Paths to Modernity
A Tribute to Yosef Kaplan

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An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Economic Dimension

Francesca Trivellato

In the title of Yosef Kaplan's most influential collection of essays, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, the emphasis is on the path more than on the end of the road.[1] The protagonists of this alternative path belong to a distinct segment of the Jewish Diaspora, the descendants of forcibly converted Iberian Jews who resettled in Western Europe and, more specifically, those who in the seventeenth century made Holland their home. Within the field of Jewish history, Kaplan's deep and original analyses of the lives and the minds of Western Sephardim put considerable strain on long-established accounts of European Jews' transition to modernity, centered as these tended to be on Germany or France. At the same time, Kaplan's studies partook of and also anticipated a broader trend among historians of post-Reformation Christian toleration, who now turn to daily and institutional practices of coexistence more frequently than to the theological and political underpinnings of that coexistence.

Kaplan knows well that modernity is a contested concept, one for which no single historical trajectory or definition captures the variegated history of the West. His penchant for unsettling comfortable assumptions led him to search for disquieting truths in the most tolerant of all early modern European societies, the United Provinces. There, every non-Calvinist religious minority (and some Calvinist dissenters, too) had to find their own place by drawing boundaries, which often also meant devising new hierarchies of belonging

1 Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). The volume collects twelve essays published starting in 1974. Hereafter, all citations from this volume appear solely with the page numbers within parentheses in the body of my text.

within the community of reference. There, "New Jews" of Iberian descent forged a balance between tradition and acculturation that, though driven by "circumstantial conjunctions, without an ideological justification" (27), constituted an "alternative path" when compared to that of other Jewish groups. This dual process of confessionalization and rupture with traditional Judaism is at the core of Kaplan's scholarship. Between the 1590s and the early eighteenth century, a new Jewish society emerged and flourished as a result of internal fractures and an important project of collective self-definition. Leaders of this creative project were the upper echelons of Amsterdam Sephardi society, who came to embody the notion of *bom judesmo* (71), a novel symbiosis of Jewish customs and gentile respectability. The guardians of this "accommodation" (27) were the lay syndics (*parnassim*) elected on a rotating basis to be at the helm of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community, most of them merchants involved in international trade and finance. If a few marginal individuals challenged the authority of the parnassim and the legitimacy of the community, the majority of Sephardi men and women in Amsterdam absorbed and reproduced the formal and informal norms of conduct dictated by their communal belonging.

In Kaplan's wide-ranging portrait, religious and cultural adaptation takes center stage. The economic activities of these Sephardim, by contrast, remain peripheral to his endeavor. This neglect is largely a measure of the author's intellectual interests. Yet, at one point, Kaplan turns his attention to the economic dimension of the Western Sephardi path to modernity and identifies the absence of regulation of economic matters on the part of the community leadership as one of the key features of this "alternative path." In his own words:

> An ideology of change intended to alter the patterns of Jewish society was not consolidated in the Western Sephardi communities in the period under discussion. As noted, challenges were relegated to the margins of the society, and those who voiced them generally left the Jewish community. Nonetheless, in this society fissures in the traditional framework did develop

> with its very establishment. This is particularly notable in the central area such as the economy. Almost all of the members of a community such as that of Amsterdam were involved in affairs involving credit, banking, and international or local trade. Nevertheless, *almost no regulations were passed regarding financial dealings*. The few regulations related to these matters were mostly little more than demands to observe the laws of the state, and they did not touch on halakhic issues. Not only did the community leaders in Amsterdam lack control over financial dealings of the "New Christians" in the Iberian Peninsula, southern France, Antwerp, and the New World, who were in close contact with members of the community; they also found it difficult to supervise the financial dealings of their own members, affairs which involved, among other things, long journeys. Many of these journeys were to countries where Judaism was forbidden, so that the travellers were required to disguise themselves as Christians once again and refrain from performing the commandments. Fearing that the demand to impose the halakhah upon the wide-ranging and intricate financial system of the "Nation" would be a decree that this particular community could not obey, and that it would also prevent the effective operation of this system, the community preferred to overlook the problem. Taking an adaptive approach, *without giving it an ideological justification*, they conferred almost full autonomy of values in the economic sphere [20–21, my emphasis, FT].

In this dense paragraph, Kaplan tackles multiple themes, each of which, as happens with path-breaking work, has since become the object of more detailed investigation. The gist of the argument is nevertheless clear: Kaplan asserts the autonomy of the economic sphere in the social and religious organization of the Amsterdam Sephardi community. The argument is axiomatic in virtually every theory of modernity, yet Kaplan adds an important qualification: the autonomy of the economic sphere for seventeenth-century Dutch Sephardim was the byproduct of necessity and pragmatism rather than ideology. The fact that the author rarely discusses the economic organization of the Western Sephardim in the rest of his large œuvre makes it difficult

to substantiate this thesis. We may debate to what extent Kaplan implies that Sephardi merchants, bankers, and entrepreneurs operated as rational wealth-maximizing economic actors, unencumbered by social and religious concerns, or whether he assumes the existence of an instrumental rationality embedded in specific historical circumstances. In either case, there is no doubt that Kaplan wishes to emphasize the peculiarity of Amsterdam, even when compared to other Western European cities with large settlements of Sephardi merchants, for its lack of formal channels of community oversight of business conduct.

In what follows, I wish to draw on Kaplan's intuition about the autonomy of the economic sphere and, at the same time, borrow from his own research in order to test the limits of this thesis with regard to the Dutch Sephardi world. In declining Kaplan's *bom judesmo* in an economic key, I ask whether and how we can draw the line between the economic, social, and religious spheres in understanding the business organization of Amsterdam Sephardi merchants. As will soon become apparent, I raise more questions than I can answer. My hope is to propose a research agenda that, building on Kaplan's work, can lead us to better integrate the economic dimension into the history of the Sephardi "path to modernity." Admittedly, my hope is even greater. I suggest that in doing so, we can do more than enrich an important chapter of the history of European Jewry. In fact, we can bring their experience to bear on widely accepted tenets of the history of Europe's own path to modernity, and in particular, the variegated declensions that religious toleration and economic liberalism took.

From Status to Contract?

At risk of being overly ambitious, let me lay out the broadest implications of my reasoning. Between January 1790 and September 1791, the National Assembly of the newly instituted revolutionary government emancipated the Jews of France. For the first time in the history of Europe, Jewish men acquired the same civic and political rights as their non-Jewish male peers.

Emancipation marked the formal transition from a society of status to a society of contract, to borrow Sir Henry Maine's influential formulation.[2] The Revolution, that is, did away with an Old Regime in which individual rights were determined by the corporate group to which an individual was ascribed to belong (thus, for example, a Jewish man from Metz could not exercise an artisanal craft because all Jews were barred from joining artisanal craft guilds) and inaugurated a legal and social order in which, at least in principle, all adult men of property shared the same political and civic rights regardless of other differences, including their religious beliefs or place of residence. Emancipation is momentous in the history of the Jewish people. Emancipation is also paramount to the history of liberalism, premised as liberalism is on the freedom of every individual to enter into contract with other equally free individuals and to choose from a large menu of contractual choices. Indeed, the economic sphere is where the recent historiography on Jewish emancipation and scholarship on liberalism broadly conceived meet.

Of course, the emancipation decrees in France did not change the course of history overnight. Scholarship on modern European Jewry is thus largely devoted to the aftermath of emancipation, its unfulfilled promises or its hidden (and not so hidden) demands on those who adhered to Jewish traditions. But if we equate emancipation with freedom of contract, we can identify embryonic versions of it in the commercial sphere already two centuries before the French Revolution, because those European states that gave refuge to the New Christians fleeing Iberia also granted Sephardi merchants near contractual equality with Christian merchants.

If an embryonic version of legal equality shaped the Sephardi economic experience in Western Europe long before it was accompanied by political equality, does it mean that the economic sphere paved the way for political emancipation? Does it mean that economic necessity was the driving force of that most revolutionary transition from status to contract that occurred in

2 Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society, and Its Relation to Modern Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871).

parts of Europe in the late eighteenth century? If not in such crude terms, historians of European Jews have tackled these questions quite explicitly. In a probing analysis of major and lesser European thinkers from 1650 to 1850 (mostly Christian authors, at least nominally, and a few Jewish ones as well), Jonathan Karp identifies a few who advanced economic arguments in support of extending political rights to Jews.[3] Though he situates these arguments in changing economic conditions, his approach privileges the history of economic thought. Other Anglophone historians of eighteenth-century European Jewry, by contrast, have examined the intersection of politics and economics from the point of view of the institutional structure of Jewish self-government and its relationship to the political economy of different European countries. Thus, for David Sorkin and Lois Dubin, the "port Jews" of Bordeaux, Trieste, Amsterdam, and London developed cultural traits and a legal status that set them apart from their Ashkenazi brethren. What their studies have in common is a twin emphasis on commerce as the principal vehicle for new forms of acceptance of certain portions of the Jewish Diaspora in Christian Europe and on emancipation as a gradual process rather than a sharp break from the Old Regime.[4] This literature, however, rests largely on an institutional account of the politics of commerce and toleration but does not examine the effects of those politics on the day-to-day business organization of Sephardi merchants.

The notion of a gradual process toward emancipation reignites entrenched debates about the line of causality and the temporal scale of the overall transition to modernity in European societies at large. When, where, and how do we spot signs of an incipient "movement from status to contract," in

3 Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

4 David Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes Towards a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50/1 (1999): 87–97; Lois Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), esp. 198–214; Sorkin, "Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation," in *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950*, ed. David Cesarani (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 15–46.

Maine's words?[5] Along this movement, credit markets become increasingly impersonal. That is, they progressively depart from a commercial world in which group identification is necessary in order to curtail the risks inherent in poor transportation, weak communication systems, and jurisdictional fragmentation – the world of trust among kith and kin in which intra-group peer monitoring offers protection from the general insecurity and unpredictability of long-distance trade. In an ideal-type scheme, this transition unfolds along a continuum that culminates in our modern, liberal, and democratic world, in which mathematical models to calculate individuals' credit scores and anti-discrimination legislation allow for borrowers' creditworthiness to be based on measurable individual economic conditions rather than on stereotyping. Obviously, this idealized narrative conceals other forms of discrimination that persist in modern economies and liberal-pluralistic democracies. Today's private credit markets in the United States are affected less by overt discrimination by gender and race (which was outlawed in 1974) and more by the structural inequality of wages by gender and race.[6]

Early modern Europe sits uneasily in between the two ends of the ideal-type trajectory I just evoked. On the one hand, it remained a corporate society governed by a principle of separate and unequal status in which group boundaries were demarcated both legally and socially. Technological barriers, moreover, were such that those involved in commercial credit often found it useful, and sometimes necessary, to rely on intra-group economic networks. On the other hand, the overseas expansion of Europe, the diffusion of increasingly sophisticated credit instruments, the invention of the printing

5 Maine, *Ancient Law*, 165.

6 For probing commentaries of the historical evolution of credit markets in light of some of the questions I raise, amidst a literature too voluminous to be glossed extensively, see Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, "Information and Economic History: How the Credit Market in Old Regime Paris Forces Us to Rethink the Transition to Capitalism," *The American Historical Review* 104/1 (1999): 69–94 and Claire Lemercier and Claire Zalc, "Pour une nouvelle approche de la relation de crédit en histoire contemporaine," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 4 (2012): 979–1009.

press, improvements in the transportation and communication infrastructure, as well as developments in commercial and maritime law, all converged to mitigate the risk of extending credit to members of different corporate groups.

The early modern period as a transitional phase in the rise of impersonal markets coincided with the integration of Sephardi Jews on unprecedented grounds in selected pockets of European commercial society. And yet, this was an uneven integration. For this reason, a fine-grained examination of the patterns of Jewish-Christian credit relations can yield fresh insights not only into the transformation of European Jewry but also into the transformation of European societies at large.

Commercial interests were a primary motivation behind the toleration charters issued by a few European rulers to Iberian refugees after the mid-sixteenth century. In order to favor the settlement of these refugees and their involvement in international trade and finance, secular authorities in Venice, Livorno, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and later, London, lifted traditional legal restrictions on Sephardi merchants and left them free to enter into contractual relations with those of their choosing, as well as to uphold their obligations in civil tribunals. Meanwhile, by the mid-sixteenth century, international merchants across Western Europe ceased to be organized in guilds (if we exclude from the definition the chartered companies for transoceanic trade). The degree of jurisdictional autonomy and compulsive corporate membership varied across the Sephardi Diaspora, with Amsterdam representing the most individualistic institutional setting. But the dual process that I just mentioned – the legal equality of Jewish merchants qua merchants and the dissolution of guilds of international merchants – had far-reaching consequences across Europe. It meant, for example, that a paper signed by any merchant, Jewish or otherwise, who was publicly recognized as such could be considered as valid legal proof in court. In principle, it meant that collective images of the groups to which a merchant belonged (or was said to belong) would matter less than his ability to offer guarantees about his competence and financial solvency. At the same time, given the centrality of family ties to the circulation of private credit in early modern Europe, the universal prohibition

of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews should caution us against the temptation to assume that legal equality in the economic sphere elided all other barriers. Similarly, the contractual freedom of Sephardi merchants and their ability to turn to secular courts did not necessarily eliminate the need for social control, which existed among all merchant communities and only increased in the case of religious minorities that had to fend off pre-existing suspicions.

In the end, what was the impact of these new toleration policies on the ways in which Sephardi merchants devised their business strategies? At the very least, they meant that Jews and Christians could freely engage in commercial credit, that is, credit without collateral – credit that was extended on the sole basis of a merchant's reputation, normally by signing a piece of paper. They also meant that in seventeenth-century Venice and Amsterdam, for the first time since the public debt had been invented in late medieval Italian cities, Jews were permitted to buy bonds and thus, to become stakeholders of the state to an extent that had been denied to them before. These were no small material and symbolic victories. But did Jews thus join an undifferentiated republic of merchants, in which individual actors freed themselves from collectivist structures? Conversely, what does any resistance – de lege and de facto – to their incorporation into European commercial society tell us about deep-seated narratives that identify the marketplace as a privileged site of the early emergence of societies of contract in the Old Regime?

Amsterdam: Between Religious Toleration and Open-Access Economic Institutions

Let us return to seventeenth-century Amsterdam and its New Jews with these, admittedly enormous, questions in mind. After the creation of the United Provinces, Amsterdam was the early modern European city in which legal status mattered the least in the economic sphere (at least in international trade). A panoply of open-access institutional resources was available to merchants of all stripes. This public-spirited economic liberalism was highly

unusual at the time and designed to boost Dutch primacy in long-distance trade against mercantilist competitors near and far. Guild membership was mandatory in most artisanal crafts and for marine insurance brokers (though not for underwriters), but the municipal authorities made no distinction between local and foreign merchants insofar as the custom duties they charged or the legal and financial services they provided.[7] Furthermore, in stark contrast to institutional arrangements prevailing across Europe, including in the neighboring southern Low Countries, the rulers of the Dutch Republic not only discouraged, but even prohibited the creation of corporate semi-autonomous organizations by resident foreign merchants, and promoted instead the development of a set of public institutions from which any merchant could obtain fair, fast, and affordable justice regardless of their place of origin or religious affiliation.[8]

These principles of governance also applied to Jews whose commercial expertise the Republic prized. As a result, the autonomy of the economic sphere that Kaplan identifies as one of the defining features of the Dutch Sephardi path to modernity was dictated first and foremost by external circumstances. Under the tacit terms that regulated the toleration of Jews in Amsterdam, the Portuguese and Spanish Jewish community emerged in the 1590s as a "voluntary association" rather than as a variation of the corporate groups whose existence was mandated in Venice and Livorno in those same years.[9] As Daniel Swetschinski explains, "the autonomy of the Jewish community was limited to internal administrative and some

7 A fixed number of Jews was allowed to join the Amsterdam brokers' guild, and many more operated without a license: Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Portland, OR and London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000), 143.

8 Oscar Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce: The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250–1650* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

9 Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, esp. 48, 222; David Sorkin, "Merchant Colonies: Resettlement in Italy, France, Holland, and England, 1550–1700," in *Reappraisals and New Studies of the Modern Jewish Experience: Essays in Honor of*

disciplinary matters. Its scope was defined by communal concerns such as synagogue worship, education, charity, and, possibly, censorship. In all other, individual, respects Amsterdam's Jews were expected to abide – and did generally abide – by the laws of Holland and Amsterdam."[10] With over eighty percent of Sephardi men employed in occupations relating to commerce (from bookkeepers to wholesale tobacco merchants), the laws of Holland and Amsterdam that most mattered to them were those that enhanced their contracting options and secured their property rights.[11] Rabbis had little choice but to relax halakhic proscriptions in economic matters, including lending at interest and the ability to go before non-Jewish tribunals. The result of these external and internal forces was a leveling of the playing field that paved the way for increased opportunities for Jews and Christians to enter into credit obligations with one another. Of course, Jewish-Christian credit existed elsewhere and before, but the financial and legal institutions of early modern Amsterdam greatly expanded it.

Though extraordinarily liberal by early modern standards, Amsterdam's legal and economic institutional structure remained embedded in a society of status and coexisted with a high degree of religious segmentation. Class and religious affiliation determined access to political offices. More important for our purposes is the fact that the confessional nature of the Dutch Calvinist state allowed for some degree of corporatism when it came to the internal regulation of religious minorities (Catholics excluded), so much so that the Dutch authorities referred to Sephardim with a conventional designation, "nation" (*natie*), which conveyed a sense of collective self-rule. Sometimes they even adopted the more unusual expression "Jews' church" (*Jodenkerck*), which equated the Sephardim to other Christian confessional denominations.[12]

Robert M. Seltzer, ed. Brian M. Smollett and Christian Wiese (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 124–144.

10 Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 20.

11 The occupational statistics refer to the period 1655–1699 and come from Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 103.

12 Ibid., 166, 221.

Under terms analogous to those granted to the latter, the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community was allowed to regulate its membership, to collect taxes that financed its operations, to dispense charity, and to oversee matters of religious education and deviance.

Furthermore, in 1639 and again in 1670, the Amsterdam magistrates made a considerable concession to the Sephardi minority by granting its elected officials the authority to use a traditional disciplinary measure, the ban or excommunication (*herem*), as a means to enforce religious conformity (109). Incidentally, it is important to note that this formal punishment was only the most visible instrument of oversight that the community leaders had at their disposal, while other coercive tools, including gossip and social pressure, have left no comparable paper trail. Even if dispensed infrequently and normally as short, temporary suspensions, these bans symbolized the power that community leaders wielded. It was a power that threatened secular authorities, who at times sought to curtail it. In 1677, the city upheld the request by a certain Joseph Abarbanel Barboza that his excommunication be rescinded (136). In 1683, for a period of four months, the Amsterdam municipal rulers obliged the community's governing body (*Mahamad*) to obtain their permission before issuing a herem (109–110). Although this drastic measure was soon revoked, other aspects of Jewish life in Amsterdam were subjected to greater scrutiny by local magistrates than anywhere else in Europe where Sephardim found a safe haven. By 1622 Jews were required to register their marriages in the Amsterdam town hall; later, they were ordered to conform to the laws of consanguinity of the Dutch Reformed Church as inscribed in the regulations of the Estates of Holland.[13]

The toleration regime with which the United Provinces governed the settlement of Iberian Jews in Amsterdam sought to balance a degree of community self-government in religious matters with the desire to curb the community's autonomy. In reality, it was not always possible or easy to draw

13 Arend H. Huussen, "The Legal Position of the Jews in the Dutch Republic c. 1590–1796," in *Dutch Jewry: History and Secular Culture, 1500–2000*, ed. Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 25–41, here at 36.

a line of demarcation between community affairs and the economic sphere. Evelyne Oliel-Grauz has questioned the neatness of this line of demarcation on several grounds. She points out that on a day-to-day basis, arbitration was far more important than excommunication as a regulatory tool in the hands of community leaders. Though as private judges rather than as delegates of the state, the parnassim dispensed justice to community members through established forms of arbitration, especially in disputes over marital and civil matters. Moreover, in the eighteenth century at least, several of the disputes they adjudicated concerned economic matters, too, albeit mostly local in scope and modest in value (wages, debt recovery, petty loans, inheritance, dowries, and so forth). More rarely did the parnassim intervene in controversies over international trade because in 1639 the community forbade them from settling disputes over insurance and bills of exchange, though this prohibition was occasionally infringed upon. In addition, the office of the Mahamad fulfilled an economic function by certifying commercial documents signed by private parties and thus the property rights assigned in those documents. Finally, even when Jewish community leaders and merchants were not the same individuals, they often worked in close cooperation with one another. Thus, we see Sephardi merchants dispatching letters to Sephardi community leaders overseas or using their international networks to procure food staples and other merchandise necessary for ritual observance.[14]

These are important findings that remind us that in the routine decision-making processes of several members of the Jewish community (and the less well-to-do in particular), a porous line divided the economic from the religious

14 The preceding paragraph draws from three unpublished papers cited with the author's permission: Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Revisiting the Nexus between the Early Modern Sephardi Kehillah and Economy," Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Binghamton University (24–25 September 2010); "The Economic Impact of the Kehillah Considered in Different Local Legal Contexts and Cultures," Association for Jewish Studies Annual Meeting, Los Angeles (19–22 December 2009); and "Between Trade, Finance, and Community: Community Agents in the Western Sephardic Diaspora," European Association of Jewish Studies, Paris (20–24 July 2014).

sphere. My own questions regarding the relationship between these two spheres point in a different direction and ask what direct and indirect effects Sephardi self-government had on affluent Jewish merchants in Amsterdam, who lived immersed in the market individualism of the city. By wooing Jewish merchants to Amsterdam, the municipal authorities granted them equal access to an extraordinary array of legal and economic institutions. Unlike in most European cities, Jews could easily obtain the status of burghers (*poorters*), even if they were not able to transmit it to their children, and were allowed to practice crafts and professions to a degree inconceivable elsewhere.[15] In the realm of international trade and finance, in any case, the authorities did not distinguish between burghers and non-burgers and offered merchants from any background access to institutions designed to facilitate their ability to broaden the range of agents with whom they could contract. Perhaps the most important of these was the Bank of Exchange (*Wisselbank*), where after 1609 anyone who wished to transact in bills of exchange amounting to more than 600 guilders (300 after 1700) had to open an account. By operating as a central clearing house for private merchants, the Wisselbank reduced the information costs that each merchant had to bear in determining the solvency of potential creditors and business associates.

If it is legitimate to assume that these open-access institutions dislodged the primacy of social ties in the economic sphere and promoted a more impersonal credit market, how can we test empirically the reach of this process? Part of the reason why we do not have concrete answers to this question is that aggregate economic data are hard to come by in early modern Europe, and Amsterdam is no exception. But there is another reason why this question continues to elude us: it has simply not been asked because of the prevailing tendency among social scientists to assume a homology between economic order (e.g., liberalism) and cultural dispositions (e.g., individualism). A constellation of work inspired by the New Institutional Economic History thus still seeks to identify the presence of certain legal

15 Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 20–21.

forms and institutions assumed to promote economic liberalism more than it examines how different societies, or even different groups within a larger society, might make use of them. An opposite but equally pervasive tendency affects scholars of Sephardi long-distance trade, who for the most part assume that family and kin were central to all Jewish economic enterprises. As a result, even when they make heroic efforts to document the economic contributions that Jews made to the Dutch Golden Age, their work, on the whole, is geared more to illustrating the presence (and, when possible, the size) of Jewish economic activities than to examining whether or not Jews organized their businesses differently from those non-Jews who were active in the same sectors. Moreover, although the circulation of personnel and capital across the Sephardi Diaspora is a staple of all scholarship on early modern Jewish trade, no serious study has attempted to compare the varieties of business organization that Sephardi merchants developed in different cities of Western Europe in order to determine how local regimes of toleration shaped those differences.

The questions I raise are difficult to address on a comparative and empirical basis, and here I can do little more than sketch out what a research agenda inspired by them might look like. I am nevertheless persuaded that this is a necessary way forward if we wish to resume where Kaplan left off. Indirect evidence corroborating the existence of an autonomous (and therefore inter-denominational) economic sphere comes from the absence of a distinctively Dutch Sephardi economic theory or even a distinctive set of normative texts about the conduct of trade. Around 1672, David de Castro, who had left the southwest of France to settle in Amsterdam, began to print a pocket-size periodical, the *Gazeta de Amsterdam*, aimed at fellow Spanish readers, but the experiment was short-lived, likely because the newspaper contained little more than a digest of the information that was already available to its potential readership in a news market as saturated as Amsterdam's.[16] Only very rarely

16 Only a few issues of this publication, dating between 7 January 1675 and 3 July 1690, survive in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, University of Amsterdam.

did Dutch Sephardi writers take on the task of compiling manuals counseling merchants on how to tend to their account books or other operations; when they did, they never added any references that only a Jewish audience would be able to identify or anything else original to the genre.[17]

In this panorama, the engrossing account of the stock market penned by Joseph Penso de la Vega in 1688, *Confusión de confusiones*, stands out as the earliest European text on the subject. Kaplan stresses that the book "contains no reference whatsoever to halakhic issues, and in fact totally ignores any specific Jewish questions," even if fellow Iberian Jews were its primary targeted audience. "The stock exchange," he adds, "was considered to be outside the bounds of Jewish life."[18] This is true. Yet we wonder, once again, where exactly to draw the line between Jewish life and the economic sphere. Penso's ultimate goal was to urge his readers to resume investing by taking calculated risks after the Amsterdam stock market had suffered its first major crash, which exposed what Jonathan Israel calls "a new strain of

17 Josua Sarfatti Pina, *De lichtende Koopmans fackel en Reductie van Wisselen, van Hamburgh Dantzick, Antwerpen, Engelandt, Vranckrijck, Venetien, Livorno, Spangien, Portugael, Franckfort, en van Livorno op Londen, van Lagio van Banck Gelt. / Soulagement pour les Marchands, de Reduction de Change, d'Hambourgh, Dantzick, Anvers, Angleterre, France, Venize, Livorne, Espagne, Portugal, Franckfort, & de Livorne à Londre* (Amsterdam: David de Crasto [sic] Tartaz, 1682); Jacob de Metz, *Sendero mercantile, que contiene 240 preguntas fundamentals con sus respuestas, para saber destinguir entre deve a hade aver* (Amsterdam: J. Ewoutsz, 1697); Gabriel de Souza Brito, *Norte mercantil y crisol de quentas*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Juanten Mouten, 1769–1770). The latter was probably first published in Amsterdam in 1706 by Cornelio Hoogenhaisen, but I was not able to consult that first edition. Brito modeled his text on Bartolomé Salvador de Solórzano's *Libro de caxa y manual de cuentas de mercaderes y otras personas* (Madrid: Pedro Madrigal, 1590; reprint, Madrid: Instituto de Contabilidad y Auditoría de Cuentas, D. L. 1990).

18 Yosef Kaplan, "The Portuguese Community of Amsterdam in the 17th Century between Tradition and Change," in *Society and Community (Proceeding of the Second International Congress for Research of the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage 1984)*, ed. Abraham Haim (Jerusalem: Miśgav Yerushalayim, 1991), 141–171, here at 166–167.

economic anti-Semitism rooted in the mystique of the stock market."[19] As the Sephardi writer penned his dialogue between a Philosopher, a Merchant, and a Shareholder, financial markets were beginning to recover and William of Orange was preparing his invasion of England, which Amsterdam Jews very much supported.[20] *Confusión de confusiones* thus also strove to cleanse the stain of financial speculation from a new type of shares (*acciones de ducaton*), introduced in 1638 and traded by Jews in particular, which had drawn into the market a great many modest gamblers under false promises of easy gains.[21] It is reasonable to read these and other sections of the book as expressing Penso's concerns with the public reputation of Jewish brokers, an issue to which I will return.

These printed texts, in any case, are imperfect guides for the purpose of reconstructing the role that social ties and community oversight played in the Sephardi business organization. The paucity of surviving private merchant papers and business letters and the vastness of notarial collections pose different challenges.[22] Yet these are the sources on which we must rely in order to overcome the irreconcilable representation of Amsterdam as the early modern embodiment of an impersonal market and of Sephardi commerce as one in which family and religious identity ruled. For we know that there

19 Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World of Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 450.

20 Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 145–147; Harm den Boer and Jonathan I. Israel, "William III and the Glorious Revolution in the Eyes of Amsterdam Sephardi Writers: The Reactions of Miguel de Barrios, Joseph Penso de la Vega, and Manuel de Ledo," in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact*, ed. Jonathan I. Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 439–461, esp. 451–454.

21 Joseph Penso de la Vega, *Confusión de confusiones* (Amsterdam: [s.n.t.], 1688), esp. 239–240.

22 A few surviving business letters are discussed in Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Communication, marchandise et religion: les négociants séfarades au XVIIIe siècle," in *Commerce, voyage et expérience religieuse, XVIe–XVIIIe siècles*, ed. Albrecht Burkardt (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 145–159, esp. 154–155.

existed multiple credit channels between Jews and Christians. But we do not have a clear picture of the types of ventures for which Jews pooled their money together with Christians and those for which they stayed within their own communities. For which tasks did Sephardim turn to non-Jews? What contractual arrangements better supported those tasks? And which forms of oversight governed different contractual arrangements?

Rather than starting from the assumption that kin and coreligionists were always the preferred choice of Sephardim involved in long-distance trade,[23] we may wish to build a micro-level analysis to determine which credit contracts were sensitive to confessional identities and which ones were not (or were less so). We may likely find that partnerships in which all members shared full liability were normally formed among close kin and not necessarily notarized because the intersecting social and economic obligations of marriage and inheritance replaced the need to draft a long and inevitably incomplete list of clauses. Those partnerships could then enter into an array of contractual agreements that involved a diversity of actors and encompassed a range of risk factors, including marine insurance, bottomry loans, freight contracts, and bills of exchange. In contrast to general partnerships, these contracts were task specific, time-bound, and highly standardized contracts, and thus enhanced opportunities for Jewish-Christian credit.[24] Similarly, commission agency (the remuneration of services by a percentage of a transaction's declared value) was a flexible contract that involved a heterogeneous variety of agents.[25] My hypothesis that Sephardi

23 Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 104 and 160.

24 Cátia Antunes, "Cross-Cultural Business Cooperation in the Dutch Trading World, 1580–1776: A View from Amsterdam's Notarial Contracts," in *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000–1900*, ed. Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi, and Cátia Antunes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 150–168.

25 Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Tijl Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks: Eighteenth-Century Diamond Merchants* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011).

firms employed a strategic combination of contractual arrangements when employing kin, other Jews, and non-Jews, would benefit from both case studies of single partnerships that utilized the entire spectrum of instruments for the conduct of long-distance trade and from lager serial data. At this stage, it suggests the need to evaluate the degree of autonomy of the economic sphere through research that emphasizes gradation and complementarity.

In short, the first point I wish to drive home is that in assessing the autonomy of the economic sphere in the Amsterdam Sephardi world, we have little to gain from knowing that Jews and Christians could and did seal credit contracts with one another. In order to understand when and where social ties and religious boundaries mattered in spite of the enforcement of formal legal equality in the commercial sphere, we need to develop a granular portrait of the conditions under which economic actors pooled their money together and a ranking order of the risks and safeguards that each type of contract entailed. The second and more delicate point I wish to stress involves the shadow role that the community organization performed in the economic realm. Not only was the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Nation a conduit of information for its own members, but it also projected a collective image to the outside. What role did this collective image play in the ways in which non-Jews perceived the creditworthiness of individual Sephardi merchants?

In theory, this is a value-neutral question. Stereotypes can work in favor or against a group. Non-Jewish merchants with an exaggerated view of Jewish commercial prowess may have been prone to trust Sephardi agents with their money, having heard of their far-flung connections across the globe and fantasizing about their influence on financial markets. More often, however, Jewish merchants had to contend with engrained theological and popular preconceptions that turned those same stereotypical views against them. It was the depth of inimical Christian fantasies with which community leaders had to battle.

Kaplan and others have argued that the Mahamad was conscious of the need to avert Christian prejudice and did so by policing all forms of Jewish-Christian relations. Among the infractions punished by herem, several

concerned improper interactions with non-Jews: not only carnal intercourse, but also theological discussions with Christians, the sale or exchange of books and manuscripts to non-Jews, the circumcision of non-Jews without explicit permission from the Mahamad, and – for women – the cutting of a Christian woman's hair (116). The sources make clear more than once that such conduct not only infringed on religious observance but also had negative repercussions on something as intangible as the community's collective reputation. In 1645, for example, the parnassim condemned those who left the synagogue while the service was still ongoing "because in addition to there being [in this behavior] a diminution of piety and an injury to the worship of the Lord, they also arouse great reproach among us and among the *goyim*" (36). Even if aggression and open tensions between Jews and Christians in seventeenth-century Amsterdam were rare, the monitoring of public behavior on the part of Sephardi leaders was a constant preoccupation, and often displayed a marked class character. The urban landscape had seen the emergence of "a fairly sharply demarcated zone of 'Jewish space,'" in which the poor figured prominently in street life.[26] Since the most established merchants in the community served on the Mahamad, their efforts at disciplining relations between Jews and non-Jews targeted first and foremost the humblest members of the community and unruly crowds, including during religious festivals such as Purim. The words chosen in the *haskamoth* are telling: they speak of the need to preserve tranquility (*quietação*).[27]

In this context, we are hard pressed to distinguish between a religious logic (orthodoxy), a class-bound social logic (*bom judesmo*), and an economic logic

26 Adam Sutcliffe, "The Boundaries of Community: Urban Space and Intercultural Interaction in Early Modern Sephardi Amsterdam and London," in *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 19–31, here at 22.

27 Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 219. See also Adam Sutcliffe, "Regulating Sociability: Rabbinical Authority and Jewish-Christian Interaction in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," in *Rabbinic Culture and Its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times*, ed. Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 289–312.

(collective reputation). The three inevitably fed into one another and the latter two likely left a particular impression on external observers. It is nevertheless extremely difficult to measure the effects of these intersecting logics on the everyday business organization of Sephardi merchants. A concrete entry into this thorny problem might be to test the stress that financial crashes exerted on individual Jewish-Christian credit relations. Considerable ink has been spilled on the anti-Semitic backlash that followed the 1688 stock market crash and the bursting of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 (which sent shock waves across the channel). Both events brought to the surface a not so well disguised Christian resentment against Jewish financiers and stockbrokers. We already mentioned the 1688 financial crash. In 1720, a host of satirical images and texts collectively known as *Het Groote Tafereel der Dwaasheid* (The Great Mirror of Folly) offered caricatured depictions of Jews and others portrayed as subverting the morality of Dutch commerce and engaging in the kind of reckless and self-interested behavior that brought on its demise.[28] These condemnations were so widespread that recently, some scholars have singled out Jean-Frederic Bernard and Bernard Picard's notable book, *Religious Ceremonies of the World* (1723–1737), for its unusual absence of attacks on Jews amidst the explosion of pamphlets, engravings, caricatures, and songs that decried the perceived causes of the 1720 stock market crash.[29] These dramatic events, too, need to be considered in assessing the autonomy

28 Margaret Jacob, "Was the Eighteenth-Century Republican Essentially Anticapitalist?" *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 2/1 (2010): 16–18, http://arcade.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/roflv02i01_Jacob_121510_3.pdf; Inger Leemans, "Verse Weavers and Paper Traders: Financial Speculation in Dutch Theater," in *The Great Mirror of Folly: Finance, Culture, and the Crash of 1720*, ed. William N. Goetzmann et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 175–189, esp. 181–182; Julie Berger Hochstrasser, "Print Power: Mad Crows and the Art of Memory in *Het groote tafereel der dwaasheid*," in *The Great Mirror of Folly*, 191–205, esp. 195 and 204 nn. 30 and 31.

29 Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhard, *The Book That Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 187.

of the economic sphere and, by contrast, the measures that the Mahamad took to curtail aggressive expressions of anti-Jewish economic sentiments.

The Many Faces of Credit

In the second half of the seventeenth century, Dutch republican theorists as different as the de la Court brothers and Baruch Spinoza celebrated the mixture of religious freedom and economic liberalism of their society. Holding Amsterdam up as the paragon of republicanism in the last chapter of his *Theological-Political Treatise* (XX.15), Spinoza painted an arresting image:

> Amsterdam is a fine example of a city which enjoys the fruits of this liberty, with its great growth being the admiration of all nations. In this flourishing republic, this superb city, people of every sect and nation live together in the greatest harmony. Before they make a loan to someone, they just want to know whether he is rich or poor and whether he is known to behave with good faith or deceitfully. For the rest, religion or sect does not come into it because this does not help to win or lose a case before a court.[30]

Part patriotic panegyric, part rudimentary new institutional economics, and part political philosophy, this cameo depicts Amsterdam as the paradigmatic impersonal market. In the language of the time, a borrower's extra-economic identification ("religion or sect") is said to be irrelevant to a lender's decision-making because that identification was of no consequence in a thoroughly impartial judicial system. Financial considerations alone (whether the borrower is "rich or poor") and information about a borrower's reputation ("whether he is known to behave with good faith or deceitfully") determined whether a loan would be extended or not. Religious prejudice, Spinoza would lead us to believe, had no place under the arcade of the Amstel Dam or along

30 Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 257.

the docks and in the taverns of the Dutch city, where seventeenth-century merchants sealed their contracts.

Some scholars have heralded this passage as the emblem of a proto-liberal republicanism rooted in commerce.[31] Others have reconstructed the literary fortune of what, adapted to the Royal Exchange of London in the hands of Joseph Addison and Voltaire, became a literary trope divorced from reality.[32] Here I might suggest a third way of reading this passage, this time with the eyes of a modern economist. Truly disenchanted, that reader would ask: In the absence of individual credit scores, how was a seventeenth-century merchant to consider a possible borrower and determine "whether he is rich or poor and whether he is known to behave with good faith or deceitfully"? What were the channels through which information circulated, and what were the criteria that sanctioned an individual's reputation? Even if courts in Amsterdam were really as insensitive to religion as Spinoza claims, did social ties and religious affiliations cease to matter?

31 Steven Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 165.

32 Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought: Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume and Voltaire, 1694–1790* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 100–103; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, fiftieth-anniversary edition, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 402–403; Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 97. Spinoza himself was adapting an adagio of the urban ethnography of his time. In recounting his Grand Tour during the first decade of the seventeenth century, the English traveler Thomas Coryat described Venice's Saint Mark's square as follows: "This part of the Piazza is worthy to be celebrated for that famous concourse and meeting of so many distinct and sundry nations ... There you may see many Polonians, Slavonians, Persians, Grecians, Turks, Jewes, Christians of all the famousest regions of Christianedome, and each nation distinguished from another by their proper and peculiar habits." *Coryat's Crudities*, 2 vols. (Glasgow: MacLehose and Sons / New York: Macmillan, 1905), 1: 318. Depictions of Amsterdam and the London's Royal Exchange, however, put greater emphasis on the dissolution of boundaries between merchant groups achieved via the common pursuit of profit.

That credit had many faces means that it is extremely difficult to single out the mechanisms that matched lenders and borrowers, particularly when the documentary basis is as dispersed and uneven as it is for the pre-modern period. Then, as today, information technology and legal institutions shaped economic behavior. Seventeenth-century Amsterdam saw a boom in the quantity and quality of information affecting financial operations, including printed sheets of prices, stock valuations, and marine insurance premiums. The sheer concentration of actors in one locality further ensured that one's deviant behavior would become apparent more easily than in thin markets. All this, together with the institutional reforms implemented by the city's authorities in order to offer all merchants equal access to legal and financial intermediation services, undoubtedly made Amsterdam an extraordinarily impersonal market by period standards. And yet, much more empirical research is needed before we can interpret Spinoza's vignette as a realistic description rather than as a programmatic statement. It is the kind of empirical research that, following in the footsteps of Yosef Kaplan, would expand our understanding of European and Jewish history alike.

Summaries

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*: A Turning Point in Autobiographical Writing in the Netherlands?

Arianne Baggerman and Rudolf Dekker

pp. 349*–361*

After its publication in 1782, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* were often read and discussed in the Netherlands. Although the work was not translated into Dutch until more than a century later, just as elsewhere in Europe, Rousseau's *Confessions* were seen as a milestone in the developing genre of autobiography. Reviews and discussions in the press made Dutchmen without knowledge of French also acquainted with its content. Although, Rousseau's *Confessions* received a mixed reaction, as had his earlier works, it had a recognizable influence on Dutch nineteenth-century autobiographers. The changing attitude of Eduard Douwes Dekker, writing under the pen name Multatuli, toward Rousseau's *Confessions*, distilled from his works and letters, is considered here as a case study. Dekker, who was sometimes compared to his French predecessor, in his younger years, may have jokingly announced to write his own *Confessions*, but in old age wrote that he would never do so, out of fear to provoke the same public discussion that had surrounded Rousseau's autobiography. That is, nonetheless, in itself a sign of the influence of Rousseau's controversial autobiography in the Netherlands.

Textual Intimacy and the Bond of Reading between the Expulsion from Spain and Amsterdam

Avriel Bar-Levav

pp. 145–168

This paper analyzes several texts – the first by R. Yehuda Hayyat who was expelled from Spain and the rest from Amsterdam – in order to present the

concept of Jewish textual intimacy. This is an attitude toward holy books and texts which can be found in Jewish culture (as well as in other textual cultures). Eight features of the textual intimacy are presented: constant presence of texts in the life of the readers; the idea that books and texts are protecting the learners, so the relationship is reciprocal; regarding the Jewish textual universe as a unified whole; an impetus to explain, interpret, and make texts accessible; long-time occupation with texts; enjoyment and excitement from texts and learning; attraction toward the physical aspects of books and libraries; an awareness of the musical aspects of texts.

Several agents enhance the textual intimacy: texts, cultural institutions, people and technologies. The result is what can be called a bond of reading that connects participants of Jewish culture.

Historical Continuity: A Document Dealing with the Formation of the Second Generation of the Jerusalem School of Jewish History

Jacob Barnai

pp. 333–348

Most scholars agree that with the foundation of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1925), a historical school was then developed known as “the Jerusalem school,” which sought to define the writing of Jewish History in a new Zionist approach. The basic principles were set by the “Founding Fathers”: Ben Zion Dinur (Dinaburg) and Itzhak (Fritz) Baer, being: Historical Continuity, Uniqueness, Unity and the Centrality of the land of Israel in Jewish History. The majority of the second generation followed in that path.

The document published here is a protocol of a discussion that took place on March 31, 1960, at the home of Prof. Shmuel Ettinger. The first speaker was Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, a prominent figure of the “second generation,” who ten years later served as editor of the series “History of the Jewish People,” which was based on the above-mentioned Zionist principles. This series was published in many languages, being influential in spreading the Jerusalem School’s historical consciousness.

Also taking part in the discussion were their students, the "third generation," who along with accepting the main thesis, also contradicted some of its aspects. The participents of the debate were mostly their students, the third generation of that "school", who expressed along with accepting the main thesis', also contradicted some of its aspects.

Sitting at Two Tables: A Paradigm for the Sephardi *Converso* in the Early Modern Era

Ram Ben-Shalom

pp. 27–59

With reference to the well-known typology developed by Jacob Katz (apostate, martyr, *Ḥasid*, disputant, man of enlightenment), and in light of Yosef Kaplan's research on *converso* society, I would like to suggest a further type in the context of Jewish-Gentile relations: the Jew who "sits at two tables" – the table of Jewish tradition and that of European culture. Six main characteristics may be associated with this social type: disputation with Christianity; philosophical thought and writing; skepticism and criticism of the sacred texts; centrality of the Bible to spiritual life; criticism of Jewish society; moral and ideological commitment to the problem of the conversos. This type, particularly prominent in the Low Countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tended to reexamine Jewish tradition through the lens of concepts and values taken from the Christian world. Such reexamination led to a heightening of the differences between Judaism and Christianity, and to the development of an independent religious and spiritual identity.

Were there any precedents for this type, at the beginning of the converso phenomenon in fifteenth-century Spain? Based on my research on the Provençal Jewish leader Isaac Nathan of Arles (who was not a converso!), I believe the answer is positive. I will demonstrate the validity of this assertion, based on the six characteristics listed above, also noting the differences between the Arles paradigm and the Amsterdam type. During the course of the fifteenth century the paradigm was still optimistic regarding the

possibility of forging a Jewish identity close to Christianity, which Nathan called the "path of the [two] doctrines." In the seventeenth century, however, despite some progress in the direction of religious tolerance, it was hard to remain optimistic regarding the chances of such a project in the shadow of the Inquisition.

Agents of the Book and Their Titles in the Amsterdam Yiddish Book Industry 1650–1800

Shlomo Berger

pp. 237–257

The agents of the Jewish book in Old Yiddish enabled the printing of books between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, thus creating the foundation of a popular Jewish culture, different from the elite culture that most of the Hebrew books represented. Preparing a Yiddish book was dissimilar to preparing a (canonical) Hebrew one. Sources such as manuscripts or even earlier editions had almost no importance for the Yiddish book. On the contrary, updating the language and sometimes the content was considered an advantage. The paper discusses seven terms of such book agents: the *zetser*, typesetter/compositor, or worker in the holy work. This is the only position that got a Yiddish (and not a Hebrew) title, which was used also in the Hebrew book industry; the editor of the book, called *magiha*, a term that only at a later stage became the term for the proofreader; *mevi le-vet ha-dfus* (literally: brings to the press) – an unclear term, usually denoting the initiator or the one who financed the printing; printer or *druker* – the owner of the print shop; by order of a person or partners – those who financed the printing and sometimes were responsible for the content; collector, copyist, author – positions relating to the pre-printing process; and lastly, nameless position – this can be the case in Yiddish books which were printed anonymously.

Compared with Hebrew printing, the Old Yiddish bookshelf was short and narrow – a situation that changed when Modern Yiddish literature flourished in the nineteenth century, leaving Modern Hebrew literature to fight over its place.

Josef Ibn Yahya and His Book *Torah Or*

Robert Bonfil

pp. 125–143

Torah Or is the first of a series of three works of moral instruction composed by Josef Ibn Yahia (1496–1539), an almost insignificant author of Portuguese ancestry, settled in Imola, a tiny place near Bologna. It is one of very few books published by the Printing House of the Silk Workers of Bologna between 1537–1540. In a number of chapters utilizing almost banal notions and quotations from customary literary Jewish sources, it focuses on the nature of the "ultimate bliss" that Jews should pursue – that is to say, what according to Ibn Yahia the ultimate ideal of Jewish human life should be.

And yet, the book can be very conveniently used as a source of valuable historical knowledge. The author of the essay discusses two main matters: first, the psychological impact of the tragic flight of Josef's parents from the Iberian Peninsula to Italy in 1497, at the time his mother was pregnant, upon the configuration of Ibn Yahia's memories; second, the nature of the edificatory pursuit of the Printing House of the Silk Workers of Bologna as reflecting the cultural profile of Jewish society in Italy.

Entangled Dowries of Converts in Early Modern Navarre

Javier Castaño

pp. 145*–177*

The analysis of a sampling of cases taken from ordinary civil lawsuits and notarial protocols provides us with information on the before and after of common converted Jews in Navarre at the turn of the sixteenth century. Despite the insufficiency of these sources in illuminating certain spheres of life, they provide us with a comprehensive picture of the social ruptures, continuities and transformations (and evidence concerning endogamy, female illiteracy, local networks, etc.) experienced by a first generation of converts, for the most part an anonymous community under inquisitorial scrutiny, accommodated to patterns of conformism. An alternative approach to

conversion requires focusing on specific objective mechanisms that enabled the process, such as the legalization of documents expediting individuals in their way to transform their legal and economic status. The monarchy supported the transfiguration of the Jewish scribe Jaco de la Rabiça into the Christian notary Pedro de Agramont, who witnessed much of the private and public activity of Tudela's Jews and their converted peers for nearly half a century. A key element of familial economies among Jews was the dowry, which met various needs, including the protection from debt and creditors and provided a system of devolution of wealth. Thus, in this time of change, dowries entangled over years in endless lawsuits (such as between the siblings Maria and Juan de Uztarroz) encompass the transitional process from one religious law to another.

The Seven Lives of Las Casas's *Brevíssima Relación*: A Bibliographical History

Roger Chartier

pp. 67*–84*

This article is devoted to the editions and translations of Las Casas's *Brevíssima Relación de la destruyción de las Indias* from its first edition in Seville in 1552 to the editions of the decades of 1810 and 1820. Faithful to Yosef Kaplan's practice of "textual connected history," the article (based on the collections of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania) attempts to trace the mobility of the meaning of Las Casas's short treatise according to the various historical contexts of its publication: the defense of the Dutch and English Protestant cause in the late sixteenth century, the Mediterranean politics of the seventeenth century, the English Revolution and the wars for independence of the Spanish colonies.

Sefer habrit Reads in the Haskalah Library: A Chapter in the Dismissal of the Enlightenment at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century

Shmuel Feiner

pp. 311–331

Pinhas Elijah Hurwitz was one of the very perceptive Jewish scholars who, at the end of the eighteenth century, observed with curiosity and great wonder the changes taking place in the world of thought and science in Europe. At the turn of the century, the Jewish library provided Torah scholars and maskilim very few opportunities to learn about the new trends in philosophy and the vast expansion in scientific knowledge. *Sefer habrit* (1797) tried to fill the void. However, the scholar who strived to acquire the very latest news from the "New World" and also regarded scientists and philosophers with awe and respect, bound up these news, as he did, for example, when summing up Spinoza's teaching, with a menacing and deterring story of heresy and a book of *musar* that preached that "there is nothing new that will bring any good but sin, hence be very cautious about anything new." Paradoxically enough, the book that presented a long series of examples of the Enlightenment's achievements and the innovations of scientists and philosophers, was the same one that most resolutely dismissed them. And in fact one of the few readers in that period who was truly familiar with those books that the *maskilim* placed on the new shelf they opened in the Jewish library, and who wrote in *Sefer habrit* a kind of diary of reading in the *Haskalah* library, was also the one who called for an urgent mobilization for a religious war against the *Haskalah*.

Don Quixote or the Quest for Fiction in Spanish Golden Age Literature

Ruth Fine

pp. 249*–266*

The present study reflects on Cervantes's conception of fiction focusing particularly on his masterpiece, *Don Quixote*. The initiator of modern narrative fiction did not produce a systematic or theoretical piece of work

that could be regarded as the authoritative declaration of his understanding of fiction. His literary premises and beliefs are scattered throughout his entire artistic creation conveyed by narrators, characters or fictive authors, who assume the authorial voice in the prologues to his works. In many respects, all these constitute a heterogeneous and even contradictory material, hard to systematize or to adjust into a coherent programmatic of his conception of fiction. However, for a considerable section of the scholarship, Cervantes turns out to be a neo-Aristotelian, which contextualizes him in the theoretical background of the late Renaissance. A less numerous part of Cervantes's criticism, including my own perspective, questions the real adscription of Cervantes to neo-Aristotelianism. The reasons vary and differ. In these pages I focus on some of them, related to the emergence notion of fiction for the Spanish Golden Age, as well as the seminal contribution to the enthronement of *Don Quixote* as the originator of modern fiction for the Iberian and Western world.

Virtù, Justice, Force: On Machiavelli and Some of His Readers

Carlo Ginzburg

pp. 29*–48*

The article analyzes one of the most debated words in Niccolò Machiavelli's lexicon: *virtù*. Many readers regarded, and still regard, the convergence of two different meanings in Machiavelli's use of *virtù* – efficacy and moral virtue – as problematic, if not shocking. The article argues first that the tension between the two meanings was at the very center of Machiavelli's thought (a point which has been missed by some recent readers); second, that a close scrutiny of the history of the Latin word *virtus* throws an unexpected light on Machiavelli's use of *virtù* and its sources. Special attention is devoted to Statius' long speech on the generation of the human soul in Dante's *Commedia*; to Donato Acciajoli's comment on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* – a book that Machiavelli might have found in the library of his father, Bernardo. The article focuses on a series of passages, all of them directly or

indirectly related to *virtù*, in Machiavelli's *oeuvre,* as well on their long term impact on some of its readers, from Girolamo Cardano to Blaise Pascal.

Hakham David Nieto on Divine Providence

Matt Goldish

pp. 267*–280*

Hakham David Nieto, who served the London Sephardi community from 1701 until his death in 1728, was accused soon after his arrival of conflating God and Nature. In the treatise he wrote to refute the accusation he shows himself to be quite orthodox on the point of God's relationship to Nature. His arguments are, however, based on an understanding of science that was still rooted in Aristotelian ideas. While he was aware of some of the revolutionary developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he was not swayed by them. He was thus not likely to convince intellectuals in Newtonian England to take seriously his version of "physico-theology."

The Fracturing of Jewish Identity in the Early Modern Jewish Diaspora: The Case of the *Conversos*

David Graizbord

pp. 85*–119*

The unique historical experiences of *conversos* and "New Jews" (*judíos nuevos*) of the Western Sephardi Diaspora of the 1600s and 1700s adumbrates the important polarity of "religion" and "ethnicity" that informs modern definitions of Jewishness. In this brief article, I consider the historical development of that polarity, especially as it entrenched itself early on in the experience of conversos and "New Jews," also known collectively as the *nação/nación*. As Yosef Kaplan's work has proven, these subjects often assumed the polarity and used it to build their concepts of personal and group selfhood. Yet this outcome obscures the fact that premodern Jewish culture was a comprehensive way of life, not a "religion" called "Judaism." In this analysis, therefore, I endeavor to de-naturalize the idea of "Judaism" that

has long been entrenched as a descriptor of Jews and of "crypto-Jewish" conversos. As I will explain, the concept of "Judaism" and all it conveyed are things that Iberian Jews adopted and their New Christian and New Jewish descendants internalized over centuries as Ibero-Christian culture encroached upon, and in the case of conversos, enveloped their lives.

Exile, Redemption, and the Land of Israel in the Thought of Rabbi Ephraim of Lunschitz

Avraham Grossman

pp. 273–309

Rabbi Solomon Ephraim of Lunschitz (1550–1619), a famous preacher and biblical commentator, served as the rabbi of Prague from 1604 to 1619.

In all of his writings, particularly in his Torah commentary (*Keli Yakar*), he criticized the various strata of Jewish society: the heads of the community as well as its prosperous constituents for their lack of generosity, and the rabbis for their religious deficiencies, moral corruption, rivalry, and needless hatred.

The spiritual connection that he felt with the Land of Israel was of singular significance. Thus, for example, he explains that Jacob and his sons were negligent for remaining in Egypt and not returning to the Land of Israel. Indeed throughout its history this was a major failing of the Jewish people and the cause of the extended period of dispersion and exile.

He expressed his love and longing for the Land of Israel and his hope for restoration to Zion repeatedly in all his works. Despite the lack of textual justification, he frequently ascribed the motif of Redemption to biblical sources. The sanctity of Jerusalem played a central role in his work, far and above that of any other Jewish scholar of his time. However, one must clearly distinguish between the ideas he attributed to the text and the simple meaning in the Bible.

Perfeyt Duran in Italy and the Fate of Catalan and Aragonese Hebrew Manuscripts after the Riots of 1391

Joseph R. Hacker

pp. 61–91

This article reconstructs the biography of Perfeyt Duran (Isaac ben Moses of Perpignan), who was a central intellectual figure of Iberian Jewry in the late fourteenth century. His family, education, learning, and scholarly activities, as well as his social ties, his conversion, his travels, and career after his apostasy, are scrutinized.

Duran's relationship to Jewish personalities in the kingdom of Aragon is reviewed and it is proved that he had no close bond to Hasdai Crescas and his family .On the basis of a new archival source and a different comprehension of formerly known sources, it is established that he stayed in Pisa, Italy in October 1398 and close to July 1413, in the region of Pisa. Since his lethal anti-Christian writings were written between 1393 and 1398, it is suggested that they might have been written in Italy, under the pen-name of "Efod" (the acronym for I Perfeyt Duran – in Hebrew), to avoid persecution by Christian authorities of the Kingdom of Aragon. His unique activity as an author who composed writings in Hebrew till 1403 – addressed to his kinsman, while he chose to stay a Christian for the rest of his life and married a Christian wife (even though he could have returned to Judaism in Italy and elsewhere) – is discussed in detail. The striking fact that, despite this, his writings were embraced by his contemporaries and by later generations of Jewish scholars without criticism, is raised and discussed.

Since the new document on his stay in Pisa shows that he sold Hebrew manuscripts to Jews in Italy in 1395, the fate of Hebrew manuscripts after 1391 in the Kingdom of Aragon is investigated, based on several archival documents.

On Gender Theories in R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto

Moshe Idel

pp. 281*–319*

The article examines a series of texts authored by R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto and his followers dealing with gender theory. The author proposes to understand such a theory as a complex one, which includes androcentric statements underlined in the studies of Elliot R. Wolfson, but also a series of passages that when understood in their proper context, reflect a vision as to the superiority of the divine Female. This latter approach reflects Luzzatto's appropriation of a gender theory that I propose to call the "three-phases" gender theory. It assumes the origin of the Female within the higher divine realm, and in the future, or during the Sabbath, the Female retrieves Her original status higher than the Male. This model is found in several main Kabbalists who preceded Luzzatto, especially his discussions of the Rabbinic myth of the diminution of the Moon – a symbol for the female. In this context, a text stemming from his school, dealing with the planet *Sabbatai* (Saturn), interpreted as being related to the Messiah that converted to Islam, is explained as dealing with the second phase of the model as referring to the diminution of the Moon. Likewise, the three-phases model can be used to understand also the descent followed by the ascent of the soul.

David Nassy and the Political Emancipation of Dutch and Dutch Caribbean Jewry (1785–1797)

Jonathan Israel

pp. 321*–347*

David Nassy (1747–1806) who lived most of his life, apart from a three-year interval in Philadelphia (1792–1795), as an active member of the Sephardi community of Surinam, was one of the most prominent figures of the later Enlightenment era, in the New World, especially as a writer about social and political affairs. His two main texts were [David de Ishac Cohen Nassy], *Essai historique sur la colonie de Surinam* (2 vols. Paramaribo, 1788), the

most important survey of Surinam's history of the early modern period, and still an indispensable source for the country's history today, and an apologetic work, the *Lettre-politico-théologico-morale sur les Juifs* (1798) upholding and citing such eminent enlighteners as Muratori, Dohm, and Mirabeau in defense of the civil rights of the Jews. Foremost representative of the Surinam Sephardi Enlightenment, Nassy exulted not only in the American Revolution, but also in the core principles of the French Revolution, especially the thirty-five articles of the expanded *Droits de l'Homme* which the French National Assembly drew up in 1792 (under the Brissotin regime), though he was subsequently horrified by the excesses of Robespierre and the Jacobins. He was a stalwart defender of Jewish rights but also of equality and freedom of expression more generally and a vigorous critic of religious intolerance and narrowness (including on occasion rabbinic intolerance).

The Voyages of Yosef in America: Knowledge, Collecting and Innovation in the Age of Discoveries

Limor Mintz-Manor

pp. 93–124

This article recounts an episode in the European encounters with the New World during the early modern period. The encounters yielded an enormous amount of literature that described the landscapes and the indigenous people of the newly discovered lands. Jews, like their fellows Christians, were intrigued by these new lands and cultures and strove to learn more about them, as well as to decipher and to appropriate the findings for their own world and beliefs. This process resulted in new ways of understanding geography, sciences, ethnicity, and religious traditions.

The article examines an unknown Amerindian-Hebrew glossary that appears in one of Yosef HaKohen's (1496–1557 or later) geographic-ethnic works that had been written in Italy. The article discusses the alphabetical glossary in the context of two major contemporary fields of study – natural history and linguistics – and elaborates on the process of mediating the

new knowledge to its Jewish readership. In sum, the article shows that this innovative glossary is part of a trend of classification and collecting in early modern Europe, when the first museums were being formed. At the time of increasing interest in botanical, zoological, and ethnic collections, this glossary may be viewed as a "textual museum" for potential Jewish readers.

The Liturgical Poem 'Who is Like You' (*Mi Kamocha*) on the Salvation of the Recife Jews: Spanish Heritage in the New World

Moisés Orfali and Rachel Hitin Mashiah

pp. 169–195

The custom of composing "Who is Like You" (*Mi Kamocha*) liturgical poems (*piyyutim*) in communities that were saved from harsh decrees, from destruction and from annihilation, spread among the Spanish Diaspora in North Africa after the expulsion from Spain and mass conversion in Portugal. Most of these poems were composed following attempts by Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and France to occupy the Maghreb countries and the military attacks on cities with Jewish communities. Important details on the events from the viewpoint of the Jewish population arise from these liturgical poems. These "Who is Like You" liturgical poems were customarily read in public during the "Second Purim" (*Purim Sheniim*) celebrations that were celebrated every year by the communities that were saved.

In this article we will discuss the "Who is Like You" liturgical poem by R. Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, which was composed in Brazil in 1646 following the Portuguese attack on the town of Recife. We will discuss its morphological-artistic and stylistic characteristics and its unmistakable characteristics regarding content, as they evolved in the passage from the Old World to the New World. We will also present evidence from this liturgical poem for a custom of celebrating the "Second Purim" in remembrance of the salvation. In order to extract the information it contains about those times and to follow the evolution of the "Who is Like You" genre in the passage from the Old World to the New World, we touched upon the historic facts which led to

its composition on the one hand, and on the life course of the poet on the other hand. The liturgical poem will be presented at the end of the article, as copied from the manuscript (Amsterdam, Ets Haim / Livraria Montezinos 47 C 12, pp. 3–8; The National Library of Israel F3532), accompanied by an explanation and sources.

The Power of the King to Transform the Family Tree: The Ximenes Family's Request for the Status of Old Christian

Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano

pp. 197–213

At the end of the sixteenth century, the New Christian family Ximenes de Aragão, known for their Jewish origin, opened an enterprise in Madrid, thus beginning the history of one of the family's most notorious branches, which had offshoots in Portugal, the Low Countries and Italy. This article analyzes the aspiration of this particular branch to obtain a title of nobility in perpetuity, from the Spanish kings Philip III and Philip IV, being an exception prerogative of the monarchs, which enabled the transformation of Jewish lineage into Old Christian. We will follow this "gracious" procedure at King's Court and tribunals, and the difficulties and polemics it aroused. This affair shed light on different social, political, and cultural aspects of the time.

Luther and the Jews: The Perplexities and Potentials of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Heinz Schilling

pp. 49*–66*

The article tries to fathom out the limits and chances of the 500th Reformation anniversary with regard to the question of Luther's responsibility for Nazi Anti-Semitism. It argues that making the Reformer directly responsible for the Holocaust will rather obscure than explain the real historical causal relationships. And it pleads for a comparative historical approach that queries the chances of a better understanding between Christians and Jews in the

moment of the breaking out of the Reformation and vice versa the structural or personal barriers (on the side of Luther or the rabbis concerned), that stood in the way and consequently led to misunderstanding and a deepening of the cleavage between Jews and Lutheran Protestants.

Converted Bachelors and Other Conversionary Dangers in the Eighteenth-Century Roman Ghetto

Kenneth Stow

pp. 259–271

In 1749, Sabato Coen, a poor bachelor living in the Roman Ghetto, converted to Catholicism and at once denounced Anna del Monte, whom he named his fiancée, as a candidate for conversion. Anna del Monte (the name del Monte derives from Montpellier, Ha-Har) a daughter of one of the ghetto's leading families, was seized at gunpoint and locked inside the Roman House of Converts, founded in 1543. Thirteen days later, she emerged still Jewish. Her case was far from singular, although only about one-quarter of those kidnapped like her avoided conversion. Anna uniquely left a "diary" recording her experience, which her brother Tranquillo edited and circulated, no doubt clandestinely, in 1793, about fifteen years after Anna's death.

Anna's case reflects a Catholic Church intent on responding to contemporary threats to confessional states like that of the pope, where an official religion determined institutional structures and defined eligibility for full citizenship. The modern secular states founded by the French and American Revolutions, roughly at the same time Tranquillo circulated Anna's diary, rejected religious criteria. Already in 1749, many legists and lawyers in the papal state itself were protesting the dominance of religious law. They went unheard. Kidnappings like Anna's, so often provoked by bachelors like Coen, continued. More disturbing were the acts of converted husbands, who sometimes "offered" their pregnant wives, who would be held in the House of Converts until they gave birth, when, regardless of whether they themselves converted, their newborns would be seized and baptized.

Most devastating, girls like Anna were never able to marry. It was feared they, or their offspring, might once more be kidnapped and pressed to "deny their essence," the phrase Anna's diary uses repeatedly. To these assaults, Roman Jews responded with protests like Anna's diary, but even more by establishing nuclear families based on both affect and limited size, thus to discourage conversion and its consequences.

Isaac de Pinto's *Political Reflections* and the Beginning of the Jewish Political Economy

Daniel Strum

pp. 233*–248*

Better known for his polemics with Voltaire, Isaac de Pinto was a renowned economist who influenced Adam Smith and Karl Marx. His essay Political Reflections was the onset of the Jewish political economy. Published in 1748 in Portuguese, it was the first writing by a Jew in which the developing scientific approach of the Enlightenment was employed to examine the economic structure of a community, namely the Sephardi community of Amsterdam. Pinto compared it to both the composition of the Dutch economy and generalizable rules of economic and demographic behavior. By methodically identifying the community's fundamental problems, Pinto expected to inform a coherent policymaking to resolve a pressing problem: escalating poverty. Conscious of both the possibility of overpopulation and the existence of mechanisms that check population growth, Pinto concluded that his community experienced overpopulation. This was a result of the exclusion of Jews from the hazardous occupations that absorbed masses from among their neighbors. However unrealistic, he advocated that the ultimate solution would be economic emancipation. More immediately, Pinto required the economic productivization of all able-bodied poor by financing forced settlement in Surinam and promoting the remaining ones' self-sufficiency, including the set-up of a profit-making manufacture. Anticipating Malthus, Pinto inferred that population naturally grows exponentially, and insisted that

the yearly savings in welfare expenditures following the transfer of a third of the poor population to Surinam should be invested in a fund. By yielding compound interests, the fund would support the rate of growth of the local unable, and deserving, poor.

Ex-*Converso* Sephardi New Jews as Agents, Victims, and Thinkers of Empire: Isaac Cardoso Once Again

Claude B. Stuczynski

pp. 209*–231*

Departing from the idea that Iberian *conversos* and *ex-converso* "New Jews" were not only agents and victims of early modern empires but also committed and sophisticated thinkers, I will argue that for the ex-converso Jewish physician Fernando-Isaac Cardoso, Judaism was the ultimate counter-imperial alternative to hegemonic Catholic-Iberian imperialism. This article is not only a re-visitation of Cardoso's "Las Excelencias de los Hebreos" (Amsterdam 1679), which was masterfully studied by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. It is a way to consider the book as much more than a mere apology on behalf of Jews and Judaism and as a religious pedagogical tract addressed to conversos "returnees." I believe that Cardoso's critiques of territorial and religious expansionism are still relevant in our times, both in Israel and abroad.

Neither a Son, nor a Father, nor a Brother Will Guide Me: The Family of Gideon Abudiente in the Caribbean

Michael Studemund-Halévy

pp. 215–236

The necessity for motion and mobility, whether spurred by push factors (that force the individual to move voluntarily or due to banishment) or various pull factors (owing to the demand of labor power and goods), brought many members of the Sephardi communities of Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London to the New World. For those who voluntarily crossed the Atlantic, the new

places not only offered an escape, a source of marvel-filled adventure, and exotic romance, but also provided a steady source of employment and income and a way of life. For others less fortunate, who undertook the voyage triggered by economic distress at home and dispatched by the Mahamad under the agreement never to return or not to come back within a certain stipulated number of years, the Atlantic was a water of grief, sorrow, and loss.

Oriental Times in the West: The Power of the Sultans and the Jews in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim

pp. 179*–208*

This article aims to explore the rhetorical arguments used to describe the historical sequence of events that led to the encounter between the expelled Iberian Jews and the Ottomans. For example, the well-known accusation made by some western travelers, such as French *voyageur* Nicolas de Nicolay that the Iberian Jews played a crucial role in the technological modernization of the Ottoman Empire, especially in fire weapons. As such, they were stereotyped in the West as a group of traitors whose technological transfer to the Ottoman Empire brought increased power to the Infidels. But this "betrayal" involves other questions, namely one of essentialist character, since they were also accused of tormenting Christendom in every possible way through their espionage in favor of the sultans; or by writing letters to the *conversos* to convince them to annihilate the flock of Christ through any means.

In the West, the Ottoman Empire is often portrayed as a tyrannical empire where the rationality of law is replaced by the dominion of the senses. In this context, we are interested to observe if the relationship between the Jews – considered as traitors – and the Sultans – portrayed at least as untrustworthy rulers – was transmitted to the West in a dialectical way; what was the role of Jews and Sultans in the social relation; and finally, whether the West was frightened by this "alliance" of dangerous enemies.

An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Economic Dimension

Francesca Trivellato

pp. 121*–144*

The inspiration for this article comes from a passing remark in *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, in which Yosef Kaplan maintains that the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community in seventeenth-century Amsterdam did not pass any regulations about financial dealings and "conferred almost full autonomy of values" to the economic sphere, although for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons. Borrowing from Kaplan's own research as well as a variety of other sources, I challenge this thesis and argue instead that a religious logic (orthodoxy), a class-bound social logic (*bom judesmo*), and an economic logic (collective reputation) reinforced one another among Dutch Sephardim. I use my case study to rebuff more linear accounts of the rise of impersonal markets in early modern Europe, and in Amsterdam in particular. I conclude by reinterpreting a famous passage in Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (XX.15) in light of the evidence presented in the essay. In spite of Spinoza's emphasis on indifference toward religion and the impartiality of tribunals as the hallmarks of Amsterdam economic life, modern historians can recognize the role of information networks, peer pressure and corporate institutions in guiding and monitoring the behavior of economic actors.