. Indeed, Se'adyah writes in his authorized and annotated version of the prayer book that someone familiar with the biblical texts about sacrificial offerings should include them in his recitation of the *'Amidah* during *Musaf* on festivals, while someone who is not should omit them.[64] Neither Se'adyah nor any other Iraqi ga'on explicitly mentions the talmudic prohibition on reciting biblical verses by heart. This suggests that they assumed the prohibition was not in force.

Ginzberg's argument on behalf of a continued rabbinic prohibition on reciting the liturgy from a written text extends even beyond the period of the ge'onim. He holds that, as late as the thirteenth century, Rabbenu Yonah maintained that it was prohibited to hold a prayer book while praying.[65] Indeed, according to Ginzberg, it was only a ruling by Israel Isserlein in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz that permitted a prayer book to be held if it helped one to have the proper intentions.[66] In fact, Rabbenu Yonah did permit a prayer book to be held if it would help one achieve the proper level of intention.[67] This was also the view of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, whose impact on Rabbenu Yonah has been documented.[68]

Other evidence against Ginzberg's theory comes from the work of Zedekiah b. Abraham *ha-Rofe min ha-'anavim* (Italy, d. 1260). Zedekiah permits the cantor to pray from a prayer book to avoid mistakes. In doing so, he considers the talmudic prohibition against praying from a written text, but rejects it. He cites the view of Rabbenu Ephraim, a student of Isaac Alfasi (d. 1103), that the cantor alone should not use a prayer book, based in turn on the talmudic law that the cantor is required to "organize his prayers" (*lehasdir et tefillato*) while the congregation is reciting the silent *'Amidah*. If the cantor were allowed to use a siddur, Rabbenu Ephraim reasons, why would he be required to "organize his prayers"? Zedekiah disagrees with Rabbenu Ephraim, concluding that even the talmudic prohibition against writing down prayers was in effect only throughout the talmudic period.[69] Since, however, the rabbis had already permitted the prayers to be written down for quite some time (based on the principle that "there is a time to act for the Almighty"), the cantor may pray from a prayer book.[70] Thus, well before the thirteenth century, any halakhic problem related to praying from a written text had been effectively neutralized, and cantors were allowed to use prayer books.

What emerges from this part of our discussion is that no Sefaradi legist, neither Maimonides, Rabbenu Yonah, Ritba, nor their gaonic predecessors, assumed that the average member of the congregation could recite liturgical verses by heart. Ashkenazi halakhists, by contrast, presumed that most, if not all, of those who prayed could recall and recite correctly and unfailingly the various biblical verses that were part of the prayers, and when they made exceptions, it was only as a means of limiting the scope of the talmudic prohibition. Their Sefaradi counterparts allowed the cantor to fulfill the obligation of the members of the community in all prayers—including those that contained biblical verses, whether he was reciting them from a written text or by heart—because they did not imagine that all their congregants could recite the prayers on their own without help.

Literacy in Ashkenaz and Sefarad

In light of Carruthers's findings about the relationship between liturgical memory and literacy, the difference between the Ashkenazi and Sefaradi positions tells us something about levels of liturgical memory and literacy in the two regions. Other rabbinic sources confirm these findings.

Menaḥem b. Aaron ibn Zeraḥ's encyclopedic work *Tsedah la-derekh* (composed ca. 1370) reflects Jewish life in Navarre and Toledo.[71] Delineating the requirement for every Jewish male to study Torah, irrespective of his socioeconomic status or prior education, Ibn Zeraḥ explains that one should set aside time for study in the morning and in the evening: "And even if he is unable to learn but can read from the prayer book, he should read Psalms in the mornings and the evenings and will thereby fulfill his obligation to establish periods for Torah study. And if he cannot even read from the prayer book . . . he should provide monetary support for others who are studying Torah, and it will be considered as if he were studying as well."[72]

This passage does not, of course, provide us with the percentages or the breakdown of those who could read and those who could not, although it does perhaps reflect the fact that prayer books were becoming more available. It suggests, however, that those able to read the prayers could do so mainly because they had recited them often enough. They could not necessarily read and comprehend new texts on their own.

The limited degree of literacy in Sefarad is confirmed by the following passage from a responsum of Ritba. The responsum deals with the suitability of a blind person to serve as cantor, a particularly vexing problem, since the extent of a blind person's obligation in the precepts of the Torah (including the obligation to pray) was generally a matter of great debate. According to Ritba, the problem was exacerbated in his day, since many sighted worshipers could not pray for themselves and relied completely upon the cantor's prayer to fulfill their obligations. Ritba writes:

> There are in our day a number of ignorant people who do not know the Torah portion that discusses *tsitsit*, which must be recited each day, perhaps even as an obligation from the Torah itself (*mitsvah de-oraita*), as well as the first verse of *Shema'*, which, according to all, is a [*mitsvah*] *de-oraita*. There are a number of ignorant people who cannot pray at all, and the cantor fulfills their obligation for them. For these reasons, it appears to me . . . that now that, due to our sinfulness, ignorant people are numerous (*nefishei 'ammei ha-arets*), it is inappropriate to appoint as a permanent cantor either a person who is blind from birth or one who lost his sight later.[73]

Throughout Sefarad, then, neither widespread literacy nor a strong degree of literary memory (*memoria*) could be presumed. R. Isaac bar Sheshet (Ribash, late fourteenth century), a leading rabbinic figure who had studied in Gerona, confirms this when he writes that the custom for the cantor to recite the *'Amidah* of *Musaf* on Rosh Hashanah immediately, without the congregation first praying silently, "was adopted in those Sefaradi locales because most of [the people there] are ignorant and can pray from a written text only with great difficulty, due to the number and length of the blessings. For this reason, they all pray together with the cantor, similarly to one person reading [prayers] for another."[74]

In contemporaneous Ashkenazi rabbinic literature, by contrast, the presumption is that most people know how to read and write. *Sefer Ḥasidim* devotes a number of sections to encouraging those who could not study Talmud (or even the Bible) nonetheless to study legal or aggadic texts, or simply to read or copy holy texts.[75] The average Jewish male's possibilities for Torah study were apparently much richer in Ashkenaz than in Sefarad, at least to judge by *Tsedah la-derekh*. In Ashkenaz, those who could not engage in more systematic or complex study nonetheless took part in Hebrew reading, writing, and copying scholarly texts.

We can detect the same patterns in a comparison of the views of medieval

Ashkenazi and Sefaradi authorities on whether someone called up to the Torah during synagogue services is required to read his portion in an undertone along with the official reader or should serve as the public reader if he can. The tendency in northern France and Germany was for someone called to the Torah to read along wherever possible. In Sefarad, on the other hand, Judah al-Bargeloni writes in his *Sefer ha-ʿittim* (ca. 1100) that typically "the cantor reads [from the Torah] and the one who goes up [to the Torah] is silent."[76]

Although al-Bargeloni himself and subsequent Sefaradi authorities decried the practice of calling to the Torah someone who was unable to read from it or did not understand its contents, the practice of calling illiterate people to the Torah continued in Sefarad unabated—presumably because there were few other choices. In the mid-fourteenth century, David Abudarham railed against those "who were ascending to the Torah and cannot read even one letter. . . . They should be prohibited from being called up [to the Torah]."[77] In Ashkenaz, however, it was relatively rare for someone unable to read to be called to the Torah, as indicated by formulations of both Ephraim of Regensburg (d. 1175) and Isaac *Or zaruaʿ*.[78] Indeed, it would appear that as late as the days of Me'ir of Rothenburg, there were places in Germany where the person called up to the Torah was still primarily responsible for executing the public reading of that section.[79]

Educational Practices

The different levels of literacy in Ashkenazi and Sefaradi communities are at least partly dependent on the educational approaches in these societies. In Ashkenaz, tutors taught young boys to read Hebrew in order to read verses of the Bible so that they could recite them by heart during the course of prayer. The cantor could fulfill the obligation to read parts of the prayer service that did not consist of biblical verses or that could not be readily memorized. Although not every child studied with a tutor, reading liturgical verses was one goal of tutors or *melammedim* employed by parents to teach their sons. *Melammedim* were available even to children of the poor through individual subsidy or benefaction, and their teaching assignments often included the rudiments of biblical interpretation and mishnaic and talmudic reading and interpretation as well. This suggests that reading biblical verses was taught at the initial phase not merely as an aid to liturgical memory but as a first step toward a more developed form of literacy.[80]

Eleazar of Worms offers a sense of how the educational trajectory proceeded after basic reading instruction: "At the beginning, the tutor should instruct [the child] to recognize the letters, and afterward, how they are put together to form words, and after that, the [Torah] verse, and then the weekly portion, and then the Mishnah, and then the Talmud." The reading of biblical verses was among the first stops on the road toward mastering the reading process, but it was not always the last.[81]

Other Ashkenazi sources suggest that even before the child was formally brought to a tutor, his father taught him to recognize the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and read verses from the Torah.[82] Nonetheless, it was deemed appropriate and beneficial to hire a tutor to teach the basics of reading.[83] Isaac *Or zarua'* describes tutors who taught the weekly Torah portion and the *haftarot* together with the Aramaic translations or Rashi's commentary. He also mentions a tutor who was hired to teach a "book" or "half a book" of the Bible.[84] Already in the days of Rabbenu Gershom of Mainz (d. 1028), there had been discussion concerning a tutor hired to teach a boy "all of Scripture," and the tutor maintained that he had successfully discharged his mission.[85] Here again, the goal was far more than providing familiarity with the content of the liturgy.

In Islamic lands, as Goitein suggests, teaching the reading process initially familiarized young boys with liturgical verses so that they could memorize them. Similarly, providing books to follow the reading of the Torah and Prophets was intended as an aid to memory. For many, however, these were the end goals of reading instruction.[86]

In Iberia, the educational process appears to have been even less successful in some respects. Yom Tov Assis has shown that elementary education was disorganized and uneven. There was little provision to educate the children of the poor.[87] And here is how Rabiah, the leading German halakhist at the beginning of the thirteenth century, characterized the level of literacy in the Sefaradi world of his day: "I have seen responsa that indicate that even today (*'od ba-yamim ha-elu*), the custom in Spain and Babylonia is that the cantor conducts the Passover seder in the synagogue on behalf of ignorant people who are not well versed enough in the Haggadah to recite it (*mipnei 'ammei ha-arets she-ein beqi'in ba-haggadah le-omrah*)."[88] That Rabiah was aware of the gap between Ashkenaz and Sefarad is indicated by his positions on reciting biblical verses in prayer.[89]

Admittedly, there were ignorant people in Ashkenaz who could not read Hebrew and people in Spain who could.[90] Nonetheless, judging by the rabbinic practices, policies, and descriptions that we have seen, the level of Hebrew literacy and literary memory among males in these two regions appears to have differed substantially. These differences depended on their respective structures of education, if not on more basic societal attitudes.[91]

Literacy and *Memoria ad Verba* in Ashkenaz and Sefarad

This study has sought to provide a new window onto the level of *memoria* and, to a lesser extent, actual Hebrew literacy in the Jewish communities of medieval Europe. In the relative absence of texts that describe or report these phenomena, the rabbinic rulings on liturgical practices shed light on the question. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, few Jewish males actually read their prayers owing to the general unavailability of written texts. At the same time, Ashkenazi Jews' capacity for *memoria* (and indeed, their ability to read from liturgical texts when available, and even to read and understand new material) was greater than that of their Iberian counterparts.

Each center's attitude toward Torah study may also have played a role. Ashkenazi Jewish communities sought to produce not only successful businesspeople but also as many talmudic scholars as possible. *Sefer Ḥasidim* even laments that most young men were schooled in order to attain the highest levels of talmudic study, even if their intellects, abilities, and proclivities were not prepared for this challenge. In the view of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, these students should instead have considered focusing on other texts (such as Scripture and midrash), or simply copying Torah and rabbinic texts.[92] Nonetheless, as far as basic levels of literacy are concerned, my findings agree with Robert Chazan's assertion that "the already high level of cultural achievement [in northern France during the Tosafist period] indicates a successful educational system."[93]

Iberian Jewry, on the other hand, did not aspire to the same levels of educational achievement for all.[94] Lower levels of expectation and opportunity help explain the fact that *memoria* and basic literacy developed differently in medieval Spain. Certainly for most, familiarity with biblical verses and Hebrew texts was desirable for facilitating recitation of prayers and reading the weekly Torah portion, but expectations did not rise much beyond this. The level of *memoria* in medieval Spain, at least as presumed by its leading rabbinic authorities, apparently fell short even of these expectations.

This study has used rabbinic literature and halakhic formulations to reflect Jewish life and experience on the ground and to identify and distinguish between shared religious traditions. It should be correlated with archival and similar materials. Aspects of the elusive social history of ordinary Jews in medieval Europe during the High Middle Ages still lie among these materials, awaiting further research. It is only through a fuller appreciation of this history that the dynamics of tradition and custom can be properly calibrated.

Chapter 11. Prayer, Literacy, and Literary Memory in the Jewish Communities of Medieval Europe

1. See, e.g., Avraham Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious Women* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 2001), 10–11.

2. See, e.g., Jay Harris, "Among the Giants," *Bulletin of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University* 17 (1999): 1–5. Cf. Moshe Idel, "Kabbalah and Elites in Thirteenth-Century Spain," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 9 (1994): 5–19.

3. We shall deal here only with Hebrew literacy. On literacy in French and Latin of the Jews in northern France, see William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1989), 15–21; and Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1992), 15–16, 119. Cf. F. H. Bauml, "Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 237–49; and Kirsten Fudeman, "'They Have Ears but Do Not Hear': Gendered Access to Hebrew and the Medieval French Wedding Song," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006): 542–49.

4. See, e.g., Simon Schwartzfuchs, *The Jews of France in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 2001), 127–28 (who distinguishes correctly between the ability to read and the ability to write); Stefan Reif, "Aspects of Medieval Jewish Literacy," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1989), 145–52; S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols. (Berkeley, Calif., 1967–93), 2:174–75, 181–82; and idem, *Jewish Education in Muslim Countries, Based on Records from the Cairo Geniza* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1962), 36–40. Cf. Shaul Stampfer, "Yedi'at qero u-khetov etsel yehudei mizraḥ Eropah ba-tequfah ha-ḥadashah: Heqsher, qorot ve-hashlakhot," in *Temurot ba-historiyyah ha-yehudit ba-'et ha-ḥadashah*, ed. S. Almog et al. (Jerusalem, 1988), 459–62; M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (Cambridge, 1977), 182–95; James Foley, "Orality, Textuality and Interpretation," in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. N. Doane and C. B. Pasternak (Madison, Wisc., 1991), 34–35; Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, "The Confrontation of Orality and Textuality: Jewish and Christian Literacy in Eleventh and Twelfth-Century Northern France," in *Rashi, 1040–1990*, ed. G. Sed-Rajna (Paris, 1993), 541–58; Goitein, *Jewish Education*, 41–45; and the next note.

5. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), 9–11, 46–48, 106–112, 122–23, 161–72, 258–59; M. Carruthers and J. M. Ziolkowski, eds., *The Medieval Craft of Memory* (Philadelphia, 2002), 1–23; Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago, 1993), 34–45; Charles Jones, "The Book of the Liturgy in Anglo-Saxon England," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 659–66; Matei Calinescu, "Orality in Literacy: Some Historical Paradoxes of Reading," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6 (1993): 175–90; and Stefan Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer* (Cambridge, 1993), 147–52.

6. See, e.g., Y. N. Epstein, *Mavo le-nosaḥ ha-Mishnah* (Jerusalem, 1964), 692–706; idem, *Mevo'ot le-sifrut ha-amora'im* (Jerusalem, 1962); Yaakov Elman, *Authority and Tradition* (Hoboken, N.J., 1994); Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 b.c.e.–400 c.e.* (Oxford, 2001); and Shelomoh Na'eh, "Omanut

ha-zikkaron, mivnim shel zikkaron ve-tavniyyot shel teqst be-sifrut Ḥazal," in *Meḥqerei Talmud*, ed. Y. Sussmann and D. Rosenthal, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 2005), 2:543–89.

7. See, e.g., Avraham Grossman, *Ḥakhemei Ashkenaz ha-rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1981), 110–11, 158–60, 250–52, 316–18, 383–84; and idem, *Ḥakhemei tsarefat ha-rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1995), 226–38, 438–39, 583–84.

8. See, e.g., E. E. Urbach, *Baʿalei ha-Tosafot* (Jerusalem, 1980), 1:50–51, 71–73, 97, 154–55, 299–301, 371; 2:680–86, 700; and Y. S. Spiegel, *ʿAmudim be-toledot ha-sefer ha-ʿivri: Haggahot u-maggihim* (Ramat Gan, 2005), 104–7, 111–56. Cf. Talya Fishman, "Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer and the Textualization of Rabbinic Culture in Medieval Northern Europe," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004): 313–31; idem, "The Rhineland Pietists' Sacralization of Oral Torah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006): 9–16; and Shraga Abramson, "Ketivat ha-Mishnah ʿal daʿat ge'onim ve-rishonim," in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson* (Hebrew), ed. R. Bonfil et al. (Jerusalem, 1989), 27–52.

9. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Heb. 260, fol. 92v.

10. See also Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (New York, 1987), 189–90; and David Olson, *The World on Paper* (Cambridge, 1994), 100–101.

11. Jean Leclerq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York, 1961), 18–22, 90. See also Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000), 31–34; and Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York, 1996), 57–60. Cf. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 88–111.

12. See below, nn. 41–46.

13. Cambridge, University Library, MS Add. 1022.1, fol. 100v; and cf. below, n. 54. On the Cambridge manuscript, see Marc Saperstein and Ephraim Kanarfogel, "A Byzantine Manuscript of Sermons: A Description and Selections about Prayer and the Synagogue" (Hebrew), *Peʿamim* 78 (1999): 164–84.

14. *Devarim she-bikhtav i attah rashai le-omran ʿal peh*; bGit 60b, bTem 14b.

15. The first is a passage in *Tosafot ha-Rosh* (to bYom 68b), which was compiled by Me'ir of Rothenburg's student R. Asher b. Yeḥi'el (Rosh) but typically reflects earlier material from the classic Tosafot of Ri and his student R. Samson of Sens (d. 1214). The second passage is found in the so-called *Tosafot yeshanim* to bYom (70a), which are (for the most part) the Tosafot of R. Judah Sirleon of Paris (d. 1224), who was also a student of Ri (and refers to him here as his teacher, *m[ori] r[abbi]*).

16. bYom 70a.

17. These include the verse of the daily sacrificial service, the psalms of *pesuqei dezimrah*, the verses associated with the Song of the Sea and the verses of *Shemaʿ*.

18. See *Sefer yere'im ha-shalem* (Jerusalem, 1973), sec. 268.

19. *Sefer Rabiah*, ed. A. Aptowitzer (New York, 1982), 3:640.

20. See the Tosafot to bTem 14b, s.v. *devarim she-bikhtav*.

21. According to Urbach (*Baʿalei ha-Tosafot*, 2:671), the standard Tosafot to bTem were compiled in the study hall of the brothers of Evreux (Normandy) in the mid-thirteenth

century; cf. Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society*, 74–79. See also Simcha Krauss, "Devarim she-bikhtav i attah rasha'i le-omran be'al peh," *Or ha-mizraḥ* 49 (2004): 101–4.

22. Kanarfogel, "Halakhah and Metsi'ut (Realia) in Medieval Ashkenaz: Surveying the Parameters and Defining the Limits," *Jewish Law Annual* 14 (2003): 193–201.

23. See *Sefer Raban*, sec. 42, fol. 16a (cited in brief in *Sefer semaq mi-Tsurikh*, 1:247, precept 104, *liqqutim*); and cf. *Sefer ha-orah*, ed. Solomon Buber, sec. 12 (p. 9). Cf. Israel Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah* (Jerusalem, 2003), 30.

24. See bGit 60a.

25. *Sefer Rabiah*, 3:642–43. This reason is based in part on the talmudic *sugya* of the Torah reading by the high priest on Yom Kippur. Cf. *Sefer kol bo*, sec. 2, and below, n. 48.

26. bTa'an 28b.

27. bMeg 18b.

28. This explanation is also cited in *Sefer Rabiah*, pt. 3, 643.

29. R. Isaac b. Moses, *Sefer or zarua'* (Zhitomir, 1862), pt. 1, Hilkhot tefillin, sec. 545; *Sefer Mordekhai le-massekhet Gittin*, sec. 407, ed. Mayer Rabinowitz (Jerusalem, 1990), 628–29; and *Sefer Mordekhai, Halakhot qetanot*, fol. 14, s.v. *zeh*. On the preservation of Rabbenu Tam's teachings by *Sefer or zarua'*, cf. Rami Reiner, "Rabbenu Tam u-venei doro: Qesharim, hashpa'ot, ve-darkhei limmud ba-Talmud" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002), 61–62.

30. *Teshuvot u-pesaqim le-Ri ha-zaqen*, in *Shitat ha-qadmonim 'al massekhet 'Avodah Zarah*, ed. M. Blau (New York, 1991), 3:228, sec. 110/3; and *Teshuvot Maharam mi-Rothenburg* (Prague, 1895), no. 313. Cf. Simcha Emanuel, "Teshuvot shel Maharam she-einan shel Maharam," *Shenaton ha-mishpat ha-'ivri* 21 (1998–2000): 160, 202.

31. In his response to his son-in-law (above, at n. 23), Raban maintains that he assumed on the basis of this construct (*shegurin be-fi kol*) that verses in all sections of the prayer service were known to those who prayed regularly.

32. See Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 26–32. Cf. Jones, "Book of the Liturgy," 696–702; Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books*, trans. M. Beaumont (Collegeville, Minn., 1998), 238–40; and Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory*, 31–36. On the paucity of collections of biblical verses that were available in medieval Ashkenaz, see, e.g., *Sefer Mordekhai* to bEruv 67b, sec. 513. Cf. *Shibbolei ha-leqet*, sec. 9, and Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:181.

33. See, e.g., T. C. Hubka, *Resplendent Synagogue* (Hanover, N.H., 2003), 91, 105–8, 192–93.

34. *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Bologna), ed. Reuven Margoliot (Jerusalem, 1957), sec. 18 (p. 81).

35. See Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 51–52; and Ephraim Kanarfogel, *ha-Ḥinnukh ve-ha-ḥevrah ha-yehudit be-Eropah ha-tsefonit bimei ha-beinayim* (Jerusalem, 2003), 198–205. Cf. Fishman, "Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer," 326–27.

36. *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Parma), in Jehuda Wistinetzki, ed., *Das Buch der Frommen nach der Rezension in Cod. de Rossi No. 1133* (Hebrew), 2nd ed., with introduction and indices by Jacob Freimann (Frankfurt am Main, 1924), secs. 404–5, 710, 1621; and *Sefer*

Ḥasidim (Bologna), ed. Margoliot, sec. 249. Cf. H. Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in the Sefer Ḥasidim," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 1 (1976): 330–35; C. Heyman, "L'écrit dans les croyances, les superstitions et la psychologie du 'pietiste,'" in *La conception du livre chez les pietistes ashkenazes au Moyen Age*, ed. C. Sirat (Geneva, 1996), 119–21; Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 51–52, and below, n. 68.

37. See Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 30.

38. *Responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg* (Berlin, 1891), 371 (no. 293). Cf. I. A. Agus, *R. Meir of Rothenburg* (Philadelphia, 1947), 1:251–52 (no. 189); *Responsa of R. Meir* (Prague, 1897), no. 120; and *Responsa of R. Ḥayyim Or Zarua*ʿ (a student of R. Meir) (Jerusalem, 1960), no. 2.

39. See, e.g., Leo Landman, *The Cantor: An Historic Perspective* (New York, 1972), 29–32; Grossman, *Ḥakhemei Ashkenaz ha-rishonim*, 292–93, 390–91; idem, *Ḥakhemei Tsarefat ha-rishonim*, 126, 173–74, 255–59; *ʿArugat ha-bosem le-R. Avraham ben Azriʾel*, ed. E. E. Urbach (Jerusalem, 1963), 4:71, 102, 108; and Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 33–35, 52–53.

40. *Sefer Rabiah*, vol. 2, 222–23 (sec. 536).

41. On the ability of the members of the congregation to read from and to utilize *maḥzorim*, see also, e.g., *Sefer Rabiah*, 3:439; the liturgical interpretation by R. Samuel of Falaise, cited in *Sefer or zarua*ʿ, Hilkhot pesaḥim, sec. 256, fol. 57, col. 4; *Sefer Mordekhai* to bBets 11b, sec. 659, ed. Makhon Yerushalayim (Jerusalem, 1983), 37–38; and Tosafot Yom 54a–b (reflecting a responsum of R. Meʾir of Rothenburg; see Urbach, *Baʿalei ha-Tosafot*, 2:610).

42. *Sefer Mordekhai* to *Yoma*, sec. 725, ed. Makhon Yerushalayim (Jerusalem, 1989), 69–70. See also *Arbaʿah turim,* Oraḥ ḥayyim, sec. 582 (end); *Beit Yosef*, ad loc. (and to sec. 101); and Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 29 n. 58. On prayer in a low voice during the weekdays in northern France, cf. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Heb. 167, fol. 91a; Eric Zimmer, "Tenuḥot u-tenuʿot ha-guf bi-sheʿat qeriʾat shemaʿ," *Assufot* 8 (1994): 363–67; *Sefer ha-makhkim le-R. Natan b. Yehudah*, ed. Judah Freimann (Jerusalem, 1968), 123–24, s.v. *la-menatseaḥ*; and I. Ta-Shma, "Matsavei yeshivah va-ʿamidah bi-qeriʾat shemaʿ u-virkhotehah," in *Kenishta*, ed. Y. Tabory (Ramat Gan, 2001), 1:53–61. See also *Sefer or zarua*ʿ, pt. 1, sec. 115, and pt. 2, Hilkhot shabbat, sec. 42 (fol. 10a, col. 2, end), for the ability of laypeople to read from the Torah in the synagogue.

43. It should be noted that the convention of simply stating "as it is written in the Torah" on festivals, without having then to recite the verses themselves (which would certainly have made things easier for those who did not have *maḥzorim* in front of them) was also referred to by Rabbenu Tam (who expressed his disapproval), by Rashi and his school, and by Raban. See *Sefer Rabiah*, 2:222–23 (and Aptowitzer's notes there). See also *Siddur Rashi* (Berlin, 1912), 80; and Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 30.

44. *Sefer ha-terumah*, sec. 219. On R. Barukh's locale, see S. Emanuel, "Barukh b. Isaac" (Hebrew), *Tarbiẓ* 69 (2000): 423–40. On the date and circumstances of his death, see I. Ta-Shma, "Keroniqah ḥadashah li-tequfat baʿalei ha-tosafot me-ḥugo shel Ri ha-zaqen," *Shalem* 3 (1981): 320–23; and cf. Kanarfogel, "The Aliyah of 'Three Hundred

Rabbis' in 1211: Tosafist Attitudes Toward Settling in the Land of Israel," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 76 (1986): 202–4.

45. *Sefer or zarua'*, pt. 2, sec. 32 (laws of *'erev Shabbat*), fol. 8a, cols. 1–2. Cf. *Sefer kol bo*, sec. 68.

46. R. Isaac also discusses a prevalent (parallel) custom in his region of the Slavic lands (*be-khol yom be-malkhutenu be-erets kena'an*) to read from a siddur the psalms for the wedding feast that are recited on the eve of the Sabbath, without concern that the candles will be tilted. On the absence of illumination and light sources as a cause for prayers being recited by heart, cf. Ta-Shma, *ha-Tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 29.

47. It should be noted that for many medieval Ashkenazi rabbinic scholars, the Mishnah was not written down as a fixed text in the days of Rabbi Judah the Prince. Rather, an authoritative version was established that could be uniformly preserved by memory; see below, n. 49.

48. *Sefer kol bo*, a halakhic compendium composed anonymously in Provence ca. 1300, notes that Rabbenu Perets of Corbeil (one of the last of the northern French Tosafists, d. 1298) also supported the first interpretation or method of justification, as apparently did his northern French predecessor in the first half of the thirteenth century, R. Moses of Coucy. See *Sefer kol bo*, sec. 2 (cited also by *Beit Yosef*, *Oraḥ ḥayyim*, sec. 49), and *Sefer mitsvot gadol*, *mitsvot 'aseh mi-de-rabbanan*, sec. 4, Hilkhot megillah. See also *Sefer or zarua'* (above, n. 229); *Arba'ah turim*, Oraḥ ḥayyim, sec. 49; *Sefer ha-maskil*, ms. Bodl. 2287, fol. 6v; and Y. N. Epstein, *Meḥqarim be-sifrut ha-Talmud u-vi-leshonot shemiyyot* (Jerusalem, 1984), 1:303–4.

49. In light of this, a passage attributed to R. Isaac (Ri) of Dampierre (in Barukh b. Isaac, *Sefer ha-terumah*, sec. 245; *Sefer mitsvot gadol*, *Lo ta'aseh* 65, fol. 16d; *Sefer Mordekhai* to *Shabbat* 116a, s.v. *alibba*) requires further discussion. Cf. above, at n. 23; see also B. M. Lewin's introduction to his edition of *Iggeret R. Sherira Ga'on* (Haifa, 1921), 26 n. 1; Epstein, *Mavo le-nusaḥ ha-Mishnah*, 692–706; Abramson, "Ketivat ha-Mishnah"; and Yaacov Sussmann, "Torah she-be'al peh: peshutah ke-mashma'ah," in *Meḥqerei Talmud*, ed. idem and Rosenthal, vol. 3, pt. 1, 209–38, 318–31, 369–70.

50. *Perush Abudarham ha-shalem* (Jerusalem, 1963), 48, 79–80, 238.

51. See *Perushei talmidei Rabbenu Yonah le-massekhet Berakhot* (5a, s.v. *lo hifsid*, in the name of R. Solomon of Montpellier), cited in *Beit Yosef* to *Oraḥ ḥayyim*, sec. 49.

52. Ritba studied with the leading scholars of Catalonia and served as rabbinic leader in Saragossa, Aragon. See Israel Ta-Shma, *ha-Sifrut ha-parshanit la-Talmud be-Eropah u-vi-Tsefon Afriqah: qorot, ishim ve-shitot* (Jerusalem, 1999), pt. 2, 69–74; Moshe Goldstein, ed., *Ḥiddushei ha-Ritva le-massekhet 'eruvin* (Jerusalem, 1974), 7–28; and Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Between Ashkenaz and Sefarad: Tosafist Teachings in the Talmudic Commentaries of R. Yom Tov b. Abraham Ishvilli," in *Between Rashi and Maimonides: Themes in Medieval Jewish Thought, Literature, and Exegesis*, ed. E. Kanarfogel and M. Sokolow (Jersey City, N.J., 2010): 237–73.

53. See *Ḥiddushei ha-Ritva le-Yoma* 70a, s.v. *le-fi*, and cf. *Sefer kol bo* (and *Beit Yosef*, above, n. 48).

54. See *Tosafot yeshanim le-Yoma* and *Tosafot ha-Rosh le-Yoma*, above, n. 15. Cf. *Teshuvot Maharam mi-Rothenburg*, ed. Lemberg, no. 437, and *Sefer Tashbets*, sec. 185.

55. After presenting the Ashkenazi approach (in the name of Rosh and Semag), *Shiltei ha-gibborim* (to bMeg 14a, in the pagination of the Rif), whose author was among those exiled from Spain, suggests a completely different approach that is similar at its core to that of Rabbenu Yonah and Ritba. Only an individual is prohibited from reciting biblical verses by heart. But when the congregation is reading with him ("they are reading all together in one voice"), there is no prohibition on reciting the biblical verses by heart. Thus, whenever the congregation reads biblical verses aloud publicly, this prohibition is not in force.

56. See, e.g., Y. M. Epstein, *'Arukh ha-shulḥan* to *Oraḥ ḥayyim*, sec. 49:3.

57. This type of argument had been made in Germany in the mid-twelfth century by R. Eliezer b. Nathan (Raban) of Mainz, although, as noted above (n. 25), it did not have much impact on subsequent Ashkenazi authorities.

58. *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. A. H. Freimann (Jerusalem, 1934), no. 36; and ed. J. Blau (Jerusalem, 1986), 469–76 (no. 256).

59. *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. Blau, no. 258. Cf. Gerald Blidstein, *ha-Tefillah be-mishnato ha-hilkhatit shel ha-Rambam* (Jerusalem, 1994), chap. 7, esp. 176–81. Maimonides mentions "one of the rabbinic scholars in Christian lands" (*eḥad me-ḥakhemei Edom*) who suggested something similar to his proposal. It is difficult, however, to identify this scholar and his precise locale from the text of the responsum. Freimann, in his edition (4 n. 12), suggests, relying on Moshe Lutski, "Five Autographed Responsa of the Rambam" (Hebrew), *ha-Tequfah* 30–31 (1946): 689–93, that Maimonides was referring here to R. Pinḥas Dayyan of Alexandria, whose origins were in southern France.

60. See Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, Conn., 1998), 192–93, 253–54, 260; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:159–65; and idem, *Jewish Education*, 51–54. Cf. Moshe Gil, *Palestine during the First Muslim Period* (*634–1099*) (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1983), 160–63, 190–94.

61. L. Ginzberg, "Saadia's Siddur," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 34 (1942–43): 315–24 (= idem, *'Al halakhah va-aggadah* [Tel Aviv, 1960], 171–77).

62. bBer 24b.

63. See also Ginzberg, *Geonica* (New York, 1968), 1:119–21; 2:26, 119.

64. Israel Davidson, Simḥa Assaf, and Yissachar Joel, eds., *Siddur rav Se'adyah Ga'on* (Jerusalem, 1941), 152–53. Cf. *Perush Abudarham*, 238.

65. See *Perush talmidei Rabbenu Yonah le-massekhet berakhot*, fol. 14b, in the pagination of Alfasi's *Halakhot*, s.v. *sakkin*. See also *Sefer ha-yir'ah le-rabbenu Yonah*, ed. Binyamin Zilber (Jerusalem, 1959), 24, sec. 89; and cf. R. Isaac of Corbeil, *Sefer mitsvot qatan*, end of sec. 11.

66. See Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen*, sec. 17.

67. See *Perush talmidei Rabbenu Yonah le-massekhet berakhot*, fol. 15b in the Alfasi pagination, s.v. *asur*; and *Beit Yosef*, *Oraḥ ḥayyim*, sec. 96 (end) and sec. 97 (end).

68. *Sefer ḥasidim* (Bologna), sec. 249 (above, nn. 34 and 36, and the additional sections noted there). On Rabbenu Yonah's awareness of *Sefer ḥasidim*, see Ephraim Kanar-

fogel, *Peering through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Detroit, 2000), 27, 54 n. 59, 62–65, 72.

69. bShab 116b.

70. See *Shibbolei ha-leqet*, sec. 12. On the identity of R. Ephraim in this passage, see Ginzberg, *Geonica*, 120 n. 1; and A. Aptowitzer, *Mavo la-Rabiah*, 325–26.

71. On the nature of *Tsedah la-derekh* (which has been compared with the encyclopedia by Bartholomew of England, who taught in Paris ca. 1225) and its communal underpinnings and origins, see Kanarfogel, *ha-Ḥinnukh ve-ha-ḥevrah*, 47–48, 555; Shelomo Eidelberg, "ha-Sefer *Tsedah la-Derekh* u-meḥabro R. Menaḥem b. ha-Qadosh R. Aharon b. Zeraḥ," *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* 3 (Jerusalem, 1977): 15–30; and Y. Galinsky, "Arba'ah turim ve-ha-sifrut ha-hilkhatit shel sefarad ba-me'ah ha-14" (Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, 1999), 300–301.

72. *Tsedah la-derekh*, unit 1, pt. 3, chap. 20.

73. *Responsa of the Ritba*, ed. Y. Qafiḥ (Jerusalem, 1959), no. 97. Cf. B. S. Hamburger, *Shorashei minhag Ashkenaz* (B'nei Brak, 1994), 4:170–73.

74. *Responsa of Rivash*, ed. David Metzger (Jerusalem, 1993), no. 37.

75. *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Parma), sec. 748. See also secs. 745, 765, 796, 824–25; and cf. Ephraim Kanarfogel, "R. Judah he-Ḥasid and the Rabbinic Scholars of Regensburg," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006): 36 n. 55, and the literature cited there.

76. *Sefer ha-'ittim* (Krakow, 1903), 264.

77. *Perush Abudarham*, 131 (cited in *Beit Yosef*, *Oraḥ ḥayyim*, sec. 139).

78. See R. Ephraim's formulation in *Sefer Rabiah*, pt. 2, sec. 551; and *Sefer or zarua'*, pt. 2, sec. 42.

79. *Teshuvot R. Me'ir mi-Rothenburg* (Lemberg, 1860), no. 149. For a thorough discussion of this issue, based on all the relevant medieval and early modern rabbinic sources, see Hamburger, *Shorashei minhag Ashkenaz*, 4:205–53.

80. On the widespread availability of *melammedim* in medieval Ashkenaz (despite the relatively informal educational structure) and expectations of them, see Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society*, 19–32.

81. *Sefer Roqeaḥ* (Jerusalem, 1967), 11. Cf. Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 29–30, 107–21.

82. See Kanarfogel, *ha-Ḥinnukh ve-ha-ḥevrah*, 55 n. 40 (and app. 2, 196–97).

83. *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Parma), sec. 829. On Hebrew as a spoken language, cf. *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Parma), secs. 99, 902, 1368; and N. Morris, *Toledot ha-ḥinnukh shel 'am Yisra'el*, pt. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1977), 1:85, 324–25.

84. *Sefer or zarua'*, pt. 1, Hilkhot qeri'at Shema', sec. 12; pt. 2, sec. 389; pt. 3, *Pisqei Bava Metsia'*, sec. 242.

85. *Teshuvot Ragma*, ed. S. Eidelberg (New York, 19555), sec. 71. Cf. *Sefer ḥuqqei ha-torah* (transcribed in Kanarfogel, *ha-Ḥinnukh ve-ha-ḥevrah*, 191–95), lines 60–72, 134–35, 170–80.

86. See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:174–75, 182; and idem, *Jewish Education*, 36–43.

87. See Assis, "'Ezrah hadadit u-se'ad bi-qehillot Yisra'el bi-Sefarad," in *Moreshet Sefarad*, ed. H. Beinart (Jerusalem, 1992), 276–77; and idem, "Ḥinnukh yaldei Yisra'el bi-Sefarad ha-notserit ba-me'ot ha-13–14: Bein qehillah la-ḥavurah," in *Ḥinnukh ve-historiyyah*, ed. R. Paldahi and I. Etkes (Jerusalem, 1999), 145–65. Cf. Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society*, 42–65.

88. *Sefer Rabiah*, pt. 1, 179, responsum 168. Cf. *Maḥzor Vitry*, ed. S. Hurvitz, 3.

89. See above, nn. 19, 40, and 45 on the reading of the Haggadah in Ashkenaz according to *Sefer or zarua'*, whose author had studied with Rabiah.

90. On those in Ashkenaz who were ignorant of Hebrew, see, e.g., *Sefer or zarua'*, pt. 1, *Hikhot qeri'at Shema'*, sec. 12, and above, nn. 18 and 45. On the enlarged circle of readers in Spain in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Galinsky, "Arba'ah Turim," 102–11.

91. For a similar problem in the realm of religious behavior and observance, see Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Rabbinic Attitudes toward Nonobservance in the Middle Ages," in *Jewish Tradition and the Non-Traditional Jew*, ed. J. Schachter (Northvale, N.J., 1992), 3–35.

92. See, e.g., Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society*, 86–91.

93. Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France* (Baltimore, 1973), 20, 52.

94. See, e.g., Mordechai Breuer, "Le-ḥeqer ha-tippologiyyah shel yeshivot ha-ma'arav bimei ha-beinayim," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period Presented to Prof. Jacob Katz* (Hebrew), ed. I. Etkes and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem, 1980), 45–55.

Chapter 12. A Temple in Your Kitchen

1. On *niddah* and ritual immersion as a custom observed outside the orthodox world, see Inbal Sicoral, "Madua' hen tovlot" (M.A. thesis, Ben-Gurion University, 1998); and Rahel R. Wasserfall, ed., *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law* (Hanover, N.H., 1999).

2. Nissim Leon, "Sefaradim ve-ḥaredim" (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1999).

3. As such, they are an example of the religious arena's large-scale dialogue between those born into the observant community and those who have joined it, between religious Israelis and religious Jews from the U.S. and Europe, and between men and women. This complex dialogue explains some of the dynamism of orthodox and *ḥaredi* communities.

4. From 1999 to 2003, I conducted fieldwork in the neighborhood of Pardes Katz in the largely orthodox city of B'nei Brak, near Tel Aviv. The neighborhood is inhabited mainly by Jews whose families came to Israel from the Islamic world. This research continues my study of the connections between women, religion, and knowledge. Previous projects focused on women in the *ḥaredi* and religious Zionist communities in Israel: see El-Or, *Reserved Seats: Religion, Gender and Ethnicity in Contemporary Israel* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 2006), in English at http://www.tamarelor.com/index.php/books/reserved-seats/; idem, *Educated and Ignorant: On Ultra-Orthodox Women and Their World* (Boulder, Colo.,

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