

ADAPTATION AND ACCEPTANCE: MOSES ḤAYIM LUZZATTO'S SOJOURN IN AMSTERDAM AMONG PORTUGUESE JEWS

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Abstract: *Although scholars have written extensively about Moses Ḥayim Luzzatto and his literary oeuvre, there has been virtually no work on his stay in Amsterdam (1735–43). The controversy over his supposed Sabbatianism, which engulfed much of the European rabbinate and led to his self-imposed exile from Padua, did not rage overtly in the Dutch Republic, and historians have generally regarded these years as nothing more than a quiet period for Luzzatto and of little consequence to him personally.*

Using previously unpublished archival material, this article demonstrates that Luzzatto was highly regarded in Amsterdam's generally insular Portuguese community. He received charity and a regular stipend to study in the Ets Haim Yeshiva, forged relationships with both rabbinic and lay leaders, and arguably influenced the community's religious outlook. However, a comparison of the manuscript and print versions of Mesillat yesharim, his famous Musar treatise composed and published in the city, reveals the limitations under which Luzzatto lived. Research into Luzzatto's time in Amsterdam shows the man's enduring self-assurance and relentless critique of his critics, as well as the Portuguese rabbinate's broadening horizons.

In February 1735, Moses Ḥayim Luzzatto entered Amsterdam for the first time. The previous few months had been trying, as he left his family and disciples in his native Italy, braved crossing the Alps in the dead of winter, and experienced hostility from rabbis in both Venice and Frankfurt. Just eight years earlier, he had been a rising star in his hometown of Padua. Born with exceptional intellectual and literary talents to wealthy parents, Luzzatto began studying medicine at the University of Padua at the age of sixteen,¹ completed his first book at the age of seventeen,² and received rabbinic ordination at

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1. Archivio studio universita Padova, ms. 233, fols. 168, 180, and 187. The records indicate that Luzzatto matriculated in 1723, 1725, and 1726, but do not show that he sat for exams or earned a degree. I am grateful to Debra Glasberg, who found these documents and generously shared them with me in the midst of her detailed research on Isaac Lampronti and the study of medicine in eighteenth-century Italy.

2. *Leshon limudim* (Language studies), a philosophy of Hebrew language. The book demonstrated Luzzatto's knowledge at that time of at least Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, Greek, French, and Italian.

eighteen.³ In the process, however, he chose to shed the common Italian mold of rabbi-doctor, and devote himself to the study of Kabbalah and a life of mystical piety. In 1727, Luzzatto concluded that he had gained access to a *magid*, a heavenly voice through which he could learn the secrets of the universe and spur redemption. Along with several like-minded young men, many of whom came from similarly privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, Luzzatto formed a confraternity with an elaborate hierarchy and identity, intent on restoring cosmic unity and creating a new spiritual order.⁴

In 1729, six years before his arrival in Amsterdam, news spread about the group's activities, including their belief that Luzzatto knew the depths of men's souls, was a reincarnation of the biblical Moses and the talmudic sage Akiva ben Yosef, and conversed with angels and souls on high. Although Luzzatto and his companions were accepted in Padua, and in fact made up the bulk of the community's rabbinic and intellectual elite, the response from abroad was swift and harsh. Fearing the rise of yet another Sabbatian theologian and messianic pretender, the heresy hunter Moses Ḥagiz initiated a campaign to suppress Luzzatto. Ḥagiz urged the Venetian rabbinate to bring the youngsters in line, and gained the written support of numerous Ashkenazic rabbis in central and eastern Europe. Between 1729 and 1735, Luzzatto was compelled to sign oaths denouncing himself, surrendered several texts reportedly composed under the influence of his *magid*, and was prevented from bringing manuscripts to press. Rabbis in Altona, Berlin, Breslau, Brody, Fürth, Lemberg, Nikolsberg, and elsewhere in Europe condemned or banned Luzzatto. They variously referred to him as "the evil man" (איש הרע), demanded that he cease teaching Kabbalah, and called for the confiscation (and even burning) of his writings.⁵ Luzzatto's dreams of fulfilling the redemption through the work of his circle in Padua were shattered.

3. On Thursday, 13 Tishre 5486 (September 20, 1725), Sabbatai Marini and Nathaniel Levi ordained Luzzatto as *haver*, the first level of ordination in early modern Italy; Archivio della Comunità Ebraica di Padova, no. 13, p. 213. (The same document records the ordination of Moses David Valle and Isaiah Romanin, who shared Luzzatto's redemptive conviction.) On the ordination, see Paolo Nissim, "Sulla data della laurea rabbinica conseguita da Moshe Chajim Luzzatto," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 20 (1954): 499–503; and Isaiah Tishby, "Rabbi Moses David Valle (Ramdavi) and His Position in Luzzatto's Group," in *Messianic Mysticism: Moses Hayim Luzzatto and the Padua School*, trans. Morris Hoffman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 304–8. Nissim was the first to publish the document; he included a facsimile of the page and an Italian translation of the Hebrew text. The year of Luzzatto's original ordination is often misstated as 1726, based on the careless reading of the year without regard for the month (see Nissim, 502). On the levels of rabbinic ordination, see Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1990), 87–95.

4. See Elisheva Carlebach, "Redemption and Persecution in the Eyes of Moses Hayim Luzzatto and His Circle," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 54 (1987): 1–29; and Jonathan Garb, "The Circle of Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto in Its Eighteenth-Century Context," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011): 189–202.

5. Mordechai Chiriqui, *Yggerot Ramḥal u-bene doro* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ramḥal, 2001), nos. 120–30. At least eleven bans are extant. On the controversy, see Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 195–255.

Yet, by the time Luzzatto departed from Amsterdam in the spring of 1743, he had printed three books and written several more, and was no longer the target of antiheretical attacks. What did Luzzatto do during his eight years in Amsterdam? Who supported him in the wake of a controversy that had engulfed the European rabbinate and largely condemned him as a heretic? How did this period relate to his mystico-messianic endeavor in Padua?

Luzzatto's eight years in Amsterdam both diverged from his kabbalistic persona in Italy and contradicted the numerous bans writ large against him. Once in Amsterdam, the city's Portuguese Jewish community accepted, and even celebrated, Luzzatto as an important member of its rabbinic circle. Luzzatto received a stipend to study in the community's Ets Haim Yeshiva and was recognized as a knowledgeable and pious rabbinic scholar. This acceptance was enabled in no small measure by Luzzatto's willingness to adjust to his new surroundings and make himself useful. The texts he produced—none overtly mystical—were directed at members of his adopted community, from laymen with limited training in Jewish theology to rabbinical students in search of intellectual and spiritual tools. Luzzatto willfully presented himself with a more mainstream façade, shedding external (though not internal) messianic pretensions in favor of living a pietistic, even quietist, lifestyle. This adjustment assuaged his detractors, and simultaneously facilitated (or forced) the development of his internal mystical compass even more acutely.

Although scholars have written extensively about Luzzatto and his literary oeuvre, there has been virtually no study of his important stay in Amsterdam.⁶

6. Giuseppe Almanzi, Luzzatto's first biographer, recorded only that Luzzatto published three books in the city, and that a handful of letters attest to his continued contact with friends or students in Padua; see Giuseppe Almanzi, "Toledot R' Mosheh Hayim Luzato me-Padovah," *Kerem Chemed* 3 (1838): 112–69. Graetz, Dubnow, and other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians identified one of Luzzatto's Amsterdam publications, the drama *La-yesharim tehillah*, as the most notable element of his stay. Simon Ginzburg went a little further by surmising that Luzzatto was a changed man in Amsterdam—contemplative, sad, and defeated; see Simon Ginzburg, *The Life and Works of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto: Founder of Modern Hebrew Literature* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1931). Jozeph Michman and Irene Zwiep dealt with Luzzatto's influence on the Portuguese poet David Franco Mendes; see Jozeph Michman, *David Franco Mendes, a Hebrew Poet* (Jerusalem: Massada, 1951), and Irene E. Zwiep, "An Echo of Lofty Mountains: David Franco Mendes, a European Intellectual," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35 (2001): 285–96. Joëlle Hansel has worked on Luzzatto's systems of logic written during his stay in Amsterdam; see Joëlle Hansel, "Rational Investigation and Kabbalah in the Work of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto" (in Hebrew), *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 40 (1998): 99–108. More recently, Yoni Garb has focused on rhetoric and pietism in Luzzatto's Amsterdam compositions; see Jonathan Garb, *Kabbalist in the Heart of the Storm: R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2014), chaps. 5–6.

Until now, the sole work explicitly dedicated to Luzzatto's life in Amsterdam was a short article by Jakob Meyer, caretaker of the Ets Haim Library following the Second World War, who discovered two references to Luzzatto and some references to his acquaintances; see Jakob Meyer, *The Stay of Mozes Haim Luzzatto at Amsterdam, 1736–1743* (Amsterdam: Joachimsthal, 1947).

The reason for the gap in scholarship on Luzzatto may stem from academic compartmentalization: scholars of Italian Jewish history, Kabbalah, and modern Hebrew literature are not wont to peruse

Luzzatto's eight years in the city—a “lost” phase in his biography—illuminate his mystical intentions, social philosophy, and attitude towards contemporary rabbinic culture. In addition, study of this phase of Luzzatto's life sheds light on western Sephardic culture in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, itself an understudied and significant period in the history of Portuguese Jewry.

PORTUGUESE ACCEPTANCE OF LUZZATTO

The earliest record of Luzzatto in Amsterdam appears in a Portuguese charity register indicating that he received three florins on 28 Shevat 5495 (February 20, 1735).⁷ Though he had been raised and supported by wealthy parents, enabling the development of his intellectual gifts and spiritual interests, Luzzatto evidently arrived in Amsterdam with little means to sustain himself.⁸ Like so many others in the great and prosperous city, Luzzatto requested and obtained monetary assistance from Portuguese Jewry. In a letter sent to Italy, he claimed that community members had offered him work, and records show that he continued to depend on civic aid for several years.⁹ In the least, the Portuguese charitable society Abodad a Hesed provided Luzzatto with three florins per month between 1737 and 1740.¹⁰

Portuguese archives, while scholars of western Sephardim have had little to no reason to consider the vagaries of Luzzatto's biography.

7. Archive of the Portuguese-Jewish Community (SAA), 334, no. 969, p. 315. Although this one-time grant to Luzzatto was comparable to entries throughout the record book, it paled in comparison to many other grants provided in the listing in which he was entered. His name appears among a list of charity granted to men from abroad, most of whom were collecting large sums (as high as 250 florins) for their communities in Jamaica, Curaçao, Suriname, London, Italy, and the Levant.

Two lines above Luzzatto's name, a scribe recorded that a Jeudah Mendola of Italy received three florins on the very same day as Luzzatto. If this was Judah Mendola of Mantua, who had once lived in Padua and was a clear supporter of Luzzatto throughout the controversy, it would indicate that Luzzatto had not traveled alone.

8. Luzzatto's financial needs may have stemmed from his father's own hardships, which coincided with an increasing tax burden faced by Padua's wealthy Jews during the mid-eighteenth century. Luzzatto recorded in a letter that, at one point, his father owed a sum of 12,000 ducats, which threatened the integrity of his business; the same letter states that the sum had been repaid (Chriqui, *’Iggerot*, no. 87).

9. Chriqui, *’Iggerot*, no. 116. I have yet to discover external evidence of Luzzatto's professional occupation in Amsterdam. Scholars have alternatively suggested it involved polishing stones or grinding lenses. See Abraham S. Isaacs, *A Modern Hebrew Poet: The Life and Writings of Moses Chaim Luzzatto* (New York: Office of the “Jewish Messenger,” 1878), 34; and Ginzburg, *Life and Works of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto*, 113. Meyer denied that Luzzatto was a lens grinder, thinking that it rang too closely to Spinoza. Instead, he adhered to the Amsterdam tradition that labeled Luzzatto a diamond cutter: “tradition that still lived in the mind of the poet Isaac da Costa whose father Daniel Haim, born in 1761, had still personally known David Franco Mendes” (Meyer, *Stay of Moses Haim Luzzatto at Amsterdam*, 9–10). Chriqui, believing implicitly that Luzzatto engaged in constant Torah study, expressed doubts about Luzzatto's occupation in the gem business (Chriqui, *’Iggerot*, no. 132, p. 358 n. 436).

10. SAA, 334, no. 1210, pp. 18, 26, 35. In this register, men, women, and orphans are listed together, and each received a given sum on Rosh Hodesh of every month of the year. The record

It is striking that Luzzatto regularly received financial support from a Portuguese communal institution. He was ethnically Ashkenazic and an ordained rabbi, whereas most individuals on the rolls of Abodad a Hesed were Portuguese men, women, and orphans lacking distinguished vocations.¹¹ Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld has shown that Portuguese poor relief was ordinarily reserved for two groups: those who came directly from the Iberian Peninsula (*fóraseiro*), who received unconditional aid, and those who already lived in Amsterdam. Needy Ashkenazic Jews, who came to far outnumber Amsterdam's Sephardim in the eighteenth century, could also receive assistance, but Luzzatto's monthly stipend for several years running was unusual if not very rare. Western Sephardic history, culture, and economic prosperity shaped Portuguese Jewry's identity as a distinct *Nação* (nation), and community rules governing interaction with other ethnicities extended to charitable contributions.¹² By the 1730s, with increasing impoverishment, Portuguese lay leaders moved to relieve themselves of a relentless financial burden. Vagrants were sent away almost immediately upon arrival, and the poor were encouraged to settle in other European metropolises, or, if Portuguese, were shipped to Dutch colonies in the West Indies.¹³

book shows that the group's average yearly income and expenses (*rendimento & despesas*) totaled about four thousand florins per year. Relatively small sums were donated by wealthy members of the community in memoriam of someone dear to them, while the remainder of the money was collected in the charity boxes placed at the entrance of the Esnoga. The organization originally served Amsterdam's poor Ashkenazim, but from 1670 on it was used to support underprivileged Sephardim on a monthly basis. See Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, "Financing Relief in the Jewish Community in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Dutch Jewry: Its History and Secular Culture* (1500–2000), ed. Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 70 n. 21.

11. The most well-known Luzzatto of the nineteenth century, Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865), traced the family's roots to Lusatia (German: Lausitz; Polish: Łuzyca), a territory in the modern-day German states of Saxony and Brandenburg. See Samuel David Luzzatto, *Autobiographie S. D. Luzzatto's ...* (Padua: J. Luzzatto, 1882), 3; Edgardo Morpurgo, *Notizie sulle famiglie ebrae esistite a Padova nel XVI secolo* (Udine: Del Bianco, 1909), 7; Vittore Colorni, "Cognomi ebraici italiani a basse toponomastica straniera," in *Judaica minora. Saggi sulla storia dell'ebraismo italiano dall'antichità all'età moderna* (Milan: A. Giuffrè, 1991), 71.

12. On the concept of *Nação*, see Daniel Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 188. On more about communal tensions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Amsterdam see Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 125–31; and Adam S. Ferziger, "Between 'Ashkenazi' and Sepharad: An Early Modern German Rabbinic Response to Religious Pluralism in the Spanish-Portuguese Community," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35 (2001): 17–18 (see Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 137–43).

13. See Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 18–19; and R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, "Enlightenment and Emancipation, c. 1750 to 1814," in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. J. C. H. Blom, R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and I. Schöffner (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), 174, citing Isaac de Pinto, *Reflexoens politicas, tocante a constituição da Nação Judaica* (Amsterdam, 1748), 31. In his report on the financial situation of the Portuguese community, de Pinto reported that in 1743 there were 419 paying members, 180 nonpaying members who were not

Equally remarkable was Luzzatto's receipt of a stipend (*aspaca*) and grants to study in the Ets Haim Yeshiva. The community had long hosted chief rabbis from abroad, but Ets Haim itself, like other communal institutions, was not ordinarily open to outsiders. In the early years of the community, the Ets Haim Yeshiva helped solidify the *Nação's* self-perception of inimitability, and in the decades prior to Luzzatto's arrival students were almost exclusively Portuguese. At least until 1661, a regulation stipulated that no Italian students were to be admitted to the yeshiva.¹⁴ Following restructuring of Ets Haim in 1728, coinciding with the ascension of a new chief rabbinate, Ashkenazim were permitted to study in the Ets Haim Yeshiva, but they were still officially denied access to funding.¹⁵

As such, Luzzatto's experience in Amsterdam was exceptional. Instead of receiving a one-off sum before being sent on his merry way, he became both an institutionalized recipient of communal welfare and a fixture in the Ets Haim Yeshiva. This is even more remarkable considering the deluge of warning that had descended upon the city from Luzzatto's opponents.¹⁶ Ashkenazic authorities from central and eastern European aptly suspected that the Italian kabbalist would seek refuge within Amsterdam's Sephardic community, who, a scant two decades earlier, had openly supported the Sabbatianist Neḥemiah Ḥiya Ḥayon.¹⁷ That controversy exhibited a sharp ethnic divide: the Ashkenazic rabbis of Amsterdam, Ḥakham Zevi Ashkenazi and Moses Ḥagiz, came down hard on Ḥayon and his Sephardic enthusiasts, and the latter responded by running Ḥakham Zevi and Ḥagiz out of town. With Luzzatto on their doorstep, Portuguese leadership faced a potential imbroglio.

While clear justification for Portuguese support of Luzzatto is lacking, several factors seem to have collectively played a role. One, Luzzatto's younger brother Lion, who had arrived in Amsterdam a few years earlier, may have been sufficiently well known to vouch for his integrity. There is evidence that Lion practiced medicine in Amsterdam,¹⁸ and he himself was deemed suitable

on poor relief, and 750 families receiving financial assistance (equal to about 3,000 individuals, assuming a family consisted of four members); see Meyer, *Stay of Mozes Haim Luzzatto at Amsterdam*, 6, citing Jacob d'Ancona, "De Portugese Gemente 'Talmoe Torā' te Amsterdam tot 1795," in *Geschiedenis van de Joden in Nederland*, ed. Hendrik Brugmans and A. Frank (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1940), 301.

14. See Michman, *David Franco Mendes*, 21; and M. C. Paraira and J. S. da Silva Rosa, eds., *Gedenkschrift uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het 300-jarig bestaan der onderwijsinrichtingen Talmud Torā en Ets Haïm bij de Portug. Israel* (Amsterdam: Roeloffzen-Hübner, 1916), 33.

15. SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 14.

16. Chriqui, 'Iggerot, no. 109; Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 242.

17. Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 75–159.

18. Lion pursued medical studies at the University of Padua briefly in the early 1730s; see Abdelkader Modena (and Edgardo Morpurgo), *Medici e Chirurghi Ebrei Dottorati e Licenziati nell'Università di Padova dal 1617–1816* (*Biblioteca di Storia della Medicina* 3), ed. Aldo Luzzatto, Ladislao Münster, and Vittore Colomi (Bologna: Forni, 1967), 126. For a reference to a Dr. Luzato, who was paid for house visits, see SAA, 334, no. 530, p. 130. It may have been common for Portuguese communal scribes to record the formal titles of members of the medical profession: in another record book,

enough to marry a Portuguese woman in 1737.¹⁹ Two, his Italian origin more closely matched Portuguese and Dutch cultural mores than those of recent arrivals from Poland. He had come from a city known for its university, architecture, and commerce, and his knowledge of Romance languages positioned him to converse with Portuguese leadership more easily than the vast majority of east European immigrants. Three, Luzzatto's rabbinic knowledge and demeanor may have proven more impressive than prevailing notions of his treachery. He undoubtedly arrived wearily, made meeker by his experience in Frankfurt, where he had been accosted by the local rabbinate and forced to denounce himself.

Regardless, the extent of Luzzatto's acceptance in the community indicates that both lay and rabbinic leadership utterly rejected the bans against him.²⁰ They enrolled Luzzatto in the *Medras Grande*, the highest class of the Ets Haim Yeshiva, providing him with the time, space, and books to pursue his studies. Between 1738 and 1742, Luzzatto collected seven florins per month from the main budget of Ets Haim, which was then responsible for nearly one hundred fifty students of all ages in seven classes.²¹ In 1737, 1739, 1741, and 1742, he received two and a half florins per year²² from a separate fund that simultaneously provided nine other students (*estudantes*) with the same amount for learning under the community's 'av bet din.²³ Another document records Luzzatto's concurrent

the Amsterdam physician and printer of Hebrew books, Naphtali Hirts Levi Rofe, was recorded only as "Doctor van Embden" (SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 47).

19. A record of Lion's marriage in 1737 in Amsterdam is housed in the archives of the Portuguese Jewish community; for a facsimile of the marriage record, see Meyer, *Stay of Mozes Haim Luzzatto at Amsterdam*, 8–9. Lion was likely the youngest of the four Luzzatto children (after Moses Hayim, Simon, and Laura Hannah).

20. Manuscript EH 47D37 in the Ets Haim Library consists of three letters related to the controversy, all stemming from Venice, corresponding to Chriqui, 'Iggerot, nos. 100, 101, and 104. The running header, in a later hand, states "neged Ramhal."

21. SAA, 334, no. 1189, pp. 227, 230, 233, 236, 239. This particular record book is in very poor condition, having sustained intense water damage.

22. During the years that he received a stipend to study, Luzzatto would have acquired the bare minimum on which to live. Scholars have determined that during the early modern period, an adult needed eighty to one hundred florins per year to meet essential needs. Skilled workers in the Dutch Republic earned approximately three hundred florins per year. Living with a family of five, one would spend 51–67 percent of the income on food, with the remainder going to clothes, fuel, soap, and rent (Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 68).

23. SAA, 334, no. 530, p. 229; no. 531, pp. 70, 193, 261. The money is listed as 2:10, equal to two florins and ten stuivers (each stuiver is five cents of a florin). For Dutch monetary measurement, see H. Enno van Gelder, *De Nederlandse Munten* (Utrecht-Antwerpen: Het Spectrum, 1965). There was also a *Medras Pequeno* (see Gerard Nahon, "The Portuguese Jewish Nation of Amsterdam as Reflected in the Memoirs of Abraham Haim Lopes Arias, 1752;" in *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others*, ed. Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 70).

In the spring month of Iyar each year, the elected secretary of charity (*gabay da sedaca*) gave the designated librarian of the Ets Haim Yeshiva (*Bibliotecario de Eshaim*) fifty florins to disperse among the 'av bet din and ten *estudantes* on the anniversary of the death of Abraham Penso Felix. The 'av bet din, Isaac Hayim Abendana de Britto, received twenty-five florins, ten times the amount of each student. During Luzzatto's tenure, Isaac Judah Leon Templo, well known among bibliographers

admittance to the Emet Le Jahacob Yeshiva, privately funded along with a sister yeshiva called Oel Jahacob by wealthy gem merchant Jacob Pereira.²⁴ In 1675, Pereira established the yeshivot under the auspices of the Ets Haim Yeshiva, which maintained them after his death through a bequest he provided (*conta de legado*).²⁵ Several of the men who engaged in scholarly activity in the *Medras Grande* also received stipends as part of Pereira's yeshivot. Some received upwards of 125 florins per year, the chief rabbis shared 160 florins between them, and members of Emet Le Jahacob, like Luzzatto, were granted 50 florins. The documents of the Pereira yeshivot are itemized financial records, providing the date of admittance for each member. The short entry detailing Luzzatto's entrance into the yeshiva, together with Abraham Mendes Chumaseiro and Mosseh de Molinas, explains that they were the replacements for three outgoing scholars. It also states that they were selected by the system of *busolo e balas*, modeled on a voting method that combined elements of both chance and selection that was used in Venice to select the doge, and in Padua, among other Jewish communities of the Veneto, to elect officials (*parnasim*).

In the spring of 1741, Luzzatto joined, or perhaps was promoted to, the Oel Jahacob Yeshiva, where he received a stipend of eighty florins. Three other scholars were admitted to Oel Jahacob at the same time, with each student supplanting someone previously admitted and with other men replacing them in Emet Le Jahacob. The relationship between the yeshivot is puzzling, for this particular document states that Luzzatto vacated a position in Emet Le Jahacob in order to join Oel Jahacob in 1741, but another document shows that he was considered part of Emet Le Jahacob in 1743. Yet, still another document from the spring of 1744 discusses filling Luzzatto's seat in Oel Jahacob because of his emigration to the Holy Land (*Terra Santa*).²⁶ At present, I have not seen regulations of the Pereira yeshivot that would explain their selection process, but it seems feasible that, just as the *parnasim* were elected on a yearly basis, so too were the salaried positions for scholars filled each year. Luzzatto's absence from some of the yearly rolls of Ets Haim indicates that he was not always fortunate to be selected as a participant in the class. The ubiquity of his name in the archives, however, reflects Luzzatto's established presence in mainstream Portuguese society.

Communal leaders valued Luzzatto so far as to honor him with a prominent seat in the Esnoga, the symbol of communal religious pride.²⁷ Constructed over several years and dedicated in 1675, the magnificent synagogue could seat twelve hundred men and four hundred women. Until the 1730s, only a few

as a printer of Hebrew books, and Joseph Cohen Belinfante served as the librarians. Belinfante replaced Templo after the latter's death in 1740 (SSA, 1053, fol. 62).

24. SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 51. In addition, Pereira founded the yeshivot of Bet Jahacob in Jerusalem and Emet Le Jahacob in Hebron (SAA, 334, no. 530, p. 135).

25. SAA, 334, no. 531, p. 15; no. 1053, p. 53.

26. SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 69.

27. SAA, 334, no. 334, no. 32: "Banco da parede enfronte dossiereres do Mahamad do Ehal para aporta do Meyo." Luzzatto's name is written in the second column with the notation "N[ota] B[ene]."

seats had been assigned: the chief rabbi sat on a bench in front of the lectern facing the ark, and the *parnasim* sat together on a raised platform with high-backed benches on the north wall. Although many chairs in the cavernous space were undoubtedly left vacant on a regular basis, some seats were deemed more prestigious or advantageous than others, and confusion and strife consequently plagued the synagogue as men vied for these coveted seats. In the midst of Luzzatto's stay in Amsterdam, the Mahamad resolved to establish a policy of fixed seating, in which a given place could be reserved for a period of three years.²⁸ Around 1738, Luzzatto was granted a highly prestigious seat between the lectern and the holy ark, facing the seating platform of the *parnasim*. Although they could not match the devotion or kabbalistic intention of Luzzatto's disciples in Padua, this conspicuous and distinguished position was an indication of Luzzatto's importance to lay leaders, rabbinic scholars, and the community at large.

Luzzatto's rehabilitation in Amsterdam corresponded with an expansion of rabbinic horizons during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. In 1728, following the death of Salomon Ayllion, the popular but controversial figure who had celebrated Neḥemiah Ḥiya Ḥayon,²⁹ David Israel Athias and Isaac Ḥayim Abendana de Britto jointly assumed the positions of the chief rabbinat. They intensified the study of Talmud and rabbinic law in the *Medras Grande*,³⁰ and initiated the frequent publication of legal rulings (*pesakim*) by the yeshiva's rabbis and senior students in the serial *Peri 'ez ḥayim* (Fruit of the tree of life).³¹ Nearly one thousand distinct *pesakim* were published between 1691 and 1798, including four hundred during Abendana de Britto's tenure.³² In addition, the co-chief rabbis

28. SAA, 334, no. 334, pp. a–c. The date the resolution passed was 25 Iyar 5490 (May 12, 1730). Elsewhere, the volume records that on 16 Kislev 5496 (December 1, 1735) the Mahamad elected to record all place seats in the Esnoga (fol. 32). On seating in the Esnoga, see Yosef Kaplan, "Bans in the Sephardi Community of Amsterdam in the Late Seventeenth Century," in *Exile and Diaspora: Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Haim Beinart on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Aaron Mirsky, Avraham Grossman, and Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1988), 530–32; and Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 188, 205–7.

29. See Matt Goldish, "Jews, Christians and Conversos: Rabbi Solomon Aailion's Struggles in the Portuguese Community of London," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45 (1994): 227–57.

30. This conflicted with the trend in the lower grades, in which children were taught Jewish subjects in addition to languages, mathematics, philosophy, rhetoric, calligraphy, and poetry. For a description of the curriculum, see David Franco Mendes, *Memorias do Estabelecimento e Progresso dos Judeos Portuguezes e Espanhoes nesta Famosa Citade de Amsterdam: A Portuguese Chronicle of the History of the Sephardim in Amsterdam up to 1772*, edited with introduction and annotations by L. Fuks and R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 9, no. 2 (1975): 47–48; and Sabbatai Bass, *Sifte yeshenim* (Amsterdam, 1680), intro.

31. For a synopsis of the periodical's extant responsa, issued sporadically between 1691 and 1807, see Menko Max Hirsch, *Frucht vom Baum des Lebens, Ozer peroth Ez Chajim* (Berlin, 1936).

32. Athias served in his position until his death in 1753, while Abendana de Britto continued until his death in 1760. Even under their joint leadership, Abendana de Britto worked most closely with the *estudantes* of the *Medras Grande* and oversaw the publication of *Peri 'ez ḥayim*.

Yosef Kaplan has pointed out that increased production of responsa literature reflected an intensification of the rabbis' religious sentiment, rather than the spread of religiosity in the community; see Kaplan, "Eighteenth Century Rulings by the Rabbinical Court of Amsterdam's Community and Their

regularly provided book approbations (*haskamot*), which served to both validate current scholarship and encourage Ets Haim students to produce more. David Meldola, a member of the *Medras Grande* who became one of Luzzatto's closest colleagues in the city, epitomized the flurry of activity emanating from the yeshiva. He authored, edited, corrected, and facilitated the publishing of a slew of texts in Amsterdam between the 1730s and 1750s, including the work of scholars from abroad, and often in conjunction with fellow *estudantes*.

In addition, the Mahamad, a traditionally conservative body of laymen, increased its support of Ets Haim during the 1730s and 1740s. Entries in a community record book show that funds were provided annually to purchase books and ritual items for students of all ages,³³ and *estudantes* were paid huge sums of money for publishing the *pesakim* of *Peri 'ez hayim*.³⁴ The Mahamad's investment in Ets Haim was probably part of an overall effort to serve the expanding western Sephardic Diaspora. Amsterdam's Portuguese Jews were now training home-grown rabbinic talent, in contrast to the longstanding practice of hiring rabbinic leaders from abroad.³⁵

It is this context that best explains Luzzatto's initial acceptance in Amsterdam. Portuguese lay and rabbinic leaders believed that they could benefit from Luzzatto's presence. They may have determined that he was not a threat, or that they could successfully keep him in check should he attempt to subvert their authority. After all, more prominent than a history of tolerating Sabbatianists was the Portuguese practice of suppressing public deviants.³⁶ As such, Luzzatto benefitted from the prevailing "liberty of conscience," which Miriam Bodian and Yosef Kaplan have described as an atmosphere in which people *thought* as they

Socio-historical Significance" (in Hebrew), in *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry*, vol. 5, ed. Jozeph Michman (Jerusalem: The Institute for Research on Dutch Jewry, 1988), 1–54 (esp. 8–11); and idem, "An Alternative Path to Modernity," in *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1–28. See also Matt Goldish, "Halakhah, Kabbalah, and Heresy: a Controversy in Early Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 84 (1993–94): 153–76.

33. SAA, 334, no. 1053. Ritual items included tzitzit, talitot, and tefillin.

34. The 1728 protocols of the Ets Haim Yeshiva state that a student would receive fifteen florins if the ḥakham approved his *pesak* for publication (SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 17).

35. For instance, Saul Morteira, Judah Vega, Isaac ben Abraham Uziel, Joseph Delmedigo, Samuel Tardiola, and Jacob Sasportas. Merchant families had encouraged study only until young men were ready to participate in business, See Odette Vlessing, "The Excommunication of Baruch Spinoza: The Birth of a Philosopher," in *Dutch Jewry: Its History and Secular Culture (1500–2000)*, ed. Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 162.

36. See Yosef Kaplan, "The Social Functions of the Herem in the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century," in *Dutch Jewish History: Proceedings of the Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. Jozeph Michman (Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University, 1984), 111–55; and idem, "Deviance and Excommunication in the Eighteenth Century: A Chapter in the Social History of the Sephardi Community of Amsterdam," in *Dutch Jewish History: Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. Jozeph Michman (Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University, 1993), 103–15.

wished so long as it did not upset the established order.³⁷ Portuguese acceptance enabled Luzzatto to maintain his intellectual and pietistic activity at a time when, following several years of struggle with rabbinic elites in Italy and beyond, he was in need of a new place to settle. He was, in short, the right man in the right place at the right time.

LUZZATTO ADAPTED

On May 26, 1735, a day before the festival of Shavuot, Luzzatto sent a letter to Isaiah Bassan, his mentor and former chief rabbi of Padua.³⁸ It was Luzzatto's first communiqué since he had arrived in Amsterdam in February. He expressed regret for having left his native Italy, and lamented the recent death of his father-in-law, David Finzi, chief rabbi of Mantua, whom he had known since his adolescence and who had been a major source of support.³⁹ One might expect Luzzatto to have been at least somewhat disheartened. His mystico-messianic venture had stalled in Padua, his attempts at defending himself in Venice had been rebuffed prior to his journey to Amsterdam, and his confrontation with the Frankfurt rabbinate was presently leading to the proliferation of bans from numerous central and eastern European rabbis. The sharpest bans ordered the confiscation of his writings, demanded Luzzatto cease writing and teaching Kabbalah, and even called for his excommunication in this world and the next. As if that were not enough, one of his fiercest critics, Eliezer Rokeaḥ of Brody (1649–1741), was installed as the Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Amsterdam just weeks before Luzzatto's arrival in the city.⁴⁰

Yet, with no sign of dejection, Luzzatto reflected on his present circumstances positively. He assured his former teacher that his life was copasetic, if not on the ascent. He had survived a brutal trek during the bitterest winter in recent memory,⁴¹ and withstood a hostile encounter in Frankfurt, only to be warmly

37. See Miriam Bodian, "'Liberty of Conscience' and the Jews in the Dutch Republic," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 6 (2011): 1–9; and Yosef Kaplan, *Religion, Politics and Freedom of Conscience: Excommunication in Early Modern Jewish Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel Instituut, 2010). Also, in a paper given on the bicentenary of Luzzatto's birth, Rabbi Isaac Landman described Luzzatto's transition from Italy as one to the "city of freedom of conscience—Amsterdam" ("Moses Hayim Luzzatto [1707–1747]," *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 17 [1907]: 192). Of the many biographical sketches of Luzzatto, Landman's is notable because he claimed that Luzzatto paid a short visit to London, an assertion for which I have found no evidence (193).

38. Chriqui, *Iggerot*, no. 116. Several extant letters reflect a warm relationship between the Luzzatto family and Bassan, who had served as chief rabbi of Padua between 1715 and 1722; see Chriqui, *Iggerot*, nos. 12, 16, 51, 87, 92, 93, and 146.

39. Finzi died after Luzzatto left for Amsterdam. Luzzatto composed a eulogy, a copy of which was made by David Franco Mendes in his manuscript *'Emek ha-shirim*, housed in the Ets Haim Library (EH 47B26). For the eulogy, see S. Ginzburg and B. Klar, *Sefer ha-shirim* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1945), 123–29.

40. For letters from Rokeaḥ, see Chriqui, *Iggerot*, nos. 128–30. On Rokeaḥ's installation in 1735, see David Mozes Sluys, *Een Opperrabbijnsbenoeming bij de Hoogduitsch-Joodsche Gemeente te Amsterdam in 1735* (Amsterdam, 1936).

41. See E. J. Lowe, *Natural Phenomena and Chronology of the Seasons* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1870), 47.

welcomed by Amsterdam's Portuguese Jewish community. Now, he remarked to Bassan, the "finger of God had placed in the hearts of the entire [Portuguese] community, small and great, a deep love and appreciation for me." A few months later, Luzzatto declared to Bassan that "all of the students" regularly called on him to teach them *hokhmat ha-'emet* (Kabbalah), and that "they" even desired to place him at the head of their yeshivot.⁴² Of course, his report to Bassan was inaccurate. The idea that "all of the students" pined for his kabbalistic teachings was obvious hyperbole, as was the spurious claim that his newly adopted community offered him the rabbinate. The former statement sharply contrasted with a noticeable disinterest in Kabbalah in the *Medras Grande*,⁴³ while the latter assertion was impossible considering the productive leadership of Athias and Abendana de Britto.⁴⁴ Luzzatto likely sought to reassure his beleaguered colleagues in Padua (with whom Bassan frequently communicated) that their work as a mystic-messianic group had not failed. Throughout his tenure in Amsterdam, Luzzatto encouraged his friends to persist in their mystical quest despite his absence.⁴⁵ Although widespread rejection and the stalling of his movement had taken their toll, he had not despaired. As much as Luzzatto's acceptance in Amsterdam depended on Portuguese willingness to disregard the bans levied against him, it also necessitated Luzzatto's willingness to adjust to his reviled status.

Luzzatto's resolve and facility to adapt stemmed from his unwavering faith in his conceptions of God, and of himself. In 1730, he had vigorously countered his elder opponents with invective, equating Ḥagiz and others with Satan, and criticizing the rabbinic "profession" for being filled by those who served themselves rather than God or Israel.⁴⁶ Over time, however, he came to view his unjust suffering as a product of divine providence. In a treatise composed in Italy in 1734, and another during his stay in Amsterdam, Luzzatto argued that evil was integral to the providential system.⁴⁷ A divinely ordained challenge was akin to contending with an adversary (מקטרג)—a word he used to describe his own

42. Chriqui, *'Iggerot*, no. 118.

43. Intensified rabbinic study under the leadership of Athias and Abendana de Britto, most manifest in *Peri 'ez hayim*, focused on ritual law relevant to contemporary Jews. Luzzatto, meanwhile, had confessed to Bassan while still in Italy that he avoided discussing his intimate mystical experiences and aspirations (see Chriqui, *'Iggerot*, no. 99, p. 286). Aviad Sar Shalom Basilea told Bassan that Luzzatto did not discuss the *magid* with him while the young man was in Mantua in 1731 soon after his marriage to Zipporah Finzi (*ibid.*, no. 145, p. 390).

44. Joseph Michman posited that Luzzatto was asked to head the Oel Jahacob Yeshiva (Michman, *David Franco Mendes*, 38). This is feasible only if Oel Jahacob and Emet Le Jahacob did indeed function separately from the *Medras Grande*. However, there is no firm indication that the yeshivot were distinct from the Ets Haim system, particularly as the names of the same men appear in reference to both. Jacob Pereira's bequeathed "yeshivot" may have merely acted as sources of funding, with all men sitting together in the *Medras Grande* (Yosef Kaplan in private communication).

45. Chriqui, *'Iggerot*, nos. 164.

46. Chriqui, *'Iggerot*, nos. 82, 88; Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 229.

47. See Yosef Spinner, ed., *Sefer da'at tevunot* (Jerusalem: Ha-mesorah, 2012), 154–63; and Luzzatto, *Derekh ha-Shem*, II:6:4.

ordeal—that would cease to appear “evil” after one accepted its ultimate goodly purpose. God’s Oneness, manifested in the inherent unity of *all*, drove the world on its march towards goodness. Such a viewpoint, coupled with Luzzatto’s persistent commitment to living piously in his daily life, enabled his failure in Padua to appear as merely a means to the same redemptive end.

To be sure, Luzzatto continued to reject his predominantly Ashkenazic opponents, harshly condemning them in a way that bordered on spiritual-cultural bigotry. In Frankfurt, he told Bassan, he had witnessed three hundred yeshiva students devoid of even the “scent of piety” (ריח חסידות), hopelessly seeking understanding and wisdom through the “emptiness of talmudic casuistry” (פּלפּוּלִיָּהּ הַמַּהְבִּילִים).⁴⁸ Evoking the confusion of the first day of creation, Luzzatto described Ashkenazic scholarship as void, formless, and dark,⁴⁹ and without comprehension of “what the Lord, your God, requires of you” (מַה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁאֵל מֵעִמְךָ).⁵⁰ Ashkenazic scholars’ focus on the Talmud rather than Kabbalah—on legal minutia rather than the divine spirit—was, according to Luzzatto, an impious waste of time and ability. Moreover, Luzzatto alluded to Bassan, Ashkenazic cultural impiety was what had precluded so many rabbinic authorities from celebrating his own attempts to spread kabbalistic ideas and enthusiasm.⁵¹

Nevertheless, compelled by his lack of success, Luzzatto willingly submitted to his enemies’ demands. He no longer spoke of his *magid*, and made no attempts to set up his own yeshiva. He may have justified his acquiescence with a belief that God explicitly “required” him to pursue his own personal, rather than communal, mystical journey. His suggestion to Bassan that Ashkenazim were ignorant of God’s will implied quite the opposite about himself. As such, Luzzatto did not exactly “refashion” himself in Amsterdam. Rather, he adapted to his circumstances by withholding certain mystical and messianic aspects of his personality that had repeatedly proved problematic.

Accordingly, Luzzatto manifested his talents judiciously. Sitting in the *Medras Grande*, he utilized Ets Haim’s extensive library⁵² and worked to influence his new community without attempting to lead it. He produced his famous pietistic manifesto, *Mesillat yesharim* (Path of the righteous), as well as *Derekh*

48. Chriqui, *Iggerot*, no. 118.

49. Genesis 1:2.

50. “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command you this day for your good” (Deuteronomy 10:12–13).

51. In this way, Luzzatto reflected a trend in Italian Jewish pietism going back to Moses Zacut (ca. 1625–97) and his students. Between 1727 and 1736, Benjamin Kohen Vitale, Joseph Ergas, and Aviad Sar Shalom Basilea all published semipolemical treatises on the supremacy of Kabbalah. On Ergas’s and Basilea’s opposition to Leone Modena in this context, see Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 197–98.

52. The library includes printed books and manuscripts from the last several centuries in Bible, Talmud, Halakhah, liturgy, Kabbalah, ethics, philology, belles lettres, and all other literary fields relevant to Portuguese Jewry in the early modern and modern periods.

ha-Shem (Way of God), a systematic cosmology of the universe and spirituality, and *Derekh tevunot* (Way of reason), a primer to the study of the Talmud. Each of these three major works served as an introduction, whether to pietism, kabbalistic ideology, or talmudic study. In addition, Luzzatto disseminated at least four essays—“*Derekh ḥokhmah*” (Way of wisdom), “*Ma’amar ‘al ha-hagadot*” (Essay on parables), “*Ma’amar ha-‘ikarim*” (Essay on fundamentals), and “*Ma’amar ha-ḥokhmah*” (Essay on wisdom)—all of which presented abstract traditional concepts as packaged dogma.⁵³ He also penned two books of logic, *Sefer ha-higayon*⁵⁴ and *Derekh ha-melizah*,⁵⁵ exploring concepts and language in Bible and Talmud. Charles Manekin has pointed out that Luzzatto himself explained the purpose of *Sefer ha-higayon*: “When I saw the great need we have for this subject ... I chose to arrange [it] in a condensed matter.... Most of it I translated from the books that preceded me in other languages, and I brought it to our language for the benefit of my coreligionists.”⁵⁶

Luzzatto’s Amsterdam compositions were noticeably more prosaic than the esoteric or highly technical treatises of his messianic youth. He successfully presented each subject so systematically that they are almost textbooks. There is no indication whether Luzzatto engaged in this edifying platform in an effort to curry favor with his Portuguese benefactors, or if his Ets Haim stipend actually depended on his willingness to produce texts relevant to the yeshiva. For that matter, Luzzatto may have acted out of his own intellectual interest, or an altruistic desire to fill a “great need” in the community.

Regardless, Luzzatto’s adaption worked in Amsterdam. Aspects of *Derekh ha-Shem*, “*Ma’amar ha-‘ikarim*,” and “*Ma’amar ha-ḥokhmah*” were based on kabbalistic sources and even dealt with messianism, but the material was conventional and dispassionate. Luzzatto did not claim divine inspiration, as he had in Padua, and Portuguese lay and rabbinic leaders responded appreciatively. In a *haskamah* for the pietistic *Mesillat yesharim* (Amsterdam, 1740), Athias and Abendana de Britto acclaimed Luzzatto’s wisdom and lauded his treatise as essential to living devoutly. In a separate introduction, David Meldola, his Ets Haim colleague, linked Luzzatto to the biblical Moses, stating, “from Moses to Moses none has arisen like Moses.”⁵⁷

53. They were not published during Luzzatto’s lifetime; they appeared in print for the first time in Amsterdam in 1783. Copies appear in manuscript in a miscellany belonging to David Franco Mendes (EH 47C22). Franco Mendes also recorded Luzzatto’s Hebrew translation of a Portuguese poem in his *Emek ha-shirim* (EH 47B26), fols. 50–52, 54, 58; see L. Fuks and R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 148–49. Presumably, the poem indicates that Luzzatto mastered Portuguese.

54. See EH 47C7, fols. 49r–51r.

55. See EH 47C48 and EH 47E8; Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, vol. 2, 178f.

56. See Charles Manekin, “On Humanist Logic Judaized—Then and Now: Two Models for the Appropriation of Gentile Science,” in *Studies in the History of Culture and Science: A Tribute to Gad Freudenthal*, ed. Resianne Fontaine, Ruth Glasner, Reimund Leicht, and Giuseppe Veltri (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 431–51 (432–34); and idem, “On Moses Hayyim Luzzatto’s Logic, and on Ramist Influence in His Writings” (in Hebrew), *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Thought* 40 (1998): 5–27.

57. ושמושה ועד משה לא קם כמותה המאיר.

Although Meldola did not intend to equate the two in the same vein that Luzzatto himself did (as his reincarnated soul),⁵⁸ it was nonetheless extraordinary to publicly draw such a comparison. Juxtaposition with Moses was reserved for Maimonides, and very occasionally for other great figures.⁵⁹ Athias, Abendana de Britto, and Meldola again honored Luzzatto in approbations for *Derekh tevunot* (Amsterdam, 1742), going so far as to encourage scholars to utilize Luzzatto's method in studying Talmud.⁶⁰ Decades later, the poet David Franco Mendes, who preserved copies of some of Luzzatto's writings, praised his "revered teacher [as] heaven-graced [who] made others partake of his grace by making many books without end, all of them full of wisdom, knowledge, and fear of the Lord."⁶¹

Despite the sizeable volume of his nonmystical literary output, and the praise he thereby aroused from within the yeshiva, Luzzatto functioned quite separately from his peers in Amsterdam. Apart from his inclusion on the rolls of the *Medras Grande*, Luzzatto's name is noticeably absent from Portuguese rabbinic activity. Colleagues such as Meldola and Jacob Bassan (no relation to Isaiah Bassan)⁶² published *pesakim* in *Peri 'ez hayim*, worked as proofreaders or editors in printing houses, provided *haskamot* to new imprints, and contributed to the rabbinic discourse in and out of Ets Haim. Meldola's *haskamot* show that he was proud of having reached a position of respect among the intellectual and religious elite.⁶³ Yet, in the hundreds of responsa printed in *Peri 'ez hayim* and elsewhere, Luzzatto's name appears only three times, and only tangentially.⁶⁴ In one instance, Meldola revealed Luzzatto's relative solitude in the *Medras Grande*: upon hearing Meldola and others discuss the kosher status of a pheasant, Luzzatto offhandedly remarked that Jews in Italy did indeed regard the bird as fit

58. There is no evidence that Meldola was a secret follower of Luzzatto in a way that harkened back to the latter's time in Padua. Meldola did publish a prayer book with the kabbalistic annotations of Moses Zacut, entitled *Tefillat yesharim* (Amsterdam, 1740), but his emphasis was on rabbinics. See his responsa, which exhibit a high level of sophistication, which he published as *Divre David* (Amsterdam, 1753).

59. For instance, it appeared on the tombstone of the Ashkenazic halakhist and theologian Moses Isserles (1520–72); see T. Preschel, "Mi-Mosheh ve-'ad Mosheh lo' kam ke-Mosheh (gilgulah shel 'imrah)," *Hadoar* 48 (1969): 627–28.

60. Research into the Ets Haim curriculum is necessary to determine if Luzzatto's teachings practically influenced instructors or students in his adopted community. For one scholar's claim of Luzzatto's spiritual impact on the community, see Laura Arnold Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (Middlesex: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012).

61. *Derekh hokhmah* (Amsterdam, 1783), fol. 5v, and EH 47A26, p. 40; see also Zwiep, "An Echo of Lofty Mountains," 293.

62. Bassan later served as rabbi of the Portuguese community in Hamburg, though I do not presently know when his tenure began.

63. Meldola frequently stated that he sat in the tent of learning (הישוב באוהל) of *midrash ha-gadol* (*Medras Grande*) of Ets Haim in Amsterdam; see his introductions to *Tefillat yesharim* and *Derekh tevunot*, and his approbation to Samson Morpurgo's *Shemesh zedakah*. His father, Raphael Meldola, similarly recorded his own presence in the *midrash ha-gadol* of Ets Haim in Livorno.

64. *Peri 'ez hayim* 1, fol. 283r (Hirsch, no. 103); *Peri 'ez hayim* 12, fol. 174r (Hirsch, no. 915); *Divre David* (Amsterdam, 1753), no. 42.

for consumption.⁶⁵ Rather than conclude with the anecdote, the text proceeds to analyze written halakhic sources, indicating Meldola's unwillingness to rule on the basis of Luzzatto's word.⁶⁶ Luzzatto was neither an integral part of the discussion nor a definitive voice in the yeshiva.

It is not surprising that Luzzatto conducted himself differently from the majority of *estudantes* in the *Medras Grande*. He had long relegated halakhic study to a mere two hours per day, deeming it just enough to retain a fresh understanding of mitzvot without abandoning his primary focus of *devekut* (spiritual adherence to God).⁶⁷ In *Mesillat yesharim*, in several chapters devoted to *perishut* (separateness), Luzzatto advocated a pietistic lifestyle on the margins of society as an essential precursor to clinging to the divine. With the yeshiva requiring studiers to sit in the study hall just two hours each morning and two hours in the late afternoon,⁶⁸ Luzzatto could almost continually engage in his private efforts.

Still, Luzzatto did not live in isolation from society at large. In addition to befriending scholars within Ets Haim, Luzzatto developed bonds with laymen, especially the wealthy merchant Moses de Chaves. De Chaves served variously as *parnas*, treasurer of the Ets Haim Yeshiva,⁶⁹ director of the community butchery (*carniseria*),⁷⁰ and as benefactor of innumerable people and institutions. He also provided loans to the Venetian Jewish community, published a poem emphasizing piety in the six-volume Bible *Tikkun soferim* (Amsterdam, 1725), and was a member of Mikra' Kodesh, a society of notable figures in the community who met at fixed times every week to study Torah with commentaries.⁷¹ There are no extant letters between Luzzatto and de Chaves, nor is there evidence that de Chaves had personal connections to Luzzatto's relations in Italy, but a friendship clearly developed over time. De Chaves was a member of the Mahamad in the late 1730s, during which time Luzzatto received his seat in the Etsnoga and was commissioned to compose "Le-'el 'elim," a poem honoring the bridegrooms (*ḥatanim*) of Simḥat Torah. The ode was

65. *Divre David*, no. 42.

66. Meldola may have concluded that he could not rely on the tradition of another community. In the nineteenth century, Judah Azsod (1796–1866) (גאסאד) ruled in his *Yehudah ya'aleh* (Lemberg, 1873), no. 92, that a community required tradition (*mesorah*) to establish the *kashrut* of a bird, despite the fact that this was not a talmudic requirement (Rema on *Yoreh de'ah* 82:3); see <<http://onthemainline.blogspot.com/2011/11/how-jewish-communities-ought-to-view.html>>, accessed May 17, 2016. In a related halakhic discussion, of a medieval communal debate with respect to eating sturgeon, see Pinchas Roth, "Fish, Customs and Philosophy: A Halakhic Debate in Fourteenth-Century Provence" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry* (forthcoming).

67. Chriqui, *Iggerot*, no. 88. In a letter to Bassan, Luzzatto contended that Isaac Luria, the early modern kabbalist par excellence, spent no more than two hours per day toiling in halakhic study.

68. SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 15. During the summer months, men receiving regular stipends were required to sit in the *Medras* between 9am–11am and 3pm–5pm; during the winter months, studiers were expected between 9am–11am and for two straight hours in the afternoon just before the recitation of the evening service (*'arvit*) in the Etsnoga.

69. SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 130.

70. SAA, 334, no. 155, p. 40.

71. For a record of his loans to Venetian Jewry, see SAA, 334, no. 179, p. 267. For a facsimile of the protocols of Mikra' Kodesh, see Meyer, *Stay of Moses Haim Luzzatto at Amsterdam*, 21.

set to music and performed as a duet by cantors in the Esnoga in 1739,⁷² and was almost immediately incorporated into the community's liturgy.⁷³

The intimacy of their relationship became most apparent towards the end of Luzzatto's tenure in Amsterdam. In April 1743, while preparing to embark on a trip abroad (ultimately to the Holy Land), Luzzatto arranged before witnesses and a notary public for de Chaves's son Jacob to manage his estate in the city.⁷⁴ Jacob agreed to administer all of Luzzatto's financial and legal matters, including the liquidation of his possessions and assets in the event of his death. Only months prior to this arrangement, Luzzatto had composed the drama *La-yesharim tehillah* (Praise for the righteous) in honor of Jacob's marriage to Rachel da Veiga Henriques.⁷⁵ The text was issued in just fifty copies on thick paper in large format, each with two title pages printed luxuriously with red ink.⁷⁶ It is unknown whether de Chaves commissioned

72. It was performed by cantors Samuel Rodriguez Mendes and Aaron Cohen de Lara (Luzzatto's colleague in the *Medras Grande*). See A. Z. Idelsohn, "Songs and Singers of the Synagogue in the Eighteenth Century: With Special Reference to the Birnbaum Collection of the Hebrew Union College Library," in *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume* (1875–1925), ed. David Philipson (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1925), 397–424. Mendes was appointed *hazzan* in 1709. Hazzan Isaac Cohen de Lara died in 1729, leading the ascension of his son Aaron Cohen de Lara. For a recent recording of the hymn: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j08qmUR4j9I>>, accessed May 17, 2016.

73. *Seder tefilot ha-mo'adim ke-minhag k"k sefaradim* (Amsterdam: Abraham Athias, 1740), fol. 180v. It was later reprinted in *Seder mo'adim ke-minhag k"k ha-sefaradim* (Amsterdam: Jacob da Silva Mendes, 1771), where it is preceded by the heading "Leshabeah la-'El," and appears with a few other hymns, including "Ki 'eshmerah Shabbat," in a section of *bakashot*. In this imprint, Luzzatto's "Le-'El 'elim" took the place of another hymn for the *hatanim* that appeared in a 1725 *mahzor* printed by Samuel Rodriguez Mendes. (These pages of *bakashot* are exactly the same as the earlier edition except that the first page was altered.) Luzzatto's name was not recorded as the author in either prayer book; as such, Israel Davidson lists the hymn anonymously in *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry*, vol. 3 (New York: Ktav, 1924), 9, no. 177.

"Le-'El 'elim" was also printed in a collection of liturgical poetry entitled *Shir 'emunim* (Amsterdam, 1793), fols. 17r–17v. This imprint also included a poem modeled on Luzzatto's: "Le-'El 'olam segule ram" (fols. 9r–9v), known only from a version for a solo voice (manuscript in The Hague, Ms. 23 D24, 16b–c). Cantors of Amsterdam created new pieces by recycling extant melodies; see Edwin Seroussi, "New Perspectives on the Music of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogues in North-Western Europe," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35, no. 2 (2001): 306.

According to the current *shamas* of the Esnoga, whose late father was a cantor, "Le-'El 'elim" was in continuous use in the Esnoga until the Second World War.

74. SAA, 5075, no. 8864, no. 349. There is no supporting documentation, so it is impossible to know the extent of Luzzatto's "estate," whether it referred to anything sizable or was relatively insignificant. Judging by the sums discussed above it was not large.

75. Rachel's father, Isaac da Veiga Henriquez, was one of the highest-taxed members of the community in 1743; see A. M. Vaz Dias, "Over den vermogenstoestand der Amsterdamsche Joden in de 17e en 18e eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 51 (1936): 174. The marriage was registered with the state on November 7, 1742 (see Amsterdam Stadsarchief, Marriage Registry, no. 726, p. 219); I have not found a record of the actual wedding.

76. The books included a half title stating only "La-yesharim tehillah," and a full title page with dedication and publication information. On deluxe printing, including with red type, see Brad Sabin Hill, "Hebrew Printing on Blue and Other Coloured Papers," in *Treasures of the Valmadonna Trust Library: A Catalogue of 15th-Century Books and Five Centuries of Deluxe Hebrew Printing*, ed. David Sclar (London: Valmadonna Trust Library, 2011), 84–111.

Luzzatto to compose the drama for the wedding, or if Luzzatto opted to do so out of appreciation for Jacob's willingness to act as his estate's executor. Or, perhaps Luzzatto wrote *La-yesharim tehillah* as a genuine celebration of a family or friend with whom he was close. Regardless, the deluxe nature of the volume—a prominent symbol of rejoicing in the union of two of the community's wealthiest families—signified the author's notoriety among members of high society.

Almost immediately after the de Chaves-Henriques wedding, at the height of his literary productivity and societal recognition, Luzzatto set off for the Holy Land. His place in the stipend-granting Oel Jahacob Yeshiva seems to have been held for a year before officials determined the Italian was not returning.⁷⁷ The particulars of Luzzatto's journey, his reason for settling in Acre (rather than Jerusalem or the newly reconstituted community of Tiberias),⁷⁸ and the three years he lived in Palestine before dying with his wife and son in a plague, are shrouded in mystery.⁷⁹ So too is his decision to leave his comfortable life in Europe's most cosmopolitan city. Luzzatto had not reached the summit he had envisioned as a youth, but he had found peace and security amid a tumultuous storm of rejection. His 1735 letters to Isaiah Bassan underscored his belief that God had provided relief, and for more than eight years he worked to spiritually and intellectually benefit the community that had welcomed him. His willingness to dispense with Portuguese support, however, meant that he remained committed to something unavailable to him in either Padua or Amsterdam.

THE LIMITS OF ACCEPTANCE AND ADAPTATION

On Wednesday, September 10, 1738, less than a week before Rosh Hashanah, Luzzatto rested his pen next to a pile of tightly written pages that commenced with the words "There was once a sage to whom God had given a wise and

77. SAA, 334, no. 1053, p. 69.

78. Yeshivat Bet 'El and Bet Midrash Keneset Yisra'el, both centers of kabbalistic study, had been recently established in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Ḥayim Abulafia (1660–1744), a kabbalist and rabbi of Izmir, helped rebuild a Jewish community in Tiberias with the financial assistance of Solomon Racach and Hillel Padova, Venetian Jews who had supported Luzzatto in Padua. An account of the proceedings in Tiberias appears in *Zimrat ha-'arez* (Mantua, 1745), which was published with the assistance of Luzzatto's disciple, Jacob Castelfranco.

79. See A. Yaari, "Efo nikbar Ramḥal," *Moznayim* 4 (1932): 9–11; Haim Zohar, "R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto in the Land of Israel" (in Hebrew), *Sinai* 30 (1952): 281–94; M. Benayahu, "Aliyato shel Ramḥal le-'Erez Yisra'el," in *Mazkeret ... ha-Rav Yiḥḥak Iẓik ha-Levi Herzog* (Jerusalem: Hekhal Shelomoh, 1962), 467–74. There is a debate over Luzzatto's burial place, based on two documents that seem to be in dispute: a eulogy written by rabbis in Tiberias, claiming Luzzatto was buried in their town next to the grave of Akiva ben Yosef (New York, JTS, MS 4022, fol. 4v), and a printed request for charity from the rabbis of Kefar Yasif (near Acre), which mentions a Ḥayim Lusato (לוסאטו) buried nearby (New York, JTS, B H35a). For the eulogy, see Chriqui, *'Iggerot*, no. 167; Ghironi, "Mikhtav heh," *Kerem Chemed* 2 (1836): 61–62; Almanzi, "Toledot R' Moshéh Hayim Luzato me-Padovah," 126; A. Yaari, *'Iggerot 'Erez Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv, 1943), 270–72; and Ginzburg, *Life and Works of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto*, 72. For the charity request, see Isaac Rivkind, "Yeshuv yehudi be-Kefar Yasif," *Reshimot* 4 (1926): 332–44; and Ephraim Deinard, *Shibolim bodedot* (Jerusalem: A. M. Luntz, 1915), 26–35.

understanding heart.”⁸⁰ He had finished copying his manuscript in a legible hand, ready to submit the work for publication. The untitled treatise, printed two years later as a heavily edited *Mesillat yesharim*, was Luzzatto’s philosophy of pietism.⁸¹ Set as it was in a dialogue between a *ḥasid* (pietist) and a *ḥakham* (rabbi), Luzzatto hoped to provide a means through which to guide his new rabbinic colleagues in Amsterdam. The characters embody diverging worldviews, intentions, and study habits, and, contextualized within Luzzatto’s biography, they reflect his continued struggle for acknowledged spiritual supremacy.

The manuscript commences with a narrative describing a wise and intelligent man who approaches Torah rationally and performs mitzvot meticulously, but is forever in search of fulfillment. At the moment of his introduction to the reader, the *ḥakham* is perplexed by the intentions and activities of pietists who live contentedly despite devoting themselves only to the recitation of Psalms and the study of Musar (morality). Moving from narration to dialogue, the *ḥakham* meets a *ḥasid* and inquires about the latter’s erudition and outlook, to which the *ḥasid* replies humbly that he has little to tell. When the *ḥasid* asks the *ḥakham* in turn to teach him what he has learned in all his years of talmudic study, the latter pompously responds that the *ḥasid* could not possibly comprehend: “My brother, you cannot taste the fruit of wisdom, for you have accustomed yourself only to the practice of separateness and seclusion [פרישות והתבודדות], reciting hymns or supplications. You have not trained yourself in conceptual analysis and dialectical discourse with students [בעיונים ובפלפול התלמידים]. Words of wisdom are for you like the words of a sealed book.”⁸² In demeaning “separateness and seclusion,” the *ḥakham* denigrates fundamental concepts of kabbalistic thought. He proceeds to detail the challenges of his own studies, and claims that the ideal pursuit consists of talmudic dialectic (*pilpul*) and legal rulings (*piske halakhah*).

Unimpressed, the *ḥasid* rejects the *ḥakham*’s perspective as superficial. In a rapid but elaborate exchange concerning the nature of the divine commandments, their study, and their appropriate fulfillment, the *ḥasid* presses the *ḥakham* to explain the essence of love and fear of God.⁸³ With obvious autobiographical

80. איש חכם היה אשר נתן לו אלקים לב חכם ונבון.

81. Moscow, MS Günzburg, 1206, Russian State Library (IMHM F 48209). Luzzatto stated in the colophon that he concluded his work on 25 Elul 5498. The manuscript is “print-ready” in the sense that there are minimal corrections. Luzzatto’s handwriting can be extremely difficult to read, so he seems to have taken care to write this manuscript in a relatively legible hand.

The history of the manuscript is difficult to trace. An owner in the nineteenth century recognized its relation to the printed *Mesillat yesharim*, as noted on the flyleaf (fol. 1r). It appeared at auction in the late nineteenth century; see G. B. Carmoly, *Catalog der reichhaltigen Sammlung hebräischer und jüdischer Bücher und Handschriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1875), 56 (no. 87). The manuscript ended up in the collection of the bibliophile Baron David Günzburg, and languished behind the iron curtain for most of the twentieth century. With the assistance of Yosef Avivi, Abraham Shoshana of the Ofeq Institute published the manuscript for the first time in 1995. For an English translation and annotation, see Abraham Shoshana, ed., *The Complete Mesillat Yesharim: Dialogue and Thematic Versions* (Cleveland: Ofeq Institute, 2007).

82. Shoshana, ed., *Complete Mesillat Yesharim*, 4.

83. Shoshana, ed., *Complete Mesillat Yesharim*, 15–17.

implication, the *ḥasid* cites Deuteronomy 10:12–13 as the pinnacle of Jewish life. As discussed above, Luzzatto had used these verses—Moses’s directive to fear God, to walk in God’s ways, to love God, to serve God, and to keep the commandments—to reproach Ashkenazic rabbinic culture in a letter sent to Isaiah Bassan in 1735. He had argued that his opponents’ spiritual inadequacy (and his subsequent persecution) stemmed from faulty edification and arrogance. Unable to elucidate the relationship between God and man, the *ḥakham* abandons his perspective and submits to the *ḥasid* as a willing and faithful student. The subsequent text, and bulk of the manuscript, is the *ḥasid*’s explanation of a baraita attributed to Pinḥas ben Yair, detailing man’s pietistic ascent and unification with the divine will.⁸⁴

This manuscript version of *Mesillat yesharim*, as a product of Musar literature and in its historical and biographical contexts, is deserving of its own extensive study. Suffice it to say for the purposes of this initial investigation into Luzzatto’s years in Amsterdam, the humble and unassuming pietist represented a simplified version of Luzzatto himself, while the arrogant and presumptuous sage served as a composite of the author’s rabbinic contemporaries. The obstinate *ḥakham* evoked Luzzatto’s critics who had thwarted his redemptive efforts, while the docile *ḥasid* represented Luzzatto’s hope for students sitting in the Ets Haim Yeshiva. In Padua, even at a young age, Luzzatto had conceived of himself as a visionary. Now, in Amsterdam, he sought to promote his pietistic worldview—not Kabbalah per se, but the living spirit behind kabbalistic study—as worthy of widespread adoption. With the *Medras Grande* engaged in the writing and publication of responsa literature, Luzzatto sought to prevent his young colleagues from (over)emphasizing *pilpul* and *piske halakhah*. As such, this manuscript reflected Luzzatto’s social and religious critique of contemporary rabbinic culture, and, with the *ḥasid*’s triumph, his own hope for widespread vindication.

The manuscript also demonstrates that in Amsterdam Luzzatto was not merely a passive recipient of charity, or a mystic or quietist in exile. Luzzatto here recorded himself defeating his opponents in the hopes of extending direct spiritual influence over Portuguese rabbinic culture and beyond. In fact, in *Derekh ha-Shem*, Luzzatto had advocated for a “perfected community” (קיבוץ השלימות) founded on the underlying spiritual values expressed by the *ḥasid*.⁸⁵ Luzzatto evidently considered his position in Amsterdam secure enough to produce an unsubtle polemic.

Luzzatto’s decision to compose *Mesillat yesharim* at such a time and in such a manner seems to have been deliberate. In 1737, the famous Proops press in Amsterdam published Elijah de Vidas’s *Reshit ḥokhmah* (Beginning of wisdom), a

84. “From here Rabbi Pinḥas ben Yair said: Torah leads to vigilance; vigilance leads to alacrity; alacrity leads to blamelessness; blamelessness leads to separateness; separateness leads to purity; purity leads to piety; piety leads to humility; humility leads to fear of sin; fear of sin leads to sanctity; sanctity leads to the holy spirit; the holy spirit leads to the resurrection of the dead.” The baraita appears in M. Sotah 9:15, B. Avodah Zarah 20b, and Y. Shekalim 3:3 (14b).

85. *Derekh ha-Shem*, II:3.7–8. There is no extant autograph manuscript of *Derekh ha-Shem*. A copy was housed in the Ets Haim Library for decades (EH 47C32), and the book was first published in Amsterdam in 1896.

kabbalistic exposition of piety originally written and published in the second half of the sixteenth century. De Vidas commenced the treatise's second section, *Sha'ar 'ahavah* (Gate of love), by quoting Deuteronomy 10:12–13, and devoted the later chapters of the section to the baraita of Pinḥas ben Yair. Writing for scholars of Kaballah,⁸⁶ de Vidas addressed only some of the steps of the ladder of holiness, leaving uninformed readers with interests piqued but comprehension lacking.⁸⁷ In Amsterdam, as discussed above, Luzzatto wrote introductory works, either as part of an arrangement with communal leaders or with the intention of raising a new (albeit noneschatological) following. At present, it is not clear whether members of Ets Haim asked Luzzatto for an in-depth explanation of the baraita of Pinḥas ben Yair, though the text was obviously of interest to early modern thinkers. Moses Ḥagiz, Luzzatto's relentless pursuer, addressed it in his *Mishnat ḥakhamim*, as would Ezekiel Landau in the coming decades.⁸⁸ If Luzzatto did not receive a request for an exposition on pietism, he may have simply been inspired by the new edition of *Reshit ḥokhmah* to promote his way of life in Amsterdam through the explication of a biblical verse and a baraita that had long interested him.

In any event, the text published by the Ashkenazic printer Naphtali Hirts Levi Rofe differed from the manuscript. The redacted version lacked the dialogue format and the opening narrative, which had explained the author's intentions and set the tone for the polemic.⁸⁹ Consequently, the meaning of the treatise was substantially diluted. Without the characters and the narrative that explained their conflict, intended to represent the supposed internal struggle of Luzzatto's readers, the text was little more than a stern moralizing lecture. The near print-ready status of the manuscript, completed so close to the imprint's release, suggests that Luzzatto himself did not voluntarily edit the manuscript.⁹⁰ It is unlikely that after finishing the most personal of all his books in the autumn of 1738, he promptly removed

86. In addition to its occasional reprinting, *Reshit ḥokhmah*'s abridgements—Jacob Poggetti's *Reshit ḥokhmah kaṣar* (Venice, 1600), Jehiel Melli's *Tapuḥe zahav* (Mantua, 1623), and Jacob Luzzatto's *Toze'ot ḥayim* (Amsterdam, 1650)—attest to its widespread popularity in diluted form.

87. For instance, de Vidas wrote extensively about purity (טהרה), and the cleansing experience of submerging in a ritual bath. He did not present the reader with a step-by-step spiritual ascension.

88. *Mishnat ḥakhamim* (Wandsbach, 1735), fols. 80r–80v (beginning of *Tohorah*); and see Sharon Flatto, *The Kabbalistic Culture of Eighteenth-Century Prague: Ezekiel Landau and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 170–71. For the baraita's use in the medieval and early modern period, especially in *Reshit ḥokhmah*, see Patrick B. Koch, *Human Self-Perfection: A Re-Assessment of Kabbalistic Musar-Literature of Sixteenth-Century Safed* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2015), 46–77.

89. The actual editing of the manuscript was not extensive, for the printed book used the same chapter format and followed much of the manuscript verbatim. Luzzatto's initial pedagogic style was converted relatively easily, because the vast majority of the dialogue consisted of the *ḥasid's* monologues.

90. The manuscript's colophon states that Luzzatto completed the work on 25 Elul 5498 (September 10, 1738), and the title page of the printed edition records 1740 as the year of publication. Raphael Meldola's *haskamah* is dated January 19, 1740, so within a little over one year, the finished manuscript had been reshaped.

only those elements that biting and overtly critiqued the rabbinic establishment.⁹¹ *Mesillat yesharim*—the oft-printed book through which Luzzatto became a rabbinic icon—had been subjected to an intervention prior to publication.⁹²

Luzzatto's published afterword indicates that his Ets Haim colleagues, David Meldola and Jacob Bassan, were involved in the book's publication, and that Luzzatto ultimately approved the final version: "I applaud the grace of a man after my heart, my sacred charge, my diadem and the seal on my right hand, my beloved and my friend, my master, companion and dear comrade, the distinguished sage ... Jacob ... Bassan ... who assumed the bulk of the burden, privileging me in all stages of this project by printing, proofreading, and completing all the work in the most perfect way. Likewise his second, a man of renown, widely acclaimed, a man of reason, industrious, praised above all proofreaders, skillful at his craft, of high repute among scholars, the distinguished sage ... David ... Meldola...."⁹³ In addition to exhibiting the author's gratitude and affection for his friends, and signifying contemporary concern for high-quality editing, the statement implies that Bassan's "burden" consisted of labor beyond the standard proofreading and printing, of which most authors had no part anyway.⁹⁴ Luzzatto was evidently interested in the progress of the publication, and the text may insinuate that Bassan's "completing all the work" included actual expurgation and emendation.

Without additional sources to shed light on the editing and printing processes, one can only speculate about the altered state of *Mesillat yesharim*. In keeping with his self-defined role in the community, Luzzatto may have preferred a published book in edited form to an intact but unread manuscript. Perhaps Meldola and Bassan advised Luzzatto to temper his treatise on pietism. Though the work drew on Kabbalah only obliquely, and thereby did not technically fall under any ban, they may have sensed that printing the manuscript in its original form would inspire a renewed round of anti-Luzzatto condemnation. After all, Luzzatto's opponents had previously urged the Amsterdam rabbinate to guard their print shops, indicating that rabbinic authority held some power over publishing and that

91. Charles Manekin has argued that Luzzatto was heavily influenced by Ramist theories on rhetoric, logic, and pedagogy—then popular in Holland—which stressed the systemization of knowledge and discouraged the use of voice or dialogue. Manekin's broad point about the influence of Ramism aside, it is unlikely that Luzzatto, having lived in Amsterdam for four years, just happened upon Ramist sources in 1739 and felt compelled to edit the most personal of all his books in a manner that coincidentally removed his biting and overt critique of the rabbinic establishment.

92. On Luzzatto's reception history, see David Sclar, "The Rise of the 'Ramhal': Printing and Traditional Jewish Historiography in the 'After-Life' of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto," in *Ramhal: Pensiero ebraico e kabbalah tra Padova ed Eretz Israel*, ed. Gadi Luzzatto Voghera and Mauro Perani (Padua: Esedra editrice s.r.l., 2010), 139–53.

93. Shoshana, ed., *Complete Mesillat Yesharim*, 525–26.

94. On the importance of print shop employees (editors, correctors, typesetters, etc.), and on the question of "who is an author?" in the early modern period, see Roger Chartier, *The Author's Hand and the Printer's Mind: Transformations of the Written Word in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

Ashkenazic authorities distrusted Portuguese judgment. This might explain why Luzzatto's other diluted kabbalistic works, including *Derekh ha-Shem* "Ma'amar ha-'ikarim," and "Ma'amar ha-ḥokhmah," were not published in Amsterdam during his lifetime.

Alternatively, Naphtali Hirts Levi Rofe himself required the editing. While Amsterdam Hebrew presses did operate according to an open business model,⁹⁵ it is improbable that Ashkenazic printers in Amsterdam would have tolerated Luzzatto's evaluation of contemporary rabbinic culture when the current Ashkenazic chief rabbis were among his fiercest critics. As mentioned above, Eliezer Rokeaḥ preceded Luzzatto's arrival by just a few weeks, and Aryeh Leib ben Saul Löwenstamm, who had distinguished himself by calling for Luzzatto's *eternal* excommunication, replaced Rokeaḥ in 1740 after the latter's move to Palestine. There is no evidence of Rokeaḥ's or Löwenstamm's reaction to Luzzatto's presence in the city, though contemporary records of the Ashkenazic community are notably scarce. With the Esnoga and the Ashkenazic Great Synagogue on opposite sides of the same canal, it is not a stretch to imagine that Rokeaḥ or Löwenstamm did what they could to prevent Luzzatto from receiving free rein in the printing houses.

Ultimately, Luzzatto's autograph manuscript of what posthumously became his most famous work elucidates the limitations of both his adaptation and acceptance in Amsterdam. He was successively tolerated, accepted, and celebrated by influential people within the Portuguese community, but he was not an unquestioned or unchecked authority. While the period was arguably his most productive, his writings did not reflect the unbridled aspirations of his soul. He crafted his persona and oeuvre carefully, while retaining contempt for his opponents, concern for contemporary religiosity, and belief in his own righteousness. Luzzatto's shift from messianist to apparent quietist did not reflect a fundamental change in his mystical intentions or in his self-conception as cosmic redeemer. By April 1743, Luzzatto had determined that his position in Amsterdam—distinguished but not "perfect"—was an irrevocable barrier to his need for *perishut*, quest for *devekut*, and hope for redemption. Quitting Amsterdam for the Holy Land was the logical progression of his socioreligious journey.

* * * * *

By the end of his sojourn among Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam, Luzzatto had secured a respectable reputation. The role differed from his previous positions as precocious adolescent, beleaguered bachelor, and prospective redeemer. Over eight years Luzzatto's adversaries had not found cause to issue new bans or to publicly condemn Amsterdam's Sephardim for offering him sanctuary. Jacob Emden, whose pen frequently spewed vitriol, admitted that since Luzzatto's arrival in the

95. Despite sharp cultural and social distinctions, little to no separation between Ashkenazim and Sephardim existed in Amsterdam's print shops, akin to the porous borders in Venice's famous publishing houses that had facilitated Jewish-Christian interaction in the sixteenth century. See David Sclar, "Books in the Ets Haim Yeshiva: Acquisition, Publishing, and a Community of Scholarship in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam" (under review).

Dutch city, “we have heard nothing from him that was bad. He has brought to press two small treatises, *Mesillat yesharim* and *Derekh tevunot*, with which I could find no fault.”⁹⁶ Luzzatto’s quieted messianism and self-aggrandizement facilitated an unspoken truce with perpetually suspicious opponents. His rehabilitated image was neither wiped clean nor did it match his own conviction, but it helped normalize his name to a tolerable level within the mainstream.

As a well-known figure in a major European metropolis, Luzzatto’s eight years in Amsterdam reflected significant facets of contemporary Jewish culture. His absorption into Portuguese society demonstrated the power of a single community to disregard a rabbinic collective. Western Sephardic Jews remained the distinct *Nação* despite intensified interaction with Ashkenazim by the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Concurrently, Luzzatto’s freedom to live without perpetual harassment indicated that contemporary heresy hunters were focused primarily on maintaining order. The relative autonomy of separate communities limited widespread or absolute rabbinic power, except perhaps at the press, and hindered strong means of uprooting sparks of dissent. In addition, Luzzatto’s transformations—promoting his group as a means to redemption, submitting to his opponents, adapting in Amsterdam, departing at the height of his standing—signify the crucial roles that challenges and intentions played in shaping his career. Broadly, it beckons questions about the inner lives of early modern kabbalists, particularly in their willingness and ability to relate elaborate views of the cosmos to the era’s social, political, and cultural developments.

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96. Jacob Emden, *Zo’i torat ha-kena’ot* (Amsterdam, 1752), fol. 57b.