

the messianic expressions in the waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine from 1881 to 1914. Focusing on this central issue for the Yemenite Jewish community helps explain its uniqueness and even how its internal structure, cultural life, and socioeconomic conditions were shaped by this preoccupation.

KONINGSVELD, SADAN, and SAMARRA'T's work provides a scholarly publication of an Arabic 17th-century text dealing with Jewish messianism in Yemen in 1666 and 1667. The Arabic text is based on oral and written Muslim sources and thus provides a unique perspective on Jewish messianism in Yemen. The book includes a survey of the text, the manuscript, the author, and his purpose. It also provides a historical survey of the waves of messianic outbursts and details of the social and legal aspects of the status of Yemenite Jews in the 17th century. This is followed by a complete translation, edition, and reproduction of the Arabic text. This is a unique opportunity to examine an important phenomenon of Yemenite Judaism as it appeared to the Muslim bystander.

NEWBY's study is a reconstruction of Arabian Jewish history up to the early Islamic period and is based mostly on Muslim sources, which were often hostile to Jews and Judaism due to Jewish resistance to Muhammad and Islam. After defining the region he intends to examine, Newby scrutinizes the legends of the beginnings of the Jewish communities in Arabia. He then discusses the Roman period with special reference to the Jewish kingdom in Yemen under Dhu Nuwas. A central part of the study is devoted to the Jews of Hejaz and the results of their encounter with Muhammad and Islam. Special attention is given to historiographic and methodological issues.

NINI's book focuses mainly on the 19th century, examining the life of the Jewish community as a minority among the Muslims. It opens with a general description of the country, its population, administration, and political developments. Against this background developments within the community are examined, with special reference to communal institutions and leaders and the messianic movements of the 19th century. Nini also examines the relations of Yemenite Jews with Jews outside Yemen and the waves of immigration to Palestine between 1881 and 1914. The study is based on archival and published sources (mostly in Hebrew) and interviews.

Following a short history of the Jews of Yemen, PARFITT focuses on the community during the 20th century. He examines the attitude of the imam and the Muslims in general toward the community, their social, economic, and cultural life, and communal organization. Special attention is paid to the worsening of conditions for the community and the mass migration to Israel through Aden at mid-century. Parfitt utilizes archival sources, including a private archive and memoirs of one of the British participants in the emigration operation, and provides very detailed information on the emigration process.

TOBI's book is an insider's description of the Jewish community of Aden. Aden-born Tobi, who later immigrated to Israel and then to England, describes the history and life of the community. Following a survey of Aden and its Jews until the British conquest of 1839, Tobi examines the organization of the community and its social, economic, and cultural life, with details on the 1947 riots and the emigration that followed. Special attention is given to customs and festivals. With

its lively personal description and numerous photographs and documents, this is a useful source on the community.

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Yeshivot: Medieval

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Every major Jewish center during the Middle Ages boasted a network of talmudic academies. The differences between the centers had to do mostly with the means by which these yeshivot were sustained, the relationship between the yeshivot and the communities including the rights and prerogatives of the academy heads, the contents of the curriculum, and the level of the students. Complicating the picture is the fact that smaller or more informal study halls or adult groups, taught by lesser known figures, often functioned in the same locale or region as more formal or better known yeshivot.

During the geonic period, there were two central academies in Babylonia (Sura and Pumbedita, both of which relocated to Baghdad toward the end of the ninth century) and a central Palestinian academy. In addition to the gaon who headed each of these academies, there was an academic hierarchy of scholars charged with fulfilling various functions. A small number of families dominated the leadership of these well-organized institutions. These academies had two main sources of income: donations, which were sent together with questions addressed to the gaon, and taxes imposed on the communities in areas considered subject to the authority of one yeshivah or another.

GIL traces the connections between the Babylonian and Palestinian yeshivot and the Jewish communities of North Africa. There was a struggle between Palestine and Babylonia

for influence on these communities, with Babylonia winning out in the early 11th century. Babylonia's ascendancy may be attributed both to the perceived superiority of its scholars and to the mass migration from Babylonia to the Maghreb. Until the first half of the tenth century, the connection between Babylonia and the Maghreb was almost exclusively through the academy of Sura. Gil presents evidence for the earliest ongoing contacts with Pumbedita. He also highlights the role that the community of Kairwan in Tunisia played in copying and distributing geonic responsa and in raising funds for the academies.

Much additional information about the central Palestinian academy has come to light in material from the Cairo Genizah. In addition to presenting Genizah material on the Gaonate, GOITEIN uses the Genizah documents to sketch a picture of the social and intellectual character of the yeshivot throughout the Middle East during this period. He notes the competition for students between the central or regional schools and the local study halls and attempts to determine the sizes of these different types of schools and the ages of their students. Goitein also traces the different titles of those who administered the various yeshivot. While scientific and philosophical study was popular among Jews in the Muslim world, the yeshivot do not seem to have taught these disciplines; instead, the academies offered only a traditional curriculum of talmudic, halakhic, and biblical studies.

The transition in the 11th century from the heyday of the geonic era to the period of the Rishonim is marked by a migration of Jews to western Europe and the establishment of yeshivot there. NEUMAN, in his social and cultural history of the Jews in medieval Spain, includes a chapter on the academies there. Despite the relative decentralization of authority, many of the issues that were of concern during the geonic period remained, including the means by which to support the schools, forms of communication between major yeshivot and local study halls, and the titles and responsibilities that academy heads were to carry. Neuman traces the leading yeshivot in Spain from the Muslim period through the period of the Christian Reconquista, describing their locations and their heads. Neuman suggests that a number of academies were housed in local synagogues, and he discusses the ways that rabbinic texts were provided to students and the difficulties that occasionally arose in this endeavor.

Several studies in BEINART also deal with the yeshivot in medieval Spain, filling in a number of new details as a result of more recent research. Avraham Grossman provides a comprehensive listing of the most significant academy heads and rabbinic scholars in medieval Spain from the Muslim period through the 15th century. He discusses their works, the nature of their contributions, and the locales and impact of their yeshivot. Contrary to the picture painted by Neuman and others, Yom Tov Assis argues that support and control of the yeshivot in medieval Spain, in both economic and curricular matters, was not the responsibility of a particular city or community. Rather, these initiatives were in the hands of individual scholars and patrons, while "societies" consisting of members drawn from the community, but functioning separately, were established in order to oversee these and other social and cultural services.

KANARFOGEL (1992) focuses on the yeshivot of medieval Ashkenaz but makes a number of comparative assessments in arriving at his conclusions. Ashkenazi society, beginning with the pre-Crusade period, was reluctant to pay advanced-level Torah scholars for their study or even for teaching, except under limited conditions. Although scholars should be aided in earning their livelihoods through business or other pursuits, Ashkenazi Jewry did not even grant tax exemptions for scholars until the late Middle Ages. Andalusian Jewry, on the other hand, typically gave financial support to their scholars, and this continued through the medieval period in Spain, despite the objections of Maimonides (who did advocate tax exemptions for scholars). Spanish and Provençal academies and communities provided stipends and funding for students, while there is almost no evidence of this in Ashkenaz.

In the pre-Crusade period, the Ashkenazi yeshivot were identified with the cities in which they were located (as were the leading European monasteries). As was the case, however, in regard to the cathedral schools and their masters (beginning c.1100), the academies of the tosafists were identified primarily with the head of the academy, not the locale in which they were situated. This may also have been a function, in part, of the dialectical method that was the hallmark of the tosafist academies and that depended in large measure on the intellectual capabilities of the academy head and his students (similar, once again, to the nature of the cathedral schools). In Spain and in Provence, following the pattern of the geonic yeshivot, centers of learning remained the more prominent consideration or means of identification. Communities often appointed the academy heads in Spain, using a formal instrument for this purpose. As KANARFOGEL (1991) demonstrates, the right to open an academy in Ashkenaz was governed not by the tenets of communal government but by the halakhically defined relationship between teachers and students.

Kanarfogel (1992) provides evidence for estimating the size of the tosafist academies. These yeshivot were located, for the most part, in the home of the principal, which meant that the size of an academy probably did not exceed 25. Leading Provençal and Spanish yeshivot, which were housed in synagogues or other specially designated communal structures, appear to have been larger. In addition to discussing the parameters of tosafist dialectic, Kanarfogel shows that biblical studies were not part of the regular curriculum in the academies of high medieval Ashkenaz, which marks another change from the pre-Crusade period.

In his chapter on the yeshivot of Provence in the 12th and 13th centuries, PICK argues that the Provençal academies underwent significant change during the period. In the 12th century, yeshivot catering to the most advanced students were, for the most part, communally maintained and supported. By the end of the 13th century, the academies became more identified with the scholars who headed them, and their focus was more on the discussion of halakhic works and conclusions than on talmudic casuistry. Pick also discusses the structures in which the yeshivot may have been housed.

GOLB suggests that the yeshivot in northern France were founded and maintained by the cities and towns in which they were located. Many of the sources, however, that Golb cites in support of his contention are Spanish or Provençal. Golb

also relies on *Sefer Hukkei ha-Torah*, a unique blueprint for setting up a system of elementary education and for the founding of advanced talmudic academies. The place (or region) of origin of this document, however, and whether or not it was actually implemented remain matters of considerable scholarly contention. Finally, Golb believes that the Jewish communal structure discovered by archaeologists at Rouen (the capital of Normandy) is the remains of the communally funded academy characteristic of northern France (rather than a mere synagogue structure), and he advances the argument that this academy was an intellectual center of considerable importance during the 12th and 13th centuries.

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See also Yeshivot: Modern

Yeshivot: Modern

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Yeshivot (singular, yeshivah) are academies for the advanced study of the Talmud and rabbinic literature. A Russian philosopher of religion once described the yeshivah as a personification of the Hegelian absolute. He was referring not merely to the extraordinary standards of knowledge and memory common among the academies' students, who paradigmatically knew the Talmud so intimately that were one to pierce a volume with a pin they were able to identify the word on each page through which the pin struck. He was also speaking of the intensity of the students' thirst for knowledge, their inner strength, and their self-sacrificing devotion to Torah study, which took priority over all other considerations. Similarly redolent of this consuming involvement, one of the characters in Chaim Grade's engrossing novel, *The Yeshiva*, nostalgically reminisces: "We'll never be able to get the Yeshiva out of our systems."

In his accessible study of the yeshivot in the modern period, MENES succinctly traces the revival of talmudic learning to the influence of the 18th-century Gaon of Vilna. Shortly after the Gaon's death, his disciple, Rabbi Hayim Volozhiner, founded the Volozhin Yeshivah in 1802, marking the begin-

ning of a new epoch in the history of higher Jewish learning in Lithuania and Poland. Menes stresses that Rabbi Hayim was an able administrator, and the fact that only the best students were admitted to the yeshivah enhanced the prestige of the institution. Rabbi Hayim abolished the old custom of "eating days," which dictated that each day the student had to seek his meals in a different household. Instead, students received a modest stipend, which enabled them to live in a frugal but dignified manner. Soon, Menes demonstrates, other yeshivot adopted the model of the Volozhin Yeshivah. The author also discusses the yeshivot of the Musar movement, developed under the impetus of the 19th-century rabbi Israel Salanter Lipkin, where, in addition to the Talmud and its commentaries, moralist literature was studied and great stress was laid on the ethical factor in religious life, and he describes the leading Musar yeshivah, Keneset Yisrael in Slabodka, near Kovno, Lithuania. Photographs of some of the yeshivot and their heads enhance the essay.

ALON studied at the Slabodka Yeshivah and later taught Talmud and Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In this essay, which was published shortly after the destruction of the yeshivot by the Nazis, the author emphasizes that the yeshivot are not to be confused with seminaries for the training of rabbis. Rather, he identifies the primary aim of the yeshivot as the study of the Torah both for its own sake and to produce a group of learned Jews to act as a leaven that raises the standards of scholarship and piety in the community at large. In Slabodka, students used to say that "if a student prepared himself for ordination from the very start and studied the dietary laws in *Yoreh Deah*, you could be sure that he was neither gifted or knowledgeable in Torah." Even the followers of the Enlightenment, who aggressively criticized most traditional forms of Jewish life, sang the praises of the yeshivah students for their attachment to study and the search for truth. Alon mentions a hearsay report (happily confirmed later) that 300 students from the Mir Yeshivah, as well as fugitives from other yeshivot, had found wartime refuge in Shanghai, where they studied and taught the Torah with an even greater intensity than before. Indeed, these men plucked from the fire of the Nazi devastation were the pioneers who set up new yeshivot in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Israel.

HELMREICH is a professor of sociology and Judaic studies at the City University of New York and an observant Jew who studied at several yeshivot. He combines four different approaches in his study of yeshivot in the United States: participant observation; in-depth interviews with the heads of the leading yeshivot, including Rabbis Moshe Feinstein (Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim), Shneur Kotler (Lakewood), Yitzchok Hutner (Chaim Berlin), and Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Yeshiva University); statistical information gathered from responses to a detailed questionnaire sent to the alumni of an unnamed yeshiva; and written material from a wide variety of sources, listed in the 11-page bibliography at the end of the book. The final chapters of the book consider whether the yeshivot are successful in reaching their goals. The author's answer is a guarded "yes." Helmreich concludes that the traditional yeshivah movement is here to stay. His statistical survey shows that 91 percent of yeshivah graduates continue to

Reader's Guide to

JUDAISM

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