

# A COMMUNAL TREE OF LIFE



## Western Sephardic Jewry and the Library of the Ets Haim Yesiba in Early Modern Amsterdam

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Mass production of books in the early modern period broadened the quest for learning, promoted the invention of new educational tools, and generated wider social networks. As wealthy individuals assembled vast collections of texts, and institutions formed new spaces as centers of specialized scholarship, an increasingly large and diversified readership gained access to, utilized, and shaped knowledge on a grand scale. Semipublic libraries developed into cultural hubs, at once enabling and driving intellectual, social, and religious developments in Europe.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, a book collection belonging to the Ets Haim Yesiba (Tree of Life Seminary), the scholastic arm of Western Sephardic Jewry in Amsterdam, emerged as the period's first Jewish institutional library.<sup>1</sup> It grew in size and importance as thousands of *Conversos* emigrated to the Dutch Republic in search of religious tolerance and financial opportunity. As a whole, these newly professing Jews, whose ancestors had been forcibly baptized in Spain and Portugal, took advantage of their new surroundings. They amassed immense wealth through mercantilism, formed new communities in western Europe and across the Atlantic, and built strong communal institutions, including a host of charities, the Talmud Torah educational system (under which formed the Ets Haim Yesiba),<sup>2</sup> and the monumental *Esnoga* synagogue.<sup>3</sup> They forged an identity as a *Nação* (Nation) and frequently referred to themselves as “Portuguese” Jews, indicative of a deeply intertwined Jewish and Iberian heritage.<sup>4</sup> As carriers of new knowledge, books—specifically, traditional texts in Hebrew, and Bibles, liturgies, and legal works in vernacular languages—supported the population's Judaization, particularly within the walls of the Ets Haim (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Adolf van der Laan, *'t Gesigt van de Portugeese en Hoogduy[t]se Jodenkerken tot Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Pieter van Gunst, ca. 1710). Image provided by the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary (PNT A41.1.21.1). The imposing Portuguese synagogue (*Esnoga*) appears on the left, with the Ets Haim Yesiba and its library located in the smaller building in front of it. The Great Synagogue of the Ashkenazic community is situated across the canal on the right.

The library of the Ets Haim Yesiba stands as a unique development in the history of premodern Jewry, and possibly of religious and communal institutions in early modern Europe in general. It did not belong to any single person, grew under the decentralized and ever-changing leadership of elected officials (*parnasim*), and served the broad religious and moral concerns of the Portuguese Jewish community. Unlike contemporary patrician and university libraries, formed by or for and according to the whims of intellectual and socioeconomic elites, the Yesiba's collection was a formal repository of texts funded by patrons and community coffers in the service of an expansive educational program. The *Livraria*, as it became known, originated as a sort of purchasing department responsible for providing students with textual and ritual supplies in support of their primary instruction. As the community grew, however, so did the school and its library. Through decades of *Converso* immigration, crises posed by nonbelievers and religious enthusiasts,<sup>5</sup> and the expansion of the Western Sephardic diaspora, religious and lay leadership formed a rabbinic library of record consisting of hundreds and eventually thousands of volumes. Throughout its history,

its user base included pupils enrolled in yeshiva, elder students in the community seeking greater textual fluency, and scholars in the *Medras Grande* (the highest class of the Yesiba) pursuing advanced studies and working on their own publications.

The Library's maturity reflected broad European developments in authorship, publishing, and reading, as book collections began to fill rooms rather than mere shelves. Collecting still required literacy, money, supplies, and texts from which to copy, but printing with movable type, particularly in cultural and economic centers like Amsterdam, revolutionized the availability of materials and the capacity to publish. Greater access to texts and increased literary awareness contributed to intellectual and social development. In the case of Portuguese Jewry, the Ets Haim's growing Judaica library facilitated the broader community's rabbinization, or adoption of a rabbinic text-based Jewishness that existed outside the *Nação's* exceptional history and self-conception. From the start, and into the modern period, Portuguese officials ensured the Ets Haim procured rabbinic texts in support of traditional study. In the eighteenth century, as greater numbers of Portuguese Jews settled outside of Amsterdam or abandoned religious conviction, the communal board (*Mahamad*) increased support of advanced students in the *Medras Grande* through regular acquisition of newly published material in and out of Amsterdam.<sup>6</sup> Whereas the *Livraria* initially attended to educational needs, it came to represent the religious ideals upheld by only a small segment of Portuguese society. As such, the story of the Ets Haim Library offers rare insight into the ways that textuality, materiality, and edification intertwined in the development of an early modern Jewish community.

Using shelf lists and, more significantly, annual acquisition records, this paper explores the development of the Ets Haim Library and its impact on Western Sephardic Jewish identity and culture. It addresses three sets of questions: How did the Ets Haim acquire its books, from whom and under what circumstances? What did Portuguese interest in rabbinic books signify about the community's perceived uniqueness, especially considering the public's continued adherence to Iberian languages and culture? Did the Ets Haim Library act merely as a facilitator of intellectual, religious, and cultural activity, or did it embody meaning in its own right? In tackling these issues, I will highlight how Portuguese lay leadership sought to ensure the success of its educational institution, as well as the significance of its rabbinate, through the frequent and widespread purchase of canonical texts and newly published rabbinic scholarship. Furthermore, I will argue that the building of an institutional library drove the development of Portuguese

*Jewish* identity, and that adoption of tradition, paradoxically, played a role in the community's social, intellectual, and cultural modernization.

*Conversos* started arriving in the Dutch Republic at the end of the sixteenth century. In Portugal and Spain they had developed as a distinct group, neither wholly Jewish nor Christian,<sup>7</sup> with some assimilating and seeking acceptance as New Christians and others surreptitiously maintaining tradition and Jewish self-awareness.<sup>8</sup> For those wishing to live openly as Jews, re-Judaizing in northwestern Europe entailed navigating an identity and past that had been severed from living Jewish culture for generations. To facilitate this process, they turned to rabbinic leadership outside their milieu, importing communal rabbis from abroad to fulfill religious functions. Consequently, as we will see, they cultivated an institutional library to train their own scholars and participate in the wider Jewish intellectual world.<sup>9</sup>

Initially consisting of disparate congregations, Portuguese Jewry formed a strong and centralized community within decades of professing their faith in Amsterdam. In 1616, two synagogues cooperated to establish a school to educate their boys in traditional Jewish subjects. Although dispute led to the formation of a new congregation three years later, the city's Sephardic population officially formed a unified community with a single place of worship in 1639. Their merger paved the way for the making of the Ets Haim Yesiba, an expanded educational institution containing several classes and a book repository. In the coming decades, elected officials, including six *parnasim* and one treasurer, oversaw the performance of its faculty and students and (most important for the purposes of this article) the growth of the *Livraria*. The community's cantors (*ḥazanim*) generally served as librarians, working with lay and rabbinic leaders to acquire and distribute texts for schooling and maintain the standing library. In addition to the wherewithal of Ets Haim officials, the collection of the Western Sephardic seminary grew by virtue of its position in one of the world's wealthiest and most connected cities, itself a center of printing that drew authors and editors far and wide.

Almost from their inception, Amsterdam's Portuguese Jews engaged in book collecting for communal or congregational purposes. When the separate synagogue congregations united in 1639, they combined their respective collections, recording a total of 167 books (mostly rabbinic) in a large communal register in 1640.<sup>10</sup> That act set the tone for the next century and a half, as trustees of the Ets Haim ordered the periodic compilation of shelf lists to check the work of their librarians. These inventories are not catalogues, for they primarily detail transliterated titles only, but they nevertheless collectively provide evidence of a growing institutional library.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1**

Shelf lists of the library in the Ets Haim Yesiba.

Year	Number of titles recorded
1640	167
1641	185
1642	210
1672	221
1680	233
1693	242
1694	290
1695	293
1696	293
1697	293
1698	306
1710	382
1764	685

The volumes integrated in 1639 grew to 185 within two years, and to 210 within three. Although the Yesiba officially added fewer than a dozen volumes to its library over the next thirty years, the rate of acquisition for the *Livraria* increased significantly towards the end of the 1690s and into the eighteenth century. In 1710 scribes enumerated 382 books, and five decades later librarians itemized more than three hundred additional titles (Table 1). Who exactly carried out this work, how, and under what circumstances is difficult to determine. Presumably, chief librarians labored with assistants, the latter of whom may have been students in the Ets Haim in need of additional funds. One source indicates that Isaac Hayim Abendana de Britto, a long-standing scholar in the *Medras Grande* who became co-chief rabbi in 1728, reviewed the *Livraria* and its existing catalog in 1719.<sup>12</sup>

The shelf lists offer snapshots of the Yesiba's permanent book collection, but another quite astonishing archival source enlivens what otherwise appears as a fixed collection. Between 1664 and 1805, Portuguese officials documented the Ets Haim's annual purchases of books and ritual items.<sup>13</sup> Administrators regularly collected receipts and, at year's end, recorded information in large registers that also detailed the Yesiba's protocols, annual elections, and student activities.<sup>14</sup> These acquisition lists show that, in any given year, the Ets Haim acquired Bibles, Talmuds, legal codes, prayer books, grammars, responsa (legal rulings), and commentaries on the Bible, Talmud, and legal codes. To varying degrees, entries included information about an imprint, the number of volumes acquired, the cost, the bookseller and possibly binder, and the recipient of the purchase. Studying the docu-

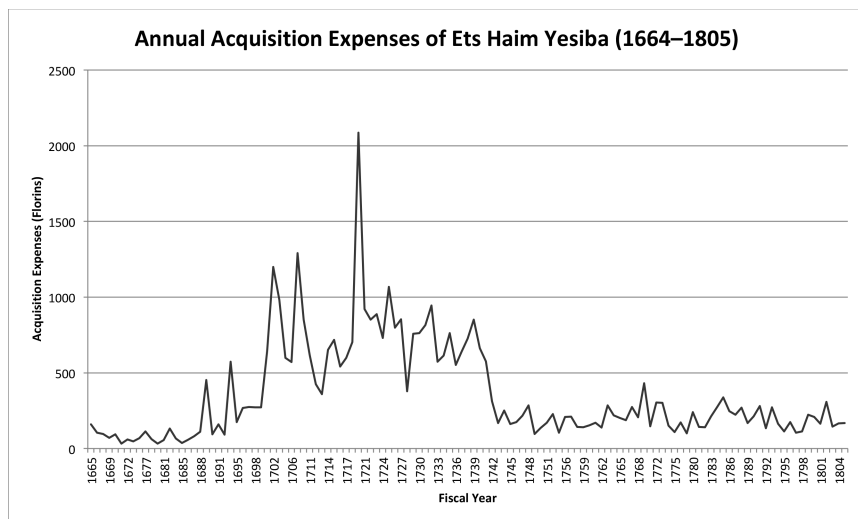




the library by the end of each day and the need for two librarians to be on duty at all times, suggests that frequent users treated the *Livraria* as their own, to the detriment of the collection's integrity.<sup>18</sup>

Still, the *Livraria* persisted as a place of importance. Although subordinate to the task of assisting students and teachers, growing a collection for advanced rabbinic study stood as informal policy at least from the mid-seventeenth century. Ets Haim book collecting seems to have been driven by two goals: one, to supply pupils with texts in pursuit of a well-rounded Jewish education as defined by lay and rabbinic leadership; and two, to support advanced study in the *Medras Grande* and build a rabbinic library sufficiently rich to enable scholars to publish their own work. The majority of the Ets Haim's transactions fell under the purview of the former goal, with numerous line-item entries stating every year that so-and-so sold or delivered so many Pentateuchs, books of Psalms, or Torah commentaries<sup>19</sup> to be used in classes of younger students. The yearly acquisition of many volumes of a given text suggest that students retained their own copies. Many of the remaining entries in the lists, including most cases of an identifiable title, served the scholarly purpose cultivated in the *Medras Grande*. Titles purchased singularly for the *Livraria* were usually advanced rabbinic texts beyond the instructional level of most classes in the Ets Haim, indicating that the general use of the *Livraria* was left to a relatively small number of scholars.

The level of Ets Haim book collecting far surpassed contemporary Jewish institutions elsewhere, though wealthy Jews in Amsterdam and abroad did amass greater collections.<sup>20</sup> At a time when a skilled worker in Amsterdam earned about three hundred florins a year,<sup>21</sup> Ets Haim officials spent tens of thousands of florins on books for students, instructors, classrooms, and what became a formal library (Table 2).<sup>22</sup> They acquired single volumes for huge sums in order to provide its religious intellectual elite with superb resources. For example, in 1738, the Ets Haim spent sixteen florins on a copy of *Ohel Ya'akov*, the responsa of former chief rabbi Jacob Sasportas.<sup>23</sup> That sum, greater than most purchases but not unique, amounted to more than half of a skilled worker's monthly salary.<sup>24</sup> Although most volumes purchased, including prayer books (*maḥzorim*) and Bibles (*ḥumashim*), were issued in large print runs and cost between one and three florins, the sheer number of acquisitions indicated the extent to which Portuguese leadership invested monetarily in their educational mission. Most years, dozens of students received new texts, as well as *tefilin* and *tsitsit*—an indication not only that pupils retained possession of books and religious objects, but that officials did not cut costs when it came to the materiality of the educational



**Table 2.** The Ets Haim's fiscal years followed the Hebrew calendar, with the new year (Rosh Hashanah) and a new period of documentation variously beginning in September or October. Thus, a book acquired in the year 5479 according to a rabbinic reckoning may have been acquired anytime between the autumn of 1718 and the autumn of 1719. For simplicity, the graph lists only the majority Christian year.

system. In addition, the Ets Haim invested in hundreds of supplementary books outside their normal spending. In 1719, for instance, the institution spent more than six hundred florins in a single purchase of 656 Talmud tractates (*gemarot*)! (Figure 3)<sup>25</sup>

Casting a wide net, Ets Haim officials acquired books from numerous sources. The names of Amsterdam's major publishers of Hebrew books, such as Proops, Athias, Templo, and Rofe, appear throughout the acquisition lists, indicating instances in which printers sold books directly to the Ets Haim. Less prominent printers, as well as book dealers, authors, and editors, likewise peddled their wares. The Dutch Christian printer Herman Uytwerf sold an unspecified number of books to the Portuguese seminary on at least one occasion.<sup>26</sup> Abraham Sasportas, who issued *Ohel Ya'akov* as a labor of love for his father and was not otherwise involved in publishing, sold the volume to the Ets Haim the year of its publication. Solomon Levi Maduro made use of his connections within the Yesiba—he had previously attempted to print a prayer book edited by Ets Haim librarian, Isaac Cohen Belinfante<sup>27</sup>—to unload *humashim*, Psalms, and grammars between 1744 and 1755.<sup>28</sup> The astounding transaction of more than six hundred



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Isaac Dias ff 656 gemarot a 19. ff.	623: 4:
33. berachot arubi mura ff Talebot e liron	76: 13:
31. sabat arubi abarbanel ff liron mo	776: 13:
40. kirubin arubi le duma ff billya	39: 9:
40. perachim ff liron p david	6: -
34. soma arubi furo ff ra. billya	28: 16:
40. tchanit Enquadernar 18. gemarot	6: 15:
34. pto arana Enquadernar 40. gemarot quahin	16: 6:
25. hagiga ff hum livro	3:
25. luea amor ppropy 18. sulkan aruch	31:
40. moed catan ao ff. cohen ff 41. liron	51: 12:
40. betra arubi piraal ff gramatica	4: 19:
40. jefamot ff 2. liron de lazema / del jacob.	7: 13:
24. aboda arana ff pautu p escureo nome	5: 18:
656 - cite liron Verdes em 18. Junio o haranda Hebra tempo	1178: 2
amosel fermj	65: 5:
beni moel . . . a:	
beni haye . . . a: 15	
beni jahacob . . . 5:	
mat. topt . . . 4:	
darchi neah . . . 5:	
mon. jab . . . 23:	
torathaim sebatij . . . 4:	
sipte thahamin . . . 9:	
alon bachut . . . 1: 10	
1. Sulkan arug em 4. liron	4: 12: -
1. septe toza Vaiera . . . . .	1: 9: -
1. sedel jerosa . . . . .	2: 10: -
Maaril . . . . .	1: 12: -
ff Enquadernar 18. gemarot	10: 3:
ff 1. Catalogo d. escureo ff alijunt	15: 5:
	1268: 16:
	9: 9: -
	1278: 4

Figure 3. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v. Acquisitions in the Ets Haim Yesiba for the year 5479 (1718–1719). Among other purchases, the page details the procurement of 656 Talmud tractates from Isaac Dias, listing the number of volumes per tractate. Beneath that is a list of titles purchased from Moses Fermj, including one volume for twenty-eight florins.

*gemarot* came through Isaac Dias, who may have been acting on behalf of his brother-in-law, the printer Moses Dias.<sup>29</sup> Ets Haim instructors and advanced students may have also visited print shops themselves to select relevant texts for their classes or studies, returning to the Yesiba with supplies and a receipt for reimbursement.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the *Livraria* received donations, such as the 164 titles bequeathed by Josiau Tartas in 1773.<sup>31</sup> The varying circumstances of these examples suggests that procurement did not occur according to a steady plan with a predetermined budget, but rather evolved according to needs, whims, and possibilities.

Complementing regular and extensive dealings within Amsterdam, the acquisition lists record the purchase of books printed in the major Hebrew publishing centers of central Europe, the Italian peninsula, and the Ottoman Empire. Communal scribes logged few details about acquisitions, making it difficult to determine when librarians worked with local or international dealers, with publishers, or at large markets. Certainly, Ets Haim officials responsible for purchases could have discovered imported imprints in Amsterdam, as print shops frequently stocked books gathered from a variety of sources, including presses from abroad. At the same time, trade networks and familial relationships furthered the Ets Haim's reach. For instance, David Meldola, the son of rabbi Raphael Meldola and a scholar in the *Medras Grande* for several years, acted as mediator between the Yesiba and his brother, Abraham, who published Hebrew books in Livorno.<sup>32</sup> In addition, officials occasionally acquired texts printed outside of Amsterdam in bulk, probably amassed through a series of middlemen in the wide diasporic web of Portuguese Jewry. At least nine books from Istanbul, Salonika, and Venice arrived in 1719;<sup>33</sup> twenty titles mostly printed in central Europe entered the library in 1726;<sup>34</sup> and a handful of volumes issued in Constantinople, Salonika, and Livorno appeared together in 1776.<sup>35</sup> In the record books, scribes indicated a common transactional origin by grouping titles together, either offset from the main list or in a single line-item entry. These and other cases stand out from many dealings with Amsterdam book suppliers and printers, because they explicitly state titles and only occasionally mention vendors. Avoiding the seller's name suggests that acquisitions from abroad occurred piecemeal, the specifics of which were not crucial for institutional memory. Concurrently, unlike with both large and small deals within Amsterdam, scribes were generally careful to note a book's title in these cases, as if each volume acquired in a batch of books from outside the city were especially valued.

In contrast to regular acquisition of the many Bibles, Talmuds, and prayer books for routine instruction and activity in the Yesiba, sporadic purchases

of particular rabbinic texts, usually as lone copies, reflected the Ets Haim's attempt to build its library and support Portuguese scholarship. It seems likely that librarians and rabbis worked together to develop the *Livraria*, with the former conferring with the latter about available purchases and the latter requesting particular titles. The men involved set their sights on titles firmly defined as rabbinic. Despite the diverse intellectual climate in northwestern Europe, in which millenarian and heterodox ideas challenged the status quo from opposite poles and which Western Sephardim both absorbed and impacted, the acquisition lists do not show an intentional mystical, pietistic, or Enlightenment turn in the Yesiba or its library. Rather, they demonstrate an active program to obtain sophisticated but orthodox texts appropriate for advanced halakhic study in the *Medras Grande*. In particular, the *Livraria* sought volumes of responsa and commentaries of various genres by the most prolific and authoritative rabbinic authors of the era.

Print technology facilitated an explosion of new rabbinic texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Ets Haim officials frequently acquired books shortly after publication. Examples from Amsterdam, Berlin, Constantinople, Livorno, Venice, and elsewhere include:

1. *Birkat ha-Zevah* (Amsterdam, 1669), commentary on Talmud by Aaron Samuel Kaidanover, purchased 1670.<sup>36</sup>
2. *Lehem Mishneh* (Amsterdam, 1703), commentary on *Mishneh Torah* by Abraham de Boton, purchased 1704.<sup>37</sup>
3. *Devar Shemuel* (Venice, 1702), responsa by Samuel Aboab, purchased 1704.<sup>38</sup>
4. *Shu"t Rema* (Amsterdam, 1710), responsa by Moses Isserles, purchased 1711.<sup>39</sup>
5. *Bene Haya* (Constantinople, 1717), legal rulings on *Arba'ah Turim* by Hayim ben Menahem Algazi, purchased 1719.<sup>40</sup>
6. *Sha'are Dura* (Jessenitz, 1724), by Isaac ben Meir Dueren, purchased 1726.<sup>41</sup>
7. *Hidushe Halakhot* (Berlin, 1725), by Samuel Edels, purchased 1726.<sup>42</sup>
8. *Dat va-Din* (Constantinople, 1726), homilies by Eliezer ben Nissim Shangi, purchased 1728.<sup>43</sup>
9. *Be'er Hetev* (Amsterdam, 1730), commentary on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, purchased 1731.<sup>44</sup>
10. *Mayim Hayim* (Amsterdam, 1730), novellae by Hezekiah da Silva, purchased 1731.<sup>45</sup>
11. *Peri Hadash* (Amsterdam, 1730), commentary on *Shulhan 'Arukh* by Hezekiah da Silva, purchased 1731.<sup>46</sup>

12. *Mayim Rabim* (Amsterdam, 1737), responsa by Raphael Meldola, purchased 1738.<sup>47</sup>
13. *Ohel Ya'akov* (Amsterdam, 1737), responsa by Jacob Sasportas, purchased 1738.<sup>48</sup>
14. *Makom Shemuel* (Altona, 1738), responsa by Samuel Ashkenazi, purchased 1739.<sup>49</sup>
15. *Divre Yosef* (Livorno, 1742), responsa by Joseph Ergas, purchased 1744.<sup>50</sup>
16. *Aderet Eliyahu* (Livorno, 1742), novellae by Immanuel Hai Ricci, purchased 1744.<sup>51</sup>
17. *Shemesh Tsedakah* (Venice, 1743), responsa by Samson Morpurgo, purchased 1745.<sup>52</sup>
18. *Yam Shel Shelomoh* [*Gitin*] (Berlin, 1761), by Solomon Luria, purchased 1763.<sup>53</sup>
19. *Ture Zahav* [*Hoshen Mishpat*] (Berlin, 1766), by David ben Samuel ha-Levi, purchased 1767.<sup>54</sup>
20. *Pene Yehoshu'a* (Fuerth, 1785), by Jacob Joshua Falk, purchased 1786.<sup>55</sup>

It appears that the Ets Haim generally secured books from Amsterdam the very year of publication, from German cities within a year or two, from Livorno and Venice in approximately two years, and from Constantinople and Salonika in at least two years. The *Livraria's* fame undoubtedly drew the attention of authors, editors, printers, and dealers, both in and outside of the city, who recognized the Yesiba's interest in new rabbinic scholarship.

Of course, the interval between publication and acquisition by the Ets Haim varied. Mordecai ben Judah ha-Levi's *Darkhe No'am* (Venice, 1697),<sup>56</sup> Samuel Shalem's *Melekh Shalem* (Salonika, 1769),<sup>57</sup> and an edition of Joseph Karo's *Bet Yosef* [*Yoreh De'ah*] (Dyrenfurth, 1791)<sup>58</sup> all arrived in the Yesiba the year they were printed. Still others arrived decades or even centuries after publication, such as:

1. *Nefutsot Yehuda* (Venice, 1589), sermons by Judah Moscato, purchased 1674.<sup>59</sup>
2. *Sifte Yeshenim* (Amsterdam, 1680), bibliography of Hebrew books by Sabbatai Bass, purchased 1700.<sup>60</sup>
3. *She'elot u-Teshuvot* of Moses de Trani (Venice, 1629), purchased 1701.<sup>61</sup>
4. [Responsa] of Solomon ben Abraham ha-Kohen (Salonika, 1586; or Venice, 1592; or Salonika, 1594), purchased 1719.<sup>62</sup>
5. *Yafe To'ar Vayera* (Constantinople, 1648), by Samuel ben Isaac Yaffa, purchased 1719.<sup>63</sup>

6. *Sedeh Yehoshua* (Constantinople, 1662), commentary on *Zera'im* by Joseph Raphael Benveniste, purchased 1719.<sup>64</sup>
7. *Ḥeshek Shelomoh* (Venice, 1623), commentary on Proverbs by Solomon ben Tsemah Duran, purchased 1726.<sup>65</sup>
8. *Zekukin de-Nura* (Prague, 1676), commentary on *Tana de-ve Eliyahu* by Samuel ben Moses Heida, purchased 1726.<sup>66</sup>
9. [Babylonian Talmud] (Frankfurt, 1715–1722), purchased 1763.<sup>67</sup>
10. *Mirkevet ha-Mishneh* (Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, 1551), commentary on the *Mishneh Torah*, purchased 1767.<sup>68</sup>
11. *Bene David* (Constantinople, 1738), legal rulings by David Falcon purchased 1776.<sup>69</sup>
12. *Ḥazon Naḥum* (Constantinople, 1748), commentary on *Ke-doshim* by Eliezer ben Jacob Nahum, purchased 1793.<sup>70</sup>

Even more than the acquisition of newly published material, purchasing older books depended on a nexus of availability, funding, collection gaps, and institutional interest. Evidence from a 1719 transaction, in which the Ets Haim obtained three of the volumes listed above, suggests that librarians selected individual books from larger lots. One title, purchased for an astonishing twenty-eight florins, indicates an awareness of rarity and, thereby, an ascription of cultural value (Figure 3).<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, the material value of something deemed “rare” did not overshadow its textual significance. In their aggregate, the acquisition lists rarely record a single title more than once because texts rather than editions mattered to the Yesiba. The willingness to expend significant funds for single volumes, be they recently authored or published decades earlier, reflected a primary interest in alleviating knowledge gaps. Buying a second or third edition of a given work served the same purpose as acquiring a first edition and, despite systematic procurement of innumerable copies of Bibles and prayer books for students, the *Livraria* itself did not regularly receive reprinted texts. As such, the book collection of the Ets Haim functioned more as a rabbinic library of recorded texts than a rabbinic library of recorded editions.

This research highlights the role that book collecting played in the growth of the Ets Haim Yesiba, and in the development of Portuguese rabbinic culture more generally. The acquisition records show that the religious and intellectual pursuits of Western Sephardic scholars coincided with the Ets Haim’s investment in textual resources. The highest expenditures occurred between 1700 and 1740, when officials purchased many more books than

in the decades prior to or following that period. Not coincidentally, between the 1720s and 1750s, the *Medras Grande*'s advanced students and instructors regularly participated in the publishing of rabbinic texts at Amsterdam presses.<sup>72</sup> They authored and edited books, including new manuscripts brought from abroad, and published hundreds of their own halakhic rulings (*pesakim*) in the Hebrew serial *Peri 'Ets Hayim* (Fruit of the Tree of Life) (Figure 4).<sup>73</sup>

The *Livraria*'s 1764 shelf list,<sup>74</sup> atypically recorded in a small manuscript codex rather than within a communal register, indicates that decades of targeted collecting had enabled the Ets Haim to amass a reference library sufficiently deep and broad to facilitate this work.<sup>75</sup> The list recorded a few examples of Bible commentaries,<sup>76</sup> philosophical treatises,<sup>77</sup> and kabbalistic texts,<sup>78</sup> as well as unspecified editions of *Mekhilta*<sup>79</sup> and the Jerusalem Talmud,<sup>80</sup> and at least three editions of the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>81</sup> However, Talmudic novellae, responsa, law codes, and their associated commentaries dominated its shelves. Important medieval works included Moses ben Jacob of Coucy's *Sefer Mitsvot Gadol*,<sup>82</sup> the collection of ritual and civil law *Kol Bo*,<sup>83</sup> the writings of Solomon Ibn Adret (Rashba, c. 1235–c. 1310),<sup>84</sup> and at least two editions of Isaac Alfasi's influential legal code (*Hilkhot ha-Rif*).<sup>85</sup> An entire page of the manuscript records the *Livraria*'s collection of "*Arambamim*"—various editions and volumes of the *Mishneh Torah*, the monumental law code of Maimonides (Rambam, 1138–1204). The prominence of Maimonides, Alfasi, and Adret signify efforts to reclaim halakhic and spiritual aspects of the community's Sephardic heritage, which had been lost in the generations between conversion to Christianity and re-Judaization in Amsterdam.<sup>86</sup> In addition, librarians collected dozens of volumes of responsa, including those of Bezalel Ashkenazi, Moses di Trani, Joseph Trani, Joseph Colon, Jacob Ibn Habib, Moses Galante, Moses Isserles, Jair Bacharach, Jacob Sasportas, Samuel Aboab, Tsevi Ashkenazi, and Raphael Meldola.

The *Livraria*'s vast holdings of responsa in particular reflected the *Medras Grande*'s deliberately broad rabbinic focus. Intensified rabbinicization among elite Portuguese scholars necessitated engagement with the vast and intricate corpus of Ashkenazic legal sources, particularly as centers of Jewish life and scholarship shifted to eastern Europe in the eighteenth century. The old and new titles enumerated above also show appreciation for rabbinic voices emanating from northern Italy, which produced a thriving collaborative halakhic culture during the same period.<sup>87</sup> In their quest to build a superb rabbinic library, the keepers of the Ets Haim overlooked notions





Figure 4. Title page, *Peri 'Ets Hayim* (Fruit of the Tree of Life). Image provided by Ets Haim—Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam (EH 4 F 8). For much of the eighteenth century, the Ets Haim Yesiba annually published twelve or thirteen halakhic essays (*pesakim*) composed by advanced students in the *Medras Grande*.

of the *Nação's* exclusivity and exhibited a level of “library awareness”<sup>88</sup>—consciousness of extant literature—that potentially surpassed most other Jewish communities in early modern Europe.

In fact, as I have argued elsewhere, long-term rabbinicization broadened the community's cultural horizons.<sup>89</sup> From the early seventeenth century, the *Mahamad* had impeded Western Sephardic interaction with Jews of other ethnicities, especially poor Ashkenazim arriving from central and eastern Europe.<sup>90</sup> Rules governed intermarriage, ritual, poor relief, and education, including in the Ets Haim, where Jews of Ashkenazic and Italian origin were officially denied entry at least until 1728.<sup>91</sup> However, initial concern for primary education made way for an interest in training rabbis, necessitating absorption of the breadth and depth of rabbinic literature. Countering the more prominent narrative of secularization as modernization, the *Nação's* official turn towards traditional texts in the Ets Haim led to the internalizing of orthodox ideas, which thereby altered social and intellectual life.

Yet there is some question as to the extent to which the *Livraria* was utilized. Though tasked with producing their own legal rulings in *Peri 'Ets Hayim*, advanced students in the *Medras Grande* rarely cited or engaged with newly published rabbinic sources.<sup>92</sup> They followed a given format; addressed issues surrounding business, kinship, and ritual; and employed Talmud, codes, and occasional responsa in their essays. However, contemporary authoritative halakhic voices are virtually absent from the community's flagship publication. That is not to say Portuguese rabbinic scholars were incapable of excelling outside the confines of the Ets Haim. The textual aptitude and literary output of Moses Zacut in the seventeenth century and David Meldola in the eighteenth century more than equaled most of their contemporaries, although the former became most influential as a kabbalist in Mantua and the latter never earned a place in the rabbinic pantheon. Further research into the activities of the *Medras Grande*, situating Portuguese rabbinic scholarship within the wider study of *halakhah* in the early modern period, may shed light on the discrepancy between collection development and literary output. At present, it seems that Ets Haim officials intended the active use of the *Livraria*, but its consumption depended upon the desire of instructors and ultimately students to apply and shape the newly acquired knowledge.

Indeed, mass procurement of traditional Jewish texts did not compel Portuguese Jewry to wholly turn toward religious conservatism. Decade after decade, from Amsterdam to London to the Caribbean, members of the Western Sephardic diaspora were generally lax in ritual observance.<sup>93</sup>

Miriam Bodian and Yosef Kaplan have stressed that personal religious freedom prevailed in Portuguese society so long as it did not adversely affect the community,<sup>94</sup> and Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld has discovered evidence that Portuguese Jews in need of funds actually pawned sacred texts, including Bibles and prayer books.<sup>95</sup> It is quite possible that hundreds or even thousands of books acquired by the Ets Haim ended their journeys on students' shelves with limited impact. The dissonance between mass collection and distribution of texts and their lack of use or relevance may stem from the *Nação's* chief emphases on mercantilism and the relatively *recent* (rather than medieval) aspects of its Iberian past. After all, out of a Portuguese nation of thousands, relatively few involved themselves in studying, publishing, and utilizing the *Livraria*.<sup>96</sup> Despite encouragement from the *Mahamad*, Western Sephardic rabbinic writings did not (and were not intended to) reach a vast audience; the *pesakim* published annually in *Peri 'Ets Hayim*, for instance, appeared in print runs of only a dozen copies, indicating an extremely limited readership.<sup>97</sup>

Thus it appears that Portuguese Jewry as a whole sustained a traditional educational system as a sort of existential ideal, with intensified religious sentiment and activity embodied in (though not necessarily confined to) the *Medras Grande*. Books, as objects of a religious essence, played a primary role in that process. As the community of former *Conversos* grew, so did the need to define and articulate its Jewishness—and the Ets Haim stood as a testament to that end. The availability of rabbinic texts influenced its educational platform, while the books themselves—studied or merely possessed—provided “new Jews” with a historical identity and the means to own an ideal. For its intellectual elite, the comprehensive rabbinic library linked Portuguese scholars to the larger Jewish world textually, halakhically, and spiritually. The apparent ease with which officials procured material from major Jewish printing centers near and far minimized the geographic and ultimately emotional distance between members of the community and Jews without *Converso* heritage. Likewise, acquiring old or rare imprints provided access to a historical continuum from which the consciousness of Western Sephardim had been severed. Accordingly, book acquisition as a communal project facilitated a sense of shared, multi-tiered, and multi-faceted communal identity.

## Notes

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1. Although “institution” could be broadly defined to include confraternities, cultural trends, or even individuals, I mean that no other library of its kind, built for and by Jews in a communal context over generations, existed in the decentralized, geographically broad, and disparate nature of Jewish settlement in the early modern period.

There is a vast literature on Jewish book collecting and Jewish libraries. For pertinent material on the early modern period, in addition to scholarship cited below, see Menahem Schmelzer, “A Fifteenth-Century Hebrew Book List,” *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 20 (1998): 89–98; Joseph Hacker, “Two Book Lists of Jewish Bankers and Moneylenders from Piedmont at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century” [Hebrew], in *Ta-Shma: Studies in Judaica in Memory of Israel M. Ta-Shma*, ed. Avraham (Rami) Reiner, et al. (Alon Shevut, 2011), 345–389; Yaacob Dweck, “A Hebrew Book List by Leon Modena,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ra’anan Boustan, et al. (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1165–1204; Avriel Bar-Levav, “The Religious Order of Jewish Books: Structuring Hebrew Knowledge in Amsterdam,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 44 (2012): 1–27; and Gershon Hundert, “The Library of the Study Hall of Volozhin, 1762: Some Notes on the Basis of a Newly Discovered Manuscript,” *Jewish History* 14:2 (2000): 225–244.

2. For a history of the Portuguese educational institution, see M. C. Paraira and J. S. Da Silva Rosa, *Gedenkschrift Uitgegeven ter Gelegenheid van het 300-Jarig Bestaan der Onderwijsinrichtingen Talmud Tora en Ets Haïm* (Amsterdam, 1916). For a recent celebration of the still-functioning library, see Emile Schrijver & Heide Warncke, ed., *Ets Haim: 18 Highlights from the Oldest Jewish Library in the World* (Zutphen: WalburgPers, 2016).

3. For the building of the Esnoga, and its place in Western Sephardic culture, see Pieter Vlaardingbroeck, ed., *The Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam* (Zwolle: W Books, 2013).

4. For the history of Portuguese Jewry, see Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); and Daniel Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000).

5. The former included Uriel da Costa, Juan de Prado, and Baruch Spinoza, while the latter included the supporters of Sabbatai Tsevi in the 1660s and Nehemiah Ḥiya Ḥayon in the 1710s.

6. David Sclar, “Books in the Ets Haim Yeshiva: Acquisition, Publishing, and a Community of Scholarship in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam,” *Jewish History* 30:3 (2016): 207–232.

7. On Converso distinction, see Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, ed., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Claude B. Stuczynski, “From ‘Potential’ and ‘Fuzzy’ Jews to ‘Non-Jewish Jews’/‘Jewish Non-Jews’: Conversos Living in Iberia and Early Modern Jewry,” in *Connecting Histories: Jews and Their Others in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Francesca Gregoli and David B. Ruderman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 197–213.



8. For an overview of *Converso* religion, see David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996).

9. On the community's early decades of book collecting, see Benjamin Fisher, "From Boxes and Cabinets to *Bibliotheca*: Building the Jewish Library of the Ex-Convertos in Amsterdam, 1620–1665," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 13 (2019): 43–76.

10. For the list, see Leo Fuks, "Jewish Libraries in Amsterdam in 1640," in *Aspects of Jewish Life in the Netherlands: A Selection from the Writings of Leo Fuks*, ed. Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1995), 38–57. Besides rabbinic texts, the collection included Gedaliah Ibn Yahya's historical chronicle, *Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*, Santes Pagnino's Hebrew grammar in Latin, and Elias Hutter's folio-size Bible, which depicted verb stems in hollow characters.

11. For shelf lists (with year included here in parentheses), see Stadsarchief Amsterdam no. 334, Archief van de Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam (hereafter SAA 334), no. 19, pp. 59–62 (1640); no. 1051, fols. 19–20 (1641), 42v–43v (1642), 52r (1672), 60v (1680), 78r (1693), 87r–88v (1694), 91r–92r (1695), 94v–96r (1696), 98v–100r (1697), 102v–104r (1698), 119v–121r (1710); and Amsterdam, Ets Haim/Montezinos Livraria (hereafter EH), 49 B 15 (1764).

12. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206r.

13. The community's fiscal years followed the Hebrew calendar, with the new year (Rosh Hashanah), and a new period of documentation, beginning in September or October. Thus, a book acquired in the year 5479, according to a rabbinic reckoning, may have been acquired anytime between the autumn of 1718 and the autumn of 1719. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to such a book as having been acquired in 1719 (the record books rarely state the month of a book's acquisition).

14. Separate receipts seem to have been kept until year's end, because each list was clearly written in a single sitting, with every entry appearing in the same hand with the same ink. A small percentage include the month and date of acquisition (for instance, SAA 334, no. 1052, fols. 164r, 168v; no. 1053, pp. 34, 38, 44, 167, 174, 179, 190, 188, 190, 196), indicating purchases were made throughout the year (Figure 2).

15. For impressive decipherment of Hebrew titles transliterated into Spanish, see Eleazar Gutwirth and Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, "Twenty-Six Jewish Libraries from Fifteenth-Century Spain," *The Library* 18 (1996), 27–53.

16. SAA 334, no. 1051, fols. 44r–44v.

17. SAA 334, no. 1051, fol. 78r.

18. For the protocols of the Ets Haim Yesiba, including rules governing the *Livraria*, see SAA 334, no. 1053, pp. 1–22. On the professionalization of the library in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, see David Sclar, "Blending Tradition and Modernity: The Growth of the Ets Haim Library in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Tradition & Modernity in Ets Haim*, ed. David Wertheim (Amsterdam: Menasseh Ben Israel Institute and the University of Amsterdam, 2017), 19–33, 38–39.

19. Most frequently that of Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi; 1040–1105).

20. On private libraries in the Western Sephardic milieu, see Shlomo Berger, *Classical Oratory and the Sephardim of Amsterdam: Rabbi Aguilar's Tratado de la Retórica* (Hilversum: Veloren, 1996), ch. 2; Yosef Kaplan, "The Libraries of Three Sephardi Rabbis in Early Modern Western Europe" [Hebrew], in *Libraries and Book Collections*, ed. Yosef Kaplan and Moshe Sluhovsky (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2006), 225–260; and idem, "Spinoza in the Library of an Early Modern Dutch Sephardic Rabbi," in *La centralita del dubbio. Un progetto di Antonio Rotondo*, ed. Camilla Hermanin and Luisa Simonutti, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2011), 1:639–62. On David Oppenheim, who amassed the era's greatest rabbinic library (which has formed the core of the Judaica collections at the Bodleian Library in Oxford since the early nineteenth century), see Alexander Marx, "The History of David Oppenheimer's Library,"

in *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1944), 238–55; Joshua Z. Teplitsky, “A ‘Prince of the Land of Israel’ in Prague: Jewish Philanthropy, Patronage, and Power in Early Modern Europe and Beyond,” *Jewish History* 29 (2015): 245–71 (esp. 246–49); and idem, *Prince of the Press: How One Collector Built History’s Most Enduring and Remarkable Jewish Library* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

21. Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 68.

22. The words florins and placas, rather than guilders and stuivers, were used exclusively in the community record books cited herein. One florin (or guilder) consisted of twenty placas (or stuivers), making ten placas equal to half a florin. In this article, 2½ florins appears as 2:10, in keeping with the form of the archival sources.

23. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 52.

24. According to the International Institute of Social History, this is equivalent today to one hundred seventy euros <[www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php](http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php)>.

25. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v.

26. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 27. Uytwerf sold the lot for forty florins. His presence in the accession records is not surprising, considering Portuguese acculturation in the Dutch Republic. Future research into Jewish-Christian relations in Amsterdam printing houses may reveal other means of acquisition, such as book auctions. On the latter, see Laura Cruz, “The Secrets of Success: Microinventions and Bookselling in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands,” *Book History* 10 (2007): 1–28.

27. For the prospectus, see University of Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Ros. Ebl. C-120.

28. SAA 334, no. 1053, pp. 71, 82, 103.

29. Levie Bernfeld, 210–211. Isaac Dias worked as a physician and headed the yeshiva of Gemilut Hasadim. Moses Dias (Diaz) is best known for publishing an edition of the Jerusalem Talmud in Amsterdam in 1710.

30. The lists, compiled at the end of the year in the Ets Haim register (see n. 14 above), frequently include entries commencing with an instructor’s name followed by a description of the item(s) and expense. Other entries reference a printer’s name first, and the class of an instructor or the *Livraria* itself in the item’s description, indicating another process of procurement.

31. EH 49 B 15. Appended to a manuscript recording the shelf list compiled in 1764 are five folios itemizing the bequest of eighty-three folio-size titles and eighty-one quarto and octavo titles. Tartas’ impressive rare-book collection, consisting of numerous sixteenth-century Italian and Ottoman Hebrew imprints, may be partially reconstructed in the present Ets Haim/Montezinos Livraria, because the volumes include gilt stamping (the Hebrew phrase “Josiah Tartas [of blessed memory]”) on the front covers.

32. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 71.

33. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v. Acquired from Moses Femy, a Sephardic Jew from Ancona who arrived in Amsterdam before 1694; for the registration of his marriage to Rachel Abendana Perera of Hamburg, see SAA Doop-, Trouw-, en Begrafenisregisters (=DTB), no. 698, p. 242.

34. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 218r.

35. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 204.

36. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 105v. Purchase of one copy for 1:16 florins.

37. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 161r. Purchase of four copies for 10 florins.

38. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 161r. Purchase of one copy for three florins.

39. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 182r. Purchase of one copy for three florins.

40. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v. Purchase of one copy for 4:15 florins.

41. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 218r. Purchase of one copy for 2:15 florins.

42. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 218r. Purchase of one copy for 3:10 florins.



43. SAA 334, no. 1052, p. 221v. Purchase of one copy for two florins.
44. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 30. Purchase of twelve copies for 13:4 florins.
45. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 30. Purchase of (probably) a single copy, with ten copies of *Peri Hadash*, for forty florins.
46. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 30. Purchase of ten copies, with one copy of *Peri Hadash*, for forty florins.
47. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 52. Purchase of the work in four parts—each acquired immediately upon publication—for sixteen florins.
48. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 52. Purchase of the work in four parts—each acquired immediately upon publication—for sixteen florins.
49. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 56. Purchase of one copy for 2:10 florins.
50. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 71. Purchase of one copy, with copies of *Aderet Eliyahu* and an unidentified volume of Solomon Ibn Adret (“Arasba”), for eight florins.
51. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 71. Purchase of one copy, with copies of *Divre Yosef* and an unidentified volume of Solomon Ibn Adret (“Arasba”), for eight florins.
52. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 72. Purchase of one copy for three florins.
53. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 137. Purchase of one copy for three florins.
54. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 153. Purchase of one copy for 3:10 florins.
55. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 263. Purchase of one copy for eight florins.
56. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 146v. Purchase of twelve copies for 7:4 florins.
57. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 167. Purchase of one copy for ten florins.
58. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 284. Purchase of one copy for five florins.
59. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 110v. Purchase of one copy, with copies of *Keli Paz* (Venice, 1657) (Samuel ben Abraham Laniado’s commentary on Isaiah) and Hayim Benveniste’s *Ken-eset ha-Gedolah* (*Orah Hayim*) (Livorno, 1658), for twelve florins.
60. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 153r. Purchase of one copy for 1:10 florins.
61. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 154v. Purchase of one copy for 16:10 florins.
62. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v. Purchase of one copy for twenty-eight florins (as far as I can tell, the highest recorded price that the Ets Haim paid for a single volume). The texts of this volume of responsa were printed without a title page.
63. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v. Purchase of one copy for 1:9 florins. Although the book was also published in Sulzbach in 1688, the context of this sale suggests that the Ets Haim acquired a first edition.
64. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v. Purchase of one copy for 2:10 florins.
65. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 218r. Purchase of one copy for 1:14 florins. A handful of other treatises were published with the same title, including Solomon ben Isaac ha-Levi’s commentary on Isaiah (Salonika, 1600) and a Hebrew–Ladino dictionary of the Bible (Venice, 1617), but the circumstances of this transaction, in a batch of rabbinic books from northern Italy and central Europe, lead me to identify the imprint as such. If I am in error, the title still stands as a rare book acquired from abroad.
66. SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 218r. Purchase of one copy for four florins.
67. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 137. Purchase of twelve-volume Talmud for sixty-six florins.
68. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 153. Purchase of one copy for 3:10 florins. The entry reads “Marqebet amisné Comento de R. Moseh” (“*Mirkevet ha-Mishneh*, commentary on Rabbi Moses [Maimonides]”). The unusual inclusion of a descriptive comment allows for bibliographic identification; without it, the title could refer to other books, including Isaac Abarbanel’s commentary on Torah (Sabbionetta, 1551) and a concordance by Asher Anshil (Cracow, 1534; Cracow, 1584). In 1767, the Ets Haim also acquired five four-volume sets of Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah* for a total of 135 florins (twenty-seven florins per set) (SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 153). Decades earlier, in 1725, officials purchased six sets of “Rabeno Moseh” (i.e. *Mishneh Torah*) for twenty-six florins each from David Mendez da Silva (SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 216v).

69. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 204. Purchase of one copy for 2:10 florins.
70. SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 298. Purchase of two copies, with copies of *Keneset ha-Gedolah*, *Hen Israel*, and *Mirkevet ha-Mishneh*, for 115 florins.
71. In the list of books from Moses Fermy (see n. 33 above), a scribe penned "Moarsah .... 28:" (SAA 334, no. 1052, fol. 206v). This may refer to the responsa of Solomon ben Abraham ha-Kohen (Maharshakh; 1540–1601), volumes of which were published in Salonika in 1586 and 1594, and Venice in 1592.
72. Sclar, "Books in the Ets Haim Yeshiva," 220–26.
73. For synopses of the nearly one thousand *pesakim* published between 1728 and 1808, see Menko Max Hirsch, *Frucht vom Baum des Lebens*, *Ozer peroth Ez Chajim* (Berlin–Antwerp: [Soncino-Gesellschaft der Freunde des Jüdischen Buches], 1936).
74. This was the final shelf list of the period (see n. 11 above). For the next list, compiled in 1813, see SAA 334, no. 1054, pp. 48–57.
75. EH 49 B 15.
76. For instance, commentaries on Prophets by Isaac Abarbanel (EH 49 B 15, folio, nos. 149, 151), and on Torah by Nahmanides (EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 150).
77. Including Maimonides' *Moreh Nevukhim* (EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 118).
78. For instance, *Pardes Rimmonim* (EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 133), *Ginat Egoz* (EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 134), *Sefer Haredim* (EH 49 B 15, quarto, no. 107), and *Zohar* (EH 49 B 15, quarto, no. 108).
79. EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 129.
80. EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 102.
81. EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 1. Editions included Amsterdam 1645, Amsterdam 1716, and Frankfurt 1717.
82. EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 18.
83. EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 52.
84. EH 49 B 15, folio, nos. 23, 54, 236, 257; quarto, nos. 68, 224.
85. EH 49 B 15, folio, no. 148. This single entry lists a Sabbionetta edition of six volumes and an Amsterdam edition of four volumes.
86. The emphasis on Sephardic authors was particularly profound in the early decades of the community's development; see Fisher, "From Boxes and Cabinets to the Bibliotheca".
87. A plethora of printed material from rabbis in Ancona, Ferrara, Mantua, Padua, Venice, and elsewhere, which frequently cited and even included each other's writings, reflected a vibrant culture. Its reception history, or lack thereof, within nineteenth-century Ashkenazic yeshivas has adversely affected historiographical understanding of its existence and impact.
88. On "library awareness," see Avriel Bar-Levav, "Between Library Awareness and the Jewish Republic of Letters" [Hebrew], in *Libraries and Book Collections*, ed. Kaplan and Sluhovsky, 209–20; and idem, "Amsterdam and the Inception of the Jewish Republic of Letters," in *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 225–237.
89. Sclar, "Blending Tradition and Modernity," 32–33.
90. See Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 125–131; Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 78–107; and Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 187–196.
91. Even after the change in admissions policy, German and Polish students officially were not entitled to the monthly stipend (*aspaca*) ordinarily granted (SAA 334, no. 1053, p. 14). There is evidence that scholars of Italian origin studying in the *Medras Grande*, such as the well-known kabbalist and poet, Moses Hayim Luzzatto, did receive an *aspaca*; see David Sclar, "Adaptation and Acceptance: Moses Hayim Luzzatto's Sojourn in Amsterdam among Portuguese Jews," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 40:2 (2016): 335–58 (esp. 338–42).
92. David Sclar, "A Letter's Importance: The Spelling of *Daka(h)* (Deut. 23:2) and the Broadening of Western Sephardic Rabbinic Culture," in *Religious Changes and Cultural Trans-*

*formations in the Early Modern Western Sephardic Communities*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 393–413.

93. On observance, see Swetchinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 213–18. On the implications for communal identity, see Yosef Kaplan, “Wayward New Christians and Stubborn New Jews: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity,” *Jewish History* 8 (1994): 27–41; idem, “Confessionalization, Discipline and Religious Authority in the Early Modern Western Sephardic Diaspora,” in *Religious Movements and Transformations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Yohanan Friedmann (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2016), 83–108.

94. See Yosef Kaplan, *Religion, Politics and Freedom of Conscience: Excommunication in Early Modern Jewish Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel Instituut, 2010); and Miriam Bodian, “‘Liberty of Conscience’ and the Jews in the Dutch Republic,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 6 (2011): 1–9.

95. Tirtsah Levi Bernfeld, “Making Ends Meet in Early Modern Amsterdam: People and Pawns at the Portuguese Jewish Loan Bank” (unpublished paper).

96. Yosef Kaplan has argued that intensified rabbinic activity in the eighteenth century coincided with the community’s shrinking size; see Yosef Kaplan, “Eighteenth-Century Rulings by the Rabbinical Court of Amsterdam’s Community and Their Sociohistorical Significance” [in Hebrew], in *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry*, vol. 5, ed. Jozeph Michman (Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1988), 8–11.

97. Paraira and Da Silva Rosa, *Gedenkschrift*, pp. 41–42.



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