

“IT IS A MINHAG”: ALGERIAN JUDAISM THROUGH THE EYES OF A HEBREW-CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY

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Among the various emblems of this different difference remains the fact that there are Christians who are Jews, or perhaps better put, Jews who are Christians, even up to this day.¹

*A məšti, məšti dlalba, l'rosa raiḥa ldarha.
Gulu l-baba gulu lu, yibni daro ḥda dari.
Baba umama kabruni, waja' lgheir wa'bani.*²

The border between Jews and Christians is an ambivalent zone, where communities attempt to define themselves against the other. This article explores the shifting boundaries between Jew and Christian and European and African in the correspondence of J.B. Crighton-Ginsburg, a Russian Jew who became a Christian missionary among the Jews of North Africa and Turkey. Crighton-Ginsburg's story directs our attention to how borders are never static, but rather continuous and porous zones of interference; his Jewish-Christian-European-African hybridity disrupted even his fantasy of a stable identity. The place of difference, Homi Bhabha reminds us, is not merely opposition, but rather “a pressure, and a presence, that acts constantly, if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorization.”³ For Christianity, the existence of Jews is both a reminder of Christianity's Jewish origins as well as a symbol of the Church's continued failure to achieve its universal message: Jews are both “the target of Christian missionary hopes, but ... also the source of Christian genealogical anxieties.”⁴ For Judaism, on the other hand, the historical proximity of Christianity led to an intensified and intentional

¹ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 225.

² “Comb, comb her braids, the bride is going to her house. / Tell father, tell him to build his house next to mine. / My father and mother raised me, and a stranger has taken me away.” This is a Judeo-Arabic henna song from Ighil-n-Ughu, in southern Morocco. Yehuda Dar'i. *Haḥatuna hayehudit baqehilot kefariyyot: minhagei nissu'in b'Ighil n- Ughu* [Jewish Marriage in Rural Communities: wedding customs in Ighil n-Ughu], in *Haḥatuna hayehudit bamesoratit baMaroqo* [*The Jewish Traditional Marriage in Morocco*], ed. Joseph Chetrit (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2003), 553-558. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article are by the author. I am especially grateful for the assistance of Abdel-Khalig Ali and Ramzi Taleb with Algerian Arabic.

³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), 109.

⁴ Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 8.

distancing. For example, in Jewish languages that developed in European-Christian contexts, words derived from Christianity were avoided (e.g. the Judeo-Espanyol *alhad*, which comes from the Arabic "first day," or Sunday, instead of the Spanish *domingo*, or "the Lord's day"⁵) or re-understood as terms of derision and ironic mockery (e.g. the Yiddish *shoyte-tome*, "Saint Thomas," via the Hebrew *shote tame*, or "impure fool"⁶). This linguistic aversion testifies to the constant "pressure" and "presence" of the Jewish-Christian boundary.

Nineteenth-century Hebrew Christians, like ancient Judaeo-Christians and contemporary Messianic Jews, served as focal points for a particular kind of anxiety about the borders of both Christianity and Judaism, particularly within the Jewish community.⁷ However, Hebrew Christians themselves were also faced with the anxiety of the Jewish-Christian border. Their position as followers of Jesus placed them outside the boundaries of normative Judaism, but their identity as *Hebrew* Christians reinforced their continued link to their own Jewishness and to the Jewish community at large. Hebrew-Christian missionaries, in particular, were doubly situated in a liminal zone: they were Jews who had become Christians, and Christians who were attempting to represent Christianity to Jews.

The Hebrew-Christian movement began in early-nineteenth century England, as Christian missionaries encouraged their converts to continue identifying ethnically as Jews; the founding of the *London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews* (LJS) in 1809 is often identified as a pivotal moment in the movement's beginning, associated especially with German-born convert Joseph S. C. F. Frey (1771-1850).⁸ In subsequent decades numerous other Hebrew-Christian organizations emerged; they translated and distributed Bibles in Hebrew and other Jewish languages, held church services in Hebrew, and trained missionaries to return to Jewish communities and preach the Gospel.⁹ While much of the work was aimed at Jewish communities in Europe, Hebrew-Christian missionaries were also prominent in missions to the Jews of Africa and Asia.¹⁰ LJS missionary Thomas Halsted¹¹ reported in the mid-nineteenth century that Hebrew-Christian missionaries were active in Constantine (Algeria), Cairo, Jerusalem, and Baghdad. Biographies of Hebrew-

⁵ Haïm Vidal Sephiha, "Christianisms' in Judeo-Spanish (Calque and Vernacular)," in *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, ed. Joshua Fishman (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 183.

⁶ Ghil'ad Zuckermann, "Etymythological Othering' and the Power of 'Lexical Engineering' in Judaism, Islam and Christianity: A Socio-Philo(sopho)logical Perspective," in *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*, ed. Tope Omoniyi and Joshua Fishman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), 240-242.

⁷ Yaacov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 55-76; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London: Cassell, 2000), 79-81; Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 37-73, 151-226.

⁸ Michael Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 52-75.

⁹ Darby, *Hebrew Christian Movement*, 90-96, 159-184.

¹⁰ See Yaron Perry, *British Mission to the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Palestine* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) and Eliezer Bashan, *The Anglican Mission and the Jews of Morocco in the 19th Century* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan Univeristy, 1999).

¹¹ Thomas Halsted, *Our Missions: a History of the Principal Missionary Transactions of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews* (London: William Macintosh, 1866), 402.

Christian missionaries who worked among the Jews of North Africa and Central Asia, such as Ferdinand Christian Ewald, Joseph Wolff and Henry Stern, are found in Louis Meyer's 1903 book *Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century* and Aaron Bernstein's *Some Jewish Witnesses for Christ* (1909).¹² Publications from the American Bible Society and the British Foreign and Bible Society showing the various languages of their translations include not only Hebrew and two dialects of Yiddish, but also Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Espanyol for "Spanish Jews in Turkey,"¹³ Eastern Judeo-Arabic, for "Jews in Syria, Yemen, &c.,"¹⁴ and Tunisian Judeo-Arabic for "Jews in North Africa,"¹⁵ indicating that they saw missionary outreach to Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews as a crucial part of their work.

The presence of European Hebrew-Christian missionaries in non-Ashkenazi Jewish communities raises important questions about their relationship to Judaism and Jews. Even Jewish European travellers among Jewish communities in North Africa and Central Asia claimed to experience complex feelings of liminality and shifting boundaries, as they identified with their Jewish co-religionists but also gazed at them from the distance of Europe looking at the Orient. The historian Asher Salah observes this dynamic, for example, in the narrative of the Italian-Jewish traveller Samuel Romanelli:

When confronted with native Moroccans, [Romanelli] claims to be Italian, but when confronted with Europeans living in Morocco he is rejected for being a Jew. Sometimes he is perceived by local Jews as an atheist or a Christian, precisely when he would like to stress their belonging to a common faith ... Romanelli's world appears to be one of constant change, instability, heterogeneity, and sheer porosity.¹⁶

If Jewish travellers from Europe faced porous boundaries and blurred allegiances among their co-religionists in Africa and Asia, certainly the world of Hebrew-Christian travellers and missionaries was even more strongly marked by this instability.

The Man and the Mission: J.B. (Crighton-)Ginsburg

J.B. Crighton-Ginsburg,¹⁷ described as "one of this Anglican Society's most controversial emissaries,"¹⁸ was born Baruch Ginsburg, in Kiev, around 1826.¹⁹ By his own account, his

¹² Aaron Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses for Christ* (London: Operative Jewish Converts' Institution, 1909), 203-15; Louis Meyer, *Eminent Hebrew Christians of the nineteenth century: brief biographical sketches*, ed. David Rausch (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983) 45-56, 103-114.

¹³ American Bible Society, *Illustration of the Different Languages and Dialects in which the Holy Bible in Whole or in Part has been Printed and Circulated* (Columbian Exposition, 1893), 13.

¹⁴ American Bible Society, *Illustration*, 22.

¹⁵ John Sharp, *The Gospel in Many Tongues* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1912), 97.

¹⁶ Asher Salah, "The Otherness of the Self: On Samuel Romanelli's Travelogue," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5, no. 2 (2011): 223.

¹⁷ He added Crighton to his name in 1886 after marrying his second wife, 21-year old heiress Sarah Ostle Crighton, in 1871. The remainder of this article will refer to him as Ginsburg, his name at the time under discussion.

¹⁸ Michael Menachem Laskier, "Review of Eliezer Bashan, The Anglican Mission and Moroccan Jewry in the Nineteenth Century," *AJS Review* 26, no. 1 (2002): 166.

father, Saul Ginsburg, was a rabbi, and trained his son for the same role. At some point in his youth, however, Baruch heard of “a Jewish sect” that followed only the Bible and rejected the Talmudic system of rabbinic law: Protestant Christians.²⁰ After his father’s death, Baruch left Kiev and traveled through Europe, seeking his spiritual home. He found it in Berlin, where he met Hebrew-Christian missionaries Carl Schwartz, Joachim Biesenthal and Robert Belson, sometime around 1846. They gave Baruch a Hebrew translation of the New Testament, and, in Strasbourg, introduced him to LJS missionary Johann Peter Goldberg and his student Jacob August Hausmeister, with whom he converted to Christianity on May 16, 1847,²¹ taking the name James.²² After his conversion, Ginsburg studied at the London Missionary College from 1849-51; among his classmates were the notable Hebrew-Christian scholars Christian David Ginsburg (no relation) and Isaac Salkinsohn.²³ The three lived together in the house of Benjamin Davidson, the principal of the college.²⁴

In 1857, after several years at the LJS mission in Mülhausen, Ginsburg was appointed to open a station in Constantine. He and his wife began work immediately: they held services, distributed Bibles and LJS literature, and opened schools for boys and girls, along with a “home for young Jewesses.”²⁵ In 1860, he traveled south to visit the Mzab, and spent some time with the Jewish community of Ghardaïa. He was transferred to Algiers in

¹⁹ The 1851 census lists him as a Russian-born “student,” twenty-five years old. National Archives, *1851 Census of England and Wales*, folio 55, 15.

²⁰ Johannes Friedrich Alexander de le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden* [Evangelical Christianity and the Jews, vol. 3] (Berlin: H. Reuther, 1892), 219.

²¹ de le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*, 219-220; Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*, 234. According to Eliezer Bashan, Ginsburg immigrated to England in 1846 and converted there. Bashan, *The Anglican Mission*. This is at odds with earlier accounts that say he converted with Hausmeister and Goldberg, who were serving in Strasbourg. See: de le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit*; Edwin Munsell Bliss, *The Encyclopedia of Missions: Descriptive, Historical, Biographical, Statistical* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1904); and Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*. 1909. Ginsburg himself writes that he “left [Russia] in the year 1846 and have ever since resided either in England or abroad [my emphasis].” It thus appears that he converted in France and left for England afterward. James Baruch Ginsburg, *An Account of the Persecution of the Protestant Mission among the Jews at Mogador, Morocco* (London: Edward G. Allen, 1880), 3.

²² Some secondary sources give his post-conversion name as James Barnet, but it appears that Barnet is a simple misreading of Baruch. See: Robert Attal, “*Les missions protestantes anglicanes en Afrique du Nord et leurs publications en judéo-arabe à l’intention des Juifs* [Protestant Anglican Missions in North Africa and their Judeo-Arabic Publications Aimed at Jews],” *Revue des Études Juives* 132 (1973) and Bashan, *The Anglican Mission*. I have not found Barnet in any primary source, and every source where Ginsburg wrote his own name (e.g. wedding certificates, publications) shows James Baruch.

²³ Samuel Hinds Wilkinssohn, *The Life of John Wilkinssohn, the Jewish Missionary* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1908), 17.

²⁴ According to the census, Benjamin Davidson lived at 48 Stanford St. with his wife Ann, his children Jane, Jessie, Benjamin, and Theodore, his nephew Henry O’Reilly, and five boarders: James Ginsburg, 25, Xtian [sic] D Ginsburg, 25, Moses [sic] Salkinson, 31, Matthew L. Mollis, 28, and Bezehil Herbestman, 33. They also had three servants living with them: Rachel Karley, 16, Marian Cockrane, 19, and James Harrison, 14. National Archives, *1851 Census of England and Wales*, folio 55, 15.

²⁵ That is, his first wife, Elizabeth Ricks, whom he married in 1853, and who died suddenly in Algiers in 1868.

1864, opening the first Anglican church in North Africa there in 1870,²⁶ and then to Mogador (present-day Essaouira, Morocco) in 1875.²⁷ The Jewish community in Mogador was intensely hostile. In 1879, riots and community protests broke out against his missionary activity.²⁸ He was compelled to leave for London, where he published his only book, *An Account of the Persecution of the Protestant Mission among the Jews at Mogador, Morocco*, in 1880. It was an impassioned defence of his innocence in the affair, and a vehement denunciation of the British authorities who withdrew their protection and forced him to leave Morocco. Ginsburg then spent two years in Marseilles, where he obtained French citizenship, and returned to Mogador in 1882. He was transferred to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) in 1886, where he remained until his death on March 4, 1898. According to missionary sources, he was responsible for a total of 287 conversions through his work in North Africa and Turkey.²⁹ Several of his students, including Theodore Élie Zerbib, Solomon Darmon, Job Dahan, and Moses Ben Oliel, continued his missionary work among North African Jews.³⁰

“This Extraordinary Phenomenon”: Ginsburg and the Henna Ceremony

In March 1858, Ginsburg published a story in *The Church of England* magazine describing an Algerian Jewish wedding and the celebration of Sukkot. The narrative takes place in the fall of 1857,³¹ just after Ginsburg’s arrival in Algeria (the full text is reproduced in the Appendix),³² and it appears to be his first published report of his own missionary work.³³ It

²⁶ Charles Pelham Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa, Vol. 3: 1878-1914* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), 158.

²⁷ See the accounts of his activity in Albert Edward Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902), 168, 217-219; William Thomas Gidney, *The history of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, 1908), 391-394, 488-492; and Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*, 234.

²⁸ Ginsburg’s activities in Morocco, as well as the responses of the Jewish community and civil authorities, are examined extensively in Bashan, *The Anglican Mission*, 40-112; Eliezer Bashan, *Jewish Women in Morocco: Seen Through Letters from 1733-1905* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 2005), 74-81; and Mostafa Hassani-Idrissi, *Aspects peu connus de la vie sociale des Juifs d’Essaouira: la mission protestante de J. B. C. Ginsburg et ses repercussions (1875-1886)* [Less-Known Aspects of the Social Life of the Jews of Essaouira: the Protestant Mission of J. B. C. Ginsburg and its Repercussions], in *Juifs du Maroc: identité et dialogue* [*The Jews of Morocco: Identity and Dialogue*] (Saint-Étienne: La Pensée Sauvage, 1978), 167-174.

²⁹ Combining Gidney’s figure of ninety-nine conversions at Istanbul and Heggøy’s figure of 188 for North Africa. See: Gidney, *The history of the London Society*, 546; and Willy Normann Heggøy, *Fifty Years of Evangelical Missionary Movement in North Africa, 1881-1931* (PhD diss., Harford Seminary, 1960), 363.

³⁰ Gidney, *The history of the London Society*, 569-70; Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*, 234.

³¹ The letter is dated September 1857, but the end of his letter describes *Shemini ‘Aseret*, 22 Tishrei of the Hebrew calendar, which in the Hebrew year 5618 began on the evening of Friday, October 9, 1857.

³² His name is misprinted as “J.B. Grosberg, on a mission from the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews,” but it is clear that Ginsburg is intended, not least since he was the only LJS missionary to serve in Constantine. This misprint is perhaps why this significant window into Ginsburg’s early mission has escaped scholarly attention. The first part of the story is also reprinted anonymously in *The Church of England*, August 1858, with a short addition from Ginsburg about the Jewish community of Constantine.

is a valuable record of Ginsburg’s first encounters with North African Jewry and his attempts to navigate the complex and intersecting boundaries that his work presented. LJS periodicals and missionary publications certainly cannot be considered objective descriptions of Jewish community life, but as Agnieszka Jagodzińska observes, they can still shed light on “the tension between contradictory Jewish images and attitudes towards Jews, trapped in the constant dialectics between the ideal, the real and the imagined.”³⁴ Significantly, Ginsburg’s narrative prefigures the conflicts that characterized his later work in Morocco and Turkey, and highlights the complexity of his position as a European Hebrew-Christian missionary among North African Jews.

Ginsburg begins his narrative with his sighting of “four Jewish females, one of them carrying a plate filled with ‘henna,’ in the midst of which was a lighted tallow candle, surrounded with eggs. This extraordinary phenomenon, I thought, must be a religious ceremony.”³⁵ He therefore stops to watch, and then proceeds to follow the procession, noting that the woman leading it uttered “loud shrieks ... clamorous and frightful gesticulations” with her hand by her chin. The procession arrives at a small house, where a henna ceremony for a young Jewish bride is taking place. Ginsburg’s narrative expresses the curiosity that leads him to watch and follow this “extraordinary” phenomenon. Of course, it is only unusual to him as an Ashkenazi Jew unfamiliar with North African Jewish wedding traditions such as henna ceremonies, the *zgharit* (trilled ululations) and the *zaffa* (public wedding procession). There is nothing extraordinary about the inclusion of these elements in what seems to be a typical Algerian Jewish wedding.

Ginsburg continues the story: as he enters the house, one of the women present approaches him and asks in Arabic, *wafīn rāyah* (And where are you going?). The text leaves this question untranslated and unanswered. In fact, it appears that Ginsburg himself did not understand. He replies in Hebrew, asking, *ma zot* (What is this?). The woman, who in return does not appear to understand his Hebrew question, simply invites him in, saying *mrhabā bik*, (Welcome).³⁶ This moment of (mis)translation is the first tension introduced in Ginsburg’s narrative. It is not only linguistic—apparently, Ginsburg does not yet know Arabic,³⁷ while this woman does not know Hebrew—but also symbolic of the

³³ A story about Ginsburg’s work in Mülhausen appears in a report of Rev. Dietrich Hechler. See: Dietrich Hechler, “Mülhausen: Letter from Rev. D. Hechler,” *Jewish Intelligence* 22, (April 1856): 120-121.

³⁴ Agnieszka Jagodzińska, “‘For Zion’s Sake I will Not Rest’: The London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews its 19th-Century Missionary Periodicals,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 82, no. 2 (2013): 385; see also Jagodzińska, “English Missionaries’ Look at Polish Jews: The Value and Limitations of Missionary Reports as Source Material,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 27 (2014).

³⁵ James Baruch Ginsburg, “Algeria—Marriage Ceremony—Feast of the In-gathering,” *Church of England Magazine: under the superintendence of the Clergymen of the United Church of England and Ireland* 44 (1858): 246.

³⁶ Ginsburg, “Algeria,” 246. Ginsburg transcribes the exchange as follows: “One of the attendants, observing me gazing with the curiosity of a novice, came forward, and said, ‘Ovaïn rajah?’ I replied with another question in Hebrew, ‘Ma zott?’ As she did not seem to understand me, she rejoined, ‘Marhabo bick’ (Thou art welcome to look).”

³⁷ By 1862, Ginsburg appears to have learned Arabic well enough to translate the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 1-13) into Algerian Arabic. Eric McCoy North, *The Book of a Thousand Tongues: Being Some Account*

distance that separates Ginsburg and these Algerian Jews, his supposed people. This interaction fails to grant any of them the knowledge they desire. The woman remains ignorant to the identity and purpose of the visitor intruding on this community celebration and Ginsburg is refused any explanation or context for this unfamiliar “religious ceremony,” undermining his authority as an enlightened Jewish teacher.

He then describes the appearance of a thirteen-year-old bride and her bridesmaid, “almost enveloped in chaplets, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and chains, their eyebrows blackened with *kehol* (kohl), and their fingers and toenails coloured red with the aforementioned henna.”³⁸ Since her hands have already been hennaed, it appears that this is one of several henna ceremonies, as was common in North African Jewish communities. This night, in fact, was devoted to hennaing the bride’s hair. Ginsburg describes how the bride’s hair is covered with henna paste, wrapped in ribbons and left for a week: “it was to retain the colour, and remain in a dishevelled condition for eight days.” This ritual, known in various Maghrebi Jewish communities as *azmomeg* (etymology unclear), *nhār al-bedyān* (the day of beginning) or *nhār at-tarf al-byād* (the day of the white ribbon), was practiced by North African Jewish communities until the mid-twentieth century,³⁹ and is still remembered today by Israelis of North African descent.⁴⁰ Beyond the general importance of pre-wedding henna in protecting and beautifying the bride, this ceremony had specific importance, and appears to be a unique innovation of the Jewish community.⁴¹ Rahel Wasserfall interprets the symbolism of this ritual, where the henna is tied into the bride’s hair along with honey, butter and a partially cooked egg, as representing the bride’s transformation from “girl” into “woman,” and the actualization of her potential sexuality via the “cooking” of the egg, and the red staining of the henna.⁴² However, from his side of the boundary—lacking cultural context, and denied explanation—Ginsburg saw only dishevelled hair and clamorous, frightful gesticulations.

While the bride was being hennaed, Ginsburg observed that “the bride’s relations and friends cried bitterly; and the rest talked loudly and laughed.” This is typical for henna ceremonies, which were both community celebrations and moments of personal transition

of the Translation and Publication of All or Part of the Holy Scriptures in More than a Thousand Languages and Dialects (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), 54.

³⁸ Ginsburg, “Algeria,” 246-247.

³⁹ Elie Malka, *Essai d’ethnographie traditionnelle des Mellahs: ou croyances, rites de passage, et vieilles pratiques des Israélites marocains* [An attempt at a traditional ethnography of the mellahs: or beliefs, passage rituals, and old customs of Moroccan Jews] (Rabat: Imprimerie Omnia, 1946), 55; Issachar Ben-Ami, *Le mariage traditionnel chez les Juifs marocains* [The Traditional Marriage among Moroccan Jews], in *Studies in Marriage Customs*, ed. Issachar Ben-Ami and Dov Noy (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1974), 16.

⁴⁰ Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun, “The Rites of Water for the Jewish Women of Algeria: Representations and Meanings,” in *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*, ed. Rahel Wasserfall (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 206; Rahel Wasserfall, “Community, Fertility, and Sexuality: identity formation among Moroccan Jewish immigrants,” in *Women and Water*, 187-197.

⁴¹ For henna’s symbolism in North African Jewish communities, see: *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Henna” (Leiden: Brill, 2013). On the *azmomeg*, see Ben-Ami, “The Traditional Marriage,” 90. Ben-Ami indicates that this ritual is not found among North African Muslims.

⁴² Wasserfall, “Community, Fertility, and Sexuality,” 194.

for the bride and her family. It was expected that the bride's family would show some (ritualized) displays of sadness and even despair. Emotional laments for the loss of the young child who was moving away from her family were common (recall that the bride of Ginsburg's story is only thirteen). For example, the Libyan Jewish scholar Mordekhai Hakohen (1856-1929) recorded that at the henna ceremony, "the bride feels pain in parting from her parents' house, and weeps for her father and mother, and all of the members of the house weep for her parting."⁴³ In the Jewish community of the Souss, in southern Morocco, the bride traditionally sang the following tearful exchange at the *azmomeg* henna ceremony with her father:

While the *tamzwarat* (bridal attendants) comb her hair, the bride cries:
'O thankless father!
Why have you given your daughter
To the top of the mountain?
Why did you not say
My daughter is young
She will stay close to me!
Her father responds to her, while crying:
'Give the girl to her cousin,
She will come back and return to her mother.'⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the henna ceremony is also a community celebration, and the evening was no doubt joyous. Numerous sources on Jewish henna ceremonies specify that singing and dancing often lasts into the early hours of the morning.⁴⁵ But again, none of this cultural context was available to Ginsburg (or if it was, he chose not to acknowledge it). Instead, he represented the Algerian Jew as wild, inconsistent and uncontrolled.

Ginsburg notes that at the end of the week, the rabbi would perform "the religious ceremony of the marriage, which had already been performed by the civil authorities."⁴⁶ This indicates that some Jews in Constantine would have their marriage registered with the civil authorities first, and then perform the week-long traditional festivities, concluding with *qiddushin* (the religious ceremony).⁴⁷ This brief observation testifies to the tension already present in the Algerian-Jewish community between local religious custom and the European colonial presence. The French, who invaded Algeria in 1830, had already

⁴³ Harvey Goldberg, *The Book of Mordechai: A Study of the Jews of Libya, Selections from the "Highid Mordekhai" of Mordechai Hakohen* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980), 277.

⁴⁴ Ben-Ami, "The Traditional Marriage," 64. This was also a common theme of Yemenite Jewish henna ceremonies. See also: Rachel Sharaby, "The Bride's Henna Ritual: Symbols, Meanings and Changes," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 11 (2006): 22.

⁴⁵ See: Cohen 1904: 43; Goldberg, *The Book of Mordechai*; Ephraim Ben-Hur, *Minbagei hatuna beJerba* [Wedding Customs of Djerba] *Yeda-Am* 10 no. 28 (1964): 34-38; Bo'az Haddad, *Sefer Jerba Yehudit* [The Book of Jewish Djerba] (Jerusalem: Beit haOtzar haIvri, 1980).

⁴⁶ Ginsburg, "Algeria," 247.

⁴⁷ In the mid-twentieth century, anthropologists Lloyd Cabot Briggs and Norina Lami Guède noted that in the Jewish community of Ghardaïa some couples were married "à la Française, that is ... a French civil ceremony in addition to the religious Jewish one." Briggs and Guède, *No More Forever: A Saharan Jewish Town* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum, 1964), 48.

restricted the authority of Jewish religious courts to deal only with marriage and divorce in 1834. In 1841, rabbis were limited to rule only on religious matters that had no connection with French civil law; traditional Jewish marriage practices that contravened French law, such as polygamy, were outlawed.⁴⁸ Algerian Jews became more and more *francisés* (Gallicized), culminating in the naturalization of Algerian Jewry as French citizens by the Crémieux Decree in 1870.⁴⁹ Since 1847, the Jewish community of Constantine (like Algiers and Oran) had been represented by a *consistoire*, a regional administrative body whose members answered to the central governing body, the *Consistoire central israélite de France*.⁵⁰ Aside from this brief mention of civil marriage, throughout his letter Ginsburg portrays the Jews as primitive and wild, celebrating barefoot and on the floor.⁵¹ Ginsburg's view divides the proceedings into an Orientalist binary, where the Algerian Jews represent everything that is unchanging, archaic, savage, and ignorant, while Ginsburg represents everything that is European, controlled, civilized, and enlightened. The realities of Algerian Jewish contact and conflict with Europe are silent in Ginsburg's account.⁵²

After the henna ceremony had finished, Ginsburg interrogated the *shamash* (synagogue caretaker) about what the ceremony signified. The *shamash* replied that he did not know. Ginsburg then asked the *shamash* whether he knew the Torah: "Have you a bible?" he asked. To which the *shamash* replied: "I have a Pentateuch." The exchange continued: "Have you read it?" "O, yes." "Do you remember what Moses said?"⁵³ Without waiting for a response, Ginsburg asks (sarcastically, one suspects) whether this *minhag* (custom) with "the hideous gestures of the crier and the washing of the hair"⁵⁴ would lead non-Jews to think that the Jews were a great nation, wise and righteous (Ginsburg directed the *shamash* Deuteronomy to 4:1-8) or wicked and foolish, having abandoned God (here he cited Jeremiah 2:13). It is likely that Ginsburg was reading to him from a Hebrew Bible; the quotation given in Ginsburg's text is not from any English version, and Ginsburg's

⁴⁸ Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 143-176.

⁴⁹ *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Algeria."

⁵⁰ Michael Menachem Laskier, Sara Reguer, and Haim Saadoun, "Community Leadership and Structure," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 53-54, 459-460.

⁵¹ Ginsburg, "Algeria," 246. Ginsburg describes how the guests "[left] their sandals outside, walked barefooted, and with uncovered arms, into the hut, and seated themselves on the floor."

⁵² This problem persists today, as noted by Alcalay: "All of these [Levantine Jewish scholars] had extensive contact with European Jewish intellectuals and institutions, yet a reading of almost any general history of modern Jewish thought would leave one with the impression that none of these persons ever existed, that the Levantine and Arab world remained plunged in darkness, totally unaware of what was taking place outside it," Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 154. For more reflective accounts of this encounter, see Norman Stillman, *Sephardi Religious Responses to Modernity* (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995); Harvey Goldberg, ed. *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1996); Spector Simon, Laskier, and Reguer, eds. *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa*.

⁵³ Ginsburg, "Algeria," 247.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Arabic does not seem good enough to have translated the Bible in spontaneous conversation.

In thus applying biblical text to contemporary circumstances, Ginsburg is engaging in a kind of *midrash* (homiletics), attempting to engage his Jewish interlocutors in a familiar textual practice. It fails, however, to achieve the desired effect; the *shamash* simply replies, "It is a *minbag*," and turns away with a shrug of his shoulders. What is the tone of the *shamash's* retort? It could be read as the *shamash* himself dismissing the henna ceremony and its attendant rituals as merely *minbag*, separate and subordinate to the scripture Ginsburg read aloud. Alternatively, he could be celebrating the power of his community's *minbag*, drawing on familiar Jewish understandings—*minbag Yisrael kedin hu* (Jewish custom has the force of law),⁵⁵ *minbag avoteinu beyadeinu* (we follow the customs of our ancestors)⁵⁶—and rejecting the Protestant attempt to delegitimize ritual as disconnected from and unauthorized by divine scripture.

Did Ginsburg fail to elicit a response because of an inappropriate choice of text? Was the question offensive? Or was it another moment of mistranslation? This conflict over text is reminiscent of Bhabha's description of the colonial scenario of the "wondrous book," the symbol of European authority, desire and discipline, "repeated, translated, misread, [and] displaced."⁵⁷ And this is a double displacement, since Ginsburg is not bringing the book (at least not Deuteronomy or Jeremiah) to the *shamash*, who knows it well. In fact, both those portions had been read liturgically in synagogue a few months earlier.⁵⁸ The futility of Ginsburg asking the *shamash* of a synagogue whether he has read the Torah, or remembers what Moses said, is a perfect encapsulation of the colonial presence, "split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference."⁵⁹ The question is oppressive in its performance of how it constructs the Other while silencing other sources of authority and authenticity.

Ginsburg's final question—about what non-Jews would think—arises from a European perspective; he does not consider whether Algerian Muslims might think it perfectly normal for Jews to have a henna ceremony. Indeed, they would likely hold a similar ceremony themselves.⁶⁰ It is Ginsburg, not the native "Gentiles," who considers this *minbag* wicked and foolish. Deuteronomy 4 warns the Israelites to hearken only to the laws of God, and not to "add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it,"⁶¹ which speaks to Ginsburg's view of the strangeness of Algerian-Jewish culture and its adoption of "heathen" customs. In 1877, Ginsburg published a letter in the LJS magazine *Jewish*

⁵⁵ A rabbinic phrase, also cited as *minbag Yisrael* (or *avoteinu*) *Torah hi* (Jewish custom has the force of Torah), e.g. Tosafot to *Menahot* 20b, s.v. *nifsal*.

⁵⁶ This phrase originates in the Babylonian Talmud (*Ta'anit* 28b, *Beisa* 4b).

⁵⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 102.

⁵⁸ Jer. 2:13 is part of the *haftarah* (additional reading) for the Shabbat of *Maṭṭot-Mas'ei*, which was July 18, 1857, and Deut. 4 is part of the Torah reading for the Shabbat of *Va'ethannan*, which was August 1, 1857.

⁵⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 108.

⁶⁰ On Muslim henna traditions in North Africa, see: M. Vonderheyden, "Le henné chez les Musulmans de l'Afrique du Nord" [Henna among the Muslims of North Africa], *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 4, no. 1 (1934): 54-61.

⁶¹ Deut. 4:2.

Intelligence with a similar perspective: he explains that rabbinic Judaism considers non-Jews excluded from any divine privileges or blessings, and argues that this goes against biblical theology. This “corroborates how far the rabbis have gone astray in their interpretation of God’s word, and how incompetent they are to judge of the concerns of religion. It was indeed reserved for Christianity to proclaim that revelation was for the world at large.”⁶² For Ginsburg, these Algerian Jews were practicing a distorted and corrupted form of Judaism, which was itself a weakened and distorted form of the perfection of Christianity.

“This Excellent Opportunity”: Ginsburg and *Shemini ‘Aseret*

Ginsburg’s first encounter ends with failure: his interlocutor turns away, dismissing his missionary proclamation of the superiority of Christian and European culture over Algerian *minhag*. In the second half of the article, Ginsburg shifts to another brief story, which took place “the other evening—the eve of the feast of in-gathering, which is annexed to the feast of tabernacles, and called ‘shemini azereth’ (Exod.23.16).”⁶³ The events of the second story mitigate the failure of Ginsburg’s first encounter, and bring his report to a triumphant conclusion.

The second story begins with Ginsburg hearing music “more discordant than I ever heard before,” and discerns that it is “the voice of Jacob,”⁶⁴ or Jews, celebrating the holiday. He enters the house—again, without permission or invitation—where he finds “a goodly number of women and children, huddled together on the ground in one part of the yard, and several men squeezed under a hut made of branches, in the other.” As with his description of the henna ceremony, the Jews he depicts are primitive, uncivilized, and discordant. Ginsburg describes the men as sitting in “a hut of branches,” without noting that this refers to the *sukkah*, a temporary booth built for the holiday of Sukkot, which Ashkenazi Jews also build as a biblical obligation. Through his selective use of biblical terminology, Ginsburg emphasizes the wild Otherness of the Algerian Jews. “The appearance ... made me desire to withdraw; but the repeated voices of ‘Marhabo bick’ (Welcome) made my stay unavoidable,” he wrote.⁶⁵ Ginsburg is both attracted and repelled by this scene, at the same time familiar and foreign. Unlike the henna ceremony, Ginsburg needs no explanation, and here he takes the role of authoritative narrator, not only naming the holiday but also directing the reader to the appropriate biblical passage.⁶⁶

The men invite Ginsburg to join them and offer him a chair, but he writes that he preferred to “sit down à l’Arab” on the floor, like them. No longer watching from the edge of the room, Ginsburg has now moved to the centre, and he has allowed himself to become

⁶² James Baruch Ginsburg, “Correspondence: To the Editor of the Jewish Intelligence,” *Jewish Intelligence, and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society For Promoting Christianity Among the Jews* 17 (September 1877): 227-228.

⁶³ Ginsburg, “Algeria,” 247. Hebrew *shemini ‘aseret*, “eighth [day of] assembly,” refers to a minor festival the day after the seventh day of Sukkot.

⁶⁴ An allusion to Gen. 27:22, where Isaac recognizes Jacob’s voice even though he is disguised as Esau.

⁶⁵ Ginsburg, “Algeria,” 247.

⁶⁶ Although it should be noted that Exod. 23:16 actually refers only to Sukkot, “the feast of tabernacles.” *Shemini ‘Aseret* itself is commanded in Lev. 23:36 and 39, and Num. 29:35.

"à l'Arab." No longer the aloof European, he would like us to believe that he now blends in.⁶⁷ A conversation begins about the holiday, and Ginsburg discovers that "my friends were well instructed in religion—the Talmud and the Sohar [sic], but on the other hand, destitute of all knowledge of the gospel and the Messianic promises."⁶⁸ Rather than immediately starting his lecture, Ginsburg begins by listening. Only after having appreciated that his interlocutors are well-instructed in Jewish text does he introduce his missionary agenda: "I took advantage, therefore, of this excellent opportunity to announce to them, they listening with undivided attention, the saving truths of the gospel of Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of God." At the henna ceremony, he is both unable to learn anything about Algerian Jewish *minbag*, and unsuccessful in engaging the participants in any kind of conversation. Here, in contrast, he succeeds in both respects.

Ginsburg has learned to play to his strengths. His European Jewish background puts him at a disadvantage in trying to understand henna ceremonies and other *minbagim*, but he participates in discussions of canonical Jewish text on (close to) equal footing. Ginsburg was proud of his ability to mobilize Jewish textual knowledge, and correspondence from his later missionary work provides other similar stories of "beating rabbis at their own game" with his ability to argue from Jewish texts as well as the New Testament; he described one argument with a group of rabbis, where (as with the *shamash*) he attempts to show them "how they forsook God, the living fountain, for the traditions of men."⁶⁹ After a long discussion citing the Bible, Talmud, Kabbalah, and Midrashic literature, Ginsburg concludes with a triumphant citation from the book of Matthew 5:3; one rabbi leaves blushing with confusion, and another humbly returns to learn with Ginsburg, and they have "much and valuable conversation."⁷⁰ Here, too, in our narrative, the account ends as a missionary success story: the Jews listen "with undivided attention" to the saving gospel.

Ginsburg's report from his first year of missionary service in North Africa is consistent with the general trends of his work. His patronizing tone and tendency to lecture, rather than converse, continued to pose problems for his mission. R. Drummond Hay, the British consul at Mogador, wrote to Ginsburg to tell him that he stopped attending Ginsburg's services due to the "extremely personal and unusually severe manner in which you address the congregation ... I consider your language unnecessarily pointed

⁶⁷ See Jagodzinska's observations on LJS missionaries and their 'penetration' of Jewish space. "Christian Missionaries and Jewish Spaces: British Missions in the Kingdom of Poland in the First Half of the 19th Century," in *Space and Conversion in Global Perspective*, eds. Giuseppe Marcocci et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 103-126.

⁶⁸ Ginsburg, "Algeria," 247.

⁶⁹ James Baruch Ginsburg, "Summary of Missionary Intelligence: Morocco," *Jewish Intelligence, and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society For Promoting Christianity Among Jews* 17 (January 1877): 17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 18. This anecdotal genre is a common theme for missionary reports; compare, for example, the report of Rev. C. S. Newman, Ginsburg's predecessor at the Constantinople Mission: "Summary of Missionary Intelligence: Constantinople," *Jewish Intelligence, and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society For Promoting Christianity Among the Jews* 17 (April 1877): 89-92; and see Jagodzinska, "English Missionaries."

and harsh, partaking more of the nature of *Lectures* than Sermons.”⁷¹ Ginsburg continued to balance his repulsion with the dirty, dark, backward, primitive North Africa (he calls Mogador a “miserable town” that produces only “sand, blackbeetles, and mosquitos”⁷²) with his desire to identify with his North African co-religionists.

Ginsburg’s position on the Jewish-Christian border remains ambiguous. It seems clear that he presented himself to Jews as a Christian (unlike other LJS missionaries, such as Joseph Wolff, who presented themselves as Jews when visiting Jewish communities in Central Asia), although it is not known to what degree Ginsburg continued to perform Jewish ritual practice.⁷³ In 1867, Ginsburg took the post of president of the North Africa branch of the Hebrew Christian Alliance, an international organization headed by his old mentor Carl Schwartz.⁷⁴ During the conflict with the Jewish community in Morocco, Ginsburg was identified as an *apikoros* (heretic) by the Jewish community,⁷⁵ which suggests they saw him as a lapsed Jew rather than a foreign Christian. However, Ginsburg also defended himself against charges from his Christian co-religionists that he was not a full Christian, writing in an 1880 screed that he faced rumours that “my ‘religion’ was different from that of the Consul, and consequently from that of Great Britain ... [The rumour was] that I had come to Morocco to preach the tenets of a totally new creed.”⁷⁶ To counter this claim, in his book he repeatedly emphasizes his credentials as an ordained priest in the Church of England.

But is this emphasis a way of distancing himself from his history as a Jew, or from his origin in Russia? His liminal position between Judaism and Christianity was only exacerbated by the confusion over his political status in Morocco as a Russian-born missionary working for a British organization, and he reminds us on the first page of his book that, “as I have never returned to Russia, I have lost all rights as a Russian subject.”⁷⁷ But he did not abandon Judaism as thoroughly as he abandoned Russia; Ginsburg is able to sit in a *sukkah*, join in a festive meal and participate in conversation he ever-so-subtly steers toward a new text. This is the kind of slippage, which, as Naomi Seidman notes, characterizes both colonial and conversional narratives: “The literature of Jewish-Christian conversion is replete with the effects of mimicry, in which pious mimesis slips into (real or perceived) parody.”⁷⁸

Ginsburg cannot escape the perpetual effects and interference of the boundaries he inhabits, “the ‘small difference,’ or, to use a translation term, ‘remainder,’ that persists

⁷¹ Ginsburg, “An Account,” 6-7. Emphasis in original.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5

⁷³ There was great variation across the Hebrew-Christian movement on the issue of what might be termed “the persistence of *minhag*”; some saw their Christian faith as more important than their ethnic origins, becoming completely acculturated into Christian society, while others identified most strongly with their unique position as Hebrew Christians. See: Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement*, 254.

⁷⁴ Abraham Benoliel, “Hebrew Christian Alliance,” *The Scattered Nation, Past, Present, and Future*, vol. 3 (London: Elliot Stock, 1868), 28.

⁷⁵ Bashan, *The Anglican Mission*, 155-156.

⁷⁶ Ginsburg, *An Account*, 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁸ Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 145.

beyond the conversion—as irreversible circumcision, as ineradicable accent, as the persistent memory and textual production of Jewishness.”⁷⁹ His Ashkenazi background prevents him from reading the henna ceremony as a potential site of Jewishness, thus weakening his authority as a representative of a superior spiritual knowledge. His Christian beliefs disrupt his attempts at co-existence with his Jewish “co-religionists,” but also turn a hospitable Sukkot meal into an opportunity to preach the Gospel. Meanwhile, behind his successful mission in North Africa lurks the shadow of his Russian-Jewish past, threatening to disrupt (as it eventually does) his performance as a representative of British-Christian civilization. The navigation of categories and boundaries in his narrative points us to a deeper understanding of the instability, heterogeneity and richness of a life lived on the borders.

Appendix

Church of England Magazine (March 1858), 246-47

Jewish Miscellanies

Algeria—Marriage Ceremony—Feast of the In-gathering—

Constantina, Sept., 1857:

“One afternoon, on quitting my lodgings, my attention was arrested by a little group of four Jewish females, one of them carrying a plate filled with ‘henna,’ in the midst of which was a lighted tallow candle, surrounded with eggs. This extraordinary phenomenon, I thought, must be a religious ceremony. I therefore stopped to see the proceedings. Another [sic] Jewess, with a child in her arms, arrived, and putting her hand to her chin, she uttered three loud shrieks, as a signal for the little company, headed by an old Jew, to march on. Before reaching the end of the journey, the female crier repeated her clamorous and frightful gesticulations three times, and, when she uttered the last and longest, the constantly-augmenting train stopped. A small windowless but nicely-carpeted and illuminated cottage, was here arranged to receive the company, who, leaving their sandals outside, walked barefooted, and with uncovered arms, into the hut, and seated themselves on the floor. A strict silence was observed, and ‘quahna’ [sic]⁸⁰ was preparing outside. One of the attendants, observing me gazing with the curiosity of a novice, came forward, and said, ‘Ovāin rajah?’ I replied with another question in Hebrew, ‘Ma zott?’ As she did not seem to understand me, she rejoined, ‘Marhabo bick’ (Thou art welcome to look). In the mean time two gaily-dressed Jewesses (one appeared to be about seventeen and the other thirteen years of age), almost enveloped in chaplets, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and chains, their eyebrows blackened with kehol, and their fingers and toe-nails coloured red with the above-named

⁷⁹ Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 144.

⁸⁰ Likely a misprint for “quahua,” i.e. *qahwa*, or “coffee.”

henna, approached us, the younger being the bride, and her companion the bridesmaid. They were ceremoniously received, and seated in the centre of the room. After a pause, the bridesmaid began to wash [sic] the bride's hair with henna, which turned it red in an instant; and it was to retain the colour, and remain in a dishevelled condition for eight days, at the end of which the rabbi would perform the religious ceremony of the marriage, which had already been performed by the civil authorities. During this 'minhag' the bride's relations and friends cried bitterly; and the rest talked and laughed loudly. When all was over, I asked the shamash, 'What does all this signify?' 'I do not know.' 'Have you a bible?' 'I have a pentateuch.' 'Have you read it?' 'O, yes.' 'Do you remember what Moses said?' Taking out my bible, I read to him Deuteronomy iv.1-8, and asked him if he thought that the Gentiles, seeing the hideous gestures of the crier and the washing of the hair, would exclaim, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and an understanding people; and what nation has such wonderful statutes or so wonderful a service as this people?' Or would they not exclaim, 'It is a people of no understanding. It is a people who have their understanding darkened, because they have committed two evils: they have forsaken him, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' 'It is a minhag,' he replied, and, shrugging his shoulders, he took leave. The other evening—the eve of the feast of in-gathering, which is annexed to the feast of tabernacles, and called 'shemini azereth' (Exod.xxiii.16)—passing the Jewish quarter, I heard some music, more discordant than I ever heard before. I stopped to listen, and soon distinguished the voice of Jacob. I took French leave, and entered the court, when I met a goodly number of women and children, huddled together on the ground in one part of the yard, and several men squeezed under a hut made of branches, in the other. The latter had a cloth spread on a square piece of wood, and a lamp suspended over it; while the former were quite in the dark, and had their dishes on their laps, with their legs crossed. The men were singing, the women chattering and laughing, and the children screaming. The appearance of this scene made me desire to withdraw; but the repeated voices of 'Marhabo bick' made my stay unavoidable. My hospitable brethren wished to get a chair; but I preferred to sit down à l'Arab. Discussion began about the nature and prayers of these festivals; and I soon discovered that my friends were well instructed in religion—the Talmud and the Sohar [sic], but on the other hand, destitute of all knowledge of the gospel and the Messianic promises. I took advantage, therefore, of this excellent opportunity to announce to them, they listening with undivided attention, the saving truths of the gospel of Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of God."

(Correspondence of the rev. J. B. Grosberg [sic], on a mission from the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews).

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