EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SALONIKA:

CASE STUDY OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY IN DECLINE AS REFLECTED BY ISAAC MOLḤO IN ORḤOT YOSHER

DEBORAH ELLEN ZECHER

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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

March, 1982

Referee: Professor Lawrence A. Hoffman

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For many people in my life, Salonika no longer exists just as a place on the map. Their interest in and help with this project deserve my grateful thanks.

I would like to express my appreciation to the faculty and library staff of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion for their aid in locating sources.

My in-laws, Sara and Meyer Mazon, have been of immeasurable help. I thank them both for their assistance in preparing the final form of this thesis.

My New York "family," the members of Havurat Tikvah, has heard more about Salonika than they ever dreamed possible. For their patient listening to the unusual customs of the Salonikan Jews, their constant encouragement and steadfast support, I offer them my heartfelt thanks.

From September 5, 1977 until this very day, my friendship with Donna Berman has been a source of great delight. These long thesis-filled months have been no exception. No words could adequately convey my gratitude for her devotion and inspiration.

Throughout the years that have led to the fulfillment of this dream to be a rabbi, my family has stood beside me every step of the way. Their support has only increased over the years. Though long-distance, their encouragement throughout this senior year sustained me. My parents, Al and Rita Zecher, my sister Elaine, my brother Steven and my sister-in-law Susan Elster--all have been a source of blessing.

My thesis advisor, Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, has truly been my teacher; for this, I am exceedingly grateful. Through his courses, I have learned much about the part ritual and prayer play in people's lives. Through his example, I have learned much about being a rabbi. Through his friendship, I have learned much about myself. My world is richer for having known him.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my husband and friend, Dennis Ross who, as always, provided me with the encouragement and support, the love and calm needed in this most amazing of years.

We know very little about the origins of the Jewish community of Salonika. Some have suggested that Jews may have arrived in the city as early as the third century B.C.E. from Palestine or more likely, Alexandria or Antioch where large Jewish communities already existed.[1] Passages from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul indicate that two centuries later Paul found a strong community there, but after speaking in the synagogue for three consecutive Sabbaths, he was forced to leave.[2] These first century C.E. Salonika Jews were given considerable autonomy by the Roman authorities. Most of them lived near the port and developed strong international commercial ties with neighboring countries.[3] They had Greek names and spoke Greek, and it has been suggested that assimilation posed a constant threat to the continued survival of the community; even the letters of Paul give the distinct impression that the strong Hellenistic influence created divisiveness among Salonikan Jewry.[4]

After the break-up of the Roman Empire, Salonika became the second most important city in the Byzantine Empire; its Jewish community flourished as well. These Jews who both spoke Greek and used it as the language of Torah reading were known as "Romanioto". Their particular ritual practice became known as Minhag Romania.The Salonika community continued to function and grow under Roman law, despite recurring problems and restrictions with various Byzantine

emperors who wanted to spread Christianity throughout the new empire. Justinian I (527-565) and Heraclius (610-642) prohibited public observance of Jewish law while Leo II (717-741) and Basil I (866-886) mandated forced conversion or exile.[5] In 932, persecution under Romanus II was severe enough to warrant intervention by Hasdai Ibn Shaprut. In most of these cases, however, our information comes predominantly from Southern Italy. It is difficult to determine precisely the extent to which anti-Jewish sentiment or legislation affected Salonikan Jewry itself.

The earliest document to mention specifically the Jewish community in Salonika provides some insight as to the situation the Jews faced during the First Crusade. A letter sent from Tripolis to Constantinople, it states that the Jews were exempt from taxation by Emperor Alexius I Comnenus.[6] It is unclear whether the exemption was granted because of the Jews' inability to pay taxes at the time or because their loyalty was valuable to the Emperor and he feared that the Jews might ally themselves with the Crusaders. At first glance, the latter reason seems less likely as persecutions against Jews were most fierce when the Crusaders dominated Byzantine territory. On the other hand, the emperor could hardly have known in advance of western Christianity's medieval anti-Jewish bias, and the consequent hostility of its "holy" warriors toward the Jewish community.

By the twelfth century, however, conditions had improved and stabilized. Our most reliable witness of this period was the well-known traveler Benjamin of Tudela who visited

Salonika in 1169 and reported that 500 Jews who were engaged primarily in handicrafts and the silk trades lived in the city.[7] Moreover, the Jewish community enjoyed its own government-appointed mayor.

Significant changes in the nature and numbers of the Salonika Jewish community occurred with the conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Turks. Salonika was secured for the Ottoman Empire by Murad II in 1430. Though the community had grown during the previous centuries, refugees from Germany, Italy and Provence now swelled the city's population. Significant numbers of Jewish exiles from Christian Europe took advantage of the expanding Ottoman economy and positive Jewish policy and began to make their way to Ottoman territories. There is no way to tell exactly how many came but with each account of persecution in or expulsion from Christian countries, it is recorded that some Jews fled to Ottoman-controlled lands.[8] The regularity of the reports suggests that there was a consistent migration of Jewish families moving southward and eastward from Western and Central Europe.

The newcomers were to arrive from Germany, Italy and Provence. Of them all, German Jews constituted the largest and most influential group.[9] Many were inspired to come after hearing of a letter sent by Isaac Zarfati to all the Jews in Germany.[10] He urged all Jews to emigrate to Turkey where they would find a wonderful life. They began to settle in Salonika in 1420 and their numbers increased considerably after 1470 when many who had been expelled from Bavaria came

to the city. They brought their own religious rite and customs and for a while, many of the Romaniot Jews adopted the German ritual. Some of the native Greek Jews even began to speak German/Yiddish.[11] Another influential segment in the community was Italian. The earliest influx of Italian Jews occurred during the fourteenth century.[12] Sicilian Jews arrived in 1415, and their number was augmented after 1493 when all Jews were expelled from Sicily. An edict of expulsion in 1550 also brought the Jews of Provence to Salonika. Even before that date, they had sent two delegates to study the conditions under which Jews lived in Salonika. As Isaac Zarfati had done for the Jews of Turkey, these delegates wrote letters back to their fellow Jews in Provence, full of praise for Jewish life in Salonika.[13] They urged them to migrate to Salonika where they would find a thriving Jewish community and good commercial opportunities.

The overwhelming number of exiles, however, sought refuge from the Inquisition of Spain and Portugal. Following the Spanish Edict of Expulsion in 1492, Sultan Beyazid II invited the refugee Jews of Spain and Portugal to come and settle in the Ottoman territories.[14] These Jews arrived in Ottoman ports and within a few years, settled throughout the Balkans. At least 30,000 Jews arrived in Salonika and an additional large number went to Adrianople, Constantinople, Smyrna and Rhodes. These new arrivals clung tenaciously to their Iberian heritage so much so that it was not long until Spanish was forced upon the native Romaniot Jews. Along with language, the Romaniot also adopted the Sephardic minhag.[15]

Within fifty years of their arrival, Salonika had become a Spanish-Jewish city, which it remained until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Many Marranos followed the example of the visibly Jewish community; they, too fled to Salonika. Their presence in the Jewish community posed a problem until 1514 when a special haskamah was issued by the rabbinical triumverate determining the Marranos' status, given questionable areas of marriage and divorce.[16] This new ruling concluded that the Marranos should be treated as Jews in every respect. A Marrano who openly returned to the Jewish faith was to be held in the highest esteem and no one was to be permitted to reproach him for his previous transgressions. A Marrano's testimony that another was of a priestly family was sufficient to accord the latter all the honors due to Kohanim.[17]

The community's support of these newcomers was exemplified by the Ancona boycott of 1555. That year, Pope Paul IV decreed that all Marranos in Ancona be arrested and their property confiscated. As some of these Marranos were Turkish subjects, Sultan Suleiman interceded on their behalf and won their release. Twenty-four other Marranos were burned at the stake. The Jewish merchants of Salonika relaliated with a boycott of Anconan products and tried to enlist Jewish merchants from all over the Ottoman Empire in their cause.[18] Though the boycott was not entirely successful, its very attempt symbolized graphically the tremendous importance and growth of the Salonika Jewish community by that time.

The flourishing Jewish community in Salonika and other Ottoman cities proved a boon to the Ottoman population as well. To a great extent, the Jews were used in the attempt by the Ottomans to extablish themselves in their territories, in that Jews tended to displace many of the important European and Greek merchants who owed their allegience to the old order. They were thus encouraged to settle in rural trading centers, especially in coastal and inland ports. The clear intent to encourage Jewish commercial activity is reflected in the terms under which Jews were settled in various places throughout the Empire. In cities such as Salonika and Balya Badra, for example Jews were exempted from a number of taxes and forced labor brigades, as well as from having their sons taken for service in the Janissary Corps.[19] Their freedom of movement for purposes of trade was assured,although it was stipulated that the community would guarantee the payment of the poll tax for any merchants away from town. Throughout the sixteenth century, the Jews expanded their economic role and were influential at the capital and in the provinces. Through various networks and partnerships they were able to administer large concessions which covered vast geographic areas and were able to maintain contact with major foreign cities.[20] Their loyalty and benefit to the Ottomans was appreciated, and the natural community of interests between Ottomans and Ottoman Jews was recognized by both groups, enabling the Jews of the Ottoman Empire to become the fore-

most Jewish community in the sixteenth century world.

The Ottoman Jews also benefited from the generally favorable toleration of the Muslim Ottomans. Classed as protected persons, or Zimmi, Jews were permitted relative freedom to practice their religion and participate in the life of the society, albeit with restrictions designed to distinguish them as adherents of a religion inferior to Islam.[21] Of the various non-Muslim groups which populated the Ottoman Empire, toleration of the Jew was remarkably high. Not only were Jews granted equal rights with other non-Muslim inhabitants, but the chief rabbi was even recognized as an official of the state and given a place in the state council. Naturally, his position of Hakam Bashi was lower than that of the Mufti, the Moslem religious leader, but not so naturally, he ranked above the Patriarch, the head of the Greek church.[22] By the sixteenth century, Jews enjoyed a number of important privileges such as having their own courts and even rabbinic police.[23] The Sabbath was a day of rest for the entire city. Whenever there was litigation between a Jew and a non-Jew, the officers of the government courts would excuse Jews from appearing in court on their Sabbath. Even the adverse regulations which did exist were sometimes enforced only on paper. One late fifteenth century report from Salonika states that Jews were prohibited from building permanent synagogues, that they could only live in low buildings and that it was dangerous to allow their voices to be heard outside lest they attract the enmity of the populace.[24] Yet, sources of the mid-sixteenth

century discuss permanent synagogue structures built some fifty years earlier - the same time as the prohibition of such construction. Moreover, the source of these regulations was supposedly the same Sultan Beyazid II who had welcomed the Spanish-Portuguese Jews to Salonika so eagerly.[25] We may surmise that economic considerations superceded theological preservation in such cases, for it was clearly in the commercial realm where the Jewish community was of such vast importance to the Ottoman rulers.

The advantageous location of Salonika was conducive to its becoming an important center of foreign trade. Centrally located between Africa and Asia, it became a convenient stopover point for ships going to and from either continent. As noted above, the Jews of Salonika were instrumental in its growth and development as such a center of commerce. They succeeded in developing connections in Italy, France, Amsterdam, Hamburg, London, Izmir, Constantinople and Alexandria. Much of the commerce and industry of the city, the customs house, the port, the leasing of government taxes and the renting of tolls were in Jewish hands.[26] The port was even closed on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.[27] Jews also held monopolies on the collection of gold ore mined in the valley around Salonika and its provision to the mints.[28] Since the upper classes of the Moslems were engaged in military pursuits while agriculture was the sole occupation of the lower classes, the Sephardic Jews became the middle class, its business agents as well as the builders of its commer-

cial and industrial structure.[29]

However, the foremost industry for Salonika's Jews was that of textiles, particularly the manufacture of ready-made garments. The Jews who had come from Spain were especially adept in producing woolen cloth and finished garments. During the sixteenth century the industry grew so rapidly that almost all the Jews of Salonika were directly or indirectly connected with it, and the richest as well as the poorer classes were represented in textiles.[30] A multiplicity of occupations centered around the textile industry. There were scourers, dyers, weavers, brushers, pressers, driers, porters and wagoners - - each charged with carrying to fruition one of the many discrete tasks of this complex mechanism from which raw material is first created and then transformed into usable clothing. Textile workshops could be found in almost every Jewish home. Jews also distributed and sold locally-made cloth It was customary to bequeath textile workshops to synagogues and charitable institutions.[31] During Hanukkah, pieces of cloth were donated to poor yeshivah students.

Both the scope and the attendant problems of the industry and trade in textiles was exemplified by the many communal regulations and rabbinical injunctions issued against price-slashing, the sale of wool to foreigners and the purchase of raw wool with cash (an activity which only the wealthy could afford).[32] Only locally-made garments could be put up for sale and every Jew over twenty years old had to wear clothes made in Salonika. After 1586 the tax on Salonikan Jewry

levied by the Ottoman authorities was payable by a quota of cloth (1200 standard pieces) which was presented to the janissaries.[33] All commercial transactions were based on Jewish law and on the established business practices adhered to by merchants and referred to as minhag ha-soḥarim.[34] These practices were recognized by the rabbis when they adjudicated litigation involving business transactions. It was also customary to draw up contracts which stipulated the conditions of the business relationship; these contracts were written either in Hebrew or in Spanish and were registered in the rabbinic court of the city. In Salonika, such business was so extensive that a special category of scribes specialized only in drawing up contracts.

Not only in its expansive business activity was the extraordinary nature of Salonika's Jewish community reflected but in its internal communal organization as well. Each new group of settlers had formed its own congregation and most maintained the minhag from their countries of origin. Some groups had several congregations, each named after its native town or area in Europe. Every congregation, small or large, employed its own rabbi, and maintained a synagogue, charity fund and burial society; each synagogue enjoyed its independent status and no rabbi or lay leader was permitted to interfere with the perogatives of another.[35] The religious head of each congregation was known as marbiẓ torah or ḥakham shalem.[36] He had to have been born in or a decendent of one born in the congregation's country or

town of origin. He was elected for a short period of time and was responsible for teaching at the yeshivah and delivering sermons. There were between twenty and thirty congregations and each one had a representative on a municipal Jewish council. Representatives of the congregations would come together for this council to allocate the percentage of tax each congregation would pay or to discuss any pressing need such as raising money to redeem captives or maintaining Jews in Palestine. Any takkanah issued by this voluntary association required unanimous consensus in order to be valid.[37]

With such a plethora of autonomous social units, it is not surprising that one of the major problems of the Jewish community in Salonika was the rivalry and bitterness among congregations. Even more frequent were the quarrels which raged within congregations, often leading to the splitting of the congregation or to the secession of some of its members.[38] The causes of these intra-congregational conflicts were diverse in character. At times the cause was the hostility of some members toward their rabbi or lay officers. At other times bitterness was aroused by the conviction that one was unduly taxed or that the rate of taxation in another congregation was lower. Sometimes, a quarrel was precipitated by the refusal of a defeated minority to submit to the will of the majority. As a result of this, members resigned from their congregations and joined others. If their number was sufficiently large, they would organize a

new congregation. These controversies often became so bitter that some members did not hesitate to call government police to aid them in expelling their rabbi or those members who opposed their will. These rifts and secessions became so scandalous that a general ordinance was decreed in 1575 by the rabbis of the city and the lay officers of the various congregations forbidding groups to secede for the purpose of establishing new congregations.[39] In addition to this haskamah, each congregation enacted a ruling that forbade individual members to desert their synagogues.

Despite the acrimonious controversies which erupted among and within the various congregations, the Jewish community in Salonika was still able to provide outstanding leadership and educational opportunities for Jews throughout the far-flung Ottoman Empire. Its yeshivot supplied rabbis to many Balkan cities. Salonikan authorities were frequently approached for legal decisions and guidance in the affairs of other communities. When money was needed to redeem Palestinian Jews captured by pirates for example, it was Salonika's leadership that took the lead in sending messengers to other Jewish communities in Turkey and Italy to appeal for funds. The city came to be regarded as the "Jerusalem of the Balkans";[39] people even used the phrase "from Salonika will go forth the law."[40] Many considered the relationship of Salonika to other cities in Turkey to be similar to that of Palestine to the Diaspora.

To settle in Salonika constituted an act of piety. Samuel di Medina, a leading Salonikan rabbi and writer of responsa in the sixteenth century asserted that no other city in the diaspora could claim the distinction of being so important a center of learning and of having so large a number of elementary and higher educational institutions.[41] Salonika's yeshivot attracted students from all over the Ottoman Empire and produced a formidable list of the greatest scholars of the age including such rabbis as Samuel di Medina and Solomon Alkabetz.

Salonika's outstanding rabbis and scholars, its unequaled educational opportunities and community leadership, its extensive trade network and commercial success, and the unprecedented freedom and toleration which Salonika Jewry enjoyed - all these factors point to the sixteenth century as a golden age for the Jewish community in Salonika Unfortunately, the community began to decline after the middle of the century. Much of the decline was due to external events. The fortunes of the Jewish community closely paralleled those of general Ottoman society, and the close of the sixteenth century brought the beginning of the end of the spectacular rise of the Ottoman Empire. True, the Empire lasted for another three centuries but never again did it regain the prominence and glory of the sixteenth century. Commercial competition from European markets created financial crisis in 1584 which forced many Jewish textile workers to leave Salonika for other industrial

centers.[42] Moreover, the economic squeeze followed shortly on the heels of a natural disaster. A fire in 1545 caused the death of 200 persons and the destruction of 5,000 Jewish houses and 18 synagogues.[43] An outbreak of plague followed the fire. Few of Salonika's Jews had the necessary resources to recover from either catastrophe.

Jewish life during this period was marked by tremendous contrasts. The change of environment had been too rapid, the demands of personal adjustment too exacting for communal authority and ordered living to have developed on a permanent basis.[44] Though Ottoman Jews dominated Mediterranean commerce and wholesale trade so that some amassed great wealth, widespread poverty was nevertheless the rule, and the general standard of living remained abysmally low. The like was true of religion and learning; ignorance and scholarship existed simultaneously. Piety among some was offset by religious apathy or even blatant disregard of religious observances on the part of others. Communal chaos and insubordination to communal ordinances stood out in vigorous contrast to the measures taken by the rabbinic and lay leaders to regulate all aspects of Jewish life.

It is, then, no wonder that the movement inspired by Shabbetai Zevi would take such firm hold in this city fifty to one hundred years later. As we shall see in the next chapter, the beginnings of economic decline certainly added to the atmosphere of expectant messianism fueled by Shabbetai Zevi's appearance. However, it seems more

likely that Gershom Scholem's theory of internal changes which guaranteed the pseudo-Messiah's success was really the case. Despite growing financial problems, Salonika's Jews suffered from relatively little anti-Jewish sentiment. Scholem's argument that the positive reaction to Lurianic Kabbalah assured Shabbetai Zevi's acceptance appears eminently justifiable with an example like Salonika, long a center of kabbalistic activity. We turn next to a review of Shabbetai Zevi and the reactions of the Salonikan Jewish community.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER I

1. Guide to Jewish Museum of Greece, Salonika, n.d., p.1.
2. Isaac Broyde, "Salonica," Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 10, (New York: Ktav Publishing House), p. 657; S. Victor Papacosma, "The Sephardic Jews of Salonica", Midstream 24 (December 1978): 10.
3. Jacov Benmayor, "Salonika," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 14, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 699.
4. Guide, p. 1
5. Benmayor, p. 699.
6. Broyde, p. 657.
7. Ibid.
8. Mark Alan Epstein, The Ottoman Jewish Communities and their Role in the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries, (Freiburg: Klaus Schwartz, 1980), p. 20.
9. Morris Goodblatt, Jewish Life in Turkey in the Sixteenth Century, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952), p. 10
10. Broyde, pp. 657-658.
11. Goodblatt, p. 10.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 11.
14. Guide, p. 2.
15. Ibid.
16. Benmayor, p. 700.
17. Goodblatt, pp. 112-113.
18. Ibid., p. 114.
19. Epstein, p. 122; also Goodblatt, p. 121. The Janissaries were mercenary soldiers employed by the Ottoman authorities.

20. Epstein, p. 143.

21. Ibid. p. 24.

22. Goodblatt, p. 9.

23. Ibid.

24. Epstein, pp. 29-30.

25. Ibid., p. 153.

26. Simon Marcus, "Greece," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 7, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 876.

27. Ibid.

28. Epstein, p. 139.

29. Goodblatt, p. 5.

30. Ibid., p. 54.

31. Zeev Bzrkzi, "Textiles," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 15, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 1038-1039.

32. Ibid., p. 1039.

33. Ibid.

34. Goodblatt, p. 50.

35. Haim Z'ew Hirschberg, "Community," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 5, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 819.

36. Benmayor, p. 701.

37. Ibid., pp. 700-701.

38. Goodblatt, p. 13.

39. Ibid., p. 14.

40. Ibid., p. 8.

41. I.S. Emmanuel, Histoire des Israelites de Salonique, (Paris, 1936), p. 13.

42. Barkai, p. 1039.

43. Broyde, p. 658.

44. Goodblatt, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

The movements which developed as the result of the appearance and later apostasy of the false messiah Shabbetai Zevi flourished in Salonika. For several reasons, they found an extremely receptive community there. As was previously noted, the Ottoman Empire began its gradual decline after the middle of the sixteenth century, and the path of the Salonika Jewish community closely paralleled that of the Ottomans. Although still the greatest Jewish community in the world numerically, Salonika had begun to lose its economic prominence. The city had also suffered drastic losses from the many fires and outbreaks of plague in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[1] Moreover, when the generation of Spanish and Portuguese exiles found refuge in Salonika after 1492, messianic expectation accompanied them. Though it did not fulfil its early promise, this hope of imminent redemption lived on in the refugees' children and grandchildren. Indeed, it was in the families of former Marranos that Shabbetai Zevi and his messianic call were most eagerly welcomed.[2] Gershom Scholem reasons that the positive reaction to Shabbetai Zevi and his teachings was probably due to the high esteem in which the study of Kabbalah was held.

> That the movement had an overwhelming appeal to such different centers of the Diaspora as Yemen and Persia, Turkey and North Africa, Italy and the Ashkenazi communities can be explained only by the fact the intense propaganda of Lurianism

> had created a climate favorable to the release of the messianic energies aroused by the victory of the new Kabbalah. This is the reason why places like Amsterdam, Leghorn and Salonika where the Jews lived relatively free from oppression, nevertheless became crucibles of the movement and centers of Shabbetean activity.[3]

Scholem's observation illustrates how remarkable Shabbeteanism really was. The messianic wave swept no less over communities that had no immediate experience of oppression and bloodshed than over those which had. As a matter of fact, it was often the communities which enjoyed the most freedom and toleration like Salonika that took the lead in the messianic revival and its propagation.[4] Jews of all backgrounds embraced Shabbetai Zevi's movement; there were hardly any differences in the reactions of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewry. The attraction of the movement also crossed class lines; rich and poor alike dedicated themselves to Shabbeteanism. After the fact, the movement was presented in a different light as part of a strenuous attempt to minimize the part played by the upper strata of Jewish society, and to ascribe the vehemence of the outbreak to the blind enthusiasm of the rabble and the poor, but this scapegoating of the underclass is not borne out by contemporary evidence.[5]

Social and religious factors were inextricably combined in the genesis of the messianic movement and its overwhelming success. Jewish messianism, particularly in its Shabbetean manifestation fulfilled a definite social function. In the peculiar conditions of Jewish existence,

messianism was the expression not so much of internal Jewish struggles as of the abnormal situation of a pariah nation.[6] The sense of permanent insecurity affected the upper classes no less than the lower. It is true that any radical change in the situation of the Jewish people would inevitably affect the interests of the ruling classes. On the other hand, there can be no doubt of the catastrophic and revolutionary impulses inherent in apocalyptic messianism, and their influence on the masses. The interlocking of these various elements accounts for much of the explosive charge of Shabbeteanism.

It is not within the scope of this study to recreate the entire mercurial career of Shabbetai Zevi; rather, we need only highlight the times in which the career of Shabbetai Zevi and the life of the Salonika Jewish community intersect. He repeatedly passed through Salonika,coming there first in 1657. His arrival put an end to several years of wandering throughout Thrace and Greece where he had gone following expulsion from his native city of Izmir. The community not only welcomed him but even invited him to preach in the Shalom Synagogue.[7] Many responded to the mystical/ascetic message in his sermons and he soon attracted a considerable following. This first stay in Salonika ended, however, in disaster. During Shavuot services in 1658, he initiated a ceremonial wedding service in which he declared that he would marry the Torah.[8] He also uttered the name of God, pronounced only by the High Priest on Yom Kippur, and

reiterated his claim that he was the true Messiah. The rabbis of Salonika convened and decided that nothing less than expulsion from the city would rid the people of his influence.

The Salonikan rabbis underestimated Shabbetai Zevi's already pervasive power. Even though he no longer resided in the city, the Shabbetean movement took root and began to grow. His supporters eagerly awaited reports of his travels throughout the Ottoman Empire. Their initial dedication to him stemmed from his reputation as a Kabbalist alone; as yet no one really took his messianic convictions seriously.[9] Early in 1665, he traveled to Jerusalem to meet with Nathan of Gaza who declared on the basis of his own dreams and visions that Shabbetai Zevi was indeed the true Messiah. He garnered immediate support from most of the Jerusalem community, including its rabbis. The news traveled all over the Ottoman Empire; the excitement accompanying these pronouncements spread like wildfire. The movement gained tremendous strength as diverse elements in most Jewish communities joined together to celebrate their imminent redemption.

Compared to the plentiful sources regarding Shabbetean developments in Smyrna, Constantinople and the European communities, specific reports about the movement in Salonika are remarkably scarce. Most of the available information was gathered from the accounts of eyewitnesses traveling between Salonika and Smyra. Yet, according to Thomas Coenen

who compiled these eyewitness accounts, the Jews of Salonika surpassed all others in their messianic faith and penitential fervor.[10] So despite the official silence, Salonika was one of the centers of Shabbetean activity.

Nathan had called for a mass movement of repentence to facilitate the transition to the coming redemption. Excessive fasts and penitential mortifications became the order of the day in Salonika. People would present themselves before a court of four rabbis to confess their sins and receive penances. Many penitents buried themselves up to their necks, with only their heads sticking out of the ground and remained this way for up to three hours.[11] Others performed symbolic imitations of the four kinds of capital punishment recognized by rabbinic law (stoning, burning, beheading and strangling).[12] Still others would lie down in the snow for one-half hour each night and then scourge themselves with nettles and thorns.[13] A Shabbetean enthusiast desirous of performing some heroic penance would not resort to the mortifications introduced by the Kabbalists in Safed but would follow the more rigorous prescriptions of the Rokeah or the Sefer Hasidim. An eyewitness from Constantinople, Isaac Roman, related the story of a group of Salonika Jews who continued for seven weeks to fast all the six weekdays and subsequently died. [14]

Other extraordinary measures were taken by Shabbetai Zevi supporters. Idealistic visionaries sold their houses and property to be ready for the journey to Jerusalem or

did nothing at all, assuming that they would be transported on clouds.[15] Pragmatic planners rented ships for moving the poor. The city suffered through a serious economic crisis. Commerce everywhere came to a standstill; hundreds of people, some of them previously wealthy, depended upon public charity.[16] A new era was inaugurated; writers of books and letters instituted the phrase "the first year of the renewal of the prophecy and the kingdom" as their calendrical date.[17] Published devotions arranged by Nathan were used daily in synagogues everywhere as were liturgical poems composed in Shabbetai Zevi's honor.[18] It was in Salonika that believers, remembering the rabbinic dictum that the son of David would not come until all souls had entered the bodies destined for them, began to marry off young children in order to remove the last obstacle to the messianic advent. Approximately 700 - 800 such marriages took place. The messianic revival affected everyone, including Salonika's rabbis who responded to the message of expected redemption as eagerly as the rest of the community.

In 1666, Shabbetai Zevi went to Constantinople with the intention of removing the Sultan's crown and inaugurating the Messianic era. The Turkish authorities arrested him but made no move to execute him. He was taken to Gallipoli and placed under house arrest. But the enthusiasm of Shabbetai Zevi's supporters was so great that these events only generated more excitement. Despite his status as government prisoner, he received delegations of supporters who assured him of the recognition of major Jewish communities.

Nathan's predictions appeared to be coming to fruition; the Ottoman treatment of Shabbetai Zevi was so remarkable that it seemed explicable only by the assumption that the dawning of the Messianic era had arrived. As a result, the 9th of Av in 1666 was celebrated as a joyous festival and declared by Messianic edict to be the official birthday of the Messiah.[20]

Several weeks later, newly confused Shabbeteans faced tremendous disillusionment. On September 15, 1666, Shabbetai Zevi was taken to the Sultan at Adrianople and given the choice of immediate death or conversion to Islam. He agreed to convert, assuming the name of Aziz Mehmed Effendi and was granted the honorary title Kapiči Bashi (keeper of the palace gates).[21] His wife and closest advisors followed him into apostasy. The apostasy produced a profound shock, paralyzing leaders and followers alike. Many refused to believe the news. The waves of excitement had been high but more profound sentiments were involved; the possibility of messianic redemption had assumed the dimensions of a newly internalized reality. The tremendous upheaval of a whole year had led them to equate their emotional experience with an outward reality which seemed to confirm it. Now they were faced with a cruel dilemma; to admit that their belief had been wholly in vain and that their redeemer was an imposter, or to cling to their belief and inner experience in the face of outward hostility and look for an explanation and justification of what had happened.[22]

Many chose the second alternative.

The "Ma'aminim" (Believers), as they were called by this time, looked to Nathan for an explanation of this seeming contradiction. Nathan announced the Messiah's apostasy as a deep mystery which would reveal itself in due time; he traveled to various Jewish communities, defending Shabbetai Zevi's actions.

> The central point of his argument was that the apostasy was in reality the fulfilment of a mission to lift up the holy sparks which were dispersed even among the gentiles and concentrated now in Islam. Whereas the task of the Jewish people had been to restore the sparks of their own souls in the process of tikkun according to the demands of the Torah, there were sparks which only the Messiah himself could redeem, and for this he had to go down into the realm of the kelippah, outwardly to submit to its domination but actually to perform the last and most difficult part of his mission by conquering the kelippah from within.[23]

Several times Nathan visited Shabbetai Zevi while continuing to exhort the people to remain faithful to their beliefs. After he left Shabbetai Zevi for the last time, he arrived in Salonika, establishing many contacts among the Believers. Even after he was forced to leave, Nathan maintained his connection with his Salonikan supporters.

Meanwhile, many of the rabbis had turned away from Shabbeteanism by this time. They attempted to suppress the movement and even published pamphlets which stated that Nathan had admitted his error in supporting the false Messiah. Nathan repudiated these pamphlets.[24] In Salonika, the chaos left in the wake of Shabbetai Zevi's actions prompted the rabbis of the thirty congregations to try to

unite the community and dispel any remaining Shabbetean influence. Toward that end, they created a supreme council composed of three rabbis elected for life and seven lay leaders.[25] The council reorganized all the rabbinical courts and attempted to revive the disorganized Jewish community.

Shabbeteanism was too deeply rooted in the life of the community for the council to be a complete success. Many refused to follow rabinical dictates; as they understood matters, their next step was to decide how best to support Shabbetai Zevi. Could their belief in his messianic mission be reconciled with remaining within the framework of the Jewish community or did it demand following his lead? Surprisingly, Shabbetai Zevi offered very little guidance in this dilemma.[26] Most people chose to remain Jewish, continuing their faith in the apostate Messiah. In some cities, such supporters went underground with their convictions.

In Salonika, by contrast, the Ma'aminim found no need to go underground. The family of Shabbetai Zevi's last wife, Jocheved, led by her father, Joseph Filosof and her brother, Jacob Querido, displayed their beliefs quite openly. Furthermore, despite the presence of the rabbinical council, some rabbis were still adherents of Shabbetean teachings. A new wave of enthusiasm for the movement followed Nathan's death. Visions and revelations were common among this circle of believers; Jocheved proclaimed her

brother, Jacob as the reincarnation of the soul of Shabbetai Zevi. Jocheved's father and another rabbi, Solomon Florentin convinced their followers that it was their duty to follow the Messiah's example; in 1683, 200 - 300 Jewish families underwent mass conversion to Islam. This group, along with Shabbetai Zevi's contemporaries who had converted when he did, would be known as Dönmeh (apostate, in Turkish). They were "voluntary Marranos" who professed and practiced Islam in public but adhered to a mixture of radical and traditional Judaism in private. The Jewish character of the Dönmeh was preserved in all matters of consequence even though they cut themselves adrift from the established Jewish community. Although they wanted to live according to their own customs, they never intended to break away completely from the traditional patterns of rabbinical Judaism. They regarded themselves as an aristocratic group of the elect because they had received a call with which others were not honored.[28] Nonetheless, they were soon regarded as a separate group by both Ottomans and Jews. As time went on, apostate families from other cities in the Ottoman Empire migrated to Salonika and the sect was organized on a more institutional basis.[29]

Internal conflicts eventually caused a split in the Dönmeh ranks which resulted in the formation of two subsects. One, named Izmirlis, consisted of members of the original community; the other was known as Jacoblar.[30] A few years

later another split occurred among the Izmirlis when, around 1700, a new young leader, Baruchiah Russo, was proclaimed the reincarnation of Shabbetai Zevi. He was known as Osman Baba (in Turkish) and a new sect known as Karashklar formed around him.[31] The Karashklar were considered to be the most extreme group in the Dönmeh community, with the reputation of having founded a new faith with a leaning toward religious nihilism.[32]

Neither the Turkish authorities nor the Jewish community knew quite what to make of the Dönmeh. The Turks had expected the Dönmeh to convince the Jews to convert to Islam but this never happened. The Dönmeh themselves, although outwardly observant of Islamic practice, determined to lead a closed sectarian existence, with no intention of assimilation into the larger Islamic society. Even though their leaders were on friendly terms with Sufic leaders and with the dervish orders among the Turks, particularly the Baktashi, the Dönmeh maintained as little contact as possible with outsiders. One of their strongest prohibitions, in fact, concerned intermarriage with Turkish Moslems.[33] Their social isolationism extended to the Jewish community as well although they continued secret ties with Shabbeteans who had not converted and even with several rabbis in Salonika who were paid for settling points of law among them when their own knowledge of Torah and Jewish law had diminished.[34] Despite the occasional contacts, the Jewish community was, for the most part puzzled

by their existence. They were called minim by the rabbis, yet among the writings of Salonikan rabbis were responsa dealing with the problems of the Donmeh living in their midst; how were they to be treated and could they be classified as Jews for any reason.[35]

The complex nature of the Dönmeh and their increasing secretiveness and the still fragmented Jewish community were just two of the problems faced by Jewish leaders at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Economic decline proved to be another serious obstacle to the continued strength of the Salonika Jewish community. As we have already discovered, deterioration of Ottoman authority also contributed to significant communal disorientation among Salonika's Jews. Accounts of Salonika's history do not, for some reason, accord much attention to this century. Molho's Orhot Yosher provides us with some sense of what transpired during this time. We turn first, however, to an overview of eighteenth century Salonika provided by sources other than Molho.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER II

1. There were outbreaks of plague and major fires in 1543, 1545, 1548, 1604, 1609, 1610, 1618 and 1620. See also Jacov Benmayor, "Salonika," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 14, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 700.

2. Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, translated by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 485.

3. Gershom Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 14, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 1221-1222.

4. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, p. 461.

5. Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi", EJ, p. 1231-1232.

6. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, p. 462.

7. Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, Saloniki: Ir v'Em BeYisrael, (Jerusalem: Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, 1967), p. 15.

8. Ibid.

9. Gershom Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 144.

10. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, pp. 633-634; 939.

11. Ibid., p. 633.

12. Ibid., p. 634.

13. Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi, " EJ, p. 1233.

14. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, p. 634

15. Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," EJ, p. 1233.

16. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, p. 634.

17. Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," EJ, p. 1233.

18. Ibid., p.1234.

19. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, p. 634.

20. Scholem, Messianic Idea, pp. 144-145.

21. Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," EJ, pp. 1236-1237.

22. Ibid., p. 1238.

23. Ibid.

24. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, p.735.

25. Ir v'Em beYisrael, p. 17.

26. Scholem, Messianic Idea, p. 147.

27. Gershom Scholem, "Doenmeh," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 6, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), pp. 148-149.

28. Scholem, Messianic Idea, p. 147.

29. Scholem, "Doenmeh," EJ, pp. 148-149.

30. Ibid., p. 149.

31. Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," EJ, p. 1245.

32. Scholem, Messianic Idea, p. 153.

33. Ibid., p. 150.

34. Scholem, "Doenmeh," EJ, p. 149.

35. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

Historians characterize the eighteenth century in Salonika as a time of material and spiritual decline.[1] This retrogression seems astonishing given the vibrancy of previous centuries, but even more remarkable than deterioration of this extraordinary Jewish community is the paucity of material chronicling this downward trend. Most accounts of Salonikan Jewish history skip over the eighteenth century as though it never occurred. Some acknowledge in passing the confusion left in the wake of Shabbetai Zevi while others make oblique reference to the growing competition in trade from Southern European ports. Nonetheless, within the scope of a comprehensive report of Salonika's long-established Jewish presence, no complete portrait of Jewish activity in the eighteenth century appears. We might surmise that this is because the eighteenth century is a period in Salonika's history we need not remember. Yet, this conclusion makes the continued existence of Orḥot Yosher even more extraordinary. The passing references to religious confusion and economic despair do indeed point to a community in decline; Molḥo's attempt to rally the group highlights this reality. But before we turn to the details of this account of eighteenth century Salonika, we should complete our historical overview with gleanings from the various sources which do mention this time period.

It has been noted already that the path of the Jewish community closely paralleled that of the Ottoman Empire. The eighteenth century marked a period of the latter's significant deterioration. Both Russia and Austria correctly assumed that the Ottoman authority was severely weakened and the Empire ready to crumble. In the late seventeenth century, the annexation by each of Ottoman territory led to protracted border skirmishes. The Ottomans signed the Carlowitz peace treaty with Austria in 1699. The terms of this treaty awarded Austria many Balkan territories which bordered the Ottoman Empire.[2] Despite a second war with Austria in 1717 in which the Ottoman forces were generally successful, the Ottoman Empire ceased to be a significant military or political threat to Western Europe.

The situation with Russia, however, was even worse. Austria, at least, negotiated an early peace settlement. Russia, on the other hand, continued its annexation of Ottoman territory. Even the Passarowitz agreement to which Russia agreed on July 21, 1718, still guaranteed Russia the right to acquire more border territories so this process of annexation persisted throughout the eighteenth century.[3] Moreover, Russia's interests were not limited solely to the Ottoman Empire's external affairs. It exercised influence internally as well, when, in 1784, the protection of the Orthodox Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek peoples was declared a Russian concern.[4] These

people were not to be persecuted, they were to be exempt from the payment of all military taxes, and they were to be granted total religious freedom. The second clause, of course, still further weakened Ottoman autonomy.

The Jewish community could not fail to be affected by these developments, not so much perhaps by the exchange of territories as by the resulting economic upheaval. Chaos dominated commercial transactions; trade came to a virtual standstill. Trade negotiations with Venice and the rest of the important Italian coastal cities slowed to a trickle.[5] At the same time, as if in a deliberate plot to make matters worse, a new source of competition developed in Livorno. The Duke of Tuscany accorded many new rights to this city so that its merchants and traders might be able to compete with their peers in Venice and Genoa.[6] This development affected Jewish business interests in Salonika adversely in that these new competitors enjoyed the protection and support of their patron. Moreover, the Greek inhabitants of Salonika became more active in trade; they, too became a new source of competition for the Jewish traders. So by the eighteenth century, due to increased competition from Venice and Ancona, and the absence of financial protection from the Ottoman authorities, even the all important textile industry had entered into a period of steep decline.[7]

Internal Jewish events played their own portentious role in undermining the economic welfare of the Jewish

community. The Jews never recovered completely from the disorder created by the support for Shabbetai Zevi. The economic crisis was widespread as many merchants and artisans remained impoverished. The community council which collected the government's taxes and supported the charitable institutions necessarily languished. From time to time, the members of the council were forced to sell ritual objects to raise funds.[8] Finally, in 1756, the rabbis declared a moratorium on payments of debts and arranged a system whereby each debtor could pay off his obligation in small, regular installments.[9] Even so, the community never regained a fraction of its former prominence.

The most recent source of immigrants to Salonika in the early eighteenth century served to emphasize the precarious position of the Jewish community. A group of Livorno Jews, the majority of whom had been forced converts from Portugal, immigrated to Salonika. Many of these newcomers were merchants who dealt primarily in banking and the import-export business, including tobacco.[10] Others were doctors who had studied at Italian universities. The native Salonikan Jews called them "Frankists", signifying their European origin.[11] Since the Frankists lived under the protection of the French consul, they enjoyed the special rights granted by the capitulation agreements which France had won from the Ottomans. According to an edict of the Sultan, the Frankists who worked as interpreters for the consuls were exempt from many of the taxes

levied on the rest of the community. Claiming that this edict exempted them from all taxes, they refused to pay their taxes to the Jewish community as well. Speaking for the impoverished Jewish community, the rabbis thought otherwise and in 1729 countered by decreeing that it was not appropriate to compare the Sultan's taxes with Jewish obligations.

> The rabbis insisted that the Frankists contribute a portion of their profits to the poor of the city, to participate in the dispensing of charity to the needy every Passover, provide land in cemetaries, donate money and provisions for those who pass through the city, contribute funds to redeem captives, donate to synagogues and schools, aid orphan brides and those who visit the sick, and participate in contributions for the land of Israel, even though they are exempt from paying government taxes.[12]

The economic independence of the Frankists was mirrored by their social isolation. They thought of themselves as a closed aristocracy in Salonika.[13] They married only among themselves and did not mix with any native Jews. The Frankists tried to live as they had in Europe: they dressed as Western Europeans did; the men were clean-shaven and wore wigs on their heads. Among themselves, they continued to speak Italian. But this social and economic isolation from the rest of Salonikan Jewry lasted only a few generations; their decendents became very effective leaders of the city's Jewish community and its institutions. Schools and charitable organizations especially benefited from their leadership.

These Frankists had at least returned to Judaism

formally before their arrival in Salonika; other immigrants later in the eighteenth century came to Salonika still as Christians. These were anusim, victims of the Inquisition in Portugal which continued until 1774, who followed previous generations of forced converts by coming to Salonika. The rabbis of the community questioned the newcomers' status just as previous generations of rabbis had questioned the sixteenth century Marranos. But their decision differed this time from that of their sixteenth century colleagues. It will be recalled that in 1514, the rabbis had ruled that all Marranos were to be treated as Jews in every respect. However, the eighteenth century rabbis would not accept these anusim as Jews without a formal conversion process. They ruled that the anusim must go to the mikvah for ritual immersion just as Christians who wish to convert to Judaism would.[14] Their decree was based on the feeling that these contemporary converts who had lived in Spain or Portugal for several generations were farther away from Judaism than their sixteenth century ancestors who had not been required to undergo the formal conversion.

Supporters of Shabbetai Zevi maintained their faith throughout the eighteenth century. Several well-known rabbis of Salonika and Smyrna such as Joseph b. David, Abraham Miranda, and Meir Birkayam were still in secret sympathy with Shabbetean teachings.[15] There is some evidence that several of the most influential preachers

and authors of moral literature displayed their Shabbetean beliefs in their writing. Many of the important musar books of the early eighteenth century such as Shevet Musar by Elijah Kohen Ittamari (1712), Tohorat ha-Kodesh (1717) and Shem Ya'akov by Jacob Segal of Zlatova (1716) belong to this category.[16] Even so, by the end of the eighteenth century, most secret Shabbetean sympathizers who had maintained their Judaism, had disappeared.

This gradual dissolution was not at all the case with the Dönmeh sects which flourished throughout the eighteenth century. By 1774, there were over 600 Dönmeh families.[17] They continued to marry only among themselves. By this time, their rites were unknown outside their own limited circle. Their knowledge of Hebrew steadily declined to the point that by the eighteenth century, they used Ladino as their vernacular.

The onset of the Ottoman Empire's decline and the worsening economic position of the Jews contributed to the gradual deterioration of Salonikan intellectual life. As the eighteenth century took shape, Rabbi Jonah Rey was describing Salonika as "a great city of scholars and scribes who are highly educated, a place eternally strong".[18] These words were not prophetic. Even though the schools were full of students, they no longer prepared their pupils adequately to live according to Torah and halacha . Scholars no longer dealt with subjects whose value was not cultural or economic.[19] Students abandoned

secular studies as well as rational philosophy and Bible.[20] Zohar and other mystical tracts compltely eclipsed rabbinic texts in the curriculum of learned Jews. People turned to magic and superstition. The Secrets of Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai, published in Salonika in 1745, permeated the air of the city with its stories of miracles and wonders.[21] It would not be completely inaccurate to describe the eighteenth century as the Dark Age of Salonika's intellectual life.

Demographic statistics drawn up by foreign consuls and tourists trying to assess the number of inhabitants to Salonika corroborate the economic and intellectual picture of eighteenth century Salonika.[22] In 1653, the city held 60,000 people, and fully one-half of them were Jewish. By 1741, the population had risen to 80,000, divided in the following manner: 40,000 Jews (still one-half!) 25,000 Greeks, and 15,000 Turks. In his memoirs, the French Consul D'evant recorded that in 1768 there were 65,000-70,000 residents and of them 30,000-35,000 were Turks, 6,000 were Janissaries, 8,000 were Greeks, and 26,000-27,000 were Jews. He observed that the Greeks were merchants or farmers, and the Jews were bankers, merchants and artisans. Jacob Vincent D'arusy visited Salonika in 1777 and estimated that of the 70,000 inhabitants, 25,000 were Jews, 15,000 were Greeks and 30,000 were Turks. Felix Beaujour, French consul in Salonika from 1792-1796, divided the 60,000 Salonikans into 30,000 Turks, 16,000 Greeks, only 12,000 Jews (one-fifth now) and several thousand Shabbeteans

(probably Dönmeh), Western Europeans, migrants and black slaves. This drastic decline in the Jewish population from a mid-seventheenth century high of 40,000 Jews to the much lower figure of 12,000 at the end of the eighteenth century validates the perception of a community whose strength has dissipated. The parallel decrease in population figures between the overall Salonikan and specifically Jewish communities confirms our earlier hypothesis regarding the connected paths these two groups follow. The generally worsening economic conditions must have forced many to migrate elsewhere in search of better opportunities. Furthermore, a community with such poor prognosis would be unlikely to attract new immigrants.

In spite of such pessimism, some cared very deeply for the welfare and improvement of Salonika's Jews. Through his endeavors to unite the community and bring it back to what he thought was "pure Judaism", Isaac Molho proved himself to be one such individual. His family background and purported reasons for writing Orḥot Yosher illustrate the depth of his commitment to his community.

Shoḥetim and scholars predominated in the Molḥo family. By the eighteenth century, three families--Molḥo, Astromoza and Beraḥa--held the monopoly on the community's ritual slaughtering.[23] Isaac's father, Abraham Molḥo served the Jews of Salonika as chief shoḥet. Abraham's three sons continued the family tradition and extended its reputation to the scholarly realm. In 1720, Joseph, the

oldest son, commenced writing Shulḥan Gavoa, a commentary and Salonikan gloss to Caro's Shulḥan Aruch.[24] He produced a profusion of Kabbalistic works, including Sefer Raziel, Shir Ḥadash, a book on the Messiah which circulated in manuscript, Shemen Zait Zaḥ, a Kabbalistic work and Shemen Misnaḥat Kodesh, a Zoharic commentary on Song of Songs, published in 1779. [28]

In contrast to his more prolific, adventure-seeking brothers, Isaac Molḥo remained in Salonika all of his life. He is known to us on the basis of a single book - Orhot Yosher although he worked as both judge and preacher, and even wrote the introductions to Joseph's works.[29] Little else is known about his life; Nehama describes him only as a "mystical moralist." [30] Lists of Salonikan rabbis and leaders do not include him. Of his personal life, we know only that he was born around 1722 and died in a great fire in 1781. He had four sons, all of whom continued their father's commitment to communal leadership. [31] Joseph, the eldest became a printer and later, a rabbi in Larissa. Elazar presided as judge in Salonika and eventually in Jerusalem while Samuel was known as a sage and glossator. Saul enjoyed the greatest reputation of the four sons. He served his community as its chief rabbi from 1834-1848. Known to Jews and non-Jews alike, he was respected as one of the most formidable spiritual leaders ever to direct Salonikan Jewry.[32] To the best of our knowledge, and incredible as it may seem, unlike his father and uncles, Saul Molḥo left no written legacy.

The spiritual and material welfare of Salonika's Jews concerned Isaac Molḥo as much as did the return to what he termed "pure Judaism". Through his book, he hoped to address the people directly, "to encourage them in the traditions of study and piety among every class of the population." [33] Molḥo saw himself as a defender of Judaism and its way of life; he sought to aid people in proper Jewish observance. He endeavored to interest his community "in the enduring principles of Judaism, and to regulate and strengthen people's discipline." [34] In his foreword to Orḥot Yosher, Recanati suggests that "Molḥo fought God's war for he worked to make Torah and mitzvot the foundation of Jewish life." [35]

Orḥot Yosher was first published anonymously; Molḥo attached it to a well-known musar book called Orḥot Tzadikim. We can only guess why Molḥo chose this method of publication. Recanati assumes that the author's humility precluded him from publicizing the book under his own name; he adds that Molḥo "wanted his words to be heard for their truth and righteousness and not because of the personality of the author." [36] Molḥo had spoken his mind in public regardless of the reactions of the public or of specific influential men so his anonymity cannot be due to fear or intimidation. [37] No matter the reason, the book touched a responsive chord in its readers and the first edition of Orḥot Yosher (1769) sold out very quickly. Continuous demand for the book mandated several printings. The author's sons, with the aid of two

patrons, sponsored a printing in 1781 which finally revealed the identity of the author. [38]

We turn next to an overview of Orḥot Yosher. Through his mystical moralizing and prescriptions for the appropriate way to live, Molḥo provides the contemporary reader with a remarkably clear picture of the community in which he lived and worked. As he castigates his fellow Salonikans for their numerous transgressions, he exposes their way of life. Preoccupation with financial success or even survival, laxity in ritual observance, unconcern for study and prayer - all these Molḥo recounts with stunning clarity. Though he did not set out to write a history of eighteenth century Salonika, his thoroughness and dedication to his task provide much of the material needed to complete the account of a remarkable Jewish community.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER III

1. Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, Saloniki: Ir V'Em BeYisrael, (Jerusalem: Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, 1967), p. 17.

2. Joseph Nehama, Histoire des Israelites de Salonique, Volumes 6 & 7, (Salonika: Communaute Israelite de Thessalonique, 1976), p. 12.

3. Ir v'Em BeYisrael, p. 17.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 18.

7. "Dyeing," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 6, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 328.

8. Ir v'Em BeYisrael, p. 17.

9. Ibid., p. 18.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.: confirmed by Dr. Martin A. Cohen as the Ladino name for European immigrants to Salonika.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Gershom Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 14, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 1245.

16. Ibid., p. 1248

17. Gershom Scholem, "Doenmeh," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 6, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 150.

18. Ir v'Em BeYisrael, p. 18.

19. Guide to Jewish Museum of Greece, Salonika, n.d.

20. Ir v'Em BeYisrael, p. 18.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 19. All demographic statistics were taken from this source.

23. Isaac Molḥo, Orhot Yosher, edited by Abraham Recanati, (Tel Aviv: Rabbi Shelomo Ibn Gabirol Synagogue for the Remembrance of the Salonikan Community, 1975), p. viii.

24. Nehama, p. 457.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 458.

27. Ibid., p. 431.

28. Ibid., p. 474.

29. Molḥo, p. ix.

30. Nehama, p. 456.

31. Molḥo, p. ix.

32. Nehama, p. 475.

33. Ibid., p. 473.

34. Molḥo, p. ix.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Nehama, p. 431.

CHAPTER IV

Throughout Orḥot Yosher, Molḥo utilizes a single, all-encompassing theme: every action taken by human beings whether at work or in prayer, should enhance the glory of God. Through their return to what he terms "pure Judaism", he urges his readers to sanctify their lives in service to God. Molḥo's book covers 23 different kinds of behavior; some are quite specific, like the appropriate way to celebrate Tu B'Shvat,while others deal with such general categories as prayer. Nonetheless, all follow Molḥo's theme.

As a leader of his community, Molḥo has observed his fellow Salonikans quite carefully. He understands very well the grave economic problems they face and sympathizes with their all-consuming need to earn a living. He cannot, however, stand idly by as these Jews turn away from the fulfillment of mitzvot in order to make a living. Molḥo will not condone religious indifference or superficial piety; nor can he allow the community to disintegrate because individuals refuse to recognize their continued commitment to the entire group.

Through his book, Molḥo hopes to recruit the Jews of Salonika for a journey of tikkun and teshuvah - - restoration and return. Their turning back to a renewed Judaism will strengthen them. He often addresses his

readers as a parent might speak to a child, with words of admonition and encouragement. He does not coddle his community; his words are direct, even blunt, as he paints a clear picture of what he considers to be a degenerated community. Yet Molḥo believes that attention to the correct way of living will bring the people, and therefore, the community, back to their former prominence. In his longing for this change, he often refers to previous generations of Jews who had made Salonika the foremost Jewish city in the world. Their lives were consecrated to the service of God; this dedication to fulfilling the will of God can belong to the present generation as well.

This chapter presents Molḥo's view of eighteenth century Salonikan Jewish life. Through his discussion of the community's situation, we can corroborate much of the historical overview presented in the previous chapter. His frustration with the way his people conduct their lives and his repeated exhortation to change emphasize the unfortunate reality of a community in religious and economic decline.

"It is especially bad in these difficult times, full of distress and sorrow that we cannot pray properly, that we try to satisfy our souls with bread and people bring <u>trefe</u> into their homes--the least we can do is serve God properly".[1] Inattention to matters concerning prayer infuriates Molḥo. If the purpose of life is to serve God, how much the more so must there be meticulous attention

to prayer which is the most direct way of exalting God.

Molḥo sees rampant disregard for the appropriate time for beginning prayer services. Shaḥarit must not begin before daylight; ma'ariv may not commence before daylight has ended. Molho tells the people that the prayers of one who starts at the proper time have greater kavannah than those begun at the individual's convenience. Even occasions for rejoicing, such as weddings or births, do not obviate the correct time for prayer. Molho cites the case of people who get all dressed up, come to the synagogue to celebrate and forget about the prayer services completely. This situation most often occurs in the winter when the days are so short that people lose track of the time. Molḥo sympathizes with those who commit this error; after all, how many times in a lifetime do occasions for joy ever occur? He cannot, however, condone the sheliaḥ tzibor who permits such lapses.

The correct attitude toward prayer also concerns Molḥo. He urges his readers to enter the synagogue with awe and reverence for God. They should not talk during services; nor should they bring small children who will disrupt the dignity of the proceedings. The participants should not take off their tefillin and roll them up before services have concluded. In so doing, they lose their concentration on the prayers and begin to think about work. Molḥo tells us that they do not respond with "amen" or "baruch hu u'varuch sh'mo" in the appropriate

places because they are no longer listening. Molḥo castigates those who regard communal prayer as unimportant; those who enter the synagogue late yet begin after everyone has already started to pray are just as guilty as those who do not come to the synagogue at all. He suggests that communal prayers are more likely to be heard than individual prayers. He also wants people to realize that cleanliness is what separates Jews from Gentiles (among other things); he urges them to remember to wash before they come to the synagogue. Salonikan Jews tend to bring their secular values into the synagogue; this, too, distresses Molḥo. When wealthy people are refused the honor of an aliyah to the Torah, many get angry and disrupt services because they feel slighted. Molḥo condemns their petty grievances and lack of common sense; why can they not realize that it is just as, if not more, important to have peaceful surroundings and say "amen" after the blessing than to quarrel at services.

Worse than those who have an indifferent attitude toward prayer in the synagogue are those who do not come to the synagogue at all. Molḥo cites merchants who do not come to the synagogue for minḥah because they are too busy. Instead, they read through ma'ariv twice. Some of them read through the service alone; rarely is it done correctly. These store owners often skip parts or even forget to cover their heads. Other merchants neither come to the synagogue on Shabbat to hear the Torah

chanted, nor study it alone. They excuse themselves, insisting that they are not scholars with time for such matters. Molḥo will not excuse their laxness; it is especially because they have such little time that they should be zealous in their observance. He reminds them of the passage in Berachot which states that people who live in cities with synagogues yet do not attend them are evil.[2]

Molḥo also admonishes those who are not scrupulous in their care and use of tefillin and tallit. The prayers of one who wears tallit or tefillin in disrepair are null and void. Many people do not put either one on properly; this, too should be corrected. While visiting various villages surrounding Salonika, Molḥo had discovered that the tallitot and tefillin of many inhabitants were defective. Moreover, few villages had someone qualified enough to undertake their repair. He urged the people to appoint someone who would take responsibility for such a project. In Salonika itself, he finds tallitot made from a mixture of cotton and linen. This combination is not permissible; all tallitot must be made from sheep's wool. Finally, he reminds his readers never to borrow anyone else's tefillin.

The community's disregard for the details pertaining to prayer is paralleled by its apathy toward other fundamentals of Jewish observance. Over and over again, Molḥo cautions the community to remember that every action should exalt God. He cites eating as the perfect example of an

action easy to violate.[3] He pleads with his readers to remember that eating should not be done merely for the sake of filling one's stomach. According to Molḥo, people eat to maintain the human being who is created in the image of God. Moreover, the act of eating provides a person with an opportunity to thank and praise God. All too often, as a result of indifference to this obligation, people simply eat, and if, by chance, they do recall the blessing, they mumble it by rote. Molḥo finds a similar inertia plaguing those with an occasion to celebrate such as a wedding or a Brit. Instead of acknowledging gratitude for the opportunity to fulfil a mitzvah, many participants simply admit to the pleasure of the moment.

Molḥo relates other episodes which focus on the community's disregard for stringent observance of Jewish law pertaining to food. One of them is especially illuminating for not only does it exemplify the laxness related to kashrut but it also emphasizes the increasingly vulnerable position in which Molho and other Salonikan leaders found themselves. In his discussion of Tu B'Shvat, Molḥo describes in great detail those fruits which may or may not be eaten based on their susceptibility to infestation.[4] Either Molḥo or one of his predecessors had decreed that Salonikan Jews were prohibited from eating crushed dates imported from Egypt because there was no way to check them thoroughly for infestation which would render them inedible. Some people protested this decision; they

wanted to eat those dates and promised that the fruit would be adequately inspected. Molḥo had no other choice but to devise a test which would prove that the prohibition was legitimate. He set out a bowl of dates including six which were rotten. Needless to say, the opponents of this restriction were unable to pick out the six inedible dates. The ban on crushed dates from Egypt remained in effect. We cannot help but wonder about the vitality of a community whose leaders must resort to petty deception in order to assert their authority.

Other sources reveal the existence of the Frankists and their isolation from the rest of the community; Molḥo confirms their presence in Salonika.[5] Moreover, he complains that whereas the Frankists may intentionally separate themselves from Salonikan Jews, these other Jews have no qualms about adopting Frankist customs. He mentions the increasing number of Salonikan Jews who remain clean-shaven despite religious injunctions prohibiting such a practice. Molḥo blames this behavior on Frankist influences but also admits that Jews connected with the Ottoman authority shave off their beards as well. From this discussion of this increasingly widespread disregard for Jewish law, one detects a note of frustration in Molḥo's words. His community seems to turn away from accepted Jewish practice at any opportunity; Molḥo and his colleagues have little recourse to stop them.

Although he has preached against it many times, Molḥo

feels powerless to stop another deplorable practice adopted by Salonikan Jews. On Shabbat, these Jews frequent coffeehouses, known as "kaviani".[6] They sit there for hours, gossiping and wasting time which could be better spent studying Torah. Molḥo compares these coffeehouses and the games of chance played in them to deserts and dry ground in contradistinction to yeshivot which are as rivers and watersprings.[7] The coffeehouse owners, almost all of whom are Gentile, keep their establishments open on Saturday expressly for the benefit of their Jewish clientele; naturally, they do their best business that day. Molḥo notes that if the Jewish population of Salonika were not so considerable, these purveyors of coffee made on Shabbat would not earn a fraction of the high profits they enjoy. Despite his strenuous efforts to convince people not to frequent these cafes, Molḥo could not arrest the increasing popularity of coffee on Shabbat. In 1763, no rain fell in Salonika. The rabbis decreed fasting, prayers of forgiveness and cessation of all work. Even then, people continued to visit the coffeehouses on Shabbat. Finally, the rabbis forbade them to go. Molḥo does not say whether this drastic measure was accompanied by the threat of excommunication; in any event, it was successful. Attendance at these kaviani dropped dramatically. Nonetheless, Molḥo and his colleagues soon discovered that many Jews, especially the wealthy among them, bought the coffee to their homes. They instructed their Gentile servants to

heat it on Saturday so they could still enjoy their Shabbat coffee. There seemed to be nothing the rabbis could do to break this onerous habit. This coffeehouse episode illustrates the kind of decline experienced by the Salonikan Jewish community. There was no carefully orchestrated disregard for Jewish law or rabbinical authority; rather, the small exigencies of life drew people away from scrupulous observance.

The needs of the moment affected education adversely as well. Molho bemoans the lack of diligence applied to study.[8] He exhorts his readers to learn a little bit every day. If they are not at all educated, they should at least come to the school to listen. He also offers his uneducated readers the option of supporting poor students or providing them with books.[9] All these actions increase one's merit in the world to come and not surprisingly, Molho steadfastly believes that study especially enhances God's glory. Those who support students with contributions of money and books or marry their daughters to them, thus becoming a permanent benefactor deserve great praise for their actions. Molho even suggests that a man with no heir should adopt a poor student who will then take on the responsibility of saying kaddish after the man's death.[10] Molho must remind his readers of these options probably because few of his fellow Salonikans understand the gravity of the situation. A generation of poor students endangers the future of Jewish literacy

in Salonika, considering the glorious past history of scholarship in Salonika, the present reality becomes even more ominous.

These Salonikan students are poor not only in money but also in their judgment of what should be studied. The student's curriculum disturbs Molḥo. Torah, Mishnah, Shulḥan Aruḥ - all are given short shrift. Surprisingly, Molho insists that students devote too much of their time to the works of Maimonides.[11] Their preference for the ordered arrangement of Mishnah Torah rather than the convoluted arguments of Gemara may have been the reason. He suspects students of engaging in derash and pilpul for the sake of the art rather than service to God.[12] They study to merit reward in this world rather than the world to come. Such students irritate Molḥo. He prefers the diligent student who devotes his life to the fulfillment of mitzvot to the brilliant student who cares little about his religious obligations.

Our other sources reveal a taxing strain on the community's ability to fulfil its responsibility in eighteenth century Salonika; Molḥo's exhortations on the subject of charity confirm these findings. He must continually remind the Salonikans about the urgent need to give tzedakah. Because so many have just recently lost their holdings, he distinguishes between the "poor" and the "needy".[13] The needy constitute those who used to be wealthy or at the very least, self-sufficient but only

now in the light of Salonika's recent economic disaster, must depend upon public assistance. Molḥo suggests contributing directly to the poor but sending money to the house of the needy via a messenger so they will not suffer unnecessary embarrassment. Likewise, he hopes that Salonikans will understand and respond graciously to the dinner guest who has no clean clothes and therefore, will not sit at the table with the host.[14] He urges them to offer the food to the guest to do with as he pleases. Knowing that so many Salonikan Jews have no work, he recommends that employers hire Jewish workers if at all possible. He commends those who lend money but charge no interest.[15] Wealthy merchants should not foreclose the loans of widows and orphans. A judge must take all the collected fines and distribute them to the poor.[16] Molḥo assures his readers that their efforts will not go unnoticed. The mitzvot of tzedakah and welcoming guests ensure that the dead will be brought back to life. Moreover, the mitzvah of tzedakah equals all other mitzvot in the Torah combined.[17] Even so, Molḥo cautions the Jews not to deceive themselves into thinking they can second-guess God. According to Orḥot Yosher, "if you see a person who used to be wealthy but is now poor, you cannot make him rich again simply by restoring his wealth. If it is God's will that he be poor, all you can do is provide him with enough to sustain him." [18]

Even as the textile industry began to decline and

Salonikan Jews were forced to search for new sources of employment, some people retained the habits of a past, more prosperous Salonika. Molḥo will not condone extravagance in these difficult times. Salonikan Jews must learn to live more modestly; they must curb their desires for luxurious clothing and fancy foods. He provides them with a twofold justification for restraining their profligate inclinations. First he appeals to their religious sensibilities: the acquisition of unnecessary food and clothing diverts a person from proper behavior as well as the study of Torah and serves as a great temptation to sin.[19] One who contents himself with the barest of necessities is deserving of merit; he is as great as the ministering angels and all the works of creation. Those who cannot comply receive only Molḥo's scorn; they are less significant than flies and mosquitos. The second rationale for living modestly deals with inter-community concerns. Jews should give Gentiles no cause for jealousy. In a society where Jews outnumber every other religious and ethnic group, as they did until the eighteenth century, this last reason could not have been legitimate. In the eighteenth century, however, a modest public appearance designed to render one inconspicuous is all too valid. Women especially must be discouraged from wearing ornate clothing in public. Molḥo even goes so far as to charge that the fancy clothing and jewelry of Jewish women caused the expulsion

from Spain.[20] A Gentile noblewoman's jealousy of the Jew's clothing and jewelry caused her to complain to the king so often that he finally tired of all the whining and ordered the expulsion of the entire Jewish population. Even though they knew this is not to be the case, this amazing tale should have served as an effective deterrent to such behavior by eighteenth century Salonikan women. Apparently, it was ineffective; finally, the rabbis authorized a decree forbidding Salonikan Jews to wear any gold jewelry in public except for a particular kind of necklace called yahrdan.[21] It should be noted in passing that this prohibition specifically included wearing jewelry to bathhouses. This clause suggests that Jews and Gentiles frequented the same bathhouses. Finally, Molho offers an entirely pragmatic reason for not living beyond one's means. Higher taxes might be imposed on those who appear wealthy.[22] Caring very deeply for the welfare of his community, Molho tries to help its members avoid undue hardship brought on by their own folly. He must help them in every possible way to re-educate themselves and adapt to a less prosperous lifestyle than that enjoyed by their ancestors.

Through the attention he focuses on the harsh realities of eighteenth century life, Molho provides us with some insight into the changing economic conditions of the Salonikan Jews. Most of their energy is necessarily concentrated on eking out a living. They cannot or will

not devote sufficient time to other obligations such as prayer and study. Even though he acknowledges their unfortunate plight, he cannot condone their neglect of their study or prayer. We have already seen how merchants ignored the appropriate times of prayers for the sake of business; they extended this attitude to include employees as well. The Salonikan council eventually decreed that every employer must allow time for minḥah. [23] If ten Jewish employees work in the store, they may conduct the service on the job as long as there are clean surroundings. Otherwise, they must be excused to attend the closest synagogue. A Jew working in a Gentile establishment where he is not permitted to leave may pray by himself in a clean place at the appropriate time.

Molḥo also discusses the problem of workers who do not get up early enough in the morning for shaḥarit. He understands all too well that people have no trouble getting up when a profit is involved; they will rise early to go to work but not to pray. As he puts it, "the evil inclination prompts them to say pray now or pray later - it's all the same!" [24] It is not the same to Molḥo; those who pray at the proper time are deserving of greater merit. He implores his fellow Jews not to imitate their non-Jewish neighbors who would "run to do the work of the gods of silver and gold even if it meant taking a deadly poison." [25]

Throughout the pages of Orḥot Yosher, Molḥo longs

for the old days when merchants would go first to synagogue, then to the bet midrash, and only after both prayer and study, to work. He remembers when merchants would carry books of psalms and other Bible verses in order to catch a few moments of study whenever possible. Today, he sees only merchants who carry around watches and worry beads. [26] He observes the progress of students who drop out of school after only a few years of rudimentary education. Even after a year or two, few remember more than enough to complete an aliyah to the Torah.

The particulars of trouble in the textile industry do not really occupy Molho's attention. He does, however, point out some unfortunate side effects of economic desperation. [27] Woolcombers occasionally pilfer the fabric they are charged with creating. Some tailors "undermeasure" the fabric for clothes. There are even middlemen who take the cut cloth from tailors; instead of distributing it as they have been empowered, they sell it privately and pocket all the profit. The need to survive outweighs all other considerations. Neither "business ethics" nor the force of Jewish tradition which condemns such behavior has the power to halt the disintegration of the once strong and prosperous Jewish community.

So gradual deterioration characterizes the downward trend of the Salonikan Jews. No single earth-shattering event prompted their decline; rather, constant assaults on the quality of life hastened its

retrogression. Like a hammer chipping away at a boulder, the face of the community was gradually transformed. Molḥo reconstructs the present situation in Salonika as a series of steps taken away from the former all-encompassing authority of Jewish law for the sake of immediate needs. His findings corroborate those of other sources. His exhortations to return to the primacy of Judaism emphasize eighteenth century reality.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER IV

1. Isaac Molho, Orhot Yosher, edited by Abraham Recanati, (Tel Aviv: Rabbi Shelomo Ibn Gabirol Synagogue for the Remembrance of the Salonikan Community, 1975), p. 15. Material covered in pages 2-5 of this chapter was taken from Orhot Yosher, pp. 8-27.
2. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 8a.
3. Molho, pp. 228-230.
4. Ibid., p. 196.
5. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
6. Ibid., pp. 117-118.
7. Ibid., p. 35.
8. Ibid., p. 202.
9. Ibid., p. 42.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 150.
12. Ibid., p. 144.
13. Ibid., pp. 102-103.
14. Ibid., p. 101.
15. Ibid., p. 104-105
16. Ibid., p. 59.
17. Ibid., p. 101.
18. Ibid., pp. 102-103.
19. Ibid., pp. 44-46.
20. Ibid., p. 99
21. Ibid., p. 100.
22. Ibid., p. 54.
23. Ibid., p. 10.

24. Ibid. pp. 7-8

25. Ibid. p. 8.

26. Ibid. pp. 33-34.

27. Ibid., p. 195.

CHAPTER V

Isaac Molho's Orhot Yosher provides us with a vivid portrait of eighteenth century Salonika. The author proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that this once-vibrant Jewish community stumbled through a period of catastrophic decline. With a multitude of examples, he reminds us that in a depressed economy, financial survival takes second place to no other consideration. Throughout the book, he reveals the apathetic lip-service paid to study and prayer. Although Molho's Salonikans live in an ostensibly Jewish world with its myriad of synagogues, communal institutions and schools, their attachment to Judaism grows more and more tenuous. Economic demands of the moment, and a lifestyle determined by convenience or capriciousness more than by halacha, pull Salonikan Jews away from the tradition-filled world they once inhabited. All this Molho discloses with disquieting clarity. And even if he overstates his case, as--being a moralist--he might, the basic truths of that case are never in doubt.

However, historical review was not Molho's purpose in writing this book. He names his work Orhot Yosher because he intends his readers to choose ways of righteousness. Seeing himself as a defender of the true Jewish way of life, he calls for a return to "pure" Judaism. He en-

courages proper observance of law and ritual. Greater discipline stands side by side with the "enduring principles of Judaism" in Molho's schema. Molho demands tikkun hanefesh--restoration of the soul-- from the Jews of Salonika. He warns them, however, that such repair is possible only if their actions and words match their intentions. He teaches his readers that God commands the fulfillment of mitzvot only to see if people stand ready to do God's will.[1]

Obeissance to God, exaltation of God, service before God - these are the cornerstones of Molho's book. He compares mitzvot and good deeds to nourishment derived from the roots of a tree.[2] The roots lay buried underground; they have neither taste nor smell nor beauty. Yet the tree draws life from the roots; it cannot bear fruit or even survive without the sustenance drawn up through its roots. What the roots are to the tree, human behavior is to the soul. Through human behavior, the soul is nourished and draws closer to God. Molho entreats his readers to strive after ethical conduct; in his program for living, meticulous attention to and time for study and prayer merit top priority.

Not surprisingly, Molho continually recommends sifrei musar (books of ethics) to his readers although he rarely specifies these books by name. A logical question follows: do we classify Orhot Yosher as such a book? In his introduction to Mesillat Yesharim,

Mordecai Kaplan defines Jewish ethics.

> It has been the practice in all types of civilized society to supplement the existing organs of social control by means of maxims, teachings and rational arguments calculated to induce the individual so as to regulate his conduct that he may contribute effectively to the general good without having to be compelled from without. This supplementary aid to the moral and spiritual order of human life is ethics.[3]

Jewish books of ethics deal with conduct but they make no attempt to examine the sources of behavioral directives; they merely exhort the reader to live up to duties which, it is presumed he as well as the author take for granted. Kaplan assumes this distinction in the second of the three points of divergence between Jewish and philosophic ethics.

> (1) As to scope, philosophic ethics confines itself to conduct affecting our social relationships. Jewish ethics includes the entire gamut of human conduct; it gives to the cultus or religious observances at least as important a place as to social conduct.
>
> (2) As to authority, philosophic ethics recognizes no authority but that of reason based on experience; all philosophic ethics is therefore humanistic. Jewish ethics does not deny the authority of reason, but subordinates it to the authority of God who has made his will known through the Torah and the Prophets. Jewish ethics is, therefore, theocentric.
>
> (3) As to the sanction or provision for enforcing what is right, philosophic ethics relies upon the knowledge of the effect, in terms of individual and social well-being, that flows directly from the deed, as a stimulus to the good, and as a deterrent from evil. Jewish ethics points to the system of reward and punishments which, according to tradition, are meted out by God. There is no direct causal relationship between virtue and its reward, or sin and its retribution.

> What the reward or retribution shall be in each instance is ordained by God.[4]

According to Kaplan's definition of Jewish ethics, we should certainly classify Orhot Yosher as musar. Molho's presentation of twenty-three kinds of behavior cover both social conduct and ritual observance. He is particularly concerned with the proper attitude toward prayer. No doubt can possibly exist as to the theocentricity of Molho's program for correct living. Moreover, Molho assures us that without exception, reward and punishment are meted out by God. His example of the once-wealthy man whose riches cannot be restored through the efforts of his fellow human beings, for only God can determine one's station in life, is particularly apt. Orhot Yosher is nothing if not musar.

But though musar, Molho's work should not be confused with the musar movement. This movement, a nineteenth century eastern European phenomenon, advocated the use of ethical tracts and rigorous discipline in an effort to instil within yeshiva students strict ethical behavior in the spirit of halacha. The musar movement arose as a response to moral degeneration, growing poverty and congestion in the Pale of Settlement; and the need to "sustain a rigorous traditional Jewish life, based mainly learning and intellectuality, in the face of such trends as Hasidism, Haskalah, Reform and neo-Orthodoxy".[5] Although this description sounds similar to the challenges met by Molho's writing and preaching, we may not categorize

Orhot Yosher as even an early part of this movement. So our question regarding the identity of Orhot Yosher as a musar book is easily resolved; another question is not. What was Molho's status concerning Kabbalah or for that matter, Shabbeteanism? His regard for Kabbalah appears to have been quite high. Salonika was, after all, a center of Kabbalistic study. Hundreds of leading mystics had long settled and studied in Salonika. Isaac's oldest brother, Joseph, produced a profusion of Kabbalistic works, including Zoharic biblical commentaries and a book on the Messiah.[6] No evident reason exists to doubt that Isaac Molho would have been just as interested in Kabbalistic study as his family and fellow scholars. Moreover, he provides hints of such an affinity in his prescriptions for ritual observance. He advocates singing the psalms of Kabbalat Shabbat, a practice introduced by the sixteenth century mystics in Safed. Tikkun Layl Shavuot, another custom described by Molho in great detail, also originated among the Kabbalah-studying mystics. It will be recalled that historians of the period such as Joseph Nehama even characterize Molho as a "mystical moralist".[7] In his foreword to the book, we saw Recanati suggesting that "Molho fought God's war for he worked to make Torah and mitzvot the foundation of Jewish life."[8] To the victors belong the spoils of war. Perhaps, the prize coveted in Molho's war was redemption, the ultimate goal of

all mystics. His advocacy of ethical behavior, strict ritual observance and fulfillment of God's will all belong to the mystic's program for living in such a way as to hasten the advent of redemption.

His very same points indicate that Molho was probably not a secret Shabbetean. Although some Salonikan rabbis such as Joseph b. David, Abraham Miranda and Meir Birkayam still sympathized with Shabbetean teachings, it seems unlikely that Molho was counted among them. All the aforementioned emphases of Orhot Yosher - - the attention to discipline and meticulous halachic observance, for example- suggest that Molho was actually anti-Shabbetean. The best example of anti-Shabbetean feeling is his stress on Tisha B'Av as a day to remember catastrophes experienced by Jews, particularly the destruction of the Temple. This emphasis certainly obviates Shabbetean observance of the day as a celebration of Shabbetai Zevi's birthday!

Especially because we know so little about his personal life and since his reputation rests solely on one book, it is difficult to characterize Molho. At first glance, he seems not to fit into any general categories of writers or scholars. However, this initial observation may not be entirely true. The life and work of one of Molho's contemporaries may shed new light on Orhot Yosher. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's book, Mesillat Yesharim, provides us with striking and enlightening parallels.

Born in 1707 in Padua, Luzzatto received a thorough

Jewish and secular education from his wealthy parents. By the age of 15, however, having already been captivated by the study of Kabbalah, he left the academy to set up an area in his home where young men would gather to study. From 1727 until 1730, Luzzatto devoted himself entirely to the pursuit of mysticism. "It was during this period that he wrote his Zohar Tinyana (the second Zohar), an imitation of the Zohar; his treatise on the principles of the Kabbalah entitled Pithë Hokmah (Portals of Wisdom); and the Hoker u-Mekubal (Philosopher and Kabbalist), a defense of the Kabbalah in the form of a dialogue between a philosopher and a mystic." [9]

Not satisfied with literary activity, Luzzatto joined forces with like-minded young men in an attempt to bring redemption closer. They drew up a set of regulations which fixed a regimen of high ethical conduct and rigorous piety for the members and emphasized the study of Zohar throughout the day. Luzzatto, who led the group, began to think that his teachings were imparted to him by that mysterious voice, heard by so many Kabbalists from Alkabetz to Karo, which he called a Maggid.[10] For a long time, he kept this secret to himself but finally confided in two of his disciples. Out of enthusiasm for his teacher's ideas, one of them, Yekutiel Gordon, wrote letters full of praise for Luzzatto and these eventually reached Rabbi Moses Hages of Altona, a vehement foe of Shabbetean-

ism. Hages feared that if not stopped in time, Luzzatto could easily become a new pseudo-Messiah so he appealed to the Venetian rabbinate to halt Luzzatto's mystical activities. These rabbis cautioned Luzzatto but took no definitive action against him. Their lukewarm support dissatisfied Hages who initiated a campaign to stop Luzzatto. Over the next few years, he wrote to Italian and German colleagues, urging strict limitations on what the mystic could publish. For a time, Luzzatto turned to family affairs, got married and wrote mostly poetry; but eventually, he returned to the teaching of Kabbalah. This defiance enraged Hages who redcubled his efforts, succeeding, in 1736, to have Luzzatto's works banned.

In 1737, Luzzatto left Italy for Amsterdam. En route, he stopped in Frankfort on the Main where, to his shock, he was arraigned before the rabbinical court and found guilty of a list of trumped-up accusations. He was forced to sign a document which limited his activities even further. Broken in spirit, he eventually reached Amsterdam where he was greeted warmly by the Portuguese community there. He did not teach Kabbalah but continued a voluminous correspondence with his Italian disciples. While in Amsterdam, he wrote his ethical treatise Mesillat Yesharim. In 1743, he moved to Palestine where he planned to join his family and fellow mystics. In 1747 before he could really resume his Kabbalistic work, he died of plague.

Mesillat Yesharim is Luzzatto's work which interests us here. An ethical book which expounds the right and pious conduct of the Jew, Mesillat Yesharim "cultivates the inwardness of laws and duties to which the Jew has to live up." [11] As Luzzatto explains in his preface, "I have not composed this book to teach people what they do not know but to remind them of what they know, and know well. You will find in this treatise things that the majority of men know and do not doubt as to their truth. But because these things are widely known, they are frequently overlooked and forgotten." [12] He emphasizes correct conduct, purity of the soul and the love of God which consists of three elements: "cleaving to Him so that He becomes the center of man's thoughts and actions, joy in worshipping Him, and zeal for his honor." [13] Luzzatto arranges Mesillat Yesharim according to an ethical statement made by R. Pinhas b. Yair:

> Carefulness (in conduct) leads to promptness (zerizut); promptness to cleanliness (of soul); cleanliness to moderation; moderation to purity; purity to piety (hassidut); piety to humbleness; humbleness to fear of sin and fear of sin to holiness. [14]

He devotes four chapters to each virtue wherein he expounds its essence, the elements contained therein, the method of its acquisition and obstacles which may prevent its attainment.

The point is that significant parallels exist between Mesillat Yesharim and Orhot Yosher. Luzzatto's prescriptions for living seem to echo Molho's underlying principles. Their stress on highly ethical behavior, scrupulous religious observance and closeness to God correlate exceedingly well. Luzzatto states in his preface that which Molho attempts throughout the book. Neither proposes new ideas or even novel practices; each simply reiterates that which is not only known but familiar to the vast majority of readers. The similarity in content and message, suggest that Molho may even have possibly based Orhot Yosher on it. After all, knowledge of Mesillat Yesharim and the Luzzatto controversy had spread well beyond Italian borders; Molho was surely aware of Luzzatto's situation. The whole episode occurred when Molho was a young man. Such a dispute would undoubtedly have interested a young rabbi from a family of Kabbalists. Mesillat Yesharim which some may characterize as Luzzatto's efforts to regain the support of mainstream Jewish leaders would have been eagerly received by the young Molho. He and other Kabbalists may have interpreted Luzzatto's message a little differently. As a leader of a Kabbalist study group, Luzzatto had drawn up a set of regulations which fixed a regimen of high ethical conduct and rigorous piety. The goal of the group had been the advent of redemption. Might we suggest that Molho shared this same ultimate goal? Is it possible

that Orhot Yosher, filled with exhortations to lead an exemplary Jewish life, was written as a "guide to redemption?"[15] The few sources available hint that Molho published Orhot Yosher anonymously at first and that influential community leaders, primarily men of wealth, had opposed much of what Molho preached. Could there have been a general apprehension that Molho's Kabbalistic tendencies might incite the people? Perhaps Orhot Yosher served as a dual purpose. It seemingly straightforward call for the proper Jewish life would satisfy Molho's mainstream opponents while his instructions were designed to help "those who understand" to bring redemption closer.

At this juncture, we cannot prove such speculation with any certainty. Scholem has demonstrated the pervasive power of Lurianic Kabbalah in the lives of seventeenth century Jews, as he sets forth his reasons for the overwhelming success of Shabbetai Zevi. It seems eminently plausible to extend this supposition to the eighteenth century Salonikan Jew as well. More recently, Ze'ev Gries has written about Sifrut Hahanhagot - - a literary genre encompassing eighteenth century books and pamphlets advocating proper ethical behavior of a non-halachic nature.[16] He indicates that Lurianic Kabbalists made use of such literature. Perhaps Orhot Yosher is one such example of this genre.

In sum, in the wake of the Shabbetai Zevi debacle, Luzzatto, the persecuted Kabbalist, demonstrates his adherence to

proper rabbinic norms by converting speculative Kabbalah into ethical hanhagah. Orhot Yosher is demonstrably similar to Mesillat Yesharim in content and form; and its author was equally a pious Kabbalist threatened by rabbinic orthodoxy. Orhot Yosher should be seen as another volume in Hanhagot Literature of the eighteenth century. It, too is the Kabbalist's way of staying within the Jewish mainstream yet not denying the Kabbalah's essential call to Tikun Olam. Hanhagah, as ethics, could satisfy the rabbis and save the world at the same time.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER V

1. Isaac Molho, Orhot Yosher, edited by Abraham Recanati. (Tel Aviv: Rabbi Shelomo Ibn Gabirol Synagogue for the Remembrance of the Salonikan Community, 1975), pp. 193-194.

2. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

3. Mordecai M. Kaplan, Introduction to Mesillat Yesharim, by Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966), p. xvi.

4. Ibid., pp. xvi, ii.

5. Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Musar Movement," Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 12, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), pp. 534-535.

6. Refer to Chapter 3, p. for more details.

7. Joseph Nehama, Histcire des Israelites de Salonique, Volumes 6 & 7, (Salonika: Communaute Israelite de Thessalonique, 1976), p. 456.

8. Molho, p. ix.

9. Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature, (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1936), p. 92.

10. Ibid.

11. Kaplan, p. xiv.

12. Waxman, p. 106.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. A description of eighteenth century anti-Shabbetean reaction recorded in the introduction to "The Shabbetean Movement in Greece", edited by Meir Benayahu found in Sefunot 14, 1971-1978:8 confirms such a possibility.

16. Zeev Gries, "Sifrut Hahanhagot HaHasidit," Zion 46: 198.

APPENDIX

The primary goal of this study was to examine the decline of the Salonikan Jewish community in the eighteenth century. Through the course of my research, I discovered that Molḥo had revealed some rather interesting Salonikan customs relating to the observance of holidays and life-cycle events. His discussion of such traditions broadens the presentation of eighteenth century Salonika; even as he castigates his community for their non-observance, he exposes their routine practices, some of which may be unique to the city. In any event, they enhance our understanding of eighteenth century Salonika. Toward that end, this last section of my study presents an overview of ten holidays and lifecycle events as experienced by the Jews of eighteenth century Salonika.

SHABBAT [1]

Molḥo stresses the importance of adequate preparations for Shabbat. After all, he reminds his readers, keeping Shabbat is equivalent to observing all the mitzvot in the whole Torah. Everyone should rise early on Friday so as to have enough time to prepare for Shabbat. One man is appointed to get up one hour before daybreak and walk through the streets, calling out to the women to begin the day's work. Baking bread is the first activity of the day. All women should bake extra for distribution

to the poor. Jews should try to buy their meat and fish on Thursday because butchers and fishmongers sell the best pieces first; by Friday morning, only the scrawny cuts remain. Molḥo warns the reader, however, that early shopping is dangerous in the summer when it is so hot that the meat will spoil by Friday evening. Everyone should buy spices which have both a pleasant appearance and a fragrant odor. If possible, Molḥo suggests that people buy extra spices for distribution to the poor. Creating a mood of anticipation is very important. As each purchase for Shabbat is made, its receipt must be accompanied by the statement "I am buying this thing in honor of the Sabbath." Merchants and tradesmen should close their stores early on Friday to provide themselves with adequate time to finish all Shabbat preparations. They should put aside worries of lost income as they get ready to welcome Shabbat. Moreover, employers should provide all their workers with Shabbat bonuses to make the Sabbath day even more festive. The Salonikan council decreed that all must wear their finest clothes in honor of Shabbat. Women should apply their makeup before Shabbat begins. Each household must contain special Shabbat candlesticks; Salonikan custom mandates that each woman lights two candles which should then be placed on the dinner table. Every woman must light her own candlesticks at her own table. However, if no woman lives in a particular house, one of the men must

light the candles.

Molḥo instructs the people to enter the synagogue while it is still daylight. As they approach the synagogue, they should begin the six mizmorim. Molḥo does not specify the content of these psalms, but probably means Psalms 95 - 99 and 29, the six psalms which begin Kabbalat Shabbat. The sound of all the people singing as they make their way to the synagogue completes the Shabbat preparation and aids in the transition from weekday to Shabbat. In one of his very few liturgical notes, Molḥo adds that on the Shabbat of Ḥol Hamoed, one may sing these mizmorim before bameh madlikin. After services have concluded, Molḥo instructs his readers to return home immediately, bless the wine and eat. However, if the tenth of Tevet falls on Friday, one waits to eat until three stars have been sighted. The restriction applies only to this fast; for all others, one may eat immediately after leaving the synagogue.

We have already discussed the peculiar institution of Salonikan kaviani. Molḥo offers more suitable activities for Shabbat. He suggests Saturday as a time for visiting newly married couples and the sick. Oddly enough, he also advises people to visit mourners on that day, though he does not specify whether this includes recent mourners observing shivah. Even though he advocates total cessation from work, he realizes that some do not abide by this restriction. If they must conduct business on Shabbat,

they should at least wait until Sunday to present the bill.

Molḥo discusses one rather unusual restricted activity which reminds us of the Mediterranean climate of Salonika. Jews should be careful not to kill mosquitos, flies and fleas on Shabbat. Greater caution must be taken at night when it would be easy to swat a bug in the dark without realizing it.

At the end of his chapter on Shabbat, Molḥo summarizes some important points concerning Sabbath observance and brings the reader to Havdalah. Work hard all six weekdays, he tells us, so Shabbat will truly be a day of rest. Be sure only to walk the prescribed distance during Shabbat. Eat Seudah Shelishit. End Shabbat with Havdalah. Molḥo suggests a fourth meal eaten after Havdalah is concluded. Shabbat was welcomed with a festive meal; it should be concluded with one as well. He even cites a tradition which insists the most festive meal should be after Havdalah, possibly as compensation for the loss of Shabbat for another six days.

SUKKOT [2]

For Molḥo, the lulav reminds the Jew of the merit accorded his ancestors. The three palm branches signify Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who stood as one in their service to God; when a person holds the lulav, it is as though he grasps the deeds of the patriarchs in his hand, thereby strengthening his own resolve to serve God.

The quality of the lulav and etrog is crucial; people get very upset if theirs are not the finest available. Since the shaking of the lulav is a mitzvah fulfilled in public, everyone want his lulav to have an attractive appearance. Some wealthy Salonikans even refuse to fulfil the commandment to shake the lulav if their lulav does not please them; instead, they borrow the lulav of a neighbor.

Some local customs pertaining to Sukkot infuriate Molho. The first regards the shaking of the lulav. In some synagogues, the shamash passes among the congregants as he shakes the lulav, the people say the blessing. Two violations occur, the first being that if the shamash alone waves the lulav, no other person fulfils his own obligation to perform this action. The second transgression involves the blessing which may be considered null and void since the speaker did nothing that merited a blessing. Molho reiterates; each person must take it upon himself to wave and bless the lulav. Another Salonikan tradition involves the choice of young boys, even age six or seven, to serve as Hatan Torah and Hatan Bereshit. If they are unable to read well, the community does not fulfil its obligation to hear the end and beginning of the Torah. Other congregations allow rowdy, obnoxious men to deliver the derashah on Simhat Torah. Despite their good intentions to promote joy and fun on this holiday, such a practice profanes the Torah.

PASSOVER [3]

Molho's Passover concerns focus on the exacting preparations needed for the holiday as well as scrupulous observance during the festival itself. All leavened food must be eliminated during the evening preceding the first day. The blessing must be recited in Hebrew and kol hamira in Aramaic or in any language understood by all members of the family. After a careful check has been completed, Molho instructs his readers to eat, drink and go to sleep. He does not specify whether or not they should eat Passover foods.

In Salonika, it had been customary to fast the day before Passover in honor of the first born son whether he survived or not. Molho does not tell us who should fast - the whole family, the parents or only the first-born son? In any event, he believes this custom should no longer be observed. Too many people get sick from such a fast; as a result, they are not able to conclude the preparations for the holiday nor can they conduct the seder properly and tell the story of the Exodus.

Molho urges his readers to take the prohibition against leavened foods in the house during Passover very seriously. Some people think that if they put these foods in a place not opened during the festival, they have fulfilled their obligation. Others give their hametz to a Gentile for the duration of the holiday, intending to take it back as soon as Passover is over. Bakers often lock the hametz

in the basement and entrust the key to a Gentile neighbor. According to Molḥo, none of these practices are permissible. Not only are these arrangements invalid, but an ordinary individual must not even take it upon himself to sell the leavened foods. All such transactions must be carried out by a qualified scholar. Moreover, certain questionable foods such as corn flour and sausages mixed with flour must be sold with the rest of the ḥametz. Store owners must be especially careful to dispose of all ḥametz. Volunteers should help these merchants check all their products; even the fruit must be examined to make sure no grain sticks to it. Nothing that has not been inspected can be sold during Passover. Molho advises store owners to close for a half-day to conduct this inspection.

Molḥo encourages the community to use only matzot baked in communal ovens. He knows that most private bakers are not quite as zealous in their observance of ingredient and time restrictions. Some even add wine to the water used in making the matzah.

Observance of the seder also concerns Molḥo. The seder should be conducted in a language everyone understands. Since most people no longer comprehend Hebrew, even Molḥo reads through the Haggadah in a language other than Hebrew, presumably the vernacular. All must eat at least an olive-size piece of matzah to fulfil their obligation. Some people create a standard measure of matzah and ḥaroset to ensure that everyone partakes of at least the

required amount. The allocation of the community-baked matzah does not satisfy the minimum requirement so every family must include privately-baked matzah. Molḥo also mentions that the middle matzah must be twice as big as the other two. In Salonika, it is customary for everyone to eat two portions of the middle matzah. Molḥo reminds the community to drink four full cups of wine during the seder.

Certain groups of people are entitled to a relaxation of some Passover restrictions. Sick people may eat rice and children suffering from smallpox are allowed to eat both rice and honey. Elderly people who cannot digest parsley may cut it up into very tiny pieces and eat it, mixed with lemon juice. Women who have just given birth may eat matzah made with fruit juice but not honey.

Finally, Molḥo informs us that some Salonikans cannot wait for Passover to end. They bring yeast into their houses on the last day of the festival so as to be ready to bake bread at the first possible moment. Wealthy people even buy bread from Gentiles that day. Whether this was a sign of affluence or an indication that Salonikan Jews did not like to eat matzah, we shall never know.

SHAVUOT [4]

Molḥo's discussion of Shavuot customs focuses solely on preparations for Shavuot and the night of study preceding the festival. Everyone, including men and women, must go to the mikvah before Shavuot begins. This sign of purity

hearkens back to the state in which the Israelites originally received the Torah. Both the body and soul must be prepared to accept the Torah.

The night of study must be continuous without interruptions of any kind. Shema must be read before study begins. Molho observes that in an effort to remember this instruction, some people write at the top of the first page of their books "Read the Shema first!"

Molḥo advises people who are so exhausted by dawn that they think they will be unable to read through shaḥarit properly to go home first for a few hours sleep. The prayers of one who is awake and fully ready to pray deserve greater attention.

ḤANUKKAH [5]

The proper placement and appearance of the Ḥanukkah menorah concerns Molḥo. The menorah should be attractive as well as durable. Molḥo offers the examples of soft clay, egg shells, lemon rinds and hollowed-out onions as inappropriate holders for Ḥanukkah candles. Moreover, it should be placed near the entrance to the door so that passers-by might be reminded of the miracle of Ḥanukkah, but not so close that wind would extinguish the candles.

Salonikans habitually forget to light the candles immediately following sunset; Molḥo admonishes them concerning their laxness. They should hurry home from the synagogue, not pausing to chat with neighbors, conduct some business or drink wine or beer. All these activities should be delayed until after the candlelighting.

Molḥo knows of some women who do not work during Ḥanukkah. He does not excuse such behavior. Apparently, many Salonikan Jews use the joyousness of the festivals to indulge in licentious activity. Many rabbis discourage their congregants, Molḥo reports that the Ashkenazi synagogue goes so far as to institute three days of fasting following each festival to atone for sins committed during the holiday.

PURIM [6]

Jews must observe Purim with feasting and happiness. Nevertheless, Molḥo notes that many Salonikans fast on the day of Purim, waiting to enjoy their festivities and mishloaḥ manot until darkness falls and Purim is ostensibly over. He reasons that this delay might occur because women spend the whole day baking and preparing the meal so that it is not ready until after sundown. They treat Purim as they do the day before Shabbat - a day of preparation. He advises the women to cook the night before or very early that morning. If people must eat later in the day, they should finish minḥah while it is still daylight and eat then. Mishloaḥ manot should be sent as early as possible.

Molḥo outlines the four levels of mishloaḥ manot: baked or cooked foods are most preferable followed by foodstuffs such as meat and bread, sweets and finally clothing. It stands to reason that in a city dominated by the textile industry clothing would not be a highly

prized gift. Everyone should send these gifts; even visitors should buy something in the marketplace to bestow on a poor person. Molḥo reminds his readers that it is preferable to increase mishloaḥ manot to a beggar than to one's friends or to augment the size of one's own banquet. Always remember the poor, orphans and widows, especially at joyous times.

Jews should not play cards on Purim even though it might seem permissible given the nature of the day. The Salonikan rabbis issued a decree forbidding any kind of card games. Visitors should not think they are exempt from this restriction simply because they hail from another city.

The complete Megillah must be read from an attractive scroll. If a person cannot read, he must listen very carefully to the congregational reader. The Megillah must be read in Hebrew, even if the majority of congregants do not understand Hebrew. Molho reassures them - - the soul understands Hebrew. Women, however, may hear the Megillah read in a language other than Hebrew. The man who reads it to them in a different language does not fulfil his own obligation. Some men read it on the fourteenth of Adar in Hebrew and on the following day in the vernacular. Women should, nonetheless, go to synagogue to hear men recite the blessing over the Megillah. If a woman is unable to attend the synagogue, her husband should read it to her at home. Should she not know the words of the blessing, she should say

the first six words by herself and then her husband should recite the rest with her, word by word. Molḥo presents an interesting paradox. If a woman goes to synagogue, she hears men recite the blessing whereas if she stays at home, she is given the opportunity to say most of it herself.

Salonikan Jews celebrate Shushan Purim. Some speculate that Salonika may have once been a walled city. Since no one is certain, Salonikans read the Megillah on the fifteenth of Adar but pronounce no blessing. Festivities, however, do continue and mishloaḥ manot are also sent on Shushan Purim.

TU B'SHVAT [7]

Molḥo uses his chapter on Tu B'Shvat primarily to discuss the appropriate blessings for various kinds of fruits as well as to reiterate the need to check all fruits carefully before eating them. Some Salonikan Jews eat fruit without blessing it at all. When confronted, they reply that "shehehiyanu" sufficed. On the other hand, other people overdo the requirement to bless the fruit; if a bowl filled with several kinds of fruit is placed on the table, they bless every piece. Molḥo outlines the proper procedure. The head of the household blesses a single piece of fruit. He then hands a piece to his wife and sons who each recite the blessing. All eat their fruit.

TISHA B'AV [8]

In this chapter, Molḥo discusses how the building of homes reminds Jews of the Temple's destruction. Opposite the entrance to the house, a builder must leave a square cubit area blank as a remembrance. Molḥo deplores those who prevent the meaning of this symbolic action. They paint the square cubit area black but surround it with decorative moulding and paint. Others even add clever but inappropriate epitaphs to make clear the significance of the area such as "black on white - - remember the destruction."

Contemporary Salonikans do not remember the Temple's destruction with the same intensity as their ancestors who dwelled on it day and night. The generation which no longer remembers is as evil as those who actually lit the torches to set the fires of destruction in motion. He urges them constantly to recall this event for it symbolizes all the evil which has ever befallen the Jewish people. After all, the seven Haftorah portions of consolation comfort the Jew for the loss of the Temple.

Molḥo summarizes some local practices relating to the observance of Tisha B'Av. In Salonika, it is customary to eat neither meat nor chicken during the week in which Tisha B'Av falls. However, one need not refrain from wine, especially on Shabbat when one must drink it. Jews should not wash on Tisha B'Av. The Jews of Salonika try to get around that restriction by swimming on the

ninth of Av. Molho forbids this infraction and reveals that he and his colleagues must continually remind the people not to swim. Most Salonikans, especially the wealthy, ignore the prohibition against wearing sandals. Molho lists the categories of Jews who may legitimately wear them: those who work in the streets, live among Gentiles or snakes and mice, the sick, and those who have something wrong with their feet.

The rabbis cannot overemphasize the importance of Tisha B'Av as a day of mourning and sadness. This traditional meaning runs completely counter to the Shabbetean proclamation of Tisha B'Av as a joyous holiday. The intensity of their message to lament obliterates any possible vestiges of Shabbetean gaity.

YAHRZEIT [9]

Salonikan Jews fast on the anniversary of a parent's death. If the anniversary of this death falls on Shabbat, the fast is delayed until Sunday. Certain exceptions such as one's own wedding day, Brit Milah of one's own son, and the fourteenth of Iyyar cancel the fast entirely. Observance of holidays and festivals takes precedence over the fulfillment of a fast because this kind of fast is only mandated by custom.

Molho urges these mourners to listen to words of Torah and Aggadah, and say Kaddish on the anniversary of a parent's death. Some people rush through synagogue services so they may visit the grave and say Kaddish

there. Even if this is the only available time to go to the cemetary, they must not shorten their prayers. Molho notes that, in an occasional year, he does not get a chance to visit his parents' graves because the classes he teaches following services fill his time completely. If one does make time to visit the grave, he should read from Pirkei Avot, "prayers for the dead" and Kaddish. Certain Torah portions including Vayikra and Tzav are read and if the mourner is a scholar, he should endeavor to make particularly insightful comments regarding these Torah portions.

Wealthy Salonikans invite scholars to their homes that evening. The scholar reads to the mourners as the meal progresses. In the summer, this kind of study should be conducted during the day.

Certain variations in the observance of Yahrzeit occur on Shabbat. Cemetary visitation and recitation of Kaddish take place on Friday as does the special study session. The mourner should be given an aliyah to the Torah and be invited to read maftir, if he is able. Kaddish should not be recited on Shabbat. As noted above, the fast is delayed until Sunday.

It is customary to give charity in memory of the deceased. This tzedakah may take the form of money for the poor or books for students. Molho suggests that if the deceased was a scholar, the mourner should donate Gemara, poskim or commentaries. Otherwise, he might

buy musar books for teachers to use in classes. He does not recommend the purchase of a Torah scroll.

BRIT MILAH [10]

Molho emphasizes the importance of Brit Milah. In his discussion of this ceremony, he concentrates on the accompanying feast. Many who are invited to such parties do not attend. Molho reasons that the new parents feel obligated to invite the entire community because of the importance of the cememony. Out of consideration for the tremendous expense which would be incurred by the host family, many people decide not to go.

During the "night of watching" preceding the circumcision, the watchers should be careful not to become raucous or drunk. After all, Molho reminds us, they bear a great responsibility to the mother and the infant. Previous generations of watchers should spend the night studying Torah, Mishnah and Psalms. Some contemporary Salonikans follow this course of study as well.

Molho provides a fascinating observation in his request that his readers ascertain the exact hour of birth. Mothers and midwives are usually too preoccupied with the birth to note the precise time. The midwife may not even inform the mother of the baby's sex immediately. This detail is crucial especially if the baby is born close to twilight. In the case of a male child, the hour of birth becomes vital in order to determine first the day of birth and the corresponding eighth day--the appropriate day of Brit Milah.

ENDNOTES APPENDIX

1. Isaac Molho, Orhot Yosher, edited by Abraham Recanati, (Tel Aviv: Rabbi Shelomo Ibn Gabirol Synagogue for the Remembrance of the Salonikan Community, 1975), pp. 107-125.
2. Ibid., pp. 221-225.
3. Ibid., pp. 127-140.
4. Ibid., pp. 141-157.
5. Ibid., pp. 225-226.
6. Ibid., pp. 235-239.
7. Ibid., pp. 227-237.
8. Ibid., pp. 186-193.
9. Ibid., pp. 251-254.
10. Ibid., pp. 240-244.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avitzur, Shmuel. "Letoledot Ta'asiat Arigei Hatzemer BeSaloniki." Sefunot. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1971-1978: 145-169.

Barkai, Zeev. "Textiles." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 15 Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 1036-1043.

Benayahu, Meir, ed."The Shabbetean Movement in Greece." (Hebrew). Sefunot 14 Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1971-1978.

Benmayor, Jacov. "Salonika." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 14 Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972.

Ben-Sasson, Haim Hillel. "Musar Movement." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 12. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 534-537.

Besso, Henry V. "Contributions to the History of Salonika." Jewish Quarterly Review (October 1935): 159-161.

Bortniker, Elijah. "Education." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 6. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 381-466.

Broyde, Isaac. "Salonica." Jewish Encyclopedia Volume 10. New York: Ktav Publishing House. 657-659

"Dyeing." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 6. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 327-329.

Emmanuel, I.S. Histoire des Israelites de Salonique. Paris, 1936.

Epstein, Mark Alan. The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries. Freiburg: Klaus Schwartz, 1980.

Frank, M.Z. "The Sephardim of Salonica." Congress Bi-Weekly 35 (January 22, 1968): 15-17.

Goldschmidt, Daniel. "Mahzorim Keminhag Kehillot Yavan." Sefunot. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1971-1978: 193-190.

Goodblatt, Morris. Jewish Life in Turkey in the Sixteenth Century. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952.

Gries, Ze'ev. "Sifrut Hahanhagot Hahasidit." Zion 46: 198-218.

Guide to Jewish Museum of Greece. Salonika, n.d.

Guttel, Henri. "Me'am Lo'ez." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 11. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 1158-1160.

Hirschberg, Haim Z'ew. "Community" Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 5. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 808-853.

Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry. Saloniki: Ir v'Em BeYisrael. Jerusalem: Institute for the Salonikan Jewry, 1967.

Kaplan, Mordecai M. Introduction to Mesillat Yesharim, by Moses Hayyim Luzzatto. The Jewish Publication Society of Jewish Classics. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966.

"Matzavot Saloniki." Otzar Yehudei Sefarad. Jerusalem, 1959: 82-84.

Marcus, Simon. "Greece." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 7. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 867-884.

Molho, Isaac. Orhot Yosher. Edited by Abraham Recanati. Tel Aviv: Rabbi Shelomo Ibn Gabirol Synagogue for the Remembrance of the Salonikan Community, 1975.

Nehama, Joseph. Histoire des Israelites de Salonique Volumes 6 and 7. Salonika: Communaute Israelite de Thessalonique, 1976.

Papacosma, S. Victor. "The Sephardic Jews of Salonica." Midstream 24 (December 1978): 10-14.

Rosanes, S.A. History of the Jews in Turkey (Hebrew). 2nd ed. Sofia, 1930-1938.

Ross, Dan. Acts of Faith: A Journey to the Fringes of Jewish Idenity. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982

Roth, Cecil. "The Last Days of Jewish Salonika." Commentary 10 (July 1950): 49-55.

Russian, Sheila. "A Study of a Roumanian Rite Machzor." Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1979.

Scholem, Gershom. "Poenmeh." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 6. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 142-152.

_____. The Messianic Idea in Judaism. New York: Schocken Books, 1971.

_____. "Shabbetai Zevi." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 14. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972. 1219-1254.

_____. Shabbati Sevi: The Mystical Messiah. Translated by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Shulvass, Moses A. "The Jewish Community in Turkey: A Story of Glory and Decline." Between the Rhine and theBosporus. Chicago: College of Jewish Studies Press, 1964.

Stern, Menahem. "Diaspora." Encyclopedia Judaica Volume 6. Jerusalem; Keter Publishing House, 1972. 8-19.

Waxman, Meyer. A History of Jewish Literature. 5 volumes. New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1936.

Werblowsky, R.J. Zwi. Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977.