

## 'Who Has Chosen Us' – About the Ritual Significance of the Blessings for the Torah Reading

Adiel Kadary

This paper discusses the blessings before the reading of the Torah and after it, with the goal of understanding the significance which they accord to the reading itself. The article presents these blessings as part of a larger complex of blessings which accompany the reading and studying of other biblical readings and even the reading and studying of the oral literature. These blessings will be called "reading blessings".

One of the motifs which appears regularly in these blessings is that of the election of Israel. It is proposed here that this is not of general theological importance but is rather connected with the reading situation. The function of this motif is to define the social framework of the reading. It defines who are "we", the participants in the rite. It identifies us as the people of Israel, chosen from among the nations to receive the Torah. As is well known, one of the distinct characteristics of the reading of the Torah in the synagogue is that any Jew may read the Torah. This accessibility is not to be taken for granted as earlier sources which portray public readings of the Torah present the reader as a priest or a leader of the people. It would seem, then, that mentioning the election of Israel in the reading blessings is connected to the "democratization" of the reading. Every Jew is "elected", every Jew received the Torah and is entitled to read it – a reading which will be accepted by God, as the readers hope. The doctrine that God chose the people of Israel and gave them the Torah justifies the ritual practice – reading of the Torah by laymen and not by priests alone and, at the same time, strengthens itself through ritual expression.

## The Seven Spheres and Intent in Prayer

Yosef Rivlin

The ten spheres are first mentioned in the *Book of Creation*. The use of the term "sphere" in its present sense as attributes only appears in the later parts of the *Zohar*. A significant development occurred when the division took place between the higher three spheres and the lower seven ones. Rekanti, an Italian Kabbalist at the end of the thirteenth century, already distinguished between these three and the seven spheres. The concept of

dated to the second half of the fourteenth century. The custom underwent a number of variants, apparently experiencing a renaissance in the late seventeenth century, until it vanished by the second half of the nineteenth century.

## Holy Arks from Mantua in Israel

David Cassuto

Mantua, long the home of an important Jewish community, gave rise to a large number of rabbis, scholars, and doctors. Public figures from exalted families such as Norsa, Cases, Finzi, and Fano—to mention only a few—embellish the list of names of its leading citizens.

Thus, it is no wonder that Mantua is also noteworthy for its proliferation of synagogues, some public and others for family use, including some of the grandest that the Italian Diaspora ever knew.

This Jewish community underwent many changes and was conquered and re-conquered, causing hardship in the conduct of Jewish life. Eventually only one of its many synagogues remained intact, the one at Via govi 11. Even this synagogue it is not at its original site. The Norsa Torrazzo Synagogue, named for two of the town's esteemed Jewish families, was relocated from its original site. A synagogue built in the finest of the Baroque style, evidently in the middle of the eighteenth century, was rebuilt at its new location as a mirror image of the original. The other synagogues in Mantua were demolished during the nineteenth century amidst the renovation of badly rundown neighborhoods. Their holy arks were first placed in the foyer of the "great synagogue" of the town (which was also doomed to destruction in 1938). Later on, all of them were taken to Israel.

The article discusses these arks. They came from three Ashkenazi synagogues—Porta, Ostiglia (1585), and Beccheria (also 1585)—and from two Italian synagogues: the "great" synagogue (early sixteenth century) and Cases (1595). The article also discusses another Italian ark: the first ark from the "great" synagogue that was subsequently moved to Sermide.

Each ark has its own form and tells its own story. In this article, I attempt to widen the purview by expanding the story and disclosing details not previously revealed in the edifying articles of Umberto Nahon, who engaged in bringing them to Israel.

*Minhag and Massorah: “הוא” – Masculine or Feminine*  
 Three Cases in the Pentateuch:  
 Leviticus 13:22; 18:23; Numbers 18:19

Jordan S. Penkower

R. Dosa of Vidin, Bulgaria, who together with R. Jacob Moellin were students of R. Shalom in Vienna and in Neustadt (near Vienna), wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch (for the most part a super-commentary on Rashi's Pentateuch commentary) in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Therein he states that he heard from his teacher, R. Shalom of blessed memory, that there are three places in the Pentateuch where the reading of הוא is uncertain – whether to read as masculine (הוא with *shureq*), or as feminine (הוא with *hireq*). The three places were Lev. 13:22 (נגע הוא), Lev. 18:23 (תבל הוא), and Num. 18:19 (ברית מלח עולם הוא). A mnemonic was given to these three places: תב"ן אין נתן לעבדיך (Ex. 5:16) – and was explained as follows: in three places נגע, ברית, תבל, the correct reading, whether to read with *hireq* or *shureq*, was not transmitted to Israel.

As a result of these uncertainties, R. Dosa relates, there are Ashkenazi congregations where the Torah Reader reads in these three cases a double reading; that is, he reads: ( ! ) הוא, instead of deciding in favor of one of the opinions.

In this study we will analyze in detail the evidence of the *massorah* and of 155 bible manuscripts (11 Tiberian, 35 Sefardi, 90 [+1 printed edition] Ashkenazi, 19 Italian) up until the time of R. Dosa (and somewhat thereafter). We will try to determine what is the earliest date for evidence of uncertainties in all of the above three cases, and what is the earliest date for evidence of the mnemonic תב"ן mentioned by R. Dosa. In addition, we will trace the vicissitudes of the double reading custom noted by R. Dosa.

The evidence points to the second half of the fourteenth century as the date of the three cases as a group and also as the date of the mnemonic. Though this clever mnemonic seems at first to be a part of the *massorah*, it is shown in detail that this late mnemonic whose purpose is to formalize uncertainties, is exactly the opposite of massoretic notes whose purpose is to determine and preserve the correct spelling and vocalization. It is shown that according to the accurate manuscripts and the *massorah*, the proper reading in the above three cases is: Lev. 13:22 (נגע הוא), Lev. 18:23 (תבל הוא), and Num. 18:19 (ברית מלח עולם הוא).

The Ashkenazi custom of a double reading in these three cases is to be

## The Blessing of the Bridegrooms and the Blessing of the Mourners

Menachem Katz and Mordechai Sabato

The mishna in Megilla (4:30) mentions the blessing of the bridegroom and the blessing of the mourner but it does not explain what is the blessing of the bridegroom. The contents of this blessing are described, in the name of R. Judah, in the Babylonian Talmud. According to this report, there were six blessings which, when combined with the blessing over the wine, gives us a total of seven blessings. This term, "seven blessings", replaced the term "blessing of the mourners" as the name of this liturgical unit. In the list of differences between the Babylonian and the Jews of Eretz Israel it is reported that the first recited seven blessings but in Eretz Israel they recited only three. We attempt to reconstruct the three, based on parallels with the blessing of the mourners. According to our reconstruction, the three blessings were: 1) Who has created man in His image.. Blessed art Thou, creator of man; 2) Rejoice, the beloved friends... Blessed art Thou who makes His people rejoice and builds Jerusalem; 3) Who has created gladness and rejoicing... Blessed art Thou Who makes the groom prosper with the bride. The first blessing is to thank God for creating man and finding his partner; this is followed by a request to make them happy, including the happiness of the people and Jerusalem; finally, a request is made for the success of the married couple.

This construction is then compared to the Babylonian blessings. We suggest that the Babylonian tradition was actually composed by R. Judah, who reworked the Eretz Israel tradition. The first blessing was expanded into three, describing the process of creation. The first of these three, "that all was created in His honor", describes the totality of the creation. This is followed by "Who creates man" which describes the creation of the male, followed by the third blessing which thanks God for finding man a mate.

We also suggest that the six blessings recited at the marriage ceremony combine, according to R. Judah, with the blessing for the betrothal ceremony, creating a series of seven blessings which accompanies the couple who are joining in matrimony.

through the investigation of the Rabbinical material, as well as artistic, archaeological and epigraphical evidence, I demonstrate that the shift from chest to ark was not only semantic, but a realistic one as well.

I suggest that this shift was not functionalistic, but was rather the result of the architectural development of the ancient synagogue, which had focused on the creation of the "Torah Shrine". After this architectural element had been established, the existent chest appeared too humble, in contrast to the impressive Torah Shrine, especially when built in the aediculae form. This was the context in which the impressive ark was introduced, and became one of the main elements of the ancient synagogue. The change therefore reflects the changing character of the ancient synagogue, and not a functional development.

## The Custom of Displaying the Torah in Jewish Communities

Hayyim Talby

It is customary, in synagogues, to lift up the Torah scroll and display it to the community, either before or after its public reading. This custom is first documented in the tractate Sofrim (14:8). Although we do not know where the custom originated, it was well known in many communities and it was considered an undisputed custom. However, the fact that there was no reference to this custom in the Babylonian Talmud enabled it to become a subject of dispute in Pesaro in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Indeed, even in the eighteenth century there were still communities in Italy which did not practice this custom. One of the objections to this custom was the fear that the Scroll might fall from the hands of the person who was displaying it – disgracing the scroll and perhaps even causing it to tear. In some places, in order to avert these objections, two people would lift up the scroll. A physical aid, a silver wand, was developed which was placed over the protruding handles of the scroll to stabilize it while it was being displayed. In Yemen, it was customary just to raise the parchment from the box-like container of the scroll, rather than lift the whole scroll.

The earliest sources imply that the scroll was displayed before the reading of the Torah and this is the custom of Oriental communities until today.

ancient manuscripts. In the Damari synagogue there was a yeshiva of elders who studied mysticism, Bible and Mishnah, law and legend.

R. Mahpoud also wrote about special prayer gatherings in the three synagogues of the city during times of trouble. He also portrayed the way that an oath was taken in the synagogue by one who had been required to take an oath by a rabbinic court.

### *'L'eyla Mikol Birchata'* – Towards a History of the Hebrew Version

Moshe Hallamish

Although the first paragraph of the *kaddish* is in Aramaic, the second one begins in Hebrew and changes to Aramaic in the middle. Ancient Eretz Israel prayerbooks present a consistent version of the second paragraph – all in Hebrew. This Hebrew version is also found in Sephardi manuscripts, primarily from Catalonia and Aragon. In some Ashkenazi manuscripts we also find this Hebrew version but only in the context of an explanation and not as an actual liturgical text.

### From Chest (תיבה) to Ark (ארון): The Evolving Character of the Ark of Scrolls in the Periods of the Mishnah and the Talmud

Itzhak Hamitovsky

The purpose of this article is to both trace and discuss the significance of the developments regarding the shape and size of the ancient ark of scrolls, in the Mishnaic and the Talmudic periods. It has long been noticed that the Tannaitic and the Amoraic sources (in Palestine) used different terms whenever referring to the ark of scrolls: "תיבה" (chest) in the Tannaitic sources and "ארון" (ark) in the Amoraic sources. Most of the scholars who dealt with this issue focused on the symbolic shift reflected in the new term, and its linkage to the Ark of the Covenant from Biblical times. This semantic shift was understood to be part of the process of the sanctification of the synagogue, which took place in this period. The attacks the Christian fathers and much later Karaite sages leveled against the Jewish customs relating to the ark of scrolls were taken as evidence of this.

Focusing on the reality of the furniture within the ancient synagogue,

been composed in the State of Israel during the last half of the twentieth century. These codes originate in synagogues found in various types of settlements and the members of the synagogues come from different countries, different backgrounds and have different outlooks. We first discuss the nature of the codes, their structures and their content. Then we note the differences between these codes and twenty seven earlier codes, from five perspectives. These include the rite of prayer itself, attitude towards Zionism and the State of Israel, the place of women in the synagogue, socio-cultural aspects of activities within the synagogue and the ways in which the codes are enforced. The most recent codes show two main patterns: one is that of the ultra-Orthodox communities and the other is that of religious Zionists/modern Orthodox. The differences between the types of codes are instructive about the various communities' concept of the synagogue and its proper function. The article concludes with an appendix which contains a number of codes, from various types of communities, published here for the first time.

### *'Maggid Zedek'* – About the Synagogues of Zana

Aharon Gaimani

The memoirs entitled *'Maggid Zedeq'* of Mahpoud Garufy describes the activities of 21 synagogues found in the Jewish quarter of Zana in the first half of the twentieth century. In this memoir, written in Ashkelon seven years after his immigration to Israel, he wished to transmit his memories of the past to future generations. The memoir is not organized in any particular order and most of the synagogues are described in brief.

The synagogue in Yemen served not only as a house of prayer but also as a house of study and it was the center of the religious life of the Jews. R. Mahpoud portrayed the leaders of the various communities positively. He stressed several subjects in the conduct of synagogue life and study and gave unique details about the various synagogues regarding their studying of the Torah, their able leadership and the mutual respect of the members of the congregation for each other.

Among the subjects discussed is the study of Torah in the synagogue: the subjects of study and the times for study. In the Tiri synagogue, study began at midnight and they studied Torah, Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara. In the study hall of R. Yihya Kafih they studied mostly Talmd, Rambam, and they examined the various versions of prayers and blessings from

## *Abstracts of Hebrew Articles*

### Dualism as a Stylistic Characteristic in the Discussion of Prayer by R. Joseph Albo

Dror Erlich

R. Joseph Albo's treatment of the theological and philosophical aspects of prayer, distinguished from the legal, historic and liturgical aspects, is, to a great extent, an unusual phenomenon in medieval Jewish thought – both in its quantity and in its quality. From the standpoint of quantity, the central discussion of prayer in the sixteenth to twenty-fourth section of the fourth part is an exceptionally long discussion. From the standpoint of quality, we have here one of the earliest attempts in the history of Jewish philosophy to present a systematic and comprehensive theory about the significance of prayer, its spiritual and religious foundations, its internal dynamics, its purpose and results, dealing with all its problems: philosophical, psychological, theological and hermeneutic.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, to discuss the various aspects of the R. Albo's concept of prayer, as they are presented in his central discussion and in other places in his work. The main conclusion of this paper, based on textual analysis, is that R. Albo maintains two different attitudes, and even contradictory attitudes, towards five central aspects of prayer: 1) the significance of precatory prayer; 2) the advantage of public prayer over private prayer; 3) the impact of prayer on the pray-er; 4) the spiritual motivation of prayer; 5) prayers of adoration. This means that his discussions are characterized by dualism. Towards the conclusion of the article it is argued that this duality was an accepted means of hiding one's true attitude in the esoteric style of *Sefer Ha-ikkarim*.

### Codes for Synagogues in Recent Times

Aaron Ahrend

This article is a first attempt to study codes established for synagogues in recent times. These codes contain rules for prayer and conduct in the synagogue. We have collected over sixty codes of this type, which have

synagogue edifice was used as a meeting hall in addition to serving as a school building. The prayer services were employed for ad hoc meetings as well as for philosophical sermons. Moreover, the synagogue structure and protocol reflected the social structure of Jewish society and especially Provençal Jewish aristocracy. The *chazzan*'s use of titles for persons not belonging to the aristocratic class or to the Nasi's family was viewed as revolutionary and elicited extreme responses. Thus, besides officiating at the services, the synagogue reader carried out a social function in insuring the continued reign of the *nesi'im*.

aristocracy. In addition to flogging, exile and a ban, the leaders of Lunel commanded Machir to fine the rebels a total of one thousand maravedis (morabetins), payable to the royal treasury! The first personality to sign the letter was Levi b. Moshe b. Todros b. Moshe b. Todros, i.e., the presiding Nasi of Narbonne who was then in Lunel. Letters from Béziers and Montpellier confirmed this.<sup>83</sup>

Although the second incident occurred in Barcelona, it is clear that synagogue protocol was a major factor in Jewish aristocratic society on both sides of the Pyrennees. Common ground between Barcelona and Provence included cultural and political ties as well as a common heritage.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the incident in Narbonne about fifteen years earlier had a similar tone; hence, the striking similarities demand the following analysis: attempts were made by non-aristocratic persons to appropriate titles reserved solely for the aristocracy and this was viewed as a revolt against the reign of the Nasi and *nesi'im*. As the medium for challenging the Nasi, the rebels chose those things that normally confirmed the Nasi's communal status and authority: the synagogue service and ceremonies, and the structural architecture in the synagogue sanctuary.<sup>85</sup>

In summary, upon examining the material found in extant rabbinic literature together with contemporary chronicles and epistles, one finds numerous passages dealing with the synagogues in southern France, their structures, and their social functions within the community and the society of *nesi'im*. The

83 Neubauer, *Letterbode*, 165 ff. See Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1929) vol. 1, pp. 37 f. and Septimus, "Piety", pp. 208–209, who demonstrated that the punishment was carried out. Septimus, "Piety", p. 223, n. 29, pointed out that for unknown reasons, the leaders of Narbonne did not communicate during this affair of ca. 1210. The leaders, the Nasi Levi b. Moses and R. David Kimchi, signed the letter from Lunel. Perhaps some members of the Jewish aristocracy retired to Lunel as a result of an acute threat to Narbonne by crusaders during the Albigensian crusade at this time. This was reminiscent of the crisis that struck the city during the 1130s and 1140s when many Jews fled to Lunel. On the Crusader threat, see Emery, *Heresy*, pp. 57 ff. For a genealogical chart of Levi's family and his relationship to Kalonymos, see Pick, *Communities*, p. 397; see also *ibid.* pp. 118 ff. For further discussion of this incident, see Pick, "Jewish Aristocracy in Southern France," *REJ*, 161 (2002), 105 ff.; Klein, *Power and Patrimony*, pp. 183–209.

84 Pick, *Communities*, *passim*.

85 Septimus, "Piety", p. 199. Septimus did not discuss the incident with the Nasi of Narbonne nor the parallel elements between the two incidents.

those seats.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, structural change in the synagogue, especially within the area reserved for the aristocrats, was an act of rebellion!

The rebels were accused of acting immorally. How was this expressed? The Nasi Machir of Barcelona had described the incident in his letter:

Afterwards, they added to their sins, an audacious crime...for when the Nasi wanted to leave the synagogue with the *nesi'im* and the elders according to protocol, these [men] audaciously went ahead of them.<sup>81</sup>

Besides these “criminal” acts by She’altiel and another person – being called to the Torah before the *nesi'im*, exiting the synagogue before the *nesi'im* and attempting structural changes of the synagogue without permission – they behaved disrespectfully during the burial and mourning period of the Nasi R. Todros. How so? They halted the prayer service during the mourning period of one of the venerable elders.<sup>82</sup>

The communities of Lunel, Montpellier and Béziers reacted strongly to the attempted rebellion in Barcelona; synagogue social behavior once again played an important role in the affair. Provençal Jewry’s swift and vigorous response manifested their similar comprehension of synagogue decorum – no change at all was permitted, neither in the synagogue etiquette nor in the seating arrangements. The Provençals levied severe punishments against those who would defy that accepted decorum and rebel against the established

80 Klein, *Power and Patrimony*, pp. 196–197. For synagogue seats as property of their owners in Provence, see *Ittur*, ed. Meir Yonah, *ot mem – moda'ah*, 41c–d.

81 Ibid., 162–163: ואחרי כן הוסיפו על חטאתם פשע בעזות מצח וכסל ורשע וקם הבער הנזכר ורעו שמואל בר יצחק הידוע בן מיימון בר' חיים וברצות הנשיא לצאת מבית הכנסת עם הנשיאים והזקנים כמשפט העזו אלו בפניהם ויקלו ראשם ויעברו בראש. On all this, see also B. Septimus, “Piety,” pp. 197–201.

82 Neubauer, *Letterbode*, 163: על חטא שחטאו להוסיף על העזרה בימה שלא על פי ב"ד של ע"א; על חטא שחטאו בנשיא הגדול ר' טדרוס ז"ל; על חטא שחטאו שלא הלכו אחר מטתו; על חטא שחטאו ושעכבו בבית הכנסת בימי אבלו; על חטא שחטאו שפרקו והעזו פניהם לקרות בספר תורה תחת הנשיא הישיש ר' שאלתיאל ז"ל; על חטא שחטאו שיצאו מבית הכנסת לפניו ולפני הנשיאים הגדולים...האחרים; cf. Septimus, “Piety,” pp. 199; 223, n. 25. The term *nesi'im* in the last sentence would imply several of them and not just a single family as suggested by Baer, *Spain*, I, pp. 94–95, 398, n. 43 (Hebrew ed., pp. 55, 483, n. 43). Apparently, the synagogue in Barcelona was quite old and contained the seating arrangements of families for a number of generations. For halting of the prayer service in Barcelona in the beginning of the thirteenth century, see above nn. 42–45.

and stature of the Nasi, his family, and his class. In the first half of the twelfth century the rabbis of Narbonne had undermined the authority of the Nasi in Halakhic and communal issues.<sup>76</sup> Now, at the end of the twelfth century, an attempt was made by some community members to further undermine the authority of the Nasi by expanding the aristocracy to include themselves. The forum for this revolt was the synagogue service.

An episode that occurred in Barcelona about fifteen years after the above letter from Sheshet again demonstrates the close relationship between Provence and Barcelona. Sheshet's successor, R. Machir bar Sheshet, was forced to defend the position of the *nesi'im* in Catalonia.<sup>77</sup> In a letter to the sages of Lunel around 1210, he described how "a foolish, evil, base man named She'altiel b. Reuben" had been called to the Torah reading during the synagogue service before "the great Nasi *Marana ve-Rabbana* Todros" and claimed for himself "an honorable place to which his father and father's fathers had not attained."<sup>78</sup> One may argue that the "honorable place" may have meant the appellation *nadib*, similar to the offender in Narbonne who had attempted to force the *chazzan* to employ a title in the Nasi's presence, or it may have denoted being called to read a specific portion (*aliyah*) of the Torah recitation, i.e., before the great Nasi Todros. However, from the response from Lunel, it probably refers to a specific place of honor within the building usually reserved for the aristocrats. The Provençal leaders, including the Nasi Levi b. Todros and R. David Kimchi, wrote in response to the events in Barcelona: "And they added a new bench to the podium in anger and they revolted against the *nesi'im*...."<sup>79</sup> It has been suggested that this platform was a special raised area in the synagogue reserved for the aristocracy. Seats in the synagogue were the property of their owners and any attempt to expand it by non-aristocrats would diminish both the monetary value and the prestige of

76 See Pick, *Communities*, pp. 66–71.

77 Septimus, "Piety," pp. 197–198. Septimus, "Piety," p. 221 n. 7, convincingly argued that Machir was not the son of the above-mentioned famous Nasi Sheshet of Saragossa and later Barcelona. However, Klein, *Power and Patrimony*, pp. 107 ff., persuasively argues that Machir was Sheshet's son-in-law, providing more biographical material.

78 Neubauer, *Letterbode*, 163: גם את עון הנשיא הגדול מרנא ורבנא ר' טדרוס ז"ל אשר מעלו בו מעל ויקימו להם משחית, איש סכל רע ובליעל ושמו שאלתיאל בר ראובן רסן שלחו מפניו להרוס להקרוחו בתורה בפניו ולכבדו לו מקום נכבד לא זכו לו אבותיו ואבות אבותיו.

79 Ibid., 165: והוסיפו ספסל בבימה באף ובחמה ועל אשר פקרו בנשיאים. See also Pick, *Communities*, n. 25.

R. Sheshet b. Isaac b. Joseph Benveniste of Saragossa, to both the Nasi of Narbonne, Kalonymos II b. Todros, and his cousin, R. Levi b. Moshe, provides evidence that the synagogue service was a vehicle for supporting the aristocracy in sustaining its position and privileges. In formal public worship in the synagogue, one's title was officially recognized and a member of the aristocracy was called to the Torah reading with his title of *nasi* or *nadib*. During the last years of the reign of Kalonymos II, Nasi of Narbonne, someone attempted to usurp the title *nadib* and Kalonymos vigorously opposed it.<sup>73</sup> In an epistle to the Nasi Sheshet of Saragossa,<sup>74</sup> Kalonymos the Nasi explained that the offender, in the Nasi's presence, insisted that during the synagogue service, the *chazzan* call this unknown and undeserving person by the title *nadib* – a title reserved for the aristocratic class. When the *chazzan* refused, the accused man cursed the *chazzan* and subsequently fled to Catalonia. Sheshet attempted to intercede on behalf of this offending person by requiring that he ask forgiveness from the *chazzan* for attempting to force the *chazzan* to use the term *nadib* when calling the offender to read from the Torah scroll. In addition, the accused was required to approach the Nasi of Narbonne and community leaders in humility and fear to receive the obligatory punishment. Sheshet then suggested to the Nasi that he should accept that person's remorse, and administer a punishment after consulting the community leaders and sages. Moreover, Sheshet requested a report of the outcome and permission to rescind the *cherem* (ban), after the offender repented and demonstrated his scrupulousness in honoring the Nasi.<sup>75</sup>

It would appear that this incident was an attempt to undermine the authority

73 D. Kaufmann, "Lettres de Scheschet b. Isaac b Joseph Benveniste de Saragosse aux prince Kalonymos et Lévi de Narbonne," *REJ*, XXXIX (1899), 71: באמרך כי אחרי אשר אמר על פניך יקראוהו החזן נדיב ורצונם יבטל מפני רצונו. Jean Régné, *Étude sur la condition des Juifs de Narbonne du Ve au XIVe siècle* (Narbonne, 1912), p. 182, n. 3, stated that the correspondence had no interest for political history and was exclusively private, however, it is clear there is socio-political significance to the epistles.

74 Kaufmann, *Lettres*, 67. Kaufmann assumed that Sheshet at this time was in Saragossa; however, Klein, *Power and Patrimony*, p. 100, states that by the 1160s, Sheshet was associated with the community of Barcelona. For more information concerning Sheshet, see *Takhkamoni*, p. 346; Baer, *Spain*, I, p. 91 [pp. 53 ff. in Hebrew ed.]; Septimus, "Piety," p. 197; Septimus, *Ramah*, pp. 28, 46 ff.; Klein, *Power and Patrimony*, pp. 100 ff.

75 Kaufmann, *Lettres*, 71. The *chazzan* himself was so upset in that incident that he vowed never to call the offender again to the public reading of the Torah in Narbonne (*ibid.*).

And the *nidui* [a type of ban] shall be practiced in the synagogue, that they should sit [daily], morning and evening, and on the Sabbath in the place where mourners sit, four cubits distant [from their usual seats] as persons reprimanded and excommunicated by Heaven.<sup>70</sup>

More significant is the existence of a Provençal Jewish aristocracy, as can be demonstrated upon reviewing the material found in extant Hebrew literature, including chronicles, epistles, the responsa literature, and commentaries to the Talmud. From this wealth of sources, details about the Nasi of Narbonne and his colleagues emerge; specifically, the close ties between the Nasi of Narbonne and the *nesi'im* of Christian Spain. Examples of marriage, intervention on behalf of one another in times of crisis, and the exchange of correspondence demonstrate these ties. One may characterize the Nasi of Narbonne as an aristocrat similar to the *nesi'im* of Christian Spain. Moreover, a complete class of *nesi'im* and courtiers existed in southern France during the period under study. A close reading of Spanish and Provençal sources indicates many individuals in southern France enjoyed the titles *nasi* or *nadib*.<sup>71</sup> It appears that these aristocrats were not members of the Nasi of Narbonne's family.<sup>72</sup>

In the last decade of the 12th century, a series of letters written by the Nasi

70 A. Neubauer, "Ergänzungen und Verbesserungen zu Abba Mari's מנחת קנאות aus Handschriften," *Israelitische Letterbode*, IV (1878–1879), 165–166 (henceforth: Neubauer, *Letterbode*): והנדוי יהיו נוהגים אותו בבית הכנסת לבא בקר וערב לשבת במקום אבלים. ברחוק ארבע אמות כנוזפים ומנוזים לשמים. This was but one of the punishments meted out by the leaders of Lunel, as will be discussed below (n. 80).

71 For *nadib* as an aristocratic title in Christian Spain, see B. Septimus, "Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England, 1979; henceforth: Septimus, *Piety*), pp. 203–204; 223, n. 32; 225, n. 55; 226, n. 60; Elka Beth Klein, *Power and Patrimony: The Jewish Community of Barcelona, 1050–1250*, pp. 112 ff. (Harvard University, 1996, unpublished diss.; henceforth: Klein, *Power and Patrimony*). Accordingly, considering the socio-political implications of the incident in Narbonne described below, it would appear that the use of *nadib* in the synagogue was reserved solely for the aristocratic class. Hence, in this case, it does not appear to be a philanthropic title but one with socio-political meaning. For further descriptions of the aristocracy of Barcelona, see Klein, *Power and Patrimony*, *passim*.

72 This was described at length in S. H. Pick, "Jewish Aristocracy in Southern France," *Revue des études juives*, 161, 1–2 (janvier–juin 2002), 97–121.

Accordingly, the synagogue was the scene of missionizing activities, and if one takes this account as factual, the scene of a lively and lengthy rebuttal by a rabbi.<sup>68</sup>

In conclusion, not only did the synagogue's structure act house the educational facilities, the synagogue with its attendant services became the focal point for the study of philosophy. By employing the Sabbath services and Bible (Torah) readings as the starting point of their sermons, many preachers used the synagogue settings to introduce their audiences to non-religious ideas of philosophy and science. Abba Mari, who had wanted to restrict the study of philosophy, recounted how he himself explained a verse during the *chazzan's* (synagogue reader) Torah reading, by suggesting that it referred to the astrolabe, causing a sensation among those in attendance.<sup>69</sup>

### E. The Synagogue and Social Structure in Provence

Finally, the synagogue was a vehicle through which one's position within Jewish society was confirmed. A person placed under the ban, which was a type of social ostracizing, may have been prevented from entering the synagogue entirely. In other cases, he was restricted to special seats in a specific area, causing public comment and social pressure to repent his ways, as seen by the ban levied by the sages of Lunel:

interpretation appears to be far-fetched and perhaps based upon what may have seemed to Chazan to be a play on words or misspelling. Herskowitz, p. 46, just states that the priest was "probably a Dominican." In light of the various sermons given in Provence, I would translate it literally and the author is emphasizing that this "*darshan*" was not a Jew, although in all probability, the priest indeed was a Dominican. In general, the term *kadesh* was translated by Chazan as "unholy" (p. 140) based upon the biblical meaning: male prostitute. Herskowitz translates it as "the outcast" (p. 57); see also his Hebrew n. 34 for Part I, chapter 1 of the Hebrew transcription [unfortunately, there is no pagination in this section].

68 Chazan, p. 445, hesitantly assumes that it was delivered in the presence of the Jews and their Christian guests. Likewise, Herskowitz assumes that R. Meir's reply was indeed delivered in front of the priest and the Christian notables. Herskowitz notes that R. Meir apologized for being lengthy and going past the usual mealtime (p. 46; 17a in the ms.), a reference mentioned by Chazan also (p. 446).

69 Rashba, Dimitrovsky, vol. II, pp. 582–583, ll. 36–45; cf. Saperstein, *Preaching*, p. 382 and n. 7.

their way. However, we have seized upon a problem that does not exist, the danger of which is far-fetched. The real danger is not addressed by our ordinance [against studying philosophy before the age of 25] despite the need for a great effort. I would not repudiate these preachers completely. Rather, I would give them permission to interpret figuratively to their heart's content verses from Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and the rabbinic homilies related to their content, and certain Psalms relevant to the physical sciences. But they must not touch upon the "three chariots"<sup>65</sup> or the work of Creation or any of the secrets of the Torah, or prophecy, or esoteric doctrines, or any of the *aggadot* pertaining to these matters.<sup>66</sup>

One should note another type of sermon in the synagogue. In order to bolster its missionizing activities, the church ordered missionizing sermons given in the synagogue. In part one of his *Milkhemet Mitzvah*, R. Meir haMeili of Narbonne wrote the following:

This is the beginning of the sermon that I preached after the *kadesh* – not of our faith – who gave the sermon and spoke in the synagogue before the congregation. With him was a multitude large and distinguished. Within my sermon were replies to those statements that he made against us on that occasion.<sup>67</sup>

65 Is. 6; Ez., 1:10.

66 *Choshen Mishpat, Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz* (Berlin, 1884), pp. 166–167 [R. Menahem ha-Meiri, *Beit ha-Behirah, Tractate Avot*, ed. S.Z. Havlin, p. 465]. See also, *ibid.*, ed. Havlin, p. 464 and Saperstein, *Preaching*, p. 383, and n. 10.

67 William K. Herskowitz, *Judaeo-Christian Dialogue in Provence as Reflected in Milhemet Mitzva of R. Meir HaMeili*, diss., N.Y.: Yeshiva University, Dec. 1974, in the Hebrew transcription of the work (17a of the MS): פתיחה לדורשה שדרשתה [צ"ל: שדרשת] אחר אשר דבר דבריו הקדש הדורש אשר לא מאמונתנו בבית הכנסת לפני הקהל ועמו עמים רבים גדולים ונכבדים ובתוך הדורשה היו תשובות לדבריו אשר דבר כנגדינו בפעם ההיא. R. Chazan, "Confrontation in the Synagogue of Narbonne: A Christian Sermon and a Jewish Reply," *Harvard Theological Review*, 67 (1974), p. 445, translated the term הקדש הדורש as "Dominican friar," and then noted that the phrase "not of our faith" is strange, and then went on to state that that "friar" had originally been a Jew. Based on this, Chazan goes on to suggest that the friar was none other than Friar Paul, i.e. Pablo Christiani (*ibid.*, pp. 456–457). This

Some of the sermons that were delivered in the synagogue – most of them contained external matters [i.e., philosophy] – there is no desire for them!<sup>62</sup>

When the ban against the study of philosophy was brought to Montpellier, protest took the form of the reading from Anatoli's book in the synagogue an hour before the afternoon service on the Sabbath.<sup>63</sup>

In one description, nothing problematic was found in the sermon, but the report by Don Crescas Vidal is important for the explicit description of sermons in the synagogue in Perpignan:

Surely, our master knows that I had not seen nor heard this until today in our town, where I have settled. Two or three times those who regard themselves as wise in philosophy delivered sermons in the synagogue when I was there and they had not uttered anything offensive or faulty. I do not know if they were prudent because of me while [really] possessing a different spirit or they were honestly stating [their beliefs].<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, there must have been many such preachers who developed philosophical themes, for R. Menahem ha-Meiri, a leading rabbinic authority in Perpignan, although opposed to issuing a ban on philosophy, demanded some action against those preachers:

This is the ever-present perversion, an evil renewed for thousands every day. These preachers now constitute a sect; they sing their song and go

62 Rashba, Dimitrovsky, vol. I, p. 403, ll. 53–4: קצת הדרשות הנאמרות בבית הכנסת, על אשר היו רובם דבריהם חיצוניים אין חפץ בהם. See also, vol. II, p. 459, ll. 13–14; p. 539, ll. 33–35.

63 Rashba, Dimitrovsky, vol. II, p. 692, ll. 37 ff.: והקהיל עלי קצת מנכבדי הקהל, קרובי החכם ר' יעקב בעל המלמד... וסבב פני הדבר, כי נאספו הקרובים ועמהם רבים מן הקהל ביום שבת פרשת פרה קודם המנחה, וקראו בספר המלמד בבית הכנסת בקול רם, ואמרו כי כן יעשו בכל שבת ושבת. Cf. Saperstein, *Preaching*, p. 382. For sermons before the afternoon service (*minchah*) on the Sabbath, see Saperstein, *Preaching*, pp. 29–30; 38.

64 Rashba, Dimitrovsky, vol. I, pp. 370–1, ll. 83–88: אמנם ידע אדננו כי זה לא ראיתי ולא שמעתי עד היום בעירנו זאת, אשר שם תקעתי אהלי, כי שנים ושלוש פעמים דרשו מן המתחכמים בפילוסופיא בבית הכנסת בהיותי שם ולא הוציאו מפיהם דבר פשע ואשם. לא ידעתי אם נשמרו בעדי [= בגללי] ורוח אחרת אתם או אם כפיהם כן לכם. See also the remarks by M. Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's Herem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History*, I, no. 2 (Fall 1986), 37–38, n. 23.

the two terms as synonymous, and hence after he employed the term *scolam* he immediately added the second term *synagogam*.

An interesting development in Provençal culture was the synagogue becoming the venue for the giving of sermons. During the thirteenth century, Provençal preachers achieved fame or infamy with their sermons. These homilies included philosophical explications, at times becoming in effect lectures in philosophy; some were extremely allegorical, raising the ire of conservative rabbis, and eventually sparking the ban on philosophy at the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>59</sup> For example, Jacob Anatoli, who recorded his sermons in his *Malmad Ha-Talmidim*, was one of those preachers who included philosophical material and interpretations in his sermons. He began his career by giving sermons at weddings, and then went on to preach each Sabbath in the synagogue. He filled his sermons with allegorical interpretations that angered his contemporaries, until he was forced to halt his preaching.<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, preachers continued to include philosophical content in their sermons. Of course, this development was a fundamental cause for Rashba's *cherem* against the study of philosophy. Abba Mari himself admitted that:

The reason why I arose and was possessed by a zealous spirit, for when I saw some men from other places during weddings and circumcisions preach publicly in the synagogue as if they were princes and leaders. They would not speak about the commandments...but rather things that they made up. If not enough of this, they would interpret Abraham and Sarah as representing material and form....<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, the following report was quoted in the *Minchat Kena'ot*:

ceremony was written in connection with the case of Johannes de Bretz, in the diocese of Toulouse, who was tried by inquisition for returning to Judaism in 1317 (Yerushalmi, *ibid.*, 325–326 and n. 25).

59 The preacher and his sermon are discussed in Pick, *Communities*, in the last section of Chapter VI.

60 Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching, 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven and London, 1989; henceforth: Saperstein, *Preaching*) pp. 111–123, which includes an English translation of a homily on education.

61 Rashba, Dimitrovsky, vol. I, p. 316, ll. 64–71 (Hebrew). Cf. Saperstein *Preaching*, p. 381, n. 5 and *Decoding*, pp. 60–62.

property in the Juiverie of Narbonne to the Jews of Narbonne. Included was the *scholas vestras* (old schools), the ancient school buildings, a reference to the venerable academy of Narbonne.<sup>52</sup> In addition, a document listing property of the Jews of Narbonne sold to Bernard Sanche dit Raseur, valet of the king, after the expulsion of 1306 included the *scole judeorum inferiores site in parrochia sancti cosme* (the lower schools of the Jews located in the district of St. Cosme) and the *scole antique judeorum que sunt in parrochia beate marie majoris* (old schools of the Jews that are in the district of Blessed Greater Mary)<sup>53</sup> and again, the references were to school buildings. The literal meaning of these terms is school, but the expression probably referred to the synagogue. There are no references in these documents to any synagogues in Narbonne, but as shown from the archeological evidence in the first section, there certainly was a synagogue in Narbonne.<sup>54</sup> Hence, scholars interpret these statements to be referring to the synagogues of Narbonne.<sup>55</sup>

The synagogues of Marseilles were also referred to as schools: the *schola maior* (larger school) in the lower city in the eastern part of the Jusataria and *schola turrium* (school of the towers) in the upper city.<sup>56</sup> The implication of all this would then be obvious – the synagogues were the sites of the academies or schools in most cases, thereby also reflecting the communal aspect of the schools.<sup>57</sup> Finally, in Bernard Gui's description of the "rejudaization" rite, a ritual employed to accept Jews who had converted to Christianity back to the Jewish fold, he concluded with the following statement: "From then on he lives and acts as a Jew and attends the School, or Synagogue, of the Jews" (*et ex tunc vivit et conversatur ut Judeus et ingreditur scolam seu synagogam Judeorum*).<sup>58</sup> Clearly, Bernard understood

52 Gustav Saige, [above, n. 34], pp. 155–156.

53 Saige, pp. 281, 283, 284; Régné, pp. 82 ff.

54 See above, n. 20.

55 B. Blumenkranz, ed. *Art et archéologie*...[above, n. 22], p. 357. See also B. Blumenkranz, "Les synagogues," *Art et archéologie*...[above, n. 22], pp. 39, 41–2, 44–7, 57, for the synonymous use of these terms. Cf. Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education*, p. 23.

56 D.L. Smail, "The Two Synagogues of Medieval Marseille: Documentary Evidence," *REJ*, 154 (1995), pp. 115–124.

57 Avignon apparently had two separate buildings, see *Art*, p. 313, but this was a late development that had resulted from a legacy from 1466.

58 Y. H. Yerushalmi, "The Inquisition and the Jews of France in the Time of Bernard Gui," *Harvard Theological Review*, 63 (1970), 364–365. The description of the rejudaizing

of Montpellier possessing “permanent houses of study”<sup>50</sup> may simply mean two or more synagogues which housed schools and/or yeshivot. Neither did Benjamin really add any architectural descriptions of these houses of study.<sup>51</sup>

From a Latin document dated March 8, 1217, we learn that Aymeri, viscount of Narbonne, and his wife Marguerite of Montmorency granted

summary and arguments. Norman Golb, *History and Culture of the Jews of Rouen in the Middle Ages*, pp. 38–40 (Hebrew) argues that the *Chukei Ha-Torah* is a product of Rouen Jewry, and provided a critical edition of it on pp. 181–4. (His argument that מנהג צרפתים refers to a custom of Ile-de-France only is weak, as this term would refer to the entire northern area of France and was the term employed by Provençals for northerners!) [Twersky, in a synopsis of a lecture published as “Huqqey Ha-Torah: Origins and Tendencies,” *Third World Congress of Jewish Studies: Report*, III, p. 121 (Hebrew), argued for the Provençal origins of this unique document. Since the lecture was never published, I presume those are the arguments which appeared in *Rabad*.] See also the essay by Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages*, pp. 101–115 (with Hebrew text). On p. 102, Kanarfogel admits that if Provençal, it is likely that it was in effect or at least represented by active institutions. Moreover, he notes that there was nothing in Germany comparable to the highly organized and communally funded educational institutions found in Provence and in the document. If its origins were in Germany, then it was probably just a theoretical blueprint. Nonetheless, he then goes on to suggest that the *Chukei Ha-Torah* may represent German pietists by comparing the *Chukei Ha-Torah* with *Sefer Hasidim*. Notwithstanding Kanarfogel's arguments, I tend to agree with Twersky (*Rabad*, p. 25 ff.) and together with his argument of pietism (the term *perushim* employed both in Provence and in the *Chukei Ha-Torah*), I would add the following two arguments: The fourth law of the *Chukei Ha-Torah* demanded communal support for the school, a phenomenon known only in Provence, as was noted above. Furthermore, the *takkanah* to dedicate the first-born son for the study of Torah is associated with the Provençal custom of not mourning the first-born son should he die because he was consecrated to God, see Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 205–211 (Hebrew). Sperber just quoted ha-Meiri's *Chibbur Ha-Teshuva* (p. 206) and hence missed a significant point. Ha-Meiri in his *Beit Ha-Bechirah al Massechet Pesahim*, ed. J. Klein (Jerusalem, 1966), p. 256, stated explicitly that “nowadays one postpones (the redemption) [pidyon ha-ben] and adds a fifth (of the amount)” – ועכשיו נהגו לאחר ולהוסיף חומש (see n. 482 ad loc). Ha-Meiri continues (p. 257) and says that if the redemption was on his wedding day, certain hymns were sung. Apparently, the firstborn was not redeemed after thirty days, corresponding to his consecration, see further details in Pick, *Provençal Customs*, pp. 90–93. Indeed the *Chukei Ha-Torah* has a special ceremony for the eighth day during the *brit milah* (circumcision), and conspicuously omits any mention of the redemption of the first-born after thirty days!

50 Benjamin, *Itinerary*, p. 3 (ג): ויש ביניהם בתי מדרשות קבועות לתלמוד.

51 J. Shatzmiller, “Les écoles dans la littérature rabbinique,” *Art et archéologie*, pp. 138–9.

whether the community could cancel vows on the Sabbath, a probable allusion to the repealing of a ban (*cherem*) or regulation on the Sabbath. Although the synagogue was not mentioned in either the question or the answer, the scene of this meeting was probably the synagogue, as seen from previous responsum, especially when one notes Rashba's response: "for there are no meetings except on the Sabbath," and as seen in all the above examples, these meetings took place in the synagogue – some during the prayer services.<sup>47</sup>

Churches were also used for community assemblies of the Christian population during this period. During the crusades against the Albigensians, excommunications were issued and announced by church authorities in the cathedrals. After the Franciscan convent in Narbonne was excommunicated, the consuls of the bourg appealed directly to the Pope. The appeal was publicly read to the populace in the Church of St. Paul, in Lamourquier, and finally at the Dominican chapter-hall.<sup>48</sup> As both the synagogue and the cathedral were the largest communal buildings and central to communal life, they became the focal points of public activities.

#### D. The Provençal Synagogue as a Place of Culture

The synagogue also typically served as the location of the school building. In most cases, it is unclear in many Hebrew sources whether the schools or academies were located in separate buildings or were housed in the synagogue.<sup>49</sup> For example, Benjamin of Tudela's twelfth century description

47 Rashba, *Responsa*, 4:296: (שם ד:רצה). שאלת אם יצחק ז"ל... (שם ד:רצה). שאלת אם יצחק ז"ל... יצטרכו הקהל להתיר נדרים בשבת לצורך שעה או לדבר מצוה או שלא לדבר מצוה אם יעשו ואם יחדלו? תשובה... היה נראה שלא היו רשאים לעשות כן, כמו שכתבתי, אלא שכך נהגו. ולא שמעתי מקום נוהגין בכך, ומנהגן של ישראל תורה היא. אולי יש להם על מה שיסמכו, לפי שאין כנופיא אלא בשבת, ואלו לא יתירוהו בשבת, לא יתאספו ביום אחר, ונמצא לו היתר לעולם. וע"ז סמכו להתיר, אפילו בשבת...

48 Richard Emery, *Heresy and Inquisition in Narbonne* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941 [Reprinted, New York: AMS Press, inc., 1967]), p. 131.

49 The *Chukei Ha-Torah* placed the school in a separate building alongside the synagogue: חק שני לקבוע מדרש לפרושים המקבלים עליהם עול שמים אצל בית הכנסת. ואותו בית נקרא מדרש גדול. The *Chukei Ha-Torah* is accepted by some scholars as a Provençal document, and provides proof of the role education played in the mind of the southern French Jew, if not an actual blueprint of Provençal schools. Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquière: A Twelfth-Century Talmudist* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980, Revised Edition), pp. 25 ff. discussed this at length and there is no need to repeat his

practice in non-Franco-German centers of Jewish culture, such as Barcelona at the beginning of the 13th century or in Provence in the twelfth century.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, the words “for any other matter” (לדבר אחר) found in the above responsum refer to a broad range of communal regulations, such as taxation, which was levied upon community members. Clearly, non-religious matters were taken up in the synagogue. This is confirmed by another case of halting the services found in Marseilles. In cases where it was impossible to adjudicate before a Jewish court, permission to appear before a Gentile court was sought by stopping the prayer. The custom in Marseilles was to stop the prayers three times in order to procure a permit for such adjudication.<sup>45</sup>

Further evidence of the synagogue’s use as a community center comes from Carcassonne. In a query sent to Rashba by R. Mordechai ha-Ezovi b. Yitzchak of Carcassonne, one notes that not all the communal leaders were in the synagogue for a communal *cherem* against a recalcitrant member of the community: “Also, not all the selectmen were in the synagogue when the ban was issued.”<sup>46</sup> Once again, the synagogue was the stage upon which communal action was played out – in this case to discipline community members. In another query sent to Rashba, R. Mordechai ha-Ezovi asked

Ages,” *Knesset Ezra: Literature and Life in the Synagogue*, eds. S. Elizur et al (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 327–350 (Hebrew).

44 For Barcelona, see below, n. 82, a source that predates by fifty years the earliest date for Christian Spain suggested by Grossman, “Origins,” p. 210.

45 Abba Mari b. Issac, *Ittur*, ed. Meir Yonah, *ot bet – birurin*, 2b, within the context of a Gaonic responsum of granting permission to adjudicate before a gentile court: “and the custom is to halt the synagogue services three times” (אבל במקום שאין דיין מומחה ואין יכול) (גזולן חוששין לישראל לגבות החוב בישראל מומחה נדון בהדיוטות ואל יאכד הממון ובמקום שאין (גזולן חוששין לישראל וגובה) [בית דין של ישראל גובה {שו”פ} החוב בדין נכרים וכן הדין {ע”כ תשובת הגאונים, שו”פ} (ומנהג לעכב שלשה פעמים בבית הכנסת ואחר כך מתירין לו כך מנהג שלנו); cf. *Ozar ha-Geonim: Thesaurus of the Gaonic Responsa and Commentaries*, ed. B. M. Lewin, *Bava Kamma*, Responsa, no. 291, p. 100. The *Ittur* was already noted by Grossman, “Origins,” 210–211. If the responsum quoted above is from Ravi, then it also predates the earliest date suggested by Grossman, *ibid.*, who only discussed the *Ittur*’s mention of *ikkuv tefilah*. In any case, whether authored by Ravi or Rabad, it certainly contradicts Grossman’s thesis that *ikkuv tefilah* in Provence was only symbolic.

46 Rashba, *Responsa*, 3:304 (starting with 3:302 there is a series of responsa to R. Mordechai ha-Ezovi b. Isaac of Carcassonne): גם לא היו כל הבוררים בבית הכנסת בשעת החרם. See also, Rashba, *Responsa*, 3:443, which was part of a series of letters to Montpellier (partially quoted above, n. 28).

Personal grievances could be aired before the entire community through the method known as *ikkuv tefilah* (עיכוב תפילה), i.e., halting the prayer proceedings, and consequently, could only take place in the synagogue. Until recently, this institution of *ikkuv tefilah* was thought to be characteristic of Franco-German communities only.<sup>38</sup> Whether it was based upon the premise that the entire community itself constituted the court or upon the assumption that the community had to insure that justice was carried out is a matter of scholarly debate.<sup>39</sup> Because this practice was certainly not a Babylonian one,<sup>40</sup> it was accepted among scholars that Spanish Jewish communities as well as Jewish communities in Islamic lands did not adopt this practice, for they followed the Gaonic tradition.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, one must conclude that Provence followed the Franco-German communities in accepting this singular practice.<sup>42</sup> However, recent scholarship has demonstrated that halting the prayer proceedings was indeed practiced among Jewish communities residing in Islamic lands.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, it should not come as a surprise to find this

בלי קדיש, לכך נתקן הקדיש אחר פסוקי דזמרה. The source of this responsum is *Shibolei ha-Leket*, ed. S. Buber, p. 8, no. 8

- 38 V. Aptowitzer, *Introductii ad Sefer Rabiah*, pp. 436–7 (Hebrew); R. Eliezer b. Yoel ha-Levi, *Sefer Rabiah*, ed. V. Aptowitzer, I, p. 19, n. 14; A. Grossman, “The Origins and Essence of the Custom of ‘Stopping the Service,’” *Milet*, I (1983), 215–218 (Hebrew; henceforth: Grossman, “Origins”).
- 39 I.A. Agus, *The Heroic Age of Franco-German Jewry*, pp. 204–207; G. Blidstein, “Individual and Community in the Middle Ages: Halakhic Theory,” *Kingship and Consent*, ed. D.J. Elazar (Washington, D.C., 1983), pp. 221–222.
- 40 See the translated responsum by an unidentified Gaon in Agus, pp. 206–7, and Aptowitzer, *Introductii*, p. 437.
- 41 Daniel Gutenmacher, *Political Obligation in the Thirteenth Century Hispano-Jewish Community* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1986. Ph.D. thesis), pp. 56–57.
- 42 Accordingly, one may speculate how this apparently non-native Provençal institution arrived in southern France. If some of the early scholars of Provence had studied in the Rhineland, then this custom may have been imported from there. Grossman, “Origins,” p. 211, also suggested some common lines of heritage. Alternatively, if the source of this custom is from the Land of Israel, this may reflect some Palestine influence upon Provençal practice. Note such an influence upon the custom of praying for rain in Herbert Shlomo Pick, *Provençal Customs* (Ramat-Gan, 1977; thesis for the MA degree), pp. 29–35 (Hebrew), and Pick, *Communities*, Chapter XII on population movements. See also Pick, *Communities*, Chapter VII, nn. 21–24.
- 43 M. Ben-Sasson, “Appeal to the Congregation in Islamic Countries in the Early Middle

1304, the significant epistle containing the *cherem* controlling the study of philosophy was read in the synagogue of Montpellier on the Sabbath at an official public meeting convened at the synagogue with the illustrious Jewish communal leaders in attendance.

And we designated the appointed day, on the Sabbath day<sup>35</sup> in the month of Elul (Aug./Sept) in the year 5064 (1304 C.E.), to have a communal meeting of the town's illustrious citizens (*ma'amad*) in the synagogue and to read the epistle [before them]....<sup>36</sup>

Many ad hoc communal meetings took place during the morning services, including the Sabbath. The Sabbath, being a day of rest, was a natural time and the synagogue was a natural place for solving communal problems. Most, if not all, community members were in town and the prayer service usually attracted the overwhelming majority of them. Thus, the synagogue prayer service was often used to solve communal problems. Accordingly, the following statement is found in twelfth century Provençal rabbinic literature:

Consequently, after the morning hymns (*pesukei de-zimra*), near the blessing of *yishtabach*, they will recite the *kaddish* once....If they should halt [the proceedings] to decide an amount of charity or for any other matter, or someone with a grievance will stop the recitation of the *shema*, they would leave without *kaddish*. Hence the *kaddish* was instituted after the morning hymns (*pesukei de-zimra*).<sup>37</sup>

also from Ravi; Rashba, *Responsa*, 3:93, to Perpignan (Hebrew text and translation, Pick, *Communities*, pp. 250–251, n. 4); *TCP*, p. 207 (Rabbi Avraham ben Yoseph ben Avraham Baruch ben Neriah of Aix suggested that a ban be issued in the synagogue to further the investigation of a divorce – Hebrew text and translation, Pick, *Communities*, Chapter IX, n. 21).

35 Perhaps the first Sabbath is being referred to or in that year the New Moon fell on a Sabbath.

36 Rashba, Dimitrovsky, no. 39, p. 415, ll. 13–15: ויעדנו יום נועד ביום השבת בחדש אלול שנת מעמד בבית הכנסת מנכבדי העיר ולקרות האגרת באזניהם סד לפרט, לעשות

37 J. Kafah could not decide who authored this responsum – Ravi or his son-in-law R. Abraham b. David (Rabad) – and consequently published this responsum in both volumes: Ravi, *Responsa*, no. 181, p. 146; Rabad, *Teshuvot ve-Pesakim*, no. 193, p. 232 and n. 1: לפיכך אחר פסוקי דזמרא סמוך לברוך הבוחר בישר ובזמרה מלך א-ל חי העולמים יקדישו פעם אחרת...ושמא יפסיקו לפסוק צדקה או לדבר אחר, או שמא יעכב עליהם מעכב מלקרא את שמע ויצאו

An interesting use of the synagogue is found in Marseilles. Due to Marseilles' topography of rising cliffs, there were two Jewish communities in the Jusataria, the Jewish quarter, – each with its own synagogue. The synagogue of the lower Jewish community was built in the eastern side of the Jusataria. Many Jews from the upper city would bring their merchandise to the port. In order to shorten the way, the synagogue of the lower city and its roof were used as a shortcut, prompting the query if this was considered an infraction of the synagogue's sanctity.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, based upon archaeological and archival evidence from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, one finds that in southern France, the mikve was often housed in the basement of the synagogue as found in Montpellier and Carpentras.<sup>33</sup> The use of this ritual bath was mostly for family purity laws and was usually unrelated to the synagogue services.

### C. The Provençal Synagogue as a Communal Meeting House

The synagogue as a meeting house was especially important for communal legislation and events. Hence, the *cherem* (ban) was issued in the Provençal synagogue throughout this entire period. Reports to this effect commence with the responsa by R. Avraham b. Yitzchak (Ravi *Av-Beit-Din*, twelfth century) and continue through to the ban restricting the study of philosophy issued by Rashba (1304). Ravi wrote: "They should proclaim the ban without express conditions in the synagogue upon anyone who has any money belonging to their father...."<sup>34</sup> At the end of the period under discussion, in

32 *Newly Discovered Geonic Responsa*, ed. S. Emanuel (Jerusalem–Cleveland, 5755 [=1995]), p. 70 (Hebrew).

33 For Montpellier, see "Le Mikvé," *Les Juifs à Montpellier* (above, n. 31), pp. 71–92; for Carpentras, see B. Blumenkranz, ed., *Art et archéologie des Juifs en France médiévale*, p. 323 and Marianne Calmann, *The Carrière of Carpentras*, pp. 37–40. For mikva'ot in Cavaillon, see "Le Mikvé," p. 88, n. 6; Narbonne, see Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc antérieurement au XIVe siècle*, p. 44; Marseilles, see Georges Lesage, *Marseille angevine*, p. 39. See also "Le Mikvé," *Ibid.*, p. 88, nn. 6,7,8 for Salon, Mallmort, Digne, Nîmes, and Perpignan.

34 Ravi, *Responsa*, no. 145 (p. 125): יחרימו סתם בבית הכנסת על מי שיש בידו כלום מממון אביהם. The source is BT *Shevu'ot*, 35a; see the commentaries *ad. loc.* and my article "Be-Inyan Yichud ha-Eidim be-Shevu'at ha-Eidim," *Magal*, 3 (1979–1980), 51–60 (Hebrew). For other cases, see also A. Schreiber (Sofer), ed., *Responsa of the Sages of Provence (Teshuvot Chachmei Provenzia)* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 396–7 (Hebrew; henceforth: TCP),

community and the selectmen want to release this ban because the yoke of taxes is heavy and the building of the synagogue is vigorous it is only that their intent was to beautify the synagogue for the glory of the Divine Presence.<sup>28</sup>

In this question, rising costs may have been the cause of the added expense, as well as higher taxes levied by the ruler. Another cause for a greater tax burden may have been the dwindling population as Jews moved southwest to Rousillon. The remaining Jews with a limited income had to pay a greater share of the taxes.

The synagogue building was constructed in the Jewish quarter. This resulted in questions of proper decorum on the part of the neighbors during the services as demonstrated in the following query from Avignon:

[To] Avignon, to Rabbi Joseph. You asked if an individual whose house is adjacent to the synagogue could respond to the *kaddish* and *kedushah* while in his house, as there are some who have this practice....And there are those who disagree with this [based upon the Talmudic passage that states] if the congregation is in the small [room] and the cantor in the large [room], they do not fulfill their obligation.<sup>29</sup>

The practice of building the synagogue in the Jewish quarter is confirmed by the Latin documents published by S. Kahn<sup>30</sup> and discussed by D. Iancu.<sup>31</sup> In 1277 a house in Montpellier was sold by Hugo Robert and his wife Alamande to the Jews Bonisach the Great, Jacob b. Bonmancip, Abram d'Alais, and others. The house was *sita in Montepessulano juxta sinagogam judeorum* (in Montpellier next to the synagogue of the Jews).

28 Rashba, *Responsa*, 3:443: מונטפסלייר [רשב"א, ג:תמ]...וכתבו: שהסכימה דעתם בעצת ראשי הקהל לתקן את בית הכנסת, והחרימו על דעת המקום יתברך ועל דעת הקהל, שיהיו מוכרחים הברורים לעשות אותה מלאכה לזמן ידוע...ועכשו רוצים הקהל והברורים להתיר חרם זה, לפי שעול המס כבד, ובנין בית הכנסת חזק, רק שהיתה כוונתם לפאר את בית הכנסת לכבוד השכינה

29 Rashba, *Responsa*, 3:286: אוניון להר' יוסף שאלת אם יחיד שביחו סמוך לבית הכנסת מהו לענות קדיש וקדושה בביתו; שיש נוהגין כן... ויש חולקין על זה, מההיא: דצבור בקטנה ושליח צבור בגדולה, אין יוצאין ידי חובתן

30 S. Kahn, "Documents inédits sur les Juifs de Montpellier," *REJ*, XIX (1889), 273–4.

31 D. Iancu, "Le Mikvé et l'évolution du Quartier juif médiéval à Montpellier," *Les Juifs à Montpellier et dans le Languedoc à travers l'Histoire du Moyen Age à nos jours*, ed. C. Iancu, pp. 78–8.

synagogue and/or the donors was often erected. Through the investigation of Hebrew sources, one can determine the needs and uses of the synagogue. The urgent need for a community synagogue is illustrated in the following correspondence between Perpignan and Barcelona found in the responsa of R. Shlomo ibn Adret of Barcelona (Rashba; active circa 1270–1310):

[To] Perpignan. You asked concerning a community<sup>24</sup> that was building a synagogue: Could it complete its construction during the intermediate days of a festival (*chol ha-mo'ed*) because there is a public need for it? Or perhaps [construction during the intermediate days of a festival] is prohibited even in the case of public need because professional work is involved....<sup>25</sup>

Public necessity included synagogue use for public prayer, schooling, or meetings. As a community expanded, the residents had to enlarge, repair, or refurbish the synagogue. If necessary, they would build a new one to meet the needs of new community members. As noted by historians, Rousillon and especially Perpignan, attracted Jews in the second half of the thirteenth century and this is reflected in the need for a new synagogue.<sup>26</sup>

In one responsum, there is a report of the problems and expenses encountered by the repairmen of a synagogue in Montpellier:

[To] Montpellier...they had written that they had agreed upon the advice of the community leaders, to repair the synagogue. [Consequently,] they issued a ban with the agreement of the Omnipresent, may He be blessed, and with the agreement of the community, that the selectmen would be forced to complete<sup>27</sup> this work within a known time [limit]...and now the

24 lit. public.

25 Rashba, *Responsa*, 4:326: פירפיניאן. שאלת: צבור שהיו בונים בית הכנסת, אם מותר להשלים בחוה"מ [= בחול המועד], מפני שיש בו צורך הרבים? או"ד [= או דילמא] אסור שאפילו לצורך הרבים, כל... Since the questions concern the prohibition of work during the intermediate days of a festival, it would appear that the laborers involved were Jewish. The question was: could they work during the festival in order to meet the public need?

26 Richard W. Emery, *The Jews of Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 12–16; Pick, *Communities*, pp. 338–340, especially n. 46.

27 The meaning here is: to oversee the synagogue's completion.

Arles, Avignon, Beaucaire, Carcassonne, Carpentras, Cavaillon, Draguignan, Forcalquier, Grasse, Lambesc, Lançon-Provence, Lunel, Marseille, Mende, Montpellier, Nîmes, Orange, Perpignan, St. Maximin-la-St. Baume, St. Remy de Provence, Salon de Provence, Tarascon, Toulouse, and Tret maintained synagogues.<sup>22</sup>

With the expulsion in 1306, synagogues were apparently targeted for attack by the Christian population. Consequently, an elegy lamented: "Concerning the books and the synagogues – I had seen the luminaries become dim and my morning star has fallen."<sup>23</sup> This is not surprising when one realizes the centrality of the synagogue to Jewish life during this period.

### B. The Community and the Synagogue

From all this archaeological and documentary evidence, one may deduce that the Jews of Provence, as Jews elsewhere, organized to build synagogues. Upon the completion of each building, a monument commemorating the

22 Bibliography for these towns and others can be found in B. Blumenkranz (ed.), *Art et archéologie des Juifs en France médiévale*, pp. 308–387. For the specific towns mentioned, see *ibid.*: Aix-en-Provence, p. 308; Apt, p. 310; Arles, p. 311; Avignon, p. 313; Beaucaire, p. 315; Carcassonne, pp. 321–323; Carpentras, p. 321 and Marianne Calmann, *The Carrière of Carpentras*, pp. 37 ff.; the towns of Cavaillon, *Art et archéologie*, p. 323; Draguignan, pp. 332–334; Forcalquier, p. 337; Grasse, p. 338; Lambesc, p. 341; Lançon-Provence, p. 341; Lunel, p. 343; Malaucene, p. 344; Manosque, p. 344; Marseille, pp. 346–7 and D.L. Smail, "The Two Synagogues of Medieval Marseille: Documentary Evidence," *REJ*, 154 (1995), pp. 115–124; the towns of Mende, *Art et archéologie*, pp. 349–350; Monteux, p. 352; Montpellier, p. 354 and below; Narbonne, p. 357; Nîmes, p. 358; Orange, p. 361; Perpignan, p. 365; St. Maximin-la-St. Baume, p. 376; St. Remy de Provence, p. 376; Salon de Provence, p. 377; Tarascon, p. 380; Toulouse, p. 382; Trets, p. 383. For a general essay on the synagogue and its function and some Provençal material, see B. Blumenkranz, "Les synagogues," *Art et archéologie des Juifs en France médiévale*, ed. B. Blumenkranz, pp. 33–72; C. Touati's essay "La synagogue dans la littérature rabbinique," *Art et archéologie des Juifs en France médiévale*, ed. B. Blumenkranz, pp. 133–135, is general and wanting and contains no Provençal material at all. See also D. Iancu-Agou, "Topographie des quartiers juifs en Provence médiévale," *REJ*, 133, 1–2 (1974), 11–156.

23 R. Shlomo ibn Adret, *Teshuvot ha-Rashba* (including *Sefer Minkhat Kena'ot* by Abba Mari of Lunel), ed. C.Z. Dimitrovsky, pt. 1 (Jerusalem, 1990; henceforth: *Rashba*, *Dimitrovsky*) vol. II, p. 881, ll. 87–88 (and notes there): על דבר הספרים ובית הא-להים ראיתי המאורות כהים ונפלה אילת שחרי

where the Lord your God has scattered you. Even if your outcasts are [at the ends of the world,<sup>19</sup> from there]...[and from there] He will fetch you. Trust in Him at all times, O People; pour out your hearts before Him; God is our refuge, Amen.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, there is archaeological evidence of the completion of a synagogue in Arles in 1276.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the archaeological remains of synagogues, medieval non-Jewish documents testify to their existence. For example, charters and authorizations granted by ecclesiastical and lay leaders demonstrate the existence of synagogues throughout both periods of Jewish Provençal history: before the expulsion in 1306 of the Jews from those areas in Provence under French hegemony, and the period afterwards in those regions that were still independent of the French Crown. Small towns, for which no Hebrew documentation exists, are described in early Latin sources as having synagogues. According to such non-Hebrew sources, Aix-en-Provence, Apt,

19 Deut. 30:3–4.

20 Ps. 62:9; the verse ends with the word *Selah* and not Amen. Nahon, *Inscriptions*, p. 350; for bibliography, see p. 348; for further biblical references, see pp. 349–350. Could this hope have been heightened before the start of the Hebrew calendar's fifth millenium? The Hebrew text is as follows:

נשלם בנין ההיכל והארון וכותל מזרחית בחדש טבת שנת חמשת אלפים  
...לראות בבנין בית המקדש וישיב את שבותנו ויקבץ נדחנו כמו שכתוב  
...וּקְבַצְךָ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיצְךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה אִם יִהְיֶה נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצָּה הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשָּׁם  
...[וּמִשָּׁם] יִקְחָךְ. בִּטְחוּ בּוֹ בְּכָל עֵת עִם שִׁפְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ לִבְכֵּכֶם אֱלֹהִים מַחֲסֵה לָנוּ אִמֵּן

21 Nahon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 370–2. The original inscriptions no longer exist, but were transcribed in the 17th and 18th centuries. One contains the verses Ps. 118:20 and Deut. 28:6: זה השער לה' צדיקים יבאו בו; ברוך אתה בבואך וברוך אתה בצאתך. The second inscription reads: חדש אלול חמשת [אלפים] לו נשלמו בדקות שדי. Nahon, p. 371, following Schwab, *Rapport* (above n. 1), pp. 219–224, translated it as follows: “Au mois d’Elul cinq mille 36 (12 août- 10 sept. 1276) on cessé les châtimens du Tout-Puissant.” A transcription found in Philip Thicknesse, *A Year’s Journey Through France and any Part of Spain* (London, 1778), translated it as: “In the month of August five thousand and thirty-six, the visitation of God ceased” and added: “Perhaps the plague had visited them” (Schwab, pp. 222–223). Schwab discussed this transcription at length, attempting to identify the visitation. On p. 220, n. 1, Schwab suggested that the reading בדיקות may have reference to the term בדיק הבית but found it difficult to connect it to the appellation *Shaddai*. One transcription immediately adds: והקדוש ברוך הוא, and it was understood by these scholars to imply a prayer – “[May] the Holy One Blessed be He, [save us...]” (Schwab, p. 220).

vineyards<sup>14</sup> for He has given...night and darkness, and nation lifted up sword upon nation,<sup>15</sup> and kingdom upon...war upon the town and in four thousand [969] (1209 C.E.)<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, the Jews of Béziers established a synagogue that would reflect their strong Provençal ties and would retain their identity on “foreign” soil. The date 1209 commemorates the crusade and the year most of the Jews fled from the town and the massacre of the remaining Jews of Béziers.<sup>17</sup>

There is also an inscription from a Narbonese synagogue commemorating the completion in 1240 of the sanctuary, Holy Ark, and the eastern wall of the synagogue. Like the inscriptions of the Jews of Béziers, the text reflected a fervent hope for redemption.

The building of this sanctuary, ark and eastern wall were completed in the month of Tevet in the year five thousand...to appear in<sup>18</sup> the erection of the Temple and to return our captivity and to bring together our outcasts as it is written...and He will bring you together again from all the peoples

14 Based upon Ez. 28:26.

15 Based upon Is. 2:4.

16 Nahon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 343; p. 342 for bibliography (including M. Catane’s crucial explanation, “An Inscription of Béziers Exilees,” *Tarbiz*, 24, 1 (Oct. 1954), pp. 232-233 [Hebrew]); pp. 344–5 for further biblical references and notes. The following is the original Hebrew:

...מעל אדמתם וישליכם אל ארץ אחרת ברכ  
לכלותם ולא הפר בריתו אתם גם הם לא נסוגו  
[ממ]צותיו וחקותיו בתוך גלותם ויבנו להם מקדש  
...ילה (?) היתה העיר בדרש עיר גדולה ומקהלות[יה]  
...שנים וימים ויבנו בתים ויטעו כרמים כי נתנם  
...[לי]לה וחשכה וישא גוי אל גוי חרב וממלכה אל  
...מלחמה על העיר ובארבעת אלפים ותתקסט

See also C. Duhamel-Amado, *op. cit.* (above n. 1), pp. 151; 154–5, nn. 27, 28.

17 On the history of the Jews in Béziers during the first half of the 13th century, note Shlomo Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda*, eds. I.F. Baer and A. Shohat, 147: שנת קס"ט [= 1209] היא שנת יגון, יצאו מתועבים מצרפת לצבוא צבא, וביום יט אב, יום טבח בדירש היה שם הרג גדול, ונהרגו מן הערלים עשרים אלף, ומן היהודים – מאתים, ורבים נשבו. On this passage cf. A. David, “Fragments from a Hebrew Chronicle,” *Alei Sefer*, 6–7 (1979), 198–200 (Hebrew). See also A. Neubauer, “Yedaya de Béziers,” *Révue des études juives* (henceforth: *REJ*), 20 (1890), 245–248, and Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah*, pp. 181–183.

18 It also could mean: to see.

merit to [sing to] God a new song and we will rejoice and see the building of the Temple, Amen.<sup>11</sup>

According to the later date of 1214, many of the Jews who had fled Béziers during the crusade, returned five years later and rebuilt their synagogue with the permission granted by the lords of the land. However, from an inscription that was engraved after 1209 – the year of the massacre of the townfolk of Béziers and the destruction of the town – and found in Olot, Spain, it is apparent that not all the Jews of Béziers returned to their native town. Some of Béziers' Jews remained in their new city of refuge, and built a synagogue while maintaining some of their Provençal identity:

...from their land and cast them into another land<sup>12</sup> in great...to destroy them, annulling His covenant with them, and they [themselves] did not retreat...[from] His commandments and statutes in their exile and they built for themselves a temple<sup>13</sup>...??? the town of Béziers, the great town and of its communities...years and days, and erect houses and plant

- 11 Nahon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 337–8. Nahon and Loeb have different French translations. For bibliography, see Nahon, p. 336; for biblical references and notes, see Nahon, pp. 338–342. The following is the Hebrew transcription, the most part following Nahon:

[מכתב חר]ות על לוח האבן הזאת זכרן לבני ישראל למען ידעו דרתינו את אשר [עשה ה' ע]מנו ועוזנו ונפלאותיו אשר עשה לגלות עמנו ישבי העיר הזאת כי לפי שחטאנו [וסרנו ממצו]תיו שמם מקדשנו בית תפארתנו אשר אנחנו מהללים בו אלינו וגלינו מארצנו [ונחנו ביד א]ויבינו וכמעט רגע הית' תחנה מאת אלינו ושב את שבותנו וירחמנו וישיבנו אל [ניו ויט על]ינו חסד לפני מלכינו ושרינו להשאיר לנו פלטה לתת לנו מחיה לרומם בית אלינו [ולעמיד חר]ביתנו וקמנו ובנינו ונחזיק ידינו לטובה וביד אלינו הטובה עלינו בנין קבע וחזק [לבנים] נפלו וגזית בנינו ודביר מקום הארון הזה אשר בו ספרי תורת אלינו גבנה בנחלת [ר'] חלפתא אחד מראשי גדולי עירנו השכן לבית אלינו התנדב ובנאו משלו בנין קבע [זכר]ה לו אלינו לטובה ונשלם בנינו בשלשה עשר בתמוז שנת ארבעת אלפים ותשע מאת [שבעים ו]ארבע לבריאת עולם האל ברחמיו יחיש לפדותנו ויכנס נפוצותינו ויקרב משיחנו ו [שבנו ל]ירושלם ברחמים וביתו יבנה בה וישכן כמאז בקרבה וקו ינטה על ירושלם ונוכה כלנו ל [שיר ל]ה' שיר חדש ונשמח ונראה בנין בית המקדש אמן

- 12 Deut. 29:27.

- 13 The term employed here is *mikdash* (מקדש). Usually one finds the term *mikdash me'at* (מקדש מעט) employed to refer to the synāgogue, e.g., see S. Shatzmiller, "Petite Epître de l'Excuse (מגלת התנצלות הקטן) de Kalonymos ben Kalonymos," *Sefunot*, X (1966), p. 36 (Hebrew): **הוכחת אותי בכעס ובאימה יתרה ביום שבת בבקר במקדש מעט**. See also I.M. Ta-Shma, "Synagogal Sanctity – Symbolism and Reality," *Knesset Ezra: Literature and Life in the Synagogue*, eds. S. Elizur et al (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 351–364 (Hebrew).

nations, the inhabitants of this town, for we have sinned [and we have left His ommandments, our Temple, the house of our glory in which we praise our God, is destroyed, and we have been exiled from our land [and given over into the hand of] our enemies, and almost momentarily there was mercy from our God, and He returned our captives, and He had compassion for us and He returned us to [Him<sup>4</sup> and He extended] to us loving-kindness before our king and our princes to leave us a remnant to give us sustenance to exalt the house of our God [and to erect] our ruins. And we arose and built and strengthened our hand for good. And through the good hand of our God, we erected a permanent and strong building. The bricks have fallen, [but] we have built with hewn stone,<sup>5</sup> and the sanctuary, the place of this ark that contains the Torah scrolls of our God, was built in the portion of<sup>6</sup> [R.]<sup>7</sup> Chalafta, one of the leading great ones of our town, he gave the housing<sup>8</sup> for the house of our God, volunteered and built it from his own [wealth] a permanent<sup>9</sup> building may our God remember him for good. And our building was completed on the thirteenth of Tammuz, four thousand nine hundred [seventy and]<sup>10</sup> four since the creation of the world. God in His compassion will hasten to redeem us and to gather in our exiles and bring nearer our Messiah and [will return to] Jerusalem in his compassion. His house will be built, and He will dwell within it as before. And He will draw a line over Jerusalem and we all

4 These two words (to Him) are straddled between this line and the next: the first two letters are in this line and the last two in the next one.

5 Based upon Is. 9:9: לבנים נפלו וגזית נבנה. One could also conceivably read: "its building is hewn," but in context of the verse in Isaiah, the reading presented is preferable.

6 It could also be: with the inheritance of.

7 Depending upon the date, this may be Rabbi Shlomo Chalafta, mentioned in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. M. N. Adler, p. 3 (Hebrew), see above, n. 1.

8 It could possibly be translated as "was the neighbor of."

9 This word is straddled between this line and the next: the first letter is on this line and the last two in the next one.

10 This is in accordance with Nahon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 337, 341–2. Loeb, p. 722, has: "[and]" leaving the inscription as is; Schwab, *Rapport*, p. 67, added thirty. Nahon had added the words "seventy and" to reach his preferred date while Loeb only add the word "and" thereby not changing the date of the inscription. See also supra, n. 1.

the papal cities of Carpentras and Avignon still stand, a result of the lack of expulsion from these areas.

Among the archeological finds is an almost complete synagogal inscription from Béziers, that apparently, had been placed next to the Holy Ark of the synagogue. The stone inscription relates that the building was erected through the good offices and contribution of R. Chalafta, one of the great, wealthy, local leaders. Although earlier scholars read the inscription as is and thus dated it to 1144,<sup>1</sup> modern scholars prefer to date the rebuilding of the synagogue to 1214 after the Albigensian Crusade, which had a devastating effect on the Jews of this town.<sup>2</sup> In July 1209, the crusaders reached the town and most of the Jewish community fled with the viscount, Raimon-Roger Trencaval, to Carcassone. Many of the Jews fled further south, to Christian Spain, as will be discussed below. The remaining 10,000 townfolk, including Jews, clerics, women, and children, were massacred, and the town destroyed.<sup>3</sup> The inscription reads:

[An inscription] engraved upon this stone plaque as a remembrance to the children of Israel so that our generations should know that which [God did] to us and His might and wonders that He did to the Exile of our

- 1 I. Loeb, "Une inscription hébraïque de 1144 à Béziers," *Univers israélite*, XXXIII (15 juillet 1878), 719–24, especially, p. 722. Moïse Schwab, *Rapport sur les Inscriptions Hébraïques de la France* (Paris, 1904), p. 67, suggested adding the word "thirty" (שלושים), to get to the year 1174, in order to identify the Rabbi Chalafta here with Rabbi Shlomo Chalafta mentioned by Benjamin of Tudela, ed. Adler, p. ג; see Gérard Nahon, *Inscriptions hébraïques et juives de France médiévale*, p. 341, concerning adding the words: R. Shlomo (ll. 7-8). See also C. Duhamel-Amado, "Les Juifs à Béziers avant 1209: Entre la Tolérance et la Persécution," *Les Juifs à Montpellier et dans le Languedoc à travers l'Histoire du Moyen Age à nos jours*, ed. C. Iancu, pp. 146; 152, n. 8.
- 2 Nahon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 337; 341–342.
- 3 Michael Costen, *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade* (Manchester and New York, 1997), p. 123. Shlomo Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda*, eds. I.F. Baer and A. Shohat, 147, recorded the following: שנת קס"ט [= 1209] היא שנת יגון, יצאו מחוּעבים מצרפת לצבוא צבא, וכיום יט אב, יום טבח בדירש היה שם הרג גדול, ונהרגו מן הערלים עשרים אלף, ומן היהודים – מאתים, ורבים נשבו. On this passage cf. A. David, "Fragments from a Hebrew Chronicle," *Alei Sefer*, 6–7 (1979), 198–200 (Hebrew). Concerning the numbers massacred see Costen, *ibid.* See also A. Neubauer, "Yedaya de Béziers," *Révue des études juives* (henceforth: *REJ*), 20 (1890), 245–248 and Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah*, pp. 181–183.

# The Synagogue in Provence: A Social Institution in the High Middle Ages

Shlomo H. Pick

## A. Evidence of Synagogues in Southern France

As throughout the Diaspora, in medieval Provence, which included Roussillon, Bas-Languedoc, Comtat Venaissin, and Comté de Provence, the synagogue was one of the important community institutions. Usually, the synagogue was among the first buildings erected by the organized community and served as a house of worship, center of learning, public meeting house, and as a means to confirm one's social place within Jewish society. Provençal rabbinic literature and Hebrew sources reflect all of these uses.

However, before turning to rabbinic sources, one should note some of the archaeological evidence of Provençal synagogues. Most of the synagogues of the medieval period did not survive until the modern age, for expulsions, anti-Semitism, as well as conflagrations, were the enemies of the synagogue, and hence, only a handful survived. In southern France, only those synagogues in

\* This essay is based upon a number of passages in my Ph.D. dissertation [Shlomo H. Pick, *The Jewish Communities of Provence before the Expulsion in 1306* (Ramat-Gan, 1996, henceforth: Pick, *Communities*)] under the supervision of Prof. Simon Schwarzfuchs, Department of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University (the degree was granted on Sept. 1, 1997). It was presented as a paper on July 9, 2001, at the IMC 2001, Leeds, England, as part of the sessions entitled "Mundane and Profane Uses of Medieval Sacred Spaces," organized by Dawn Marie Hayes. I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Joseph Tabory for his comments that have indeed enhanced this article. Likewise, I thank Prof. David M. Schaps for his elucidations of some of the Latin documents employed in this essay.



Public reading of the Torah is an important feature of synagogue ritual. Adiel Kadary discusses the significance of the blessings connected with this reading to the sense of community: who is included in the group who reads the Torah, and who is left out. Jordan S. Penkower discusses a custom developed in connection with the correct reading of a single word that appears in several places. This highly technical article offers important insights into the development of customs, and the tension between written works and oral tradition.

The public Torah reading is generally followed by the raising of the Torah scroll and its presentation before the community. This is the Ashkenazi tradition; many other communities raise the Torah scroll prior to the reading. Hayyim Talby discusses the origins of this custom and the variant practices of different communities. He also tells about a unique device used in Italian communities to facilitate the raising of the Torah.

The Shabbat Shacharit reading of the Torah is followed by a passage from the Prophets. There is evidence that a reading from the Prophets was also customary after the Torah reading during the afternoon prayer on Shabbat. Meir Raffeld presents us with some additional information about this subject.

I wish to express my appreciation to everyone who contributed to the publication of this volume; extended thanks will be found in the Hebrew introduction. Here I would just add my thanks to Ms. Adina Moryosef, who edited the English material, and to Ms. Anne Lamdan, who made a major contribution to this volume as a whole.

Joseph Tabory

the synagogue. Aaron Ahrend describes some of the ways in which contemporary communities have begun managing themselves by codifying the rules and regulations concerning the customs and conduct in their synagogues. This is part of an ongoing project to collect all such codes, which will help identify not only the problems encountered by communities in various periods and places, but also record how they handled them. I hope that this vast project will see its completion soon.

In his study of synagogues in Provence, Shlomo H. Pick analyzes how the community was organized around the synagogue in medieval times. Aharon Gaimani presents a survey of synagogues existing in Zana in the first half of the twentieth century, prior to the massive immigration of Jews from Yemen to Israel.

The synagogue was thought of as a "minor Temple" (Ez. 11:16), a surrogate for the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem; this necessitated the application of laws originally connected with the Temple to the synagogue. Uncertainties concerning the limitations of this application were discussed in connection with the planting of trees in synagogue precincts. Eliav Shochetman presents a broad discussion of the issues and publishes a hitherto unknown responsum dealing with this question.

Two articles concern the interior furnishings of the synagogue: Itzhak Hamitovsky discusses how the traveling ark, which contained the Torah scrolls, became incorporating into the synagogue structure, and David Cassuto describes monumental arks in Mantua that traveled from there to Jerusalem.

Smaller ritual objects are also of interest in the history of the synagogue. Sinai Turan discusses the use of pointers during the Torah reading, and shows how it is connected to other objects used for pointing.

Three articles discuss the act of prayer. Dror Erlich illustrates how Rabbi Yosef Albo related to two major concepts of prayer: prayer as a means to influence the Creator, and prayer as a means to influence the pray-er. Conversely, Yosef Rivlin shows how the kabbalists connected prayer to the world of *sefirot*. Lastly, a comparison of the text of the blessings read at a wedding to that of the mourner's blessings is the subject of an article by Menachem Katz and Mordechai Sabato. Any discussion of prayer is relevant to *Kenishta*, but the relevance of this subject is enhanced by the fact that in many communities, weddings are conducted in the synagogue.

## Introduction

Recent events testify to the central place of the synagogue in Jewish life, now and throughout the history of the Jewish people. It is distressing to see that synagogues are still attacked as symbols of Judaism and the Jewish people, even in the State of Israel. We have born sad witness to the destruction of the synagogues of Gush Qatif in the summer of 2005, the final symbolic act erasing the Jewish presence from the area. Much of the political turmoil surrounding the last days of the Gush was centered on the ultimate destiny of those synagogues. Unfortunately, we find no evidence that the synagogues were properly documented, a procedure that would have preserved their legacy and the legacy of the Jews who built them. I hope that they were documented, but in any case this emphasizes the need for a central institution that will collect documentation and relevant materials about synagogues past and present. Although there are already a number of organizations working in this field, and mention should be made of the expeditions of young students documenting synagogues in Eastern Europe as well, this is not adequate. We need a strong institute with extensive resources capable of coordinating all the work being carried out in this field.

This third volume of *Kenishta* is being issued much later than originally planned, and I hope that we will not have to wait so long for the fourth. As a reward for your patience, this volume is almost double the size of the preceding volume. It is appropriate that this volume is larger, as it is meant to commemorate a great man, Prof. Dov Rappel, OBM. Dov Rappel was a man of prayer in mind and heart: He was both a scholarly researcher of the world of prayer, and a man who prayed with his heart. The editorial board gladly accepted the idea of dedicating this issue to the memory of Prof. Rappel. We asked Prof. Ze'ev Safrai to write an appreciation of Dov. It is especially fitting that Prof. Safrai present this biographical essay, as he was Dov's peer in two equally important aspects: as an academic colleague in Bar Ilan University, and a fellow worshipper in the synagogue in Kibbutz Yavneh.

This volume, like the previous ones, presents the rich, multi-faceted life of

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# KENISHTA

STUDIES OF THE SYNAGOGUE WORLD

3

DOV RAPPEL – IN MEMORIAM

Edited by

Joseph Tabory



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# KENISHTA

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