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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted by Warren Stone
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

ME-AM LO'EZ: Isaac Magriso's Commentary to ETHICS OF THE FATHERS

The Me-am Lo'ez, the outstanding but relatively unknown classic of Sephardic literature, contains perhaps the greatest wealth of information about the inner life of Sephardic Jewry during the period of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Warren Stone is the second thesis on this encyclopedic work done at our College-Institute, the previous one being by Rabbi Shelton Donnell (1977).

Mr. Stone's study focuses on what is in many ways the most important component of the Me-am Lo'ez for an understanding of the spirit of Ottoman Jewry, that is Isaac Magriso's commentary to Pirke Abot. Carefully analyzing this lengthy work in its Hebrew translation (the original is in Ladino), Mr. Stone studies the physical and spiritual problems of Jewish life in the eighteenth century and the patterns for societal reconstruction which Magriso suggests. He also analyzes Magriso's "theological blueprint" by which he tries to account for the suffering of his generation and to encourage them to overcome their pain through a renewal of their faith in God and the tenets of the Jewish tradition.

The analysis of Magriso's commentary is preceded by a concise, well-conceived introduction to the history of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire and to the Me-am Lo'ez collection itself.

Mr. Stone's study is carefully researched, enriched by a wealth of secondary material, meticulously annotated, and presented attractively in a well-written style. Its scope and depth exceed the ordinary current requirements of a rabbinic thesis.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I recommend the acceptance of this thesis toward the fulfillment of the requirements for rabbinic ordination.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin A. Cohen

Dr. Martin A. Cohen

April 24, 1978

ME-AM LO'EZ : ISSAC MAGRISO'S COMMENTARY TO ETHICS OF THE FATHERS

Societal Disintegration and Reconstruction among Ottoman Jewry

WARREN G. STONE

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
New York, New York

1978

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Martin A. Cohen

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Preface

The experience of working on this thesis proved extremely valuable. Exposure to Issac Magriso's Me-am Lo'ez commentary on Ethics of The Fathers refined my understanding of the struggles of Sephardic Jewry in the Ottoman Empire. Magriso's artistry in aggadic exposition gave me an insight into the vast wealth of Judaic sources absorbed by Sephardic intellectuals at a time when the folk populace lost touch with the very basics of Jewish tradition. Close contact with Ethics of The Fathers has enriched my life with its depth of insight into the human condition.

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Martin A. Cohen for his encouraging guidance. He inspired me to search beneath the text to seek the insights of life that a dynamic historic perspective can truly offer. Beyond the methodology, our thesis seminar addressed questions that were of primary concern to our future role as capable rabbinic leaders. The textual analysis acted as a catalyst for us to pursue the greater questions of life. For this I am indebted to Dr. Cohen.

Most of all, I would like to thank my wife Elaine for her tremendous support as well as editing expertise. She worked very closely with me throughout the long and

sometimes tedious process. She offered me insight which proved to be invaluable. I therefore dedicate this thesis to Elaine.

NOTE ON TEXT AND TRANSLITERATION

This thesis is based upon Samuel Yerushalmi's Hebrew translation of Magriso's original Ladino commentary on Pirke Abot (Jerusalem: Mosad Yad Ezra, 1972). The author supplied his own translation of the textual references to Pirke Abot. The transliteration of Hebrew phrases follows the system chosen by the editors of the Encyclopedia Judaica.

CHAPTER I

Background on Ottoman Jewish History

A. Introduction

Throughout the course of Jewish history, two major factors have profoundly influenced the Jewish people. The first is the larger society with its means for relating to its Jewish polity, thereby setting a "Jewish policy."[1] The response of the Jewish community[2] constituted the second factor. In their continued struggle for societal homeostasis, the Jews often found it necessary to readjust to changing conditions of history. During times of societal optimism, they prospered. They frequently rose within the larger society. By contrast, in times of decline, they generally suffered. In such periods they turned inward for spiritual answers to their dilemmas. This process in turn necessitated a rediscovery of meaning for their lives.

The Jews in the Ottoman Empire during its rise and decline in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries readapted continually in order to preserve their own homeostasis. They soared to heights and sank to depths as a result of the changing conditions of history. Issac Magriso's commentary to Ethics of The Fathers, a section of the encyclopedic Me-am Lo'ez compendium, responds to one such nadir in Ottoman Jewish history. This significant work strikingly reflects the

societal decline of Ottoman Jewry. In addition, it provides a blueprint for the reconstruction of a segment of mid-eighteenth century Jewish life. A brief historical overview of the sixteenth to eighteenth century will lay the groundwork for a more detailed discussion of this period.

With the rise of Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century, certain Jews achieved wealth and status within the Empire.[3] A policy of religious autonomy enabled them to preserve their religious identities in the midst of a pluralistic society.[4] The policy of autonomy encouraged a massive influx of Spanish-Portuguese Jews.[5] Spanish leadership expelled these Jews in 1492. These distraught Jews then sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire. This immigration transformed the fabric of Ottoman Jewry. The indigenous Jewish population, the Romaniots had maintained their own separate identities, institutions and rabbinical leadership.[6] The newcomers, considering themselves superior to the Romaniot Jews, rejected their leadership and established their own communities.[7]

External historical factors in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought about the gradual demise of the Ottoman Empire. With the inundation of restrictions by the Ottoman government,[8] Jews sought messianic answers to alleviate their suffering.[9] Shabbatai Zevi, a false messiah, brought disillusionment and disarray to this Jewish world. He thereby shattered hope for future fulfillment as well as societal homeostasis.[10] Shabbateanism offered Ottoman Jewry

a spiritual panacea in a seemingly incomprehensible world. Internal decay plagued their communities. Jews came perilously close to losing their religious identities. Jewish leadership became corrupt.[11] Issac Magriso's commentary to Pirke Abot, Me-am Lo'oz reflects these conditions of the decline of the Jewish communities. It also served as a blueprint for their reconstruction.

B. The Jewish Community

A small group of Jews founded the first Jewish community of the Ottoman Empire in 1326 in Bursa.[12] When Muhammed II (1451-81) conquered Constantinople from the decadent Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Jews entered[13] an era of religious toleration. A proclamation issued to the Jews of Turkey illustrates Muhammed's beneficent policy:

> Who among you of all my people that is with me, may God be with him, let him ascend to Constantinople, the site of my royal throne. Let him dwell in the best of the land, each beneath his fig tree, with silver and with gold, with wealth and with cattle.[14]

Ottoman leadership accorded Jews a unique status within the Empire. This status dramatically affected the history of Jews in the Ottoman world from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

Two discrete groups with distinct societal roles comprised Ottoman society: the elite ruling class and the masses. The masses provided wealth by paying taxes to the ruling elite, known as Osmanlilan or Ottomans. In order to be a member of the Ottomans, an individual had to follow the following guidelines:

1. Accept and practice the religion of Islam, embracing its entire system of thought and action.

2. Promote loyalty to the sultan and the state established to carry out the sovereign duties of expanding Ottoman borders, promoting Islam and exploiting revenues.

3. Know and practice the complicated system of customs, behavior, and language forming the Ottoman way.[15]

This system relegated anyone without these qualifications to the subject class. The Ottomans thereby entirely excluded the Jews from the higher political echelons.[16]

Although in the subject class, the Jews enjoyed the status of "People of the Scripture," a term used in the Koran to refer to believers. While the Ottoman authorities forced polytheists to accept Islam or face death, they considered Jews dimmis, tolerated infidels.[17] A contract with Muslim rulers guaranteed the lives of the dimmis. It protected their personal liberties, and occasionally secured their communal property as well.[18] Significantly, this social contract accorded Jews the right to practice their monotheistic religion as "People of the Book." In return, the Ottoman

rulers assessed Jews with the cizye, a special poll-tax, and a land tax known as the harac.[19] These taxes bolstered the Empire's corrupt and tottering economic structure. The assessments constituted a serious drain on the Jewish communities.

A state sanctioned millet or formal religious community further formalized Jewish autonomy.[20] Each millet sustained its own institutions. Millet leadership exercised authority over educational facilities, courts and social welfare.[21] Millet membership protected the status of an individual dimmi.[22] The sultans dealt with the millet through its accepted leader, the millet-bashi.

Regardless of Ottoman tolerance of the Jews, restrictions placed upon them reveal the presence of state sanctioned anti-semitism. For example, Ottoman rule forbade Jews from marrying Moslems. It also compelled Jews to wear distinctive clothing.[23] As a rule, the laws restricted Jews to dark clothing, permitting light-colored garments only on the Sabbath and religious festivals.[24] Furthermore, it prohibited a Jew from buying or owning slaves lest he lure them away from Islam.[25] These restrictions relegated the Jew to an inferior status.

The records also reveal incidents of mob violence. Synagogues were often a target. Moslem masses destroyed Torah scrolls, ritual objects and buildings.[26] These acts violated official state policy but the state banned the

construction of new synagogues,[27] allowing only repairs of those already in existence. This suggests acquiescence if not complicity in the anti-semitic out-bursts.[28]

The official dimmi status given to Jews served as a mixed blessing. The right to practice Judaism existed alongside numerous restrictions that humiliated, segregated and clearly fixed the Jew in an inferior position.[29] As "People of the Book", they knew their role in Ottoman society, accepted it, and used it to develop their own internal leadership and institutions.

C. The Spanish-Portuguese Influx

The Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II, (1481-1512), extended a welcome to the Jews of Spain and Portugal who had suffered the devastating expulsions of 1492 and the conversions of 1497. This acceptance rescued them from cultural and religious extinction.[30] The skills and economic expertise of these immigrants contributed significantly to the developing economic life of the Empire.[31] Bayazid's policy of open immigration rested on the critical role Jews could play in the expanding Ottoman Empire.

The influx of Spanish-Portuguese Jews radically changed the complexion of Ottoman Jewry[32] for generations.[33] Skilled financial experts, physicians and scholars[34] arose from their ranks. They flourished under the freedoms of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Yet

their painful expulsion had psychologically traumatized them. They carried with them deep fears concerning their future. Burdened with the torment that they had somehow brought the expulsion upon themselves,[35] they sought to understand its theological meaning.

Certain Marranos -- Jews publicly embracing Christianity -- escaping the Ottoman lands suffered especially from this guilt.

D. Jewish Communal Discord

Intercommunal discord plagued Ottoman Jewry, beginning with the Spanish-Portuguese immigration into the environment of the native "Romaniot." These indigenous "Romaniot" were threatened both culturally and socially by the newcomers who gradually imposed their way of life upon them.[36] The communal conflict persisted for several generations and flared in difficult times.

The development of the kahal system solidified this factionalism. Each faction established its own kahal and each developed institutions, with its own leaders: the dayyan, hakham and marbiz torah. In addition the kahal elected a lay leadership, the memunnim, beruim and gabbim.[37] The synagogue served as the center of communal government. The Jews debated all issues in the synagogue and produced frequent takkanot, legal decisions. Communal power lay both in the hands of the hakham and the secular leaders. These figures

functioned as arbitrators on matters of tax collection, business practices, civil litigation, and ritual and ethical questions.[38] Spanish, Portuguese and Romaniot kahals guarded their own autonomy and occasionally employed legislative powers to prevent Jews from joining a rival group.[39] A responsum of Rabbi Joseph Levi of Salonika points to attempts by Spanish-Portuguese Jews to dominate various Romaniot kahals.[40]

A deep-seated conflict concerning the nature of rabbinical leadership in part underlay these power disputes. Originally, the chief rabbi or Hakham Bashi acted as the unifying force of the Jewish millet. The Ottomans appointed Rabbi Moses Capsali (1420-1495), the leading rabbi of the dominant Romaniot population, as official representative of the Jews.[41] After his death, they designated Rabbi Elijah Mizrachi, another learned Romaniot, as his replacement.

The Spanish-Portuguese newcomers challenged the idea of a unified rabbinical authority.[42] They recognized neither the legitimacy of the Hakham Bashi's leadership[43] or the Romaniot rabbinical ordination, "according to the custom of France and Germany."[44] Likewise, the Romaniots rejected the academic qualifications of the Spanish-Portuguese for rabbinical leadership. This bitter dispute clouded the communal leadership of Ottoman Jewry. It sowed the seeds for its disruption.[45] Uniform leadership gave way to unstable factionalism. The Spanish-Portuguese kehalim eventually attained dominance because of their economic, intellectual

and numerical superiority.[46] These factors led to the disintegration of the chief rabbinate.

The reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66), ushered in a beneficent period for Ottoman Jewry. Considered a benign ruler and friend of his Jewish subjects,[47] he defended Jewish rights throughout the Empire and in Christian countries as well. This beneficence derived in part to the profound influence of two Jews, his advisor, Don Joseph Nasi[48] and his physician, Moses Hamon. In 1530, Hamon persuaded the sultan to outlaw the blood libel in the Empire.[49]

Midway through Suleiman's career his government's power irreversibly waned.[50] The decline continued until the end of the eighteenth century. The relations with the Jews suffered a change for the worse with the death of Selim II, Suleiman's successor and the rise of Murad III (1574-95).

Murad instituted harsh restrictions against the Jews to prohibit their rise from an "inferior" status. Annoyed by the luxury of their clothing, he called for the execution of all Jews. After the tender of a handsome bribe, he reduced his order to sumptuary restrictions.[51]

The effect of the Ottoman Empire's decline on Jewish communities reflects in their despondent mood, messianic longings and eventual social decay.

E. Shabbateanism and Cultural Decline

The social decline of Ottoman Jewry can also be attributed to a change among the Jews themselves.[52] The spread of Lurianic kabbalah powerfully influenced the Jews in the early seventeenth century.[53]

Developed by Issac Luria in Safed, Palestine, Lurianic kabbalah encompassed a mystical system of theosophical redemption. It offered Jews a profound hope[54] for messianic fulfillment.[55] Many Jews accepted Shabbateanism, the messianic movement that swept Ottoman Jewry in the seventeenth century. It seemed to be a panacea for all social ills. The factionalism among Ottoman Jewry gave rise to a facade of unified hope embodied in the massive acceptance of Shabbetai Zevi a messiah of Israel.[56]

Shabbatai Zevi, a Jew of Spanish descent, was born in Smyrna in 1626. The study of Lurianic kabbalah convinced him of his messianic role.[57] In 1648 he proclaimed himself Messiah in the Holy Land. His native region gave him a hero's welcome on his return. Anarchy and anti-nomianism marked Shabbatai's religious philosophy. In public, he contradicted Jewish law, desecrated the Sabbath, ate forbidden foods and altered the traditional liturgy. When Mehmet II threatened his life, he converted to Islam.[58] This act delivered a cruel blow to Ottoman Jewry. Their apocalyptic hopes dissolved into

despair. Faith now gave way almost totally to superstition. According to Gershon Scholem, in the onward course of the Shabbatean movement the world of traditional Judaism was shattered beyond repair.[59] Another cultural historian notes: "Messianism seems to have contributed to it [throwing the millet off balance] by concentrating their attention on illusory hopes, and by encouraging the growth of superstition at the expense of culture."[60]

The Shabbatean epoch marked the beginning of the cultural and religious demise of Ottoman Jewry. This chaotic period ultimately set the stage for the writing of Me-am Lo'oz.

The majority of Jews in the eighteenth century in the Ottoman Empire were unable to read the Bible, Mishna, Talmud, Midrash and Codes[61] and other basic sacred texts of Judaism.[62] The surviving intelligentia feared that the Ottoman community would lose forever its Jewish identity:

> Today, the stature of the populace has been further diminished, so that few people can even read the Bible. . . Many people do not know Hebrew and cannot even read the Torah in the original. Even those who know the words cannot comprehend the meaning of what they read. Everyday, fewer and fewer people study Torah, and the ways of Judaism are gradually being forgotten.[63]

Educational disintegration constituted the foremost sign of a decaying culture. A visitor to Constantinople, the heart of earlier Jewish culture depicted this situation as follows:

> Community life was falling apart. General Jewish education was virtually nonexistant and most of the populace could not understand Hebrew. . . Jewish life was in an advanced state of disintegration.[64]

Suffering from an illegitimate Jewish leadership, the populace clearly lacked the education necessary to rebuild Jewish culture. Their leaders were not versed in law;[65] few could be deemed learned in Jewish tradition.[66] They failed to produce the new inspiration so desparately needed. The very symbol of traditional Judaism, the talmid hakham suffered debasement amidst this decay:

בזונה גם רבו המבקשים את תלמיד חכמים הפני הם, קורא לו חכם בלשון מצין אין קונאת אותו בשום דבר כמוב.[67]

Rampant poverty added immeasurably to these frustrations.[68]

In sum, Ottoman Jewry had lost sight of the sustaining traditional values of prior generations. With the hopes of the past shattered, it faced a foreboding future. At this juncture, Jacob Culi conceived of the encyclopedic Me-am Lo'ez to fill this vacuum.

F. Me-am Lo'ez

Born in Jerusalem in 1689,[69] Rabbi Jacob Culi recognized the crisis facing Ottoman Jewry. He sought to arrest it by producing a major encyclopedic commentary in the popular language of Ottoman Jewry, Ladino,[70] on the entire Bible.[71]

Ladino developed as a common folk tongue of Spanish Jewry. For a long period of time, it constituted the sole language spoken by the Jews of the Ottoman Empire. They lacked knowledge of both the Hebrew of traditional Jewish writings

and the Turkish of their larger environment.[72] Originally written in Spanish characters, Ladino gradually came to be written in the characters of the Hebrew alphabet.[73] Although scholars had translated Bahya Ibn Pakuda's Duties of The Heart and Joseph Caro's Shulhan Arukh into Ladino, these volumes were scarce and difficult for the common Jew to understand.[74]

Culi sought to reach these Jews. He conceived of the Me-am Lo'ez as a means of rejuvenating Ottoman Jewry.[75] He wrote his commentary in an unpretentious popular style, as a commentary to the Bible.[76] He wove it as a tapestry of Mishna, Midrash, Talmud, Codes and a multitude of Jewish classics, all translated into Ladino. After devoting two years to the completion of the section on Genesis and two-thirds of Exodus, Culi died in 1732 leaving his monumental goal for others to realize.[77]

Communal leaders sought a scholar to complete the unfinished task. This move reflects the growing impact of Me-am Lo'ez on Ottoman Jewry. Rabbi Issac Magriso assumed much of this role. He completed Exodus in 1746, Leviticus in 1753, and Numbers in 1764.[78] Issac Agruti finished Deuteronomy in 1772. Despite its multiple contributors, Me-am Lo'ez can be considered a unified work because of similarities in the various authors' styles and historical perspectives.

Issac Magriso also completed the only commentary to the Mishna found in Me-am Lo'ez. His commentary to Pirke Abot, Ethics of The Fathers[79] constitutes the major subject of his

thesis. A total dearth of historical material exists concerning the personal life of Issac Magriso. As a disciple of Jacob Culi, he completed his commentary to Pirke Abot sometime between 1733 and 1764. One historian posits that Magriso's original name was "Magris." If this be the case, his family could be traced not to the Iberian Peninsula but rather to the Greek-Jewish Romaniot tradition. His ancestors might have joined the Spanish-speaking community, according to the viewpoint, at a later period in history.[80]

Ottoman Jewry elevated the entire Me-am Lo'ez to a status equal to that of the Talmud.[81] Jews gave it as a dowry. They read it in the synagogue on a weekly basis and used it as the text for home discussion groups.[82] Many considered such devotion a religious obligation. These volumes acquired a unique place in Jewish history:

> Never before had a set of Jewish books achieved such instant popularity. But even greater than their popularity was their impact. Thousands of families that had been almost totally irreligious suddenly started to become observant. A new spirit swept through the Sephardic communities, reminiscent of that engendered by the Chasidic movement a half century later. Very few Jewish books in modern times have had such an impact on their milieu.[83]

As strikingly illustrated by Magriso's commentary on Ethics of The Fathers, Me-am Lo'ez fulfilled a deep ideological need among Ottoman Jewry. Magriso responded to a culturally declining, divisive post-Shabbatean Jewry by using his commentary to channel their skewed values into more traditional

Jewish norms. He sought to give the individual Jew a feeling of reverence for the talmid hakham and torah learning, the core symbols of traditional Judaism. In addition, he pointed to the need for legitimate communal leadership and a sense of communal unity. He ultimately imbued the individual Jew with a profound faith in the meaningfulness of his very existence. The real message of Magriso's commentary was therefore the sacred value of life itself.

CHAPTER II

Societal Commentary

Issac Magriso's decision to write a commentary to Pirke Abot has deep significance. Reconstructing a culturally waning Ottoman Jewry constituted his ultimate ideological goal. Jewish communal life had reached a nadir of despair. The underlying factionalism of previous ages now surfaced in the wake of the Shabbatean fiasco. Corrupt leadership threatened the social, judicial and educational institutions. A dearth of learning among Ottoman Jewry jeopardized the very basis of Toraitic knowledge and intellectually responsible leadership. These factors placed the future of Jewish communal life in question. Magriso's anthological commentary to Pirke Abot responds to this pending crisis by providing structure and meaning in the form of the once vital Jewish values now lost amidst social and religious turmoil. He utilizes the symbolic values of the "talmid hakham" and "torah learning" to attempt to provide the social stability necessary to reconstruct Ottoman Jewry. Ethics of The Fathers, became the most significant vehicle for this return. The Abot, "fathers" are the core symbol of traditional Judaism; their teachings provided the necessary framework for the reconstruction of communal values. Magriso uses his commentary as a teaching device, to inculcate these values.

His commentary therefore reflects the social turmoil of a disintegrating Jewish communal life. Magriso then moves beyond the harsh reality of his day to an ideal blueprint for the future of Ottoman Jewry. Inordinate demands upon the human condition may subvert the very preciousness of life. Consequently, providing hope for the individual became Magriso's most significant goal. His commentary therefore truly offers the gift of life itself.

Issac Magriso followed Jacob Culi's methodological model. His commentary to Abot, included in the compendium of Me-am Lo'ez, incorporates literally scores of sources, revealing the extensive range of his learning. He utilizes an array of Sephardic commentaries to Pirke Abot including: מלי דאבות (Hiyyun, Constantinople 1579), זכות אבות (Pinski, Baghdad date unknown), חסד' אבות (Yaavetz, Constantinople 1583), as well as obscure sources: אבות על הנ"ם, זרע אבות, אהבת אבות He also relies upon a number of midrashic collections: Midrash Rabbah, Yalkut Shimoni, Tanhuma, Sifre and Pesikta. He draws heavily upon both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds as well. Magriso frequently quotes from Maimonides' Yad-Hahuzakoh, Asher's Tur and Karo's Shulhan Arukh. In addition, he gleans from Ashkenazic and Sephardic commentators Rashi, Sforno (Italy d. 1550), Azuli (Castile d. 1660),

Gerondi (Spain d. 1263) and Alshekh (Ottoman Empire d. 1508).

Magriso's tapestry of commentaries reflects the changing needs of his era. His artistry lies in his blueprint for the reconstruction of Ottoman Jewry.

Magriso introduces his textual commentary in an explanation of why the work is entitled Ethics of The Fathers. First, he cleverly equates the word "father" with hakham.[1] Thus, the "Fathers" of Jewish tradition are actually the legitimate sages, students, judges and rabbis, all those who fit into the category of תלמיד חכם. To bring the future generation of children to the values of Torah constitutes the primary task of the hakham in Jewish history.[2] Second, to instruct Jews that each word of the Torah serves as an a father for all of the oral tradition, gives significance to the title, Ethics of The Fathers.[3] During Magriso's age of rampant heresy from oral tradition, the linking of oral and written tradition was critically important. Through these teachings of the "fathers" or "hakhamim" of Jewish history, Magriso hoped to return Jews to an appreciation of their legitimate traditions. He intended to move them away from the quasi learning of their day. He also sought to challenge the status of their dubious leadership.

Jews were required to read Pirke Abot four times a year. Magriso derives this mandate from the fact that Moses taught the Torah to Israel four times.[4] Such study offered the individual an opportunity to develop moral fortitude.[5]

One could also conquer the ills of the soul by fulfilling the commandment to read these teachings:

> As a person needs to cure the ills of the body, so he needs to cure the ills of the soul by commandments, for they are the true medicine for the soul.[6]

By studying Ethics of The Fathers, the Jew will confront his own ethical values.[7] Magriso analogizes the reading of Abot to reflecting upon one's innermost soul in a mirror. One can determine its beauty or ugliness.[8] This soul-searching acts as an essential tool for reconstructing one's own life values. It functions as a means of healing one's life[9] with Judaism, imbuing a person with faith,[10] wisdom[11] and tradition.[12] Magriso asserts that true beliefs are attained not by philosophical speculation but by the teachings of mothers and fathers. They are the ones who must pass along Torah tradition.[13] He equates the words of Pirke Abot with the "mothers to understanding and the fathers to wisdom."[14] If one devotes his life to the traditional values of these ethics, he can achieve eternal life.[15] Magriso consoles his readers: "Jews must never despair because every Jew has a portion in the future world."[16] The entire Jewish people will be guaranteed eternal life if they behave in accordance with the moral teachings of the fathers, the hakhamim[17] of Jewish tradition.

CHAPTER III

Societal Decline: Existential Problems

Magriso's commentary to Ethics of The Fathers confronts the harsh realities of life faced by the Jews of the Ottoman Empire. Magriso clearly was attuned to the plight of Ottoman Jewry. Societal decline produced physical deprivation, financial insecurity and unemployment. Worst of all, it led to a pervasive sense of hopelessness.

The commentary reflects how economic needs consumed Ottoman Jewry's strivings. Magriso notes that, in his society, a person first strives to meet the needs of his body. Afterwards, a person desires property, fields, vineyards, and wealth.[1] Complaints about lack of food were frequent. In response, Magriso cautions: "Food can be put off until later."[2] Perhaps one can find "inexpensive foods."[3] He sees danger in a society that focuses all its energies upon physical needs. One should not, Magriso warns, become accustomed[4] to pleasures of eating, drinking, clothing and pleasantries, lest all one's efforts be directed toward acquiring money.[5] This striving for acquisitions he labels a "mirage"[6] and a grave societal error. He relates a story to illustrate this point, in the form of a comment upon Abot 4:28: "Envy, lust and vainglory shorten a man's life." The story tells of a man wandering in a desert thirsting for water. He repeatedly sees what he thinks is water, but in

fact it is only a mirage.[7] The story is of course symbolic.

The society Magriso comments upon seeks to live by aspiring to economic fulfillment alone. This way of life, he warns, will bring them greater distress[8] when they discover that they are unable to attain these shallow goals. Our world, he explains, is like an angry sea.[9] One who desires the economic fulfillment of this world will attempt to cross this sea of life on a very unstable bridge. The more one pursues economic gains, the shakier the bridge becomes. One could easily tumble from the bridge at any moment and drown.[10] This parable touched the lives of Ottoman Jews. They faced a major societal disaster with little hope for economic fulfillment. If Jewish communal life were to survive, it became crucial to establish proper priorities. Magriso sought to make the people's options clear. He found it necessary to emphasize that striving for material needs alone would be disastrous.

Widespread poverty plagued Ottoman Jewry. In this decaying society, Jews lost touch with traditional values of providing for those less capable fo earning a livelihood. Simply stated, Jews ignored the poverty of the less fortunate. Magriso sought to break down this indifference. He repeatedly emphasizes the needs of the poor. He exhorts his readers to open their homes to the impoverished,[11] and to treat them with kindness.[12] A partial transformation of Jewish attitudes does not satisfy Magriso. He demands that the people

give the poor the best of their food, not leftovers.[13] He repeatedly stresses the need to provide assistance[14] to the poor. The poverty-stricken should be lifted into socially independent positions.[15] Furthermore, he advocates the promotion of business dealings with the poor.[16] He suggests hiring poor Jews.[17] He recommends that Jews buy merchandise from indigent Jewish peddlers.[18] Magriso urges the community to share wealth as the best solution for poverty.[19]

Magriso realizes that no easy answers exist for alleviating poverty. Consequently, the Jewish community must learn to live with that reality. He cleverly elevates the status of the indigent. The commentary extolls the virtus of poverty. Poor people always manage to acquire the basic necessities, Magriso explains.[20] They live free from the anxieties that plague those who chase after more wealth.[21] One can be content, he asserts, with the simple life.[22] Most important of all, the poor enter heaven more quickly than their prosperous brothers.[23]

Magriso recommends studying amidst poverty. Poor students remain happy, he explains.[24] He points to Hillel and other great sages. They led productive and meaningful -- although poverty-stricken lives.[25]

Not only does Magriso elevate poverty by emphasizing its advantages; he also creates a theology of poverty to remold social values. He posits that God created money

solely to attend to the needs of the poor.[26] He explains that when one behaves mercifully toward the poor he acts in accordance with God Himself. He equates giving to the poor with giving to God Himself.[27] A story illustrates these points: locusts swarmed over a city and destroyed it because communal leaders failed to give charity to poor water sellers. Finally, the residents do collect money for these poor people. God then restores the city.[28] Magriso states his message bluntly: "if you give money to the poor you will be saved from all suffering, and if you do not, you will suffer even more."[29] Giving charity will even save a person from death.[30] Most importantly, he who joins in the process of alleviating poverty actually becomes a partner with God.

The evils of poverty clearly plagued this society. Magriso's response is twofold. He attempts to imbue a life of poverty with transcendant meaning and moreover, offers this theology of poverty as an incentive to social change.

Unemployment also contributed to the disintegration of Jewish communal life. This comment indicates the scarcity of jobs: "we are like the students of Eber, who do not have work."[31] High unemployment carries other dangers. People without a trade will be compelled to rob, steal and deceive.[32] A story depicts the importance of a trade for all members of society: A king's son trains to become a weaver. Later he is kidnapped. He cleverly weaves a note into a garment and thus ensures his own rescue. Having a

trade actually saved his life. It is essential, Magriso argues, for everyone to have a trade, even a king's son, let alone members of a needy Jewish community.

All this time of social decline, Jews neglected the needs of their community. Magriso asserts that one who spends time helping the community merits God's help.[33] One must not ignore the troubles of a community, particularly in periods of distress.[34] The leaders, particularly, should struggle to alleviate the distress of the community.[35]

Jewish leadership became corrupt during the decline of Ottoman Jewry. Secondary sources reveal the rampant factionalism and power conflicts among communal leadership. Magriso's commentary reflects this reality. The judicial leadership held responsibility for the governing of all Jewish communal life, encompassing the regulation of civil and religious strife. Unfortunately, they failed to carry out their functions adequately.

According to Magriso, the judicial leadership lacked halachic expertise.[36] Magriso decries the illegitimacy of their positions.[37] They ruled irresponsibly and frequently rendered decisions without precedent.[38] The commentary castigates unfair trials[39] and false legal decisions.[40] It particularly condemns divorces based on incorrect law.[41] Court decisions grounded in legal error were a critical problem.[42] Rampant corruption[43] perpetuated social injustice.[44] Judicial leadership, according to Magriso, lacked adequate legal training.[45] Disregard of valuable outside assistance

compounded their ignorance.[46] He relates a parable of the attempts of an incompetent weaver to weave 100 meters of cloth, knowing neither how to cut it nor how to make clothes from it. The parable continues, "what benefit is this long cloth? But if one knows how to cut it immediately it becomes warm clothes for him and others. In the same way, the scholars of Israel are lawyers and must know how to make a legal decision."[47] Again, Ottoman Jewry confronted a dire situation. Neither a rejection of the Jewish judicial structures nor a turn to secular courts were possible for Ottoman Jewry. Jews did not speak Turkish, the language of those courts. Moreover, they were unwilling to reject the autonomy permitted Jewish millet by the Ottoman authorities.[48] Their futures thus rested on the health and vitality of their own institutions.

The pivotal realm of education constituted yet another critical aspect of Jewish life that showed signs of decay. For a culture that perpetually cherished education as the core value in life, educational disintegration represented a shattering blow, and indeed, a threat to Jewish survival. Jewish tradition endures only when the learning of the past is transmitted from generation to generation. According to secondary materials, the populace had scant knowledge of Hebrew and the basic sources of Judaism -- Torah, Midrash,

Talmud, Codes and Ethics. Hebrew illiteracy became rampant. It posed a major threat to cultural survival. Writing in the folk language of Ladino, Magriso reaches out to Ottoman Jewry.[49] He sounds the alarm of the disintegration of their communities.

A dearth of schools plagued Ottoman Jewry. Magriso affirms the need for educational facilities, commenting that one must make a most serious effort to establish schools in every city.[50] A city without a school is like a city without life and should be destroyed.[51] The transmission of knowledge, Magriso holds, remains the basis for the world's existence.[52] He recommends that learning takes place in the home[53] as previous generations of Jews studied. Sharing books within the homes can help eliminate the problem of their scarcity.[54] Problems of illiteracy[55] could be alleviated in a like manner. Young people[56] must learn if the problems of illiteracy[57] are to be avoided.[58] It is easier for the young to learn.[59] They in turn can teach others.[60] Magriso posits that if all people continue to study throughout their lifetimes, the Ottoman Jewish community could alleviate the crisis of educational disintegration.[61] They must increase traditional Toraitic learning.[62] Life itself then will be meaningful once again. Magriso conveys his message in a comment on Abot 1:13: "whoever does not increase his knowledge decreases it." He adds, "the road is far and our

time is limited. This ethic is very crucial for our times."[63]

Because the hakham served as educational, judicial and communal leader, the future of Jewish life hinged on the quality of his educational leadership. According to Magriso's commentary, the teachers of his day lacked knowledge of tradition[64] and talmudic expertise.[65] In fact, their incompetency[66] weakened an entire generation.[67] Magriso illustrates this dilemma:

> Our Torah was acquired by many generations of forefathers. These teachings are for the meek as well as the great. It is proper to transmit these teachings to the youth of Israel in order to teach them the ethics our sages taught in the Mishna, to implant these precious qualities in them-roots of belief, to be a people of truth, haters of iniquity and lovers of humanity, to be humble in spirit rejecting the honor of money or illegal means. If our teachers do not teach their students, we and our offspring will be less virtuous than any other nation or tongue.[68]

Not only were teachers incapable of transmitting knowledge of Jewish tradition,[69] they actually conveyed false information[70] and destructive[71] legal precedent.[72] They carelessly[73] altered legal teachings.[74] Moreover, the absence of rabbinical expertise led teachers to transmit idolatrous ideas. Magriso warns, commenting on Pirke Abot 1:11, "Sages, be careful with your words":

> One should not create new interpretations of the Torah that may bring about false teachings. Everything should be based on the premises of our Rabbis. If you do not, this is in the category of idolatry.[75]

The above comment evidences the radical challenges to normative Judaism mounted by such groups as the Karaites and Shabbateans.[76] It shows as well that traditional Judaism still felt itself threatened by the residue of turmoil from the previous generation. Community leaders considered the numerous kabbalistic Ladino books a menace.[77] They destroyed many of these works after the Shabbatean fiasco.[78]

Followers of Shabbateanism, particularly the mystical Donmeh sects,[79] yet remained in the Ottoman Empire. Remnants of Karaites, Jews who rejected the oral tradition, also lived among Ottoman Jewry.[80] Furthermore, variances in theological orientation continued to plague the various kahals: descendants of the Spanish-Portuguese immigrants, the descendants of the Romaniot Jews, and numbers of Ashkenazim, Jews of European extract. This communal instability rose to the surface after the fiasco of the extremist messianists. Heresy[81] and apostasy[82] ran rampant among these influential extremists.[83]

Magriso cautions the populace about this menace:[84]

> Some question the purpose of the Torah and commandments. Amidst Israel there are people who attempt to lead Jews astray. They never explicitly stated their heresy . . . . but they broke from the oral tradition and only acknowledged the written Torah. They are the Boethusians and the Karaites that are in all generations. Blessed is our God who as separated us from their error.[85]

These non-traditionalists posed a grave threat. Magriso warns Ottoman Jewry to beware of non-traditional wisdom[86] which he condemns.[87] He accuses those who pursue non-traditional learning of seeking honor,[88] financial rewards and personal gains.[89] They have abandoned oral tradition,[90] the very foundation of traditional rabbinic Judaism. Instead they seek hidden or mystical knowledge.[91] Magriso comments on Abot 4:7: "Do not use the Torah as a spade to dig with," by advising, "one should not seek hidden things with the Torah."[92] He speaks polemically against the dangers of mystical inquiry. Magriso explains that one must know how to respond to apostates. One should help them find answers in traditional Judaism.[93] If possible one should bring them to repentance.[94] One should also provide knowledgable rabbinic responses[95] to their heretical questions. Most fundamentally, his arguments emphasize the very foundation of traditional Judaism, that God transmitted both Torahs, the written and oral, at Sinai.[96] A further comment asserts that God actually prefers the oral tradition[97] of Jewish tradition's sages.

Clearly, grave doubts concerning their futures tormented Ottoman Jewry of the early eighteenth century. Economic hardships, incompetent judicial leadership and theological factionalism all posed a significant threats to their cultural survival. With its values convoluted and its sense of purpose lost, this society needed reconstruction

in order to survive and regenerate. Accordingly, Magriso offers a transforming blueprint that radically alters the present skewed value system into one of traditional learning, guided by legitimate spiritual leadership.

CHAPTER IV

Societal Reconstruction: Ideal

Magriso counters his description of the decay of his age with a detailed presentation of a value system based on two rubrics: the traditional talmid hakham and the central principle of talmud torah. Throughout his commentary, he carefully builds these essential rubrics into major symbols of societal reconstruction.

A. The Talmid Hakham

Significantly, Magriso equates the talmid hakham with the "father" of Jewish tradition, as in Ethics of The Fathers. This religious symbol, the talmid hakham thereby displaces the quasi-religious figures of the past generation: the Shabbateans, mystics, Karaites, heretics, apostates and other extremists who rejected traditional Judaism. The talmid hakham also symbolizes authentic unified leadership in sharp contrast to the current illegitimate leaders of Ottoman Jewry.

Among Sephardim, the hakham traditionally played the pivotal leadership role in Jewish communal life. The community frequently considered him the dayyan, judge, the bet din, court and the marbiz torah, teacher of Jewish tradition.[1] The Jew often interchanged the terms "hakham" and "rabbi."[2]

However, at this time of the mid-eighteenth century, the talmid hakham had fallen from his revered status. Ottoman

Jewry, their values seriously skewed, mockingly debased this figure. Magriso attempts the crucial task of reelevating this symbolic figure. He devotes much of his commentary to extolling the virtues of the talmid hakham. Repeatedly, he admonishes his society to honor this crucial symbol of Jewish life.

The talmid hakham listens in order to absorb all traditional teachings[3] with an open heart.[4] With care, insight and clarity[5] he teaches others. He respects the teachings of the sages of Jewish tradition,[6] particularly when he sits in the presence of other hakhamim. Moreover, he permits the most learned to speak first,[7] because wisdom takes precedence over age.[8] He cautiously acts with derech eretz[9] and never embarrasses another sage.[10] Without fail, he ponders his legal decisions.[11] He carefully articulates them.[12] He rejects complacency in learning, forever striving to increase his knowledge.[13] All twenty-four books of the Bible are like precious jewels to him.[14] The talmid hakham frequently decides to forego sleep to increase his learning.[15] He attains a vast amount of knowledge. His knowledge incorporates all aspects of human endeavors: secular knowledge, business negotiations, agriculture, natural phenomena, manual labor, medicine, types of food, legal oaths, vows, languages, Torah wisdom and every other area of wisdom.[16] A true hakham refuses to rely on what he has learned in his family but seeks to prove himself in knowledge.[17] A talmid hakham of unseemly

birth, even a bastard, merits acclaim even over royalty and the priesthood.[18] The commentary extolls the daily actions as well as the learning of this symbolic figure.[19] His virtuous behavior, personal ethics and fear of heaven[20] provide a model, as does his advice about life.[21]

Magriso posits that the hakham actually serves as God's messenger.[22] He learns for the sake of heaven[23] in order to bring peace to the world.[24] What the hakham teaches in this world, God says in the next world.[25] Moreover, the talmid hakham maintains the existence of God's world: "As God maintains the existence of the world, so a talmid hakham who studies Torah for its own sake maintains the existence of the world."[26]

The commentary chastises the Jews of the Ottoman Empire, importuning them to recognize the virtues of the talmid hakham and to reelevate him to his previously revered position. This effort would become the very process of societal reconstruction.

Pursuing his task, Magriso presses the need to honor this symbolic figure.[27] The hakham should be uplifted. The community should provide him with personal sustenance, including food and clothes.[28] They should open their homes to the talmid hakham in order to support him.[29] In return, they will gain the insight of his great learning.[30] They can learn with him in their homes.[31] Magriso condemns those

who act miserly[32] toward this figure. He likens one who strengthens a talmid hakham to one who sacrificed offerings to God when the Temple stood.[33] The hakham should be treated politely, as a special guest in one's home.[34] He should never be exploited for work. Such a practice is absolutely forbidden and actually yields the death penalty.[35]

The commentary demands that Jews venerate,[36] strengthen[37] and honor the hakham,[38] explaining that individuals honor themselves when they honor him.[39] The world exists for the purpose of sustaining the learned Jew.[40] Magriso must admonish the communities to cease their mocking of the talmid hakham. Magriso compares their scorn to the mocking of the Torah,[41] Jewish festivals[42] and God's name itself.[43] He censures talmid hakham jokes,[44] and criticizes those who pity[45] and hate[46] these individuals.

Magriso's repeated need to expound the proper treatment of the talmid hakham reveals the communal disrespect for this figure. It is striking evidence of Ottoman Jewry's societal decline. Magriso attempts to alter this attitude by pointing to the societal benefits of the talmid hakham. The hakham enjoys access to traditional learning.[47] Most importantly, he can transmit his knowledge to the community.[48] Magriso illustrates this value by relating the following story: Two men travel to a slave market in search of slaves. One man buys a slave who tells his master to make use of his, the slave's wisdom. The slave's learning thereby brings his

master to greatness. The second man purchases a slave. This slave tells his master he will do everything to bring him material benefit. The second slave lies, cheats and works to increase his own material wealth. Both this master and slave are eventually punished.[49] The story illustrates a highly significant point; great benefit accrues to he who respects the wisdom of a talmid hakham. The society that rejects him in favor of material benefits will in turn be rejected. Ultimately, they will receive punishment. The story sends a symbolic message to Ottoman Jewish readers. The talmid hakham, according to Magriso, must be praised[50] as a communal model[51] and respected as a reconstructive tool. One should seek him as a teacher,[52] a rabbi[53] and a personal friend.[54] Through him, one can acquire true knowledge.[55] Ideally, one should strive to become a talmid hakham himself.[56] Magriso offers a beautiful parable that likens the Jewish people to a nut:

> What is a nut? During the time that its shell clings to its inner fruit, it is protected. This is not so when it is separated from it. In the same way, if the masses cling to hakhamim they will merit both this world and the world to come.[57]

Accentuating this message, Magriso provides a second parable: One who clings to a talmid hakham is like a man who enters a store. Even if he buys nothing, he absorbs a goodly fragrance.[58] If one honors the talmid hakham, it is as if

he has honored the Torah[59] and God Himself.[60] Magriso's recurrent pleas to reelevate the talmid hakham have been convincing. The very future of God, Torah and the Jewish people depend upon this reelevation. A healthy society, like the nut in a shell, cannot exist without the fruits of tradition vested in the talmid hakham. If the people fail to reinstate the talmid hakham as the central figure of Jewish communal life, decline inevitably will escalate among Ottoman Jewry.

B. Talmud Torah

Magriso offers the value of talmud torah, learning, as his second symbolic rubric for reconstructing Ottoman Jewry. Learning constitutes the life blood of a healthy society.[61] A society that avoids learning commits suicide.[62] Magriso affirms the value of daily study for all persons, whether it be an hour a day[63] or nightlong study.[64] This study may involve even such light materials as midrash, psalms or Me-am Lo'ez itself.[65] Daily study, a vital necessity, must occupy a high priority in one's life. A story illustrates: Because he has set aside time for daily study a poor tailor keeps a king waiting for his garments.[66] The king cannot convince this Jew to forego his Torah study time. Torah study,[67] Magriso asserts, must be a daily obligation so that one can increase his knowledge.[68] One strengthens his life[69]

while gaining wisdom.[70] Magriso holds that one must strike persistently[71] to learn.[72] He condemns those who ignore learning and calls them haughty fools, simpletons and blind-men.[73] Everyone must realize he possesses the potential for learning. This includes all Jews:[74] the uneducated,[75] am ha'aretz,[76] the common man,[77] poor students,[78] deaf-mutes,[79] as well as those already educated.[80]

Magriso relates a story concerning two deaf-mutes who came daily to a Yeshiva to study Torah. They came in order to watch the lips of the hakhamim teach. When Rabbi Judah saw how great was the mutes' love of Torah, he requested mercy upon them. They were cured. When they began to speak, to everyone's surprise they were experts in all aspects of Torah: halakha, sifre, sifra and the entire Talmud. They merited this marvel merely by listening.[81] A second deaf-mute story exactly parallels this theme.[82] Thus Magriso alludes, if this generation merely will open its minds and hearts to learning, it too will be cured of its educational disabilities.

Magriso offers several suggestions to arrest the critical decline in traditional knowledge. He recommends that Jews cling to hakhamim[83] even if they must uncomprehendingly listen to their learning.[84] Learning after work[85] will help. So too he advises the study of easy tests such as musar and Shulhan

Arukh.[86] Magriso instructs on study techniques. One should learn according to one's abilities, personal strengths and inclinations.[87] One should avoid rote learning.[88] Oral[89] repetition[90] of the material helps a person increase knowledge.[91] One thereby can remember what he has learned already.[92] Neglect of learning means neglecting life. This neglect will bring one to despair.[93]

Learning should not take place in solitude;[94] instead one should join in community[95] by seeking out a learning partner: a rabbi, teacher or friend.[96] Learning becomes a challenge when it occurs communally.[97] One increases wisdom[98] by learning with others; true hakhamim find others with whom to learn.[99]

Magriso exhorts the people to do more than increase their own knowledge, however. Teaching others helps increase Torah knowledge, lest it diminish.[100] The generational chain continues only with the sharing of learning.[101] Magriso extrapolates from Hillel's dictum, Abot 1:14: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?" with this statement:

> If I do not occupy my time with Torah study "only for myself", but also teach others and bring others to Torah. . . When all my actions are for me alone, "what am I," what do I do to teach the multitudes? 102/

Magriso reinterprets Hillel's original verse to give support to his own theories of societal reconstruction based on learning and teaching others. He extensively develops this point, emphasizing that if one fails to use the accumulated traditional knowledge to teach others, he wastes his own life.[103] One should strive to teach others legal sharpness[104] to clarify the halakha.[105] One who increases students increases life itself, Magriso posits.[106] One attains the crown of a good name if he brings many students to Torah.[107] Magriso cites a parable about a prince who travels in the desert with many donkeys loaded with barrels of water. Another prince took not donkeys, but hakhamim expert in the ability to find water. Wherever they went, they dug wells. The first prince, Magriso explains, did everything for himself whereas knowledge helped the second prince. Like one who teaches others, he benefitted from and in turn increased knowledge from generation to generation.[108]

Magriso presents a two-fold task to this generation. First, the people must learn the insightful teachings of Jewish tradition. Second, they must share this learning with others so that knowledge will flow from generation to generation. Society should honor everyone who fulfills these tasks,[109] parents,[110] as well as anyone who knows more than others,[111] even if it be merely one letter more of Torah.

Magriso's commentary constitutes more than a justification of and methodology for learning. He himself undertakes the obligation of teaching others. Following Jacob Culi's methodology for teaching fundamentals by use of a textual commentary, he attempts to teach the very basics of Jewish tradition to his uneducated readers. For example, Magriso explains the backgrounds of the Mishnaic teachers -- Jose ben Joezer and Jose ben Johonan: "know, these two sages were recalled in the Mishna, they are second generation sages of the Mishnas -- one was Nasi and the other Av Bet Din,"[112] and Rabbi: "This refers to Rabbi Judah HaNasi who is called the holy rabbi because he was the rabbi of an entire generation . . . Rabbi wrote the Mishna." Magriso tutors his readers on the two types of commandments, the rational commandments such as honoring one's parents, and the commandments between man and God that have no rational explanation. These include the red heifor rituals and dietary regulations.[113]

Magriso realized that the people of his day had little or no access to traditional sources such as the Shulhan Arukh or Mishneh Torah. At one point he quotes verbatim from the laws of talmud torah, learning, found in the Shulhan Arukh[114] and the Mishneh Torah.[115] He quotes only these laws of learning in his commentary. He makes these laws central to his goals of transforming Ottoman Jewry. He urges Jews to attempt to study these laws of learning every day.[116]

Magriso conveys a variety of information to his readers injecting at one point a scholarly lesson on the nature of the Jewish judicial system. He mentions courts, judges, legal decisions and the pressing need for justice.[117] At other junctures he delves into Israelite history.[118] In addition, Magriso discusses the purpose of the festivals.[119]

In short, Magriso practices what he preaches. Not only does he extoll the values of learning and tradition, he also attempts to imbue his readers with a true knowledge of Jewish tradition. He teaches via explanations, stories and anecdotes. He also presents actual lessons on history, law and ethics. Magriso passionately commits himself to the task of infusing hope into the lives of Jews. Those Jews had lost touch with the beauty of traditional Judaism. Magriso attempts to ignite the spark of Torah in the midst of a culturally impoverished people. Magriso illuminates his message with the following metaphor. He comments on the Mishnaic words of Abot 5:25: "The words of the sages are like ashes of fire."

> You can only see a small spark of fire. If you cultivate it and turn it over, a flame will rise. It catches until it will begin to burn. One could be warmed by its light. So are the words of Torah, even if they seem simple and slight, a person who turns them and studies them will have enlightened eyes. He will find deep meaning in them.[120]

Although Magriso fully develops his symbol of talmud torah as central to social reconstruction, he does not see learning as an end in itself. Learning should inspire Jews to actions.[121] They should help one attain the personal values of fear of heaven, moral virtue and proper manners.[122] Just as a lamp requires oil to burn so Torah learning must be accompanied by personal values.[123] Throughout people's lives, Magriso contends, evil inclinations challenge them. These tendencies prevent one from learning.[124] They hinder the realization of Torah.[125] One can solve this problem by filling his heart with Torah.[126]

Commandments, too are crucial to life.[127] He stresses the inadequacy of Torah learning unless joined with the action of the commandments.[128] Prayer constitutes another essential ingredient of social reconstruction. Magriso explains that everyone possesses the capacity for prayer.[129] God desires man's prayer,[130] particularly communal prayer.[131] A father's commitment to prayer serves as a model to his son.[132] Because prayer increases God's providence[133] and stimulates Torah learning,[134] it contains social value for man.

The synagogue, like prayer, functions as a necessary component in Magriso's societal reconstruction. The synagogue lies at the very heart of Jewish communal life.

Magriso recommends that all Jews go to synagogue even if they are neither learned nor observant.[135] Merely by sitting in the midst of *hakhamim*, they may acquire knowledge. Magriso tells a story of a person who comes to a *hakham*. He complains about attending synagogue services on Shabbat when the weather turned cold or hot. Today, Magriso warns, these complainers come with a request, tomorrow they will say, "why do we burden ourselves with Torah reading?" Later they will question, "why pray three times a day?"[136] The synagogue, Magriso reiterates, functions as the central institution of Jewish life. It must not be undercut by such attitudes. Preservation of the synagogue as a center for the Jewish community constitutes a necessary condition for Ottoman Jewry's survival.

Throughout this chapter Magriso's presentation of certain basic rubrics of traditional Judaism, designed to stabilize and regenerate Ottoman Jewry, has been highlighted. The *talmid hakham* and the critical value of *talmud torah* comprise his two central symbols. He supplements these symbols with other necessary components of reconstruction: personal ethics, action, prayer and the centrality of the synagogue. Magriso gives expression to his hope of replacing the shattered culture and illegitimate leadership of Ottoman Jewry with models for leadership and learning, both firmly grounded in traditional Judaism. He thereby attempts to provide the Jew of the Ottoman Empire with a sense of

social stability, personal meaning and a foothold within the legitimate continuity of past history.

This ambitious revitalization of Jewish society was merely a beginning, however. Magriso's task remains uncompleted without a presentation of his theological blueprint for the future. To provide transcendant meaning and hope constitutes the fulfillment of Magriso's monumental goal. It is to this larger task that this study now turns.

CHAPTER V

Theological Blueprint

After Magriso equips Ottoman Jewry with his societal symbols, he seeks to imbue their individual lives with eternal significance. His theological blueprint takes its life from the spiritual sustenance of the Torah, the core of all Jewish learning. To formulate this blueprint, Magriso refers back to the past models of Jewish history. These personalities derived transcendent meaning from living the values of Torah. He hopes that Ottoman Jewry will identify with these past models. Ideally they will next adopt his design for the future.

Magriso realizes that his readers had suffered in their recent past, enduring expulsions, messianic fiascos and the still present anti-semitic restrictions. With great insight, he responds to human suffering by integrating it into his theological blueprint: even suffering has transcendent meaning and dignity. Promises of a future world of eternal life help to alleviate the seeming meaninglessness of human suffering. Perhaps the greatest comfort comes, Magriso asserts, from the knowledge that God, too, suffers when the Jewish people suffers.

God becomes Magriso's ultimate integrating factor as the prime force within the Torah and the redeemer of those

who suffer. Although skewed values, a dearth of education, incapable leadership, despair and injustice, surely plagued Ottoman Jewry, human redemption could be found within God. The individual could discover transcendent meaning by placing his trust in God's redeeming justice.

A. The Centrality of Torah

The Torah, according to Magriso, provides a vast resource of the transcendent values of life. He considers it the source of all wisdom,[1] a repository for an endless stream of knowledge.[2] One could study Torah unceasingly without exhausting its wisdom.[3] The Torah can be equated with a king's palace. If a person enters one room of the palace, he will see that it leads to an endless array of rooms. So, too, with the Torah, it can provide spiritual sustenance without end. The world was created for the sake of Torah,[4] Magriso comments. The Torah maintains the very existence of the world,[5] keeping it in balance.[6]

Magriso affirms his emphatic message that the Torah is essential to life itself.[7] One who ignores the fact cannot be considered a living human being[8] because humanness is impossible without Torah.[9] Moreover, one who lacks Torah, lacks a human soul.[10]

In a society that pursued material acquisition over spiritual growth, Magriso attempts to reelevate the spiritual values of life. He holds that the transcendent meaning of Torah, not materialistic gain, constitutes the true nourishment

of life. The lack of Torah causes a scarcity of bread.[11] It embodies the true bread of life.[12] Sustenance,[13] bodily[14] and materials needs[15] all can be attributed to the rejection of Torah. Fulfillment of these needs will occur when Jews honor the Torah.[16]

Magriso succinctly illustrates his point: God gave the Torah in a desolate desert, to teach that one can find Torah only when he limits material pleasures.[17] Throughout one's life a person struggles to achieve economic fulfillment; yet when he dies, only Torah remains.[18] The Torah therefore embodies the only enduring value of life. The commentary describes the words of the Torah as true pearls.[19] The hakham throughout Jewish tradition spent great amounts of money to study Torah. Magriso argues that a person should envy those whose lives are more steeped in Torah than is his own:

> One should not look with envy on those who have more clothes, food or drink. One should be happy with one's portion. But one should envy those whose spiritual lives are higher in Torah and fear of heaven.[20]

The commentary tells of a youth who rejects the wealth of jewels when he realizes the value of Torah study.[21] Another tale describes a Torah scholar mocked by businessmen on a boat trip. Rough seas capsized the boat, and all the material possessions. Only the Torah scholar received honor in the port.[22] The value of Torah eternally endures. It outlives the transitory material possessions that people seek. Magriso

reemphasizes this point: a person has neither gold, silver nor jewels when he dies; only Torah survives forever.[23]

Magriso recommends that the Jews of the Ottoman Empire limit their business concerns.[24] They must rather make Torah the chief pursuit of their lives.[25] He cites a story of two store-owner hakhamim. One owns a large store and lacks the time to make Torah central to his life. The other, with a small store, can achieve that objective.[26]

Magriso's theological blueprint continues with his assertion that the Torah cures life's problems. Torah acts as medicine for the soul,[27] to relieve sadness[28] and sickness.[29] The Torah cleanses like water,[30] purifying the mind.[31] It enables a person to avoid sin.[32] It endows him with alertness,[33] knowledge,[34] as well as a sense of justice.[35] Like a mirror, Torah reflects the hidden aspects of one's heart.[36] It possesses the power to protect, from the dangers of life: evil,[37] punishment,[38] destruction[39] and death.[40][41]

Magriso cajoles this generation to love the Torah.[42] One should regard it as a precious vessel that contains the fulfillment of one's entire life. A person can acquire the sweetness of Torah[43] if he only inclines his heart to this purpose.[44] For the Torah truly provides lasting transcendent values. It offers life's ultimate spiritual meaning.

Throughout the commentary Magriso uses various historical personalities as models of Torah-centered living. Drawn from the biblical, rabbinic and medieval periods, these Jewish figures emphasize the centrality of Torah to their lives. They give preference to spiritual over material values. Learning plays a crucial role in their lives. These historical personalities clearly put into action the very values Magriso articulates in his theological blueprint for Ottoman Jewry.

Before the patriarchal period, Magriso asserts, there existed no honor in the world except in the life of Ya'avetz. He established a Torah institute for learning.[45] The patriarchs themselves rejected materialism[46] in favor of the true spiritual bread of Torah.[47] Lacking both clothing and food,[48] they found sustenance in Torah. They realized that the rejection of Torah leads to suffering.[49]

During ancient Israelite history, Magriso finds Moses' rejection of physical sustenance for forty days in order to receive the Torah.[50] Each Jew who accepted the Torah lived a life of material deprivation to be worthy of Torah.[51] The materialistic indulgence in the golden calf constituted the exception. This incident, Magriso notes, led to grave failure.[52] Joshua began his life as an uneducated fool. When he accepted Torah, he achieved greatness.[53] Magriso describes David as one who revered the Torah.[54] He taught many hakhamim[55] and learned with humility.[56] He also accepted life's suffering.[57] Many of these figures rejected materialism

in favor of the Torah's spiritualism. They accepted suffering, attributing human misery to a neglect of Torah. Accordingly, Magriso ascribes the destruction of the ancient temple to scorn of the talmid hakham,[58] the embodiment of Torah learning. The commentary also cites the sage Ecclesiastes as yet another who chose a life imbued with spiritual pursuit over materialism.[59]

Magriso proceeds to extoll the values of certain talmudic sages. Rabbi Abaye celebrated his students' learning abilities.[60] Rabbi Akiba educated thousands of students.[61] According to the commentary, he studied continually, even on his wedding day.[62] He ultimately gave his life for the sake of Torah.[63] Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai, a great Torah scholar, also learned throughout his entire lifetime.[64] Rav Nahman rejected material benefits in order to teach his son by Torah alone.[65] A number of sages, including the Babylonian Amoraim, Judah HaNasi,[66] Shimon Bar Yohai, Akiba and Judah Ben Eli,[67] suffered and endured exile in order to study Torah. Magriso's themes of spiritualism over materialism, Torah study, and suffering for Torah guided the lives of his Talmudic models. So, too, a suffering Ottoman Jewry can live by these essential, life-giving values.

Later historical personalities provide like guidance. Magriso applauds Rashi as a brilliant Torah scholar.[68] Isaac Luria suffered to become a sage of Torah.[69] The Vilna Gaon studied Torah continually.[70] Magriso makes Torah learning

central to the eminence of these historic personalities as well.

A paradigmatic story appears repeatedly throughout Magriso's commentary. It tells of a great Torah hakham, either Judah HaLevi,[71] Saadya Gaon[72] or an anonymous sage,[73] who enters cities in disguise. He invariably receives shabby treatment. The communities' residents relegate him to a corner in the tavern or a poor kitchen. Finally, the cities' residents discover the brilliance of the stranger's Torah knowledge. At this point, they accord him the highest of communal recognition and ask him to assume the position of talmid hakham for the entire community. Magriso imbues this story with great symbolic significance. The Jews of the Ottoman Empire failed to recognize the talmid hakham, the symbol of Torah learning. Torah is yet to be reelevated to a position of centrality among Ottoman Jewry. When this recognition comes, it will dramatically change their own society.

The personalities of Jewish history are potential models for Ottoman Jewry. Their lives epitomized the very values Magriso presents in his theological blueprint. It is incumbent on this generation of Ottoman Jews to recognize their dilemma and to begin to shape their lives in accordance with the lives of paradigmatic Jewish personalities.

B. The Meaning and Purpose of Suffering

A major obstacle, however, impeded Ottoman Jewry's ability to assume the task. The Jews considered themselves victims of inexplicable suffering. The roots of their anguish could be traced to the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal. They then fled to the Ottoman Empire. The numerous descendants of these Jews were acutely aware of this tragic history. More recently, they endured the psychologically crushing Shabbatean fiasco, dashing their hopes for messianic fulfillment. Currently, Ottoman Jewry was suffering the harsh restrictions of a declining Ottoman ruling class and the anti-semitic outbursts of the turbulent Ottoman masses. Lest they interpret their tribulation as God's punishment or even abandonment, any plan for regeneration would have to offer an alternative transcendent meaning for their suffering. Magriso acutely senses the need to counter the tendency to reject traditional Judaism in despair. By drawing Ottoman Jewry's suffering into the ambit of traditional Judaism, he transforms an obstacle into a crucial component of his societal blueprint. 74/

The commentary acknowledges the burdens of suffering 75/ but reminds the Jews that their lot could be even worse. He advises them how to behave in the face of suffering. The community should relieve the personal distress of an individual. 76/ They must transform suffering into a communal burden. Furthermore, Magriso offers them hope. He relates a story

depicting the survival of the Jewish people amidst threatening circumstances:

> A multitude of non-Jews journeyed to a marketplace. One Jew stood in their midst, minding his own business. A thought came to his mind. Considering how much non-Jews hate Jews, who will seek justice if they kill him? He called Rabbi Akiba who witnessed a wonder. Ten thousand lions, tigers and bears passed by him. One lamb stood among them, but it was not killed. The animals' compassion did not spare the lamb; rather the "shepherd" saved it. The lions are the nations of the world, and the lamb is Israel. 77/

Magriso's interpretation: Israel, like this vulnerable lamb, will survive even the treacherous times facing Ottoman Jewry.

Another parable recognizes the pain of life. A baby in a womb contentedly studies Torah. Inevitably, however, he was to leave this security. He is born and cries as he confronts the suffering in the world. Magriso adds to the message of this story. Suffering, although inevitable, has both purpose and rational explanation. Simply stated, sin causes human suffering. 78/ It must be atoned for according to one's iniquities. 79/ One must not interpret human suffering as punishment or revenge but rather as a payment, similar to the satisfaction of a person's financial obligations. 80/ Suffering has the purpose, according to Magriso, of testing man 81/ with rich and poor alike. 82/ It purifies him for the future. 83/ God treats the lives of certain righteous individuals as a pledge for an entire generation. 84/

The sin that causes the suffering of Ottoman Jewry, Magriso posits, is neglect of Torah. He thereby links together the various themes of his commentary. One who exerts no effort to learn Torah will suffer as a result.[85] Magriso makes this quite clear in his comment to Abot 2:20, "The day is short, the task is great," stating, "one should not think that suffering caused one's neglect of Torah, but rather, neglect of Torah brought suffering upon you."[86] A parable sounds a similar theme. A home owner hires laborers. When he discovers their laziness, he becomes angry and causes them trouble. So, too, if the Jewish people fail to study Torah, suffering will plague them.[87] Moreover, their scorn of Torah brings about all the suffering in the world[88] and was responsible for the Jewish people's exile and oppression.[89]

Having chastised the people, Magriso outlines appropriate responses to their problems. First, because suffering constitutes a payment for past neglect, one should receive suffering with inner love.[90] This acceptance represents the greatest sacrifice a person can make.[91] The hakhamim throughout Jewish history resigned themselves to suffering in love. They understood that their pain was only physical, not spiritual.[92] Magriso advises this generation actually to accept suffering in joy, knowing that they thereby atone for past sins.[93] They then can face the future with equanimity.

Second, he urges that this generation pursue Torah learning amidst their suffering.[94] They must not, he emphasizes, tear their hands from Torah.[95] He comments on Abot 4:11, "Whoever fulfills the Torah despite poverty shall in the end fulfill it amidst wealth," explaining that a person must learn to toil in Torah when he is burdened, exiled and striving for sustenance. Ultimately God will double his rewards.[96] Conversely, if he responds to suffering by complaining, it will intensify.[97] Suffering thus becomes purposeful. It enables one to atone for past societal errors such as the neglect of Torah and learning while confronting the future with the hope that atonement will improve his lot. One therefore should accept such suffering with the inner joy of sacrifice. Magriso thereby offers hope in place of despair.

Magriso's third response is one of comfort. Lest Ottoman Jewry believe that God vengefully punishes them, or worse, that he ignores their plight, Magriso assures that God suffers with them.[98] God has not rejected this generation; he remains close to those of "contrite and broken heart."[99] God's presence, the Shekhina, actually undergoes exile with the Jewish people.[100] A parable illustrates God's concern for the suffering of Ottoman Jewry:

> A precious son walked barefoot and felt a thorn sting his foot. His father feared lest the leg become infected. He took a needle and ejected the thorn. Even though this procedure caused suffering to the boy, it was necessary to cure him.

> Whenever the boy asked to go barefoot, the father would warn him that if stuck by a thorn he would have to endure more pain.[101]

God, like the father in this story, brings about tribulation only to help his people. He cares about their suffering. Moreover, He seeks to prevent future pain by warning them of the cause of their suffering. As a father does not reject his beloved son, so God will not cast aside Ottoman Jewry in their time of despair. This concern in itself provides transcendent religious meaning to the suffering of Ottoman Jewry.

Finally, Magriso responds to current suffering by describing the rewards of the next world. Their pain in this world will bring merit to the Jewish people in the world to come.[102] One therefore should accept suffering in joy.[103]

Magriso repeatedly attempts to shift emphasis from this world to the next. Security really does not exist in this world,[104] he asserts. Material possessions easily are lost.[105] Therefore, one must seek spiritual fulfillment, for all Jews are promised a piece of the world to come.[106] Ultimate judgment of man's life occurs not in this world:

> A person is not judged in this world, lest he suffer and blame God for this apparent injustice. But all man's actions are written in a book. God judges him in the future world. Then all men will know God's justice.[107]

Although rewards for Torah learning do not exist in this world,[108] God preserves and grants them in the next.[109]

If a *hakham* diminishes his sleep to study Torah, God will sustain him in the light of his splendor in the world to come.[110] One therefore should be neither bitter nor cynical. God will deny both the future world and His comforting *Shekhinah* to the rejecter of Torah living.[111]

Magriso apparently was aware that his emphasis on Torah study as the vehicle to a future world could leave an uneducated, alienated Jewry without hope. He must reassure them:

> If you merely make an effort in Torah, even if you do not attain knowledge as you would like, do not think your efforts are for naught. For God will reward your efforts according to your toil. Know that the reward of the righteous is in the future, then they will learn Torah and never forget.[112]

Magriso thereby imbues the uneducated person's struggles to learn with transcendent purpose. For as his comment to *Abot* 1:1, "All Israel has a share in the world to come" explains:

> All work that a person does needs some ultimate purpose. If a person does not know its purpose he will not work out of love. For example, if a person builds a house, he knows he will live in it. The essence of Torah living and learning is to merit the future world.[113]

Each Jew possesses the precious tools needed to attain the world to come. Magriso relates a highly symbolic story. A rich man will permit his only son to inherit his vast wealth only on the following conditions. The son must travel to a certain place, learn to work and become an expert,

lest people consider him a lazy son who lives only on inherited wealth. The son goes to the appropriate spot to learn to work. He discovers that he needs special tools available only in a certain place. The father sends for and receives these precious tools after much effort. He gives the tools to his son. The son finds them to be a burden and tosses them into the sea. He is no longer capable of facing his father. Magriso interprets the story: the Jew should not rely solely upon God's mercy, just as the son should not be totally dependent on his inheritance. The Jew receives the precious tool of Torah. If he uses it, he can live by it. If he chooses to cast Torah aside, he will lose the reward of the future world, unable to face his "Father."[114]

After chastising the Jews for their departure from Torah, Magriso's commentary has responded to their suffering in four important ways. He counsels the Jews to accept their tribulations with equanimity but offers hope that their lives will improve if they mend their ways. He comforts them with the knowledge that God is concerned and suffers along with them. Finally, he paints the possibility of reward in the world to come, emphasizing above all else, that the choice is theirs to make.

If they reject Torah, they will strive after the transient material pleasures of this world.[115] If they make Torah central to their lives, they can attain the beauty of eternal life in the future world.[116] They must realize, Magriso holds, that these two options are like fire and water.

They cannot exist together.[117] Magriso poses a choice for Ottoman Jewry that will determine the future course of their history: continued societal decline or a hopeful reconstruction imbued with transcendent meaning.

C. In Conclusion -- God's Integrating Role

Throughout Magriso's commentary, God functions as the crucial integrating factor in the proposed theological blueprint. In a seemingly inexplicable world, God renders life's harshness comprehensible. He imbues everything--the Torah, the symbolic talmid hakham, the value of study, action, prayer, ethics and even human suffering--with ultimate meaning. He oversees all of human history. Chance or fate do not truly exist and consequently, Ottoman's Jewry cannot consider their dilemma an accident. Furthermore, they are not alone in their struggle for meaning.

Jewry must acknowledge God's providence over all as the most basic truth.[118] They must transmit this reality, Magriso continues, from generation to generation.[119] Ultimately, human sustenance depends upon God, not man.[120] A businessman or farmer must not strive to increase his material wealth lest he usurp God's domain.[121] This warning applies to all human beings who strive after illusory materialism. God's spiritual values are crucial;[122] they take precedence over all else. God judges human beings according to how well they adhere to His values during their lives.[123]

God's values are embodied in His Torah, given as a precious gift to the Jewish people.[124] Magriso affirms that all of God's hopes rest with the Torah.[125] The very purpose for human creation is found therein.[126] A parable offers insight: a king makes musical instruments so his people can play for him. The instruments are the king's. So, too, God gave the Torah, his precious possession, to please his people.[127] According to Magriso, God has a great stake in the future of His Torah. It possesses the potential to provide transcendent meaning and eternal life for Ottoman Jewry. The Torah thus embodies God's providential concern.

God's hope for the world becomes manifest through his unique relationship with Israel. Magriso affirms that the establishment of this relationship constituted the central purpose of the world's creation.[128] God gave Israel, unique[129] and beloved before Him, the Torah as a precious gift.[130] a blessing to enlighten their lives and to bring the reward of the future world.[131] Magriso did not want this future jeopardized, a future dependent upon their embracing of God's Torah.

Certain attitudes are fundamental to this acceptance. Ottoman Jewry must acquire a reverent fear of God to encourage departure from the sins of the past.[132] This awe would also infuse them with a love of Torah and a desire to learn.[133] Magriso reminds this generation that fear of God also means fear of the talmid hakham, God's messenger of Torah.[134] Because he teaches them Torah, Jewry should revere the talmid hakham.

Ultimately he will bring them the rewards of the future world.[135] Ottoman Jewry should couple their reverence with gratitude.[136] They must not challenge God's providence but must accept it in love[137] and appreciation.[138] God deserves credit for human understanding, knowledge and Torah,[139] Magriso explains.

God, in turn, will respond compassionately to this generation of Ottoman Jewry. He will provide meaning for their uncertain futures. First, He will help them make their ultimate choice for Torah-centered living. In addition, God will assist them with their most vital needs, contributing to their sustenance,[140] communal necessities[141] and good relations with the governing powers.[142] These comprise external, secondary needs. More significantly, God will aid Ottoman Jewry to learn[143] and understand Torah,[144] and to clarify its ultimate meaning for their lives.[145]

A strikingly symbolic story provides the greatest of hope for Ottoman Jews: a noted person attempts to journey to the home of _hakhamim_ to study Torah. Unfortunately, an extremely powerful river prevents him from reaching his destination. He prays for the ability to cross the river and study Torah. At this point, the river divides for him. He tells others that they, too, can traverse the river and study Torah. They fear that they will drown, but he assures them that that could never happen to a Jew who attempts to study Torah. The river symbolizes the many barriers before Ottoman Jewry in the mid-eighteenth century. They had reached a nadir of

despair. Their past crises and present suffering seemed as insurmountable as a turbulent river. Magriso offers them hope of success in crossing the tempestuous river of their painful past and present to reach the true source of life, the Torah, waiting on the other side. No matter how great his fears for his own future, every Jew has the capacity to surmount these barriers. The future can be one of transcendent meaning and personal hope. A profound change in attitude toward God and the study of Torah could bring Ottoman Jewry to a true renewal of life itself. Magriso's commentary to Pirke Abot acts as the inspirational catalyst for this hopeful transformation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Sanford Shaw, History of The Ottoman Empire, p. 113.

2. Ibid. p. 151.

3. Morris Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey in The Sixteenth Century, p. 5. He particularly alludes to Don Joseph Nasi and Moses Hamon.

4. S. Shaw, History, p. 13.

5. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Ottoman Empire," v. 16 p. 1550.

6. A. J. Arberry, Religion in The Middle East, p. 187. The ordination prevented morally unworthy individuals from gaining rabbinic authority. According to the author, Spanish Jewry rejected ordination as it did not conform to halakhic requirements.

7. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 5.

8. Jewish Encyclopedia s.v., "Turkey."

9. H. Graetz, History of The Jews, iv pp. 563-71.

10. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society and The West, II, p. 242.

11. Solomon Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim be-Turkiya ve-Arzot ha-Kedem, v. 5, p. 15.

12. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 4.

13. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Ottoman Empire," p. 1530.

14. Moses Lattes, Likkutim de-Bei Eliyahu, p. 7.

15. S. Shaw, History of The Ottoman Empire, p. 113.

16. Jews of exceptional ability including political advisors, physicians, financiers were not entirely excluded from this elite Ottoman class. Cecil Roth, The Duke of Naxos, Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey.

17. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society, II, p. 208.

18. Ibid. p. 206.

19. A. J. Arberry, Religion in the Middle East, p. 151.

20. S. Shaw, History, p. 151.

21. Ibid. p. 151.

22. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society, II, p. 212.

23. Ibid. p. 208, indicating that Jews were not to be confused with true believers. They forbid Jews from riding horses or from bearing arms.

24. A. J. Arberry, Religion, p. 156.

25. Ibid. p. 158.

26. Ibid. p. 154.

27. Abraham Galante, Documents Officiels Turcs concesnant Les Juifs de Turquie, p. 504.

28. A. J. Arberry, Religion, p. 153.

29. H. Graetz, History, IV, p. 647.

30. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 4.

31. Ibid. p. 5. They gained prominence as the business agents of the Empire's commercial structure. They taught the Ottomans the firearms, cannon and gunpowder business. They also gained status with the dominant military leadership.

32. Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Ottoman Empire," p. 1550.

33. A. J. Arberry, Religion, p. 146.

34. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 5. A great many legal scholars enriched the lives of their communities. Among them include such outstanding rabbis as Joseph Fasi, Eliezer Hashimoni and Don Judah Benveniste in Turkey as well as halakhists Joseph Karo and Obadiah Bartinoro in Palestine.

35. A. J. Arberry, Religion, p. 161. He quotes from Abraham b. Solomon of Torrutiel in Neubauer, MJC, v. 1, p. 111: "Our sins grew over our heads and our guilt piled up to heaven. . . According to the wickedness, the misdeeds and the great pride that spread all over Spain we would, but for his mercy and the righteousness of our fathers which he remembered, have been almost like Sodom."

36. Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. 14, "Romaniot," p. 231.

37. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 62.

38. Ibid. p. 86.

39. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Istanbul" v. 9, p. 1088.

40. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Ottoman Empire," v. 16, p. 1547, which quotes Responsa II of Salonika: "Even in Salonika where everyone speaks the same native language, when the refugees came each language group founded its own kahal and no one switches from one kahal to another.

41. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 4.

42. Ibid. p. 61.

43. A. J. Arberry, Religion, p. 186.

44. Ibid. p. 186.

45. Ibid. p. 187.

46. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Istanbul," v. 8, p. 1088.

47. M. Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey, p. 13.

48. Cecil Roth, The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos, cf. p. 75.

49. S. Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim V. vii, p. 230.

50. S. Shaw, History, p. 169.

51. Jewish Encyclopedia, "Turkey," p. 282.

52. H. Graetz, History V. iv, pp. 563-71.

53. Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, "Isaac Luria and His School," pp. 244-286.

54. Ibid. p. 245. The Jews who had suffered expulsion from Spain were moved by a theo-historical explanation for their suffering. Scholem cites: "After the catastrophe of the Spanish Expulsion . . . it also became possible to consider the return to the starting point of creation as a means of precipitating the final world catastrophe."

55. A. J. Arberry, Religion, p. 166.

56. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society, p. 242.

57. G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, "Shabbateanism and Mystical Heresy," pp. 287-324.

58. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society, p. 242.

59. G. Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, "Redemption Through Sin," p. 326.

60. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society, p. 243.

61. S. Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim, V. 5, p. 15.

62. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Ottoman Empire," p. 1550.

63. Jacob Culi, Me-am Lo'ez: Genesis, Introduction, p. xiv.

64. Ibid. p. xv.

65. S. Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim, V. 5, p. 2.

66. Ibid. V. 5, p. 2.

67. Ibid. V. 5, p. 2.

68. J. Culi, Me-am Lo'ez: Genesis, Introduction.

69. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Jacob Culi."

70. S. Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim, V. 5, p. 15.

71. Ibid. V. 5, p. 1. Originally, the work was to form seven parts: Genesis, Exodus-Leviticus, Numbers - Deuteronomy, Early Prophets, Later Prophets, Minor Prophets, the rest of the Bible.

72. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Ottoman Empire," p. 1550.

73. Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Ladino," p. 1342.

74. Jacob Culi, Yalkut Me-am Lo'ez: The Torah Anthology, Genesis, p. xviii.

75. J. Culi, Me-am Lo'ez: Genesis, s.v. Introduction.

76. J. Culi, Yalkut Me-am Lo'ez: The Torah Anthology, p. xv.

77. S. Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim, V. 5, p. 16.

78. J. Culi, Yalkut, p. xxiv.

79. Issac Magriso, Me-am Lo'ez: Abot. This work is rarely mentioned in any article on Me-am Lo'ez.

80. Jose Benardete, In Search of Our Sephardic Roots, "An Introduction to The Me-am Lo'ez," p. 16.

81. J. Culi, Yalkut, p. xv.

82. Nissim Gambach Tarragano, In Search of Our Sephardic Roots, "Hebrew Aspects of The Me-am Lo'ez," p. 55.

83. J. Culi, Yalkut, p. xxv.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Magriso, Me-am Lo'ez: Abot, p. 1.
2. Ibid. p. 1.
3. Ibid. p. 1.
4. Ibid. p. 3.
5. Ibid. p. 2.
6. Ibid. p. 2.
7. Ibid. p. 4.
8. Ibid. p. 3.
9. Ibid. p. 2.
10. Ibid. p. 11.
11. Ibid. p. 3.
12. Ibid. p. 11.
13. Ibid. p. 311.
14. Ibid. p. 3.
15. Ibid. p. 2.
16. Ibid. p. 4.
17. Ibid. p. 5.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Magriso, Me-am Lo'ez: Abot, p. 74.
2. Ibid. p. 288.
3. Ibid. p. 273.
4. Ibid. p. 289.
5. Ibid. p. 289.
6. Ibid. p. 214.
7. Ibid. p. 214.
8. Ibid. p. 289.
9. Ibid. p. 290.
10. Ibid. p. 290.
11. Ibid. p. 24.
12. Ibid. p. 24.
13. Ibid. p. 26.
14. Ibid. p. 17.
15. Ibid. p. 17.
16. Ibid. p. 17.
17. Ibid. p. 25.
18. Ibid. p. 25.
19. Ibid. pp. 120, 241.
20. Ibid. p. 308.
21. Ibid. p. 308.
22. Ibid. p. 308.
23. Ibid. p. 187.
24. Ibid. p. 286.
25. Ibid. p. 324.

26. Ibid. p. 123.
27. Ibid. p. 120.
28. Ibid. p. 75.
29. Ibid. p. 239.
30. Ibid. p. 246.
31. Ibid. p. 201.
32. Ibid. p. 40.
33. Ibid. p. 64.
34. Ibid. p. 66.
35. Ibid. p. 317.
36. Ibid. pp. 39, 237.
37. Ibid. pp. 175, 179.
38. Ibid. p. 184.
39. Ibid. p. 35.
40. Ibid. p. 14.
41. Ibid. p. 14.
42. Ibid. pp. 39, 236.
43. Ibid. p. 39.
44. Ibid. p. 39.
45. Ibid. p. 39.
46. Ibid. p. 299.
47. Ibid. p. 323.
48. Ibid. p. 40.
49. Ibid. pp. 91, 257.
50. Ibid. p. 200.

51. Ibid. p. 91.
52. Ibid. p. 91.
53. Ibid. p. 22.
54. Ibid. p. 22.
55. Ibid. pp. 232, 303.
56. Ibid. p. 29.
57. Ibid. p. 267.
58. Ibid. p. 279.
59. Ibid. p. 210.
60. Ibid. p. 210.
61. Ibid. p. 156.
62. Ibid. p. 145.
63. Ibid. p. 45.
64. Ibid. p. 320.
65. Ibid. p. 298.
66. Ibid. p. 315.
67. Ibid. p. 9.
68. Ibid. p. 322.
69. Ibid. p. 175.
70. Ibid. p. 321.
71. Ibid. p. 321.
72. Ibid. pp. 248, 298.
73. Ibid. p. 41.
74. Ibid. p. 38.
75. Ibid. p. 41.

76. Gershon Scholem, "The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Donmeh" in The Messianic Idea in Judaism, p. 149. Believers in heretical theologies existed in Salonika and spread into such cities as Adrianople, Constantinople and elsewhere.

77. A. J. Arberry, Religion in The Middle East, p. 167. Lists of kabbalistic books printed in Ladino will be found in M. Franco, Esai sur l'Histoire des Isrealites de l'Empire Ottoman, and S. A. Rosanes, Korot ha-Yehudim be Turkiya ve-Arzot ha-Kedem, V. I, pp. 63, 316-26; II, pp. 15-16, 73, 230-40; IV, pp. 389-97; V, pp. 346-64.

78. Ibid. Arberry, p. 173.

79. Ibid. Scholem, "The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Donmeh," pp. 150-166.

80. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Ottoman Empire", V. 16, p. 1547.

81. Magriso, Me-am Lo'ez: Abot, p. 42.

82. Ibid. p. 137.

83. Ibid. pp. 96,97.

84. Ibid. p. 95.

85. Ibid. p. 18.

86. Ibid. p. 211.

87. Ibid. p. 266.

88. Ibid. p. 296.

89. Ibid. pp. 292, 296.

90. Ibid. pp. 18, 95, 137.

91. Ibid. p. 178.

92. Ibid. p. 17 .

93. Ibid. p. 42.

94. Ibid. p. 42.

95. Ibid. pp. 96, 97.

96. Ibid. pp. 36, 270, 311.

97. Ibid. p. 311.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Morris Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey in The Sixteenth Century, p. 66.
2. Ibid. p. 66.
3. Magriso, Me-am Lo'ez: Abot, p. 250.
4. Ibid. p. 250.
5. Ibid. p. 250.
6. Ibid. p. 232.
7. Ibid. p. 232.
8. Ibid. p. 232.
9. Ibid. p. 232.
10. Ibid. p. 232.
11. Ibid. p. 232.
12. Ibid. p. 232.
13. Ibid. p. 158.
14. Ibid. p. 305.
15. Ibid. p. 285.
16. Ibid. p. 271.
17. Ibid. p. 200.
18. Ibid. p. 199.
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