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HISTORY AND CULTURE

DAILY LIFE IN OTTOMAN JERUSALEM IN THE 1630S THROUGH THE EYES OF AN INTERNATIONAL WORDLY MERCHANT

Julia R. Lieberman (Saint Louis University. USA)

Introduction

On Sunday, August 1, 1638, David Senior, a former merchant of Portuguese origins residing in Jerusalem, wrote in Spanish a lengthy letter to his brothers-in-law David Ergas and Isaco Sereno, who were living in Amsterdam.¹ Senior's letter includes much valuable information on daily life in Jerusalem, a rare occurrence in contemporary documents. Yet, as its author reveals only his Jewish name, the letter's content could not be fully appreciated without discovering his true identity.

With few clues to his identity, I researched and found records of it in the Amsterdam Sephardi community archives. In light of this discovery, the letter reveals even more information on life in seventeenth-century Ottoman Jerusalem and the family life of the Portuguese Jews: the life-cycle of old age, personal relations between Eastern and Western Sephardi Jews, and the Jewish custom of migrating to Jerusalem to

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¹ Manuscript at the Hamburg State and University Library, Nr. 172, Levy 75, acc.1906/11353. The letter is bound together with another letter written in Italy around 1626 by Rabbi Immanuel Aboab, who also went to spend his last days in Jerusalem shortly after. Aboab's letter was studied by Cecil Roth, who transcribed it at the end of his study: "Immanuel Aboab's Proselytization of the Marranos. From an Unpublished Letter." Roth used a different copy of Aboab's letter – housed at the British Museum – which suggests that Senior's letter under study here may also be a copy of the original. Carsten Wilke has published a study of Senior's letter titled "La ville sainte vue par un juif d'Amsterdam." Wilke provides valuable information that I have taken into consideration. His essay, however, does not mention important secondary sources on Jerusalem that will be cited in my essay. More importantly, Wilke did not locate the author of the letter.

spend one's last days. This essay will examine Senior's letter under two major themes: (I) Jerusalem, a sacred city under Islam, from the Jewish perspective; and (II) Jerusalem as it was: The Earthly City. But let us begin with a discussion of David Senior's identity.

David Senior and his Nuclear Family

David Senior, alias Alfonso Henriques, was the son of Mordechai and Violante Abeniagar, who lived in Constantinople and were members of the New Christian Henriques-Pimentel family who had fled Portugal in the 1590s. Senior's father and a maternal uncle, Rabbi Jacob Abeniatar, were diplomats in the Sultan's service.² Senior's brother, Juda Senior (1589–1656), lived in Venice before settling in Amsterdam.³ When the brothers left their parental home is unknown, but by the 1610s both resided in Venice as partners to renowned merchant families: the Abendanas and the Abeniagars, respectively.⁴

David Senior in Venice: A Brush with the Holy Office

The names of David Senior and his in-laws, the Abendanas of Venice, are mentioned in the Venetian Inquisitional Records. In 1621, Rafael and his son Abraham Abendana were denounced to the Holy Office, accused of formerly living openly as Christian merchants and then showing up equally conspicuously as Ponentine merchant Jews in the Venetian ghetto.

² There are a number of studies on this extended family, who eventually dispersed into commercial centers in Venice, Amsterdam and the New World. See Israel. *Empires and Entrepots*, 151, and by the same author "Sephardic Immigration into the Dutch Republic, 1595–1972." Violante, the mother, was a sister of the two well-known merchants Manuel and Garcia Pimentel of Amsterdam. See *Studia Rosenthaliana* (SR) 1982, 2. For the Senior-Henriques in the New World, see Weinstein. "Stones of Memory," 89, and Klooster. "Jews in Suriname and Curaçao," 359.

³ For information on the 1612–1613 Venice residence of Juda Senior, alias Felipe Henriques, in the service of his maternal uncle Manuel Pimentel, see SR, Amsterdam's notarial record, Nr. 1183 and Nr. 1989. Juda moved to Amsterdam around 1615, and in 1617 he married his first cousin Ester Pimentel, daughter of Garcia Pimentel and Sara Lindes.

⁴ The connection between the two brothers, David and Juda Senior, and their parents is shown, beyond doubt, in the legal records on the dispute over the inheritance left by their maternal uncle Manuel Pimentel, alias Isaac Abeniagar, who passed away in 1614 in Amsterdam. The dispute, which dragged on until about 1623, was fought among relatives living in Constantinople, Venice and Amsterdam. The most important notarial records on the case are: Nr. 1348: SR 12, 1-2 (1978): 173. Nr. 1566: SR 13, 1 (1979): 234, Nr. 1859: SR 15, 2 (1981): 251, Nr. 2359: SR 18, 2 (1984):169, and Nr. 2969: SR 25, 1 (1991): 111.

The inquisitors showed little interest in the family's commercial activities. Instead, they meticulously examined details of the family's private life and faith, mostly its switching back-and-forth between Christianity and Judaism. The trial concluded with a relatively mild verdict: all family members, including our subject of interest, David Senior, were forced to leave Venice within three days and never allowed to return.⁵ The trial records are silent about what happened later to the members of this extended family and how many stops they made before reaching a new destination.

One archival document that informs us of the Abendanas' subsequent whereabouts is the will of the head of the family, which surfaces a year later in Amsterdam. Rafael Abendana, according to the will, passed away in Frankfurt very shortly after the family's banishment from Venice. The will does not mention David Senior – only the Abendanas' blood-related family members – but provides valuable information on the routes some family members took: some stayed in Venice, others went to Hamburg, others to Amsterdam.⁶

David Senior's Years in Amsterdam

David Senior lived in Amsterdam between 1625 and 1636, according to records. For a few years he was first affiliated with the Neve Salom congregation, and then with the Bet Israel congregation. Records show his moderate involvement in congregational institutions. He was *gabay* (treasurer) of the institution Terra Santa for the year starting in 5391 (1630). This institution financially supported the Jewish communities in the Holy Land, so Senior must have learned details of Jerusalem life before moving there. His two last names – Jewish and Christian – are occasionally recorded together, while his relation to his brother Juda – who was by then a well-established and influential merchant – is revealed in the records. David was also a member of the confraternity Jonen Dalim, which lent interest-free money to the poor in the community. His name

⁵ For the Inquisition trial, see Zorattini. *Processi del S. Ufficio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti (1608–1632)*; and, by the same author, “Jews, Crypto Jews, and the Inquisition,” 112. See also Pullan's *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550–1670*, 43-44, 94, 194. Starr-LeBeau. “Iberians before the Venetian Inquisition,” 29-44, 38-39.

⁶ No. 2575 & 2576: SR 20, 1 (1986): 126-127. Abraham de Rafael Abendana and his mother Miriam Abendana (now widowed) made their home in Amsterdam. David Abendana, alias Fernao Dias, went to Hamburg.

appears on membership lists together with the name of his brother-in-law David Ergas, one of the letter's addresses.⁷

Yet some aspects of David Senior's life in Amsterdam remain mysteriously unknown. That he paid the *finta* (tax on wealth) and the *imposta* (tax on trade) indicates that he was an active merchant while living there. He was likely connected to either his brother-in-law Abraham de Rafael Abendana (also forced to leave Venice), who took charge of his father's firm in Amsterdam,⁸ or perhaps the firm of Juda, who remained connected to the Abeniacar-Pimentels of Amsterdam. Yet no records of David's mercantile activities have surfaced.

The last time David Senior's name shows up in Amsterdam is September 1636. His next documentation is in his letter, in which he says that he and his wife – who is never mentioned by name – had arrived in Jerusalem less than a year prior. This two-year gap may indicate he did not travel directly from Amsterdam to Jerusalem. The letter gives a few clues about places he might have visited or resided in his active professional years: Turkey, The Hague, Lisbon.⁹

David Senior's Letter

Introduction

David Senior's letter to his brothers-in-law was very likely written in response to one they had previously sent to him, as his starting sentence

⁷ David Ergas, alias Manuel Dacunha Hergas, formerly of Trancoso, Portugal, lived in Amsterdam since at least 1622. In 1623, he married Leah Abendana, a daughter of Rafael Abendana (Francisco Diaz), and by this marriage he turned into a brother-in-law of our David Senior. The Spanish historian, Bernardo José López Belinchón, has documented that David Ergas's commercial firm was based in Madrid, and the Spanish inquisition accused them of trading contraband merchandise with the Netherlands. See his article, "Sacar la sustancia al reino," 1017-1049; here: 1035-1036. Regarding Isaac Sereno, the other addressee of the letter written in Jerusalem, he has proven to be a far more elusive individual, and I have been unable to find out his mercantile-Christian name. The name Isaac Sereno appears only once on the list of members of the Amsterdam Neve Salom congregation in 1638; see SAA PA 334, no. 9, 207, dated 5398 [1638].

⁸ Abraham de Rafael Abendana's mercantile transactions show up in Amsterdam. He was associated with David Hergas (see note 8), who was married to his sister Leah Abendana. See Notarial Deeds No. 2743, and Nr. 2747: SR 22, 2 (1988): 189-190.

⁹ Senior says that the walls surrounding the old city of Jerusalem are better than some in Turkey; and, in describing the citadel in Jerusalem old city and its moat, near the Jaffa gate, he compares it to the Hague's court's pond surrounding the castle.

suggests: “[You have expressed] a desire to know what is singular about this Holy city, our own country [*patria*]...”¹⁰ Much of the letter’s content parallels travel literature, including the accounts of Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the medieval and early modern period. These accounts, Jerusalem historians tell us, were conditioned by the pilgrims’ religious expectations, based on biblical passages, as well as by their amazement at a city and people so different from theirs. Historians tend to doubt these accounts, as they are laden with cultural misunderstanding. Yet they are of great historical value. They often corroborate historical documents, such as the so-called *sijill* records found in the sharia’s Muslim court in Jerusalem, if from a western and often biased perspective.¹¹ One can see both parallels and differences between Christian pilgrim narratives and Senior’s letter. His unique expectations of the Holy City are conditioned by his previous experiences as a Portuguese *ex-converso* Jew in exile. But his perspective of the city, like those of Christian pilgrims, is also determined by his often-biased western perspective.¹²

Structure

The letter was apparently written over a period of time, perhaps as notes Senior took as he encountered places of interest. It is organized by topics that would appeal to his relatives and perhaps persuade them to join him in Jerusalem: “I hope you will appreciate to learn about what is particular about this holy land,” he writes at the end.¹³ A predominant topic is the description of Jerusalem, though it includes details one may not expect to find in a description of a city, as he is often detracted from what he says he will cover. For instance, he begins a paragraph announcing the weather in Jerusalem, “as for the weather in this holy city...” but this paragraph actually covers Jerusalem’s geographical location and beauty, based on biblical quotations such as psalms, and refers to the privilege that life in Jerusalem signifies for Senior. Only several paragraphs later is the mild climate of Jerusalem discussed.

¹⁰ “*Por los deseos que Vms tienen [de] saber de las particularidades de la Santa ciudad y patria nuestra...*” (f 69).

¹¹ On pilgrims’ accounts, see Ze’evi, 9-14.

¹² Two contemporary travelogues: *La terre sainte*, by the Franciscan Eugène Roger (1635), and the *Book of Travels*, by the Ottoman Muslim Evliya Çelebi (1649 and 1672), are worth mentioning. On Roger, see Ze’evi, 174-176. On Çelebi’s see Ben-Nach. “Thousands great saints.”

¹³ “... *creo estimaran sauer sobre las particularidades desta santa tierra...*” (f 79).

I. Jerusalem: A Sacred City under Islam

Senior's expectations of Jerusalem were based on biblical descriptions of the city and its no-longer-extant temple, and he found the real Jerusalem to be both a confirmation of such lofty expectations and a disappointment. This ambivalence is evident, for instance, when he discusses his first impression of the walled city: "...as we enter through the imposing and beautiful gates, on a one hand we are grateful that our feet have reached the entries to Jerusalem...but on the other our hearts are broken by sadness, as we see that our dear land, with such a glorious past, is now in the hands of barbarian people."¹⁴ However, in contrast to Christian pilgrims, who mostly wished to see proofs of their Christian roots, most biblical quotations Senior uses are prophetic, where the reasons for Jewish life on exile are explained as a consequence of their sins and unfaithfulness toward God. Senior's descriptions of sacred sites in Jerusalem and its surroundings are often taken from the readings recited on Tishah b-Av (the ninth of Av in the Jewish calendar) and other prophetic readings, though some are based on his own experiences during visits to sites of Jewish pilgrimages and to the Jewish cemetery.

The date of the letter's completion, the 21st of the month of Av,¹⁵ may explain Senior's choice of quotations. Just a few days prior, on the ninth of Av, on Tishah b-Av, Jerusalem Jews would have commemorated the tragic events of the destruction of the two temples and the expulsion from Spain in 1492. In fact, upon close reading, most biblical selections Senior cites are from the traditional readings Jews recite on Tishah b-Av, or are biblical descriptions of the vanished Jerusalem temple. Senior interprets his first two quotations, "slaves rule over us" (Lamentations 5:8), and in "the land that You gave to our forefathers...we are slaves upon it" (Nehemiah 9:36), as if referring to Jerusalem and Jews of his time.¹⁶ Jews who had once been masters of

¹⁴ "*mas quando entramos por las puertas della que son grandiosisimas y bellas por una parte nos alegramos de alcanzar tanto bien destar nuestros pies en puertas de Jerusalem...y por otra parte después que se entra...se quebranta el corazón de magoa de ver que...la nuestra querida patria...oy esta...en poder de barbaros...*" (f 73a).

¹⁵ The date is given as August 1 (which was Sunday), 5398. In the Jewish calendar, it was the 21st of the month of Av.

¹⁶ See the "Orden de tahanit de Tishabeav," in *Orden de los cinco tahaniot* (Amsterdam: Menasse ben Ysrael, 5390 [1630]), which includes selections from the Books of Lamentations and Psalms. But other times Senior quotes from the so-called *Biblia de Ferrara*, which includes the complete Book of Lamentations and uses almost identical wording. There are many editions of this Bible, with few if

the city were now enslaved because of their sins. These quotations begin a thread that runs throughout Senior's narrative: Jerusalem has a glorious past but is now desolate because of Jewish sins, and the city is now under the care of people he sees as lacking civilized breeding and ability to care for and cultivate the land.¹⁷

Sites of Jewish Pilgrimage

King David's tomb

Jewish pilgrimages to sites in the Holy Land under the Ottomans reflect an influence of the Hajj, or the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and the tombs of Islamic holy men, according to Yaron Ben-Naeh.¹⁸ Amnon Cohen has identified three important places Jewish pilgrims visited: Jerusalem, Hebron, and the tomb of the prophet Samuel near Jerusalem. Cohen also suggests that these pilgrimages caused tensions between Jewish pilgrims and Muslim locals.¹⁹

Senior's letter corroborates some of this historically based information. Referring to Jewish pilgrimages with the Hebrew term *ziyara*, or the Spanish "romerías," and to Muslim pilgrimages as *azarias* [*zawiyas*],²⁰ he emphasizes the competition among the faiths that arose from the visits to these sites. At the beginning, he discusses visits he had already paid to the graves of holy men and prophets, though, as he explains, he had yet to go to Hebron, due to his financial situation: as foreigners were charged two *rixdaldres* to make the *ziyara* to Hebron, he was waiting to complete a year of residence in Jerusalem, when the charge to long-term residents would be reduced. He also alludes to tensions Jewish pilgrimages caused: "these *goim* [non-Jews] are not

any changes introduced over time. The one available to me is *Biblia en lengua espanola* [sic] ...de Ferrara (Amsterdam, 5606 [1846]), "Lamentaciones de Yermiahu, 5[:8] "... *Siervos podestaron en nos...*" And *Nehemiah* 9[:36], (included only in the Ferrara Bible, not in the Orden de tahanit), "*nos cautivos en la tierra que el Dio dio a nuestros padres.*" Senior differs a bit in the wording: "*nos cautivos en la tierra que el Dio dio a nuestros padres.*"

¹⁷ "barbara y vil jente, sin politica ni habilidad alguna" (f 72b).

¹⁸ Ben-Naeh. *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 432, where he cites the study by Faroqhi. *Pilgrims and Sultans*.

¹⁹ Cohen. *Jewish Life under Islam*, 101-109.

²⁰ The Arabic term "azarias" (*zawiyas*) is not exactly a pilgrimage but rather a section of a building usually associated with a saintly man; the spiritual head of the *zawiya* is a *sheikh*. See the definition of *zawiya* in *A Popular Dictionary of Islam*, by Richard, 264. Senior uses the term *azarias* as he uses *ziyyara*: "*los señores turcos graues que vienen aqui a hacer azarias.*"

happy that we make these *romerias*.²¹ Alternatively, he is displeased that Turkish “grave men” were coming to Jerusalem to make their own pilgrimages and calls them “the accursed ones (*malditos*) who make their pilgrimages as we [Jews] also do.”²²

Two sacred sites Senior specifically discusses are the tomb of King David on Mount Zion, outside the walled city, and Temple Mount-Haram al-Sharif (the Dome of the Rock), where the Temple stood, plus the esplanade around it.²³ He describes the so-called tomb of King David as converted to a mosque and off-limits to Jews.²⁴ Nevertheless, he reports that “...some of ours [Portuguese Jews who] have dared to enter at great risks and have seen the tombs of Kings David and Solomon, covered with black velvet cloths.”²⁵

Temple Mount

Senior’s descriptions of the sites on Haram al-Sharif, or Temple Mount, with its Muslim and Jewish sacred sites, are difficult to follow. As proof of their existence, he cites biblical texts and connects them to the places he is encountering without differentiating between the two. His mixing of the biblical past with the remains of the present could indicate that he did not know well the area of Temple Mount.²⁶ He mentions restrictions the Turks imposed on Jews, as well as his reluctance to approach these sacred sites, probably referring to Rabbinic prohibitions from visiting them. His past-and-present admixture could also demonstrate his citation

²¹ “...estos goim no se guelgan de que agamos las romerias,” (f 69).

²² Of course, it does not help matters that the Turks are lodged at a *zawiya*, inside what he refers as a famous palace (perhaps a mosque) near the ruins of the temple: “...un famoso palacio questa junto de las puertas de bet a midras, ...para agasajar y ospedar a los señores turcos graues que vienen a hacer azarias que los malditos hacen como nosotros” (f 76a). For the term *azarias*, see the note above. For the many *zawiyas* in Jerusalem, see the online study “Sufism in Jerusalem under the Ottoman Rule,” by Zaki Hasan Nusseibeh, <http://www.mideastweb.org> (access 17/07/2017).

²³ He refers to Temple Mount, Monte de la casa, as it is named in the above mentioned *Biblia de Ferrara*, where the Jerusalem temple is referred to as *casa*.

²⁴ In reality, the tomb is a cenotaph or empty sarcophagus: “fuera de los muros desta ciudad...esta la sepultura del Rey Daud y mas reies nuestros donde los turcos hicieron una mesquita y no dexan entrar ningun judío...” (f 73b).

²⁵ “Mas ai algunos de los nuestros que estuvieron ya dentro...y vieron las mismas sepulturas de Daud y Salamon cubiertas con panos de terciopelo negro mas fue con grande riesgo...” (f 74a). We will return to this site later on, when we will discuss relations between Jews and Muslims.

²⁶ He always calls the esplanade *Monte de la Casa* (Temple Mount) and never uses the term *Haram al-Sharif*.

of biblical texts without understanding their chronology well. In any case, Senior disregards the division created by the wall surrounding Jerusalem and instead discusses sites outside the wall, including King David's tomb and the Jewish cemetery. He also describes sites inside the walled city as if all were in the same spatial area.²⁷

Senior mentions two Jewish pilgrimage sites near Temple Mount. One, by the two gates to the Temple courtyard, "used to be called Har Habayit, on Mount Moria, where thousands of people could be present and where today two of its doors are still present and our people visit in pilgrimage."²⁸ The other, the Tomb of the Prophet Zechariah, was outside the walled city on the Mount of Olives foothills, where Jews went the eve of Tishah b-Av.

The Jewish Cemetery on the Mount of Olives

Senior describes the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives as one more site of pilgrimage Jews made on the eve of Tishah b-Av. On that date, he says, "all Jews go there to ask for forgiveness for the grave sin that our ancestors committed against [the prophet Jeremiah, and there they chant] *quinot* [while] circling the prophet's burial site."²⁹ This sin can be deduced by the convoluted mix of biblical characters he mentions, all in relation to the prophet Jeremiah: his predictions that the first temple would be destroyed (which went unheard by the Jews of his time), and his ultimate death at the hands of a Jewish king.³⁰

Senior refers to other customs related to death and burial in the cemetery. He details the steps Jerusalem residents took to prepare for their individual deaths: secure a plot in the cemetery and make burial arrangements with the *parnassim* (community lay leaders), the *hevrah*

²⁷ For him the spatial divisions of the old city are: Mount Zion, where King David tomb is located; Mount Moria, where the Temple once stood; and the Mount of Olives, where the Jewish cemetery was located.

²⁸ He probably refers to the so-called Hulda's gates, which lead to the Haram al-Sharif compound, "*el lugar de la cassa santa tiene oy un grande sirquito...que en tiempos pasados le llamauan har-abaito...oy aun tiene este santo lugar dos puertas que los nuestros la[s] visitan por romerias mas no pueden poner el pie dentro...*" (f 75b).

²⁹ "*en bispera de tisabea ban alla todos los judios a pedir perdon del pecado tan graue que nuestros antepasados hicieron de su [Zacarias] muerte y con lagrimas y rogativas...con xinos [quinot]...*" (f 76a).

³⁰ Senior alludes to what he calls the "*alberga de sangre*" in reference to the moat in Jerusalem's old city, and he may refer to a legend regarding the death of prophet Jeremiah that I have not been able to locate.

(confraternity) in charge of burials, and finally the stonemason for the tombstone. He mentions these steps presumably because they were financially expensive.³¹ He had already acquired a plot for himself and his wife (he gives its specific measurements: 12 to 15 tiles) below the area of Zechariah's tomb, which seems to have been a choice location. But because of the expenses involved, he had not yet completed the other steps. Additional burial-related customs were: residents dug their own grave (the *keba*, in Hebrew), as it was considered a *mitzvah* to do it while still alive, top it with a stone, and visit it whenever possible.³²

II. Jerusalem as it Was: The Earthly City

According to Senior, the Jewish community comprised 450 to 550 households and was divided into two separate congregations, or *kehilot*.³³ The *Ashkenazi kahal* (the *tudescos*, as he calls them), whose members were cohesively united, had their own real estate and did not engage in business or mercantile transactions. He does not give evidence of any direct contacts with them. The other *kahal* included two groups of Jews:³⁴ Moorish Jews (*judíos moravios*) – also known as

³¹ The lease of the cemetery land was a heavy financial burden to the Jewish community during the entire period of Ottoman control. For the sixteenth century, Cohen. *Jewish Life under Islam*, 86-101, has documented details of the cemetery, which was waqf property, and the Jews leased the land for the purpose of burying their dead. The Jewish community was often brought to the *shari'a* court on charges that they had not paid enough rent or had transgressed land boundaries. In the eighteenth century, the situation with the cemetery seems to have deteriorated; see Barnai. *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century*, 21.

³² (f 70a). In contrast, in places like Amsterdam, gravedigging was done by associations of volunteers. Philippe Ariès, in his study of attitudes to death in Western Societies, has divided them into stages. During the Middle Ages, death was accepted as a collective destiny shared by all human fellows. Then, in the later Middle Ages, a new attitude – which he terms the “death of the self” – emerged, as individuals began to be concerned with their own mortality. See Ariès. *The Hour of Our Death*. In the descriptions given by Senior, such as when he describes the custom in Jerusalem of individuals digging their own graves, we see various signs of this “death of the self.”

³³ (f 76a). Ze'evi, 23, has estimated the total population in seventeenth-century Jerusalem as not exceeding ten thousand inhabitants. Barnai. *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century*, 173, has estimated that the Jewish population in Jerusalem by the end of the seventeenth century consisted of roughly a thousand people; more or less ten-per-cent of the total population.

³⁴ The Musta'riba or local Jews and the Maaravim or Maghrebi Jews are discussed by Barnai. “The Jewish Settlement in Palestine in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries,” 135-136, and by David. *To Come to the Land*, 70-71.

Maarabim or *Maghrebi* Jews – and Portuguese Jews, *los nuestros* (“our people”). Senior suggests this *kahal* was not a harmonious entity, in part because they did not speak the same language. Moorish Jews, as speakers of a language understood in the entire Barbary (Arabic), did well in the pharmaceutical business (*tienen botica*, 77a).

However, their simple clothing did not impress Senior. On Shabbat, he says, men wore a simple white linen cape. On weekdays, they wore any piece of old cloth. In summer, they went barefoot. Their women wore hats of beaten silver that protected their eyes, as well as woolen masks that allowed them to see but concealed their faces from others. Surprisingly, he did not disapprove of this custom and thought they had more freedom than Sephardi Jewish women in Amsterdam. Another custom he appreciated was that these Jews married their daughters at the early age of 12 or 15, and grooms paid their dowries.

In discussing the Portuguese Jews, Senior mentions some by their given names, and at least two had arrived from Venice: Dr. Ben Amram, alias Bento Pinel,³⁵ and Doña Reina, widow of Rabbi Immanuel Aboab, who, according to Senior, was related to him and his Amsterdam relatives.³⁶ Few business opportunities were available to Portuguese Jews (76b); some had previously failed to import merchandise via Egypt and Aleppo. He blames these failures on important Turkish individuals who in the past had not paid for their purchases, thus putting the Portuguese Jews in debt (77a). Also, by giving others the impression that the Portuguese were wealthier than they really were, other Jews subjected them to abuses. Some Portuguese Jews made a living lending money to the *tudescos* or *Ashkenazim* and to Christian friars, charging 10-12% interest. Others invested money in Egypt, earning between 17-18%; still others invested in Constantinople and Aleppo. But the Portuguese Jews, he says, preferred to leave their wealth in the good hands of those in Flanders so, with the interest earned there, they could live comfortably in Jerusalem.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Jewish community of Jerusalem, as described by Senior, was not yet the impoverished community historians had claimed, but he suggests signs of lack of com-

³⁵ On Bento Pinel, see Wilke. “La ville sainte vue par un juif d’Amsterdam,” 77.

³⁶ Roth. “Immanuel Aboab’s Proselytization of the Marranos,” 125, has documented that, around 1627, Rabbi Aboab, accompanied by a group of 36, had moved to Jerusalem from Venice, where he had joined his daughter, Gracia Aboab.

munication between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, as well as tension and mistrust among the Arab speakers and the Portuguese Jews.³⁷

Non-Jewish Residents of the City

Senior does not discuss people as often as sites, likely because he did not understand Arabic or Turkish, though he often refers to encounters with other non-Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem. Among these were Turkish governors, mostly the *pashas* of Jerusalem and Egypt, Turks in charge of holy Muslim places, and the common locals, that is, the Arabs and Moors (Maghrebi Muslims). Other than physically observing them in the city, Senior does not allude to knowing them well, which may explain why he either idealizes them, as he does with the *pasha*, or relies on his biases, as he does with the Arabs, whom he resents.

The Pashas, or Governors

In one instance, the Jerusalem pasha had organized festivities attended by Portuguese “and other Jews.” The occasion was water, which that summer had gushed from what he erroneously calls “Jacob’s well,” actually Job’s well.³⁸ He describes the well’s location as an idyllic setting down a beautiful valley of orange groves and abundant spring water. The pasha and his cohorts arrived to the celebration with their tents, and music was played while the Jews ate and entertained themselves. On another occasion, Senior credits the “good basha” with the quiet the city enjoyed.³⁹

Turks in Charge of Holy Muslim Places

Encounters with Muslims in charge of sacred places, however, revealed animosity between them and Jews. In an incident Senior ap-

³⁷ Recent studies by Jacob Barnai and Mattias Lehmann have demonstrated that these tensions intensified at the end of the seventeenth century, reaching the peak in the eighteenth century, when the community was dependent on donations from Jews in the Diaspora.

³⁸ “...*abaxando a otro valle mui ameno...esta el famoso pozo de Jacob que los moros le llaman vir’u que es palabra corrupta de ebraica ver Jacob poço de Jacob...*” (f 71b). In reality, he is describing the Job’s well. See Wilke. “La ville sainte vue par un juif d’Amsterdam,” n. 8, and see Barnai. *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century*, 141.

³⁹ “[*en esta santa ciudad*] *con un buen baxa que no nos hace ningunos males ni molestia que en esto esta...la quietud desta santa tierra...*” (f 76b).

pears to have witnessed near King David's tomb, a physical encounter had occurred between a Jew and a preacher, or sheikh.⁴⁰ When the two had crossed paths, the sheikh had forcefully tried to remove the Jew's headcovering. While trying to avoid the fall of his headcovering, the Jew had caused the sheikh's turban to fall off.⁴¹ The populace became involved, to the detriment of the Jew, who was accused of intentionally causing the sheikh's turban to fall and was jailed. Thanks to the good pasha, the Jew was imprisoned for only three to four days despite the sheikh's frustration, Senior says.

The Arabs and Moors

Senior harshly describes the local Arabs as incapable of cultivating the land, but he calls the other group of locals, the Moors "the best people one can find here." However, he equally scorns the clothing of both Arabs and Moors, describing them similarly to the apparel of Maghrebi Jews.⁴² Only sporadically does Senior acknowledge the presence of local Christians in the city.

Conclusion

On some levels, Senior's depiction of Jerusalem resembles other accounts of western travelers who, in the words of Ze'evi, "combine myth and reflections of reality" (p. 10). But Senior's additional interests in the trivial details of daily life and human interactions have given us an account that allows us to experience life in Ottoman Jerusalem as he experienced it in the 1630s.

⁴⁰ For the history of the tense relations between the Franciscans and the Muslims in relation to the Tomb of David, see the book by Clausen. *The Upper Room and Tomb of David*.

⁴¹ "un xeche de dicha mesquita que son los predicadores della personas mui respetadas tubo una pendencia que un cierto judío...y leuataron que por desprecio el judío se la echara al suelo y lleuaronlo presso..." (f 74a).

⁴² "[arabes] barbara y uil gente que ni industria tienen para cultivarla [tierra], [moros] la mexor gente que aquí ay..." (f 72b).

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