

Pe'amim

Studies in Oriental Jewry

154–155

Spaces and Boundaries

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**Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish
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In This Issue

Beginning in the sixteenth century, many Italian Jewish communities lived in enclosed ghettos. Several scholars have argued that although the ghetto served to exclude the Jews from the Christian communities of Italy, it also served to solidify the position of the Jews as inhabitants of Italy, thereby creating a tolerant attitude towards the Jews of Italy. This article will examine the phenomenon of the ghetto and the Italian city from an internal Jewish perspective through an understanding of the nature of the community's *eruv* as it developed in Italy in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. Through the creation of the community's *eruv* in the ghetto we witness an internal Jewish attempt to strengthen Jewish existence through communal solidarity and cultural autonomy. Ironically, it was the same *eruv* that enabled the Jews to maintain a dialogue with the world around them.

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In an important study from 1989, Jonas Greenfield and Michael Sokoloff analyzed a poem in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic found in the Cairo Genizah, containing an unusual set of predictions from lunar appearances. Their assumption, that this poem was based on a prose text with astrological prognostications, is now confirmed with the discovery in the Cairo Genizah of parts of the lost prose composition. The present study contains an edition of the new text, and a

detailed comparison between it and the above-mentioned poem. This shows how a 'scientific' text of Babylonian or Persian origins became a religious poem used in the new moon rituals for the month of Nissan in Byzantine Palestine. Prof. Gideon Bohak, Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University.
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In his Judeo-Arabic commentary to the Torah, Abraham Maimonides describes a debate with Christians and his refutation of their messianic exegesis of Genesis 49:10. He argues that the "scepter" cannot refer exclusively to the tribe of Judah's kingship until the arrival of the messiah. Similar arguments were presented by the tenth century Karaite scholar al-Qirqisani. The relevant texts are edited, translated, annotated and analyzed.

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The literary framework of the *Kuzari* consists of conversations that allegedly took place between the king of the Khazars and a Jewish scholar (*haver*). An analysis of the king's responses to the *haver* shows that the king did not fully understand the *haver's* lessons, in which the deep meaning of Judaism is taught. In this article the king's responses are analyzed, as is the question of the intention of the author (Judah ha-Levi) in using this literary sophistication. As is argued in the article, the true message of the *Kuzari* is

that a rational explication of the Jewish faith, developed as it may be, cannot communicate the true meaning of Judaism – the collective memory of experiencing the Divine presence.

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Jacob Anatoli substantially affected many philosophers during the 13th and 14th centuries, in Provence and Italy. Philosophers such as Levi Ben Avraham, Menachem ha-Meiri and Immanuel of Rome, were considerably influenced by Anatoli's composition as expressed in *Malmed Hatalmidim*. This article discusses Jacob Anatoli's influence on Menahem ben Zerah, as expressed in the *Zedah la-Derekh*.

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R. Haim Blech (1832-1919) served as Chief Rabbi of Tlemcen, Algeria, and took part in the Haskalah activity in his city. The present study suggests that even his activity in the publication of R. Ephraim Elnekweh's book *Sha'ar Kavod Hashem* should be understood in light of this activity. Concurrently, this article also asserts that his religious outlook on the issues of miracles and human perfection is consistent with the tenets of the Jewish-European Enlightenment Movement but, at the same time, was rooted in medieval Jewish-Sephardi thought.

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The present study attempts to follow Rabbi Uziel's approach to labor. Did he see work as a necessary means to earn a living, or as endowed with the theological framework of the Torah? The conclusion is that work in the thought of Rabbi Uziel is much more than the ability to be engaged in paid labor – it is part of a national religious theology, a “materialist-spiritualist” theology which he shaped largely himself.

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An unusual use of the expression *kocha d'heitaira adif* is found in the halachic writing of Rabbi Moshe Malka (1911-1997), who served as vice president of the rabbinical court in Casablanca and later the Chief Rabbi and head of the Avot Beit Din in Petah Tikva. In his writings, this term serves as a guideline for a principle that forms a coherent (ruling) policy of lenient rulings, which is integrated into a coherent and organized worldview. This article examines the use of this rule in Rabbi Moshe Malka's writings, analyzes his halachic thinking patterns, and briefly considers the motives that guide this tendency and its halachic logic.

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo E. Glicksberg taught at Efrata College and the Bar-Ilan University Law Faculty and currently serves as *dayan* and a member of the Beit Din in Johannesburg, as well as the head of Kollel and the senior rabbi of the Mizrachi congregation in Johannesburg, South Africa.
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