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Biographical Illustrations, Proselytes and their acceptance to Judaism
between the 9th and 19th Centuries

PhD Thesis

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Introduction

Biographical illustrations, Proselytes and their acceptance to Judaism between the 9th and 19th Centuries.

On 24th October, 1977 I received a letter from Rabbi Dr Professor Alexander Scheiber suggesting that I write a paper on proselytes of the Middle Ages. Since that time I have given this much consideration but have never had the opportunity of actually taking up this challenge. One of the points he mentioned was that that there was material available but it had not been properly structured, assembled or fully analysed.

As I was researching the subject the thought arose that whilst I would like to complete this paper I would also wish to continue in my research, looking at intermarriage and its influence on conversion to Judaism, trying to find additional material on the individual proselytes, though this may mean a great deal more research and travelling in spite of today's technology and the influence of the Internet. Further, it would also be interesting to see whether free societies facilitate more conversions to Judaism or whether this remained static. Above all I was interested to see whether in the USA, where there was both freedom of religion and absence of persecution (apart from the persecutions of black people in the 20th Century or "dissenters"),¹ there was any noticeable effect on people wishing to convert to Judaism in the light of the degree of welcome or otherwise. Another aspect of interest to me would be the conversion of Jews to Christianity and particularly as to how many Jews, who became Christians, entered the Church and were active in its anti-Jewish activities or being just passive Christians, such as some censors of Jewish books see ².

I have set out in this Dissertation to bring together the lives and names of the Proselytes. This has proved to be an enormous task as available material is deficient and is scattered across numerous books and sources. Nevertheless I decided to try to do justice to Professor Alexander Scheiber's aspirations and to my own desire to fulfill a dream dating back some 30 years or more.

My Dissertation goes beyond existing research to date as it tells of a number of new examples of individuals who converted between the 9th to 19th Centuries, exploring their lives, their attitudes and those of the people around them, who either rejected them or welcomed them into the bosom of Judaism. There were some who paid with their lives for daring to go against the established Church by converting to Judaism. One of the martyrs

¹ Howard Brotz, *The Black Jews of Harlem; Negro Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Negro Leadership* (Sourcebooks in Negro History; New York: Schocken Books, 1970).

² Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text : The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Jewish Culture and Contexts; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) viii, 314 p.

mentioned frequently is Count Valentin Potocki, a member of an aristocratic rich Polish family who allegedly turned against his own background, eventually to be betrayed and burned at the stake in 1749.

My discovery in Leo Baeck College's Library of a small "booklet" called Count Potocki, the Righteous Convert (Ger Tzedek) and written in Yiddish by J. Kagan, published in Poland by "Drukarna Uniwersalna, Warsaw in and around the early 1920) together with the account by Avrom Karpinovitsh (see below)³ throws a different light on the story. This booklet has not been previously acknowledged, not even by Joseph H.Prouser⁴, who has researched widely on this subject.

Chapter 1

The History and Laws of Conversion-A Short Historical Perspective and the Converts

(i) Definition of Convert/Stranger/Foreigner in the Bible

Biblical Hebrew⁵ and other Scripture references refer to converts or proselytes using the following expressions: נוכרי זר בן נכר אחר אחר "Nochri, Zar, Ben Nechar, Acher Ezrach" as well as "Ger", generally are understood to mean "strangers".

The latter came to be understood as referring to those who became Proselytes i.e. converted to Judaism, although in Genesis 23:4 "I am a stranger and an inhabitant with you. Give me burial property with you, so that I may bury my dead from before me." implies a "stranger" an "alien"-Abraham being a "stranger" and "citizen", Bible using גר and תושב.

There are however instances where the word "Ger" combined with the word תושב "Toshav" inferring, in such a combination to mean someone who is a "citizen" of the land. This is made obvious when we look at Exodus 23:9 and 12 "And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, since you were strangers in the land of Egypt". This implies that "Ger" can also mean "foreigner/stranger" "Six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, in order that your ox and your donkey shall rest, and your maidservant's son and the stranger also".

³ Avram Karpinovitsh, Die Geschichte Fun Vilner Ger-Tsedek Graf Valentin Pototski (Tel Aviv: Vilner Pinkas, 1990).

⁴ Joseph H.Prouser, Noble Soul the Life and Legend of the Vilna Ger Tzedek Count Walenty Potocki (1; NJ USA: First Gorgias Press Edition, 2005).

⁵ Albert S Goldstein, 'Conversion to Judaism in Bible Times', in David Max Eichorn (ed.), Conversion to Judaism (a History and Analysis) (Ktav Publishing House INC., 1965).

In Exodus 12:48 and 49 we read “And should a “Ger” reside with you, he shall make a Passover sacrifice to the Lord. All his males shall be circumcised, and then he may approach to make it, and he will be like the native of the land, but no uncircumcised male may partake of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who resides in your midst.” Surely here it refers to an “alien”, though some translate “Ger” as someone who has converted, but this cannot be correct. According to the commentary by Ibn Ezra, a renown Bible commentator and poet from the Golden Spanish period, the meaning of the word “Ger” is what later was to be understood as “Ger Tzedek” –(the righteous proselyte), but again this cannot be right (see also Numbers 15: 26,29 and 30). “Ger” according to these Biblical verses clearly means “stranger” though who may at some point decide to convert to Judaism.

It would appear that the closest meaning of “Ger” and “Toshav” we can gather from Numbers 35:15 “ לבני ישראל ולגר ולתושב בתוכם ” where a distinction is made between the aforesaid words, so seemingly clarifying their individual and combined meaning for the children of Israel and for the stranger and (not as it is often translated meaning a convert) and resident among them, so that anyone who unintentionally kills a person can flee there”. In this verse “Ger” means “stranger. In combination with the word “Toshav” “Ger” means here a stranger and not a convert.

It is obvious from the texts that “Nochri” means “a foreigner” as in Deuteronomy 17:15 “You shall set a king over you, one whom the Lord your God, chooses; from among your brothers, you shall set a king over yourself; you shall not appoint a foreigner over yourself, one who is not your brother” and in Deuteronomy 29: 21 where again the use of the word “Nochri” denotes a foreigner. The expression “Ben Nechar”- " בן נכר " means a slave who had to be circumcised if he was to be part of a Jewish household see Genesis 17:12: “And at the age of eight days, every male shall be circumcised to you throughout your generations, one that is born in the house, or one that is purchased with money, from any foreigner, who is not from your seed”. Words in Numbers 17:5, " איש זר " denote a stranger- a non-Jew.

If we are to correctly interpret Ezekiel 44:9 “So said the Lord God: No alien of uncircumcised heart or of uncircumcised flesh may enter My Sanctuary... . The words “No alien... כל בן נכר ערל... denotes someone who is a stranger,an alien.

(ii) Definition of a Convert or Stranger/Foreigner in the Talmud

Examining the expression in Talmud “Makot 9a” the words “Ger Toshav” would appear to imply that such a person is treated as a heathen (in regard to the law of refuge); but he is treated differently if he kills a Jew or another stranger/convert. “Ger” was meant to mean a convert to Judaism, see in Masechet Megilah 3a “Rab Jeremiah or some say R. Hiyya b. Abba also said: The Targum of the Pentateuch was composed by Onkelos the proselyte under the guidance of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua..... But did Onkelos the proselyte compose the Targum to the Pentateuch?” where Onkelos was referred to as “Ger” a proselyte. This particular verse points towards someone who would otherwise be called “Ger tzedek” the righteous proselyte. The text discussions gives an opportunity to examine the meaning of the word stranger תושב אלמא גר תושב עובד כוכבים הוא אימא סיפא גר “ Save not for a sojourning — stranger, etc. This implies that the sojourning-stranger is treated as a heathen (in regard to the law of refuge); but then reading the latter clause: “ A sojourning -stranger goes into banishment for (Another) sojourning stranger (in accordance with the law of refuge — “Said R. Kahana: It is not difficult to explain the seeming discrepancy); the last clause provides for a sojourning-stranger who had slain (inadvertently) another sojourning — stranger, whereas the previous clause provides for a sojourning-stranger who had slain an Israelite”. So this expression clearly to a non-Jew.

Further, in Talmud Masechet Avodah Zarah 64b is a discussion as to who is “Ger Toshav” and it would appear, that in respect of annulments of idolaters, that such a person may have been someone intending to convert to Judaism, at any rate someone not being a heathen. The Babylonian Talmud⁶ and see also⁷, not surprisingly, had a very similar approach. For example in Shabbat 31a there is a use of the word “נוכרי” “...”stranger or foreigner” , which is translated as referring to a “heathen” “On another occasion it happened that a certain “heathen” came before Shammai and said to him, ‘Make me a proselyte, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot.’ Thereupon he repulsed him with the builder's cubit which was in his hand. When he went before Hillel, he said to him, ‘What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it”. The Hebrew for “make me a proselyte” was created from the word “גר” -”stranger”-”גייירני”. The aforesaid reference and the meanings as herein explained, as to the use of different words in both

⁶ Isidore Epstein et al., The Soncino Babylonian Talmud (Editorial Benei Noah, 2005).

⁷ Isidore Epstein I. Cohen A. (ed.), Babylonian Talmud 19 vols. (London, 1938–1965).

the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud give a clearer and better understanding of reference in Eichhorn's and Albert S. Goldstein's Book, Chapter 1⁸, "Conversion to Judaism" which appeared to have been "lost in translation" giving a confusing message both in their translation and explanation.

However, whichever words are used, be it in the Hebrew Bible or the Talmud it would seem that it was only following the two exiles, when the true meaning of proselyte, convert, citizen or foreigner became clearer. However it was in that period when yet another expression was used namely, "Ger Tzedek" the true (righteous) stranger and where "Ger Toshav" (citizen) was an additional notation of one who converted to Judaism. There is no doubt that by the time of the Talmud and post Talmudic period the word "Nochri" denoted a stranger while the word "Ger" either on its own or with the use of the word "Tzedek" (righteous) referred to someone who has converted to Judaism.

A discussion in respect of converts would not be complete without referring to the actual Laws of Conversion in the Babylonian Talmud and Shulchan Aruch's Yoreh Deah. The laws of conversion appear in both Hebrew and in translation in Appendix III, namely Yebamot 46a-46b and Yoreh Deah 268:1-7 in particular.

Chapter II

Khazars –a nation which converted to Judaism and Review

Khazars were an important and significant feature in the development of Judaism, because as it showed the welcoming spirit of Judaism accepting many as equals⁹ and refer to also¹⁰. For example, the Jews of England who were expelled in 1292 were readmitted through the intervention of Menashe ben Israel and the good will of Oliver Cromwell. It is my understanding that one of the stipulations of Cromwell was, that Jews would not proselytise; (this may explain the antipathy for centuries in this country towards

⁸ Albert S. Goldstein, 'Conversion to Judaism in Bible Times'.

⁹ Seth Ward, 'Review', The Jewish Quarterly Review, 91/3/42001), 523–25.

¹⁰ Kevin Alan Brook, The Jews of Khazaria (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), Ward, 'Review'.

accepting converts). With regards to England there is a reference on p.9 in¹¹ discouraging proselytism.

There has been a great deal written about the Khazars and their conversion to Judaism¹². Background and some of the findings based on the Cairo Geniza, tell an extraordinary story giving rise to a never ending discussion with regard to this unusual phenomenon.

The Khazars¹³, were a national group of general Turkic origin, when they were taken over by the dynasty of Ashihna. They formed an independent and sovereign nation in Eastern Europe active between the seventh and tenth centuries, circa 630C.E. to 970 C.E. During part of this time the leading Khazars professed Judaism. There is also an idea that the Khazars may have belonged to the empire of the Huns (fifth century C.E.). In the time of Procopius (sixth century) the region immediately north of the Caucasus was held by the Sabirs, who may have been the Khazars as in Turkish they are called Sabirs. Whilst there is historic data about this nation its precise racial origin is unknown. Were there any that became "the Jews of Russia"¹⁴ It is fascinating to note the theory of Arthur Koestler (Jewish writer and philosopher originating from Hungary and who became a British citizen) who in his book¹⁵ refutes the idea of a Jewish "race." He says that most Jews of the contemporary world did not come from Palestine and are not even of Semitic origin. His research appears to show that most Jews originated in what was the Soviet Union (now Russia), and that a group from there became Jews through conversion, on the orders of their king. Koestler writes "The bulk of modern Jewry is not of Palestinian, but of Caucasian origin.... Their ancestors came not from the Jordan but from the Volga, not from Canaan but from the Caucasus." And he stresses: "The mainstream of Jewish migrations did not flow from the Mediterranean across France and Germany to the east and then back again. The stream moved in a consistently western direction, from the Caucasus, from the Ukraine into Poland and thence into Central Europe."

¹¹ Francis Henry Goldsmid, Two Letters in Answer to the Objections Urged against Mr. Grant's Bill for the Relief of Jews : With an Appendix (London, 1830).

¹² J. Brutzkus, 'The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev', Slavonic and East European Review (22, 1944), 108-24.

¹³ D.M.Dunlop, The History of Jewish Khazars (Princeton N.J., 1954).

¹⁴ Louis Greenberg, 'The Jews in Russia', (updated 1944) <<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/2105668.html> >.

¹⁵ Arthur Koestler, The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage (1976).

Fitzroy Maclean writes in the *New York Times* of 29th August 1976: "Mr. Koestler's book is as readable as it is thought-provoking. Nothing could be more stimulating than the skill, elegance and erudition with which he marshals his facts and develops his theories. It is filled, too, with unusual and pleasing scraps of knowledge. For my part I shall always be grateful to him for at last elucidating to my satisfaction the provenance of that improbable tribe, the Dagh Chufuty or Mountain Jews of Daghestan, who, I am glad to be able to report, were, only this summer, reasonably well and still living in Daghestan. Whilst Edward Grossman writes in the December 1976 *Commentary Magazine* : "Koestler's methods make it impossible to perceive *The Thirteenth Tribe* as a scholarly work, and one casts around for another genre to which it might be assigned. If there were any doubts, they are dispelled on reading the following lines in Dunlop, which Koestler missed, although elsewhere he quotes Dunlop's study copiously and defers to his authority. The theory that the modern Jews of Eastern Europe, or more particularly those in Poland, are the descendants of the medieval Khazars . . . can be dealt with very shortly, because there is little evidence which bears directly upon it, and it unavoidably retains the character of a mere assumption. . . . To speak of the Jews of Eastern Europe as descendants of the Khazars seems to involve Ashkenazim in general . . . and would be to go much beyond what our imperfect records allow".

According to The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, in the 16th century Jews numbered about one million. Koestler quotes scholars as documenting that "the majority of those who professed the Judaic faith were Khazars." Koestler, who after the Second World War became a British citizen, and whose most famous book, *Darkness at Noon*, was translated into 33 languages, has one main thesis: the bulk of Eastern Jewry -and hence of world Jewry is of Khazar-Turkish, rather than Semitic, origin. It is also quite fascinating to note that Koestler also says that after the destruction of their empire (in the 12th or 13th century), the Jewish Khazars migrated into those regions of Eastern Europe, mainly Russia and Poland, where, at the dawn of the modern age, the greatest concentrations of Jews were found. It is "well documented," Koestler writes, that the numerically and socially dominant element in the Jewish population of Hungary during the Middle Ages was of Khazar origin. An Israeli scholar, A.N. Poliak, a Tel Aviv University professor of medieval Jewish history, quoted by Koestler, states that the descendants of Khazar Jews, "those who stayed where they were (in Khazaria), those who emigrated to the United States and to other countries, and those who went to Israel - constitute now the large majority of world Jewry." In the second part of *The Khazar Empire and its Heritage* he speculates about the ultimate faith of the Khazars and their impact on the racial composition and the social heritage of modern Jewry.

Norman Golb in his pamphlet¹⁶ and¹⁷ summarily dismisses these ideas and ascribes much greater weight to the correspondence between Hisdai ibn Shaprut, a well-known personality of Muslim Spain in the tenth century, and Joseph, king of the Khazars. M. I. Artamonov (*Istoriya Khazar*, 12) includes the Cambridge Document and the Hisdai letter together with the Reply of Joseph in the Khazar correspondence. The Reply is available in a Long Version and a Short Version. But again we must note that the correspondence involves serious critical difficulties, and its authenticity has been debated. However again the Judah ha Levi "Kuzari"¹⁸ may give us a clue as to the authenticity of the events that led to the conversion of Khazars. The tone of the Letter of Hisdai is mostly one of enquiry, and it invites an answer to questions which range over a variety of topics: Is there a Jewish kingdom anywhere on earth? How did the Jews come to Khazaria? In what way did the conversion of the Khazars take place? Where does the king live? To what tribe does he belong? What is his method of procession to his place of worship? Does war abrogate the Sabbath? Has the Khazar king any information about the possible end of the world? S. P. Tolstoy envisages a Khazaria united with Khwarizm under one ruler to form a single state, a view for which the evidence is slight. It must be allowed, however, that at one time Khazar rule extended westward a long way beyond the Crimea-Caucasus-Volga region which for the Greek and Arabic sources is Khazaria. The Russian *Primary Chronicle*¹⁹ reports that at an unspecified date the Polians south of the Middle Dnieper paid tribute to the Khazars of a sword per hearth, and that in 859 C.E. the Polians, Severians, and Viaticians paid them a white squirrel skin per hearth (trans. Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, 58, 59). Later these payments in kind ceased to be made, being evidently replaced by money payments; e.g., the Radimichians paid the Khazars a shilling or dirham a piece until 885 C.E., according to the Chronicle (61), and the Viaticians until 964, the same per plowshare (*ibid.*, 84).

The practice of Judaism in Khazaria is demonstrated by the documents in the Cairo Genizah collection of an autograph letter (T-S 12.122) of the Khazarian Jewish Community of Kiev, the town which is in the westernmost part of the Khazar State. This letter was probably written around 930 C.E. and it refers to a captive who was redeemed by the Jewish community of Kiev.

¹⁶ Norman Golb, 'Jewish Proselytism—a Phenomenon in the Religious History of Early Medieval Europe', paper given at The Tenth Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture, University of Cincinnati, 3rd March 1987. p. 41ff 1987

¹⁷ Vera Basch Moreen, 'Review: Golb–Pritsak's "Khazarian Documents"', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 73/4(1983), 404–05.

¹⁸ Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari (Kitab Al Khazari) : An Argument for the Faith of Israel* (New York, 1971).

¹⁹ 'Chronicle of Nestor, *Povest Vremennykh Let*', *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 1953), 58–59.

According to Joseph's letter, a descendent of Bulan named Obadiah later on "renewed the kingship and strengthened the religion as was fit and proper; he built synagogues and schools, brought together Israelite scholars, and gave them silver and gold. Apart from a Longer and Shorter version of a letter, there is further evidence from the work Kol Mevasser of Isaac Akrish in or after 1577, and moreover there are two letters published by the younger Buxtorf in his edition of the book Cosri (Kuzari) of Judah Halevi in 1660. Although it is not known what manuscript sources were used by Isaac Akrish. Buxtorf depended on Kol Mevasser. The only known manuscript of the Correspondence as a whole, containing the Letter of Hisdai and the Reply of Joseph is in the library of Christ Church, Oxford. This manuscript is very similar to the printed text, which, it has been suggested, is a transcript. There appear to be no special grounds for this opinion, though the manuscript, which is undated, has no claims to great antiquity. Nothing is sure about its provenance, but it is thought to have belonged originally to the celebrated Dr. Fell (1625-1686)²⁰.

A longer version of the Reply of Joseph was published by A. Harkavy in 1874,²¹ from a manuscript of the Second Firkovich Collection in the Leningrad Public Library. The Long Version bears no indication of any alterations or additions, and is supposed to date from the 13th century. Harkavy, in spite of his very critical attitude to Firkovich, regarded it as the undoubted original of the Short Version, though some findings of Firkovich e.g. regarding some epitaphs were found to be forgeries and thus discredited see pages 110 and 111 of²². See extensive symposium on the history of the Khazars in a collection published in 2007²³. This is a fascinating academic collection and it seems to bring the world up to date in respect of the Khazars, their history, origins and extent of their Judaism.

The conversion of the Khazars was known to the monk Druthmar of Aquitaine, writing in Westphalia in 864: "At the present time we know of no nation under the heavens where Christians do not live. For Christians are even found in the lands of Gog and Magog -- who are a Hunnic race and are called Gazari (Khazars)... circumcized and observing all the laws of Judaism. The Bulgars, however, who are of the same seven tribes as the Khazars,

²⁰ Stanley Morison and John Fell, Notes Towards a Specimen of the Ancient Typographical Materials Principally Collected and Bequeathed to the University of Oxford by Dr. John Fell D. 1686 (Oxford: University Press], 1953).

²¹ A Harkavy, From a Manuscript of the Second Firkovich Collection (Leningrad (St Petersburg) Public Library, 1874).

²² Haggai Ben-Shammai and András Róna-Tas Golden Peter B (ed.), The World of the Khazars : New Perspectives (Leiden ; Boston Brill

2007).

²³ Ibid.

are now becoming baptized into Christianity."²⁴. It is important to note, that the monk was a historical figure. His name was Christian of Stavelot. He is sometimes (possibly incorrectly) referred to as Christian Druthmar or Druthmar of Aquitaine. Christian was a noted grammarian, a biblical commentator, and eschatologist. He was born in Aquitaine in the early ninth century CE, and became a monk at the Benedictine monastery. At some point in the early to mid-ninth century he was sent to the Abbey of Stavelot-Malmedy in Liege to teach Bible to the monks there. It is unknown whether he died at Stavelot, or returned to Corbie or was ultimately sent elsewhere. Christian was called the "Philologist" because of his extensive knowledge of Greek grammar and his ability to comment upon the Gospels in their original Greek. He also likely had some understanding of Hebrew. The traditional date given for the composition of this work is 864; There were others who wrote about the Khazars such as Ahmad ibn Fadlan, in his travelogue (c. 922): "The Khazars and their king are all Jews." Ibn al-Faqih (c. 930): "All of the Khazars are Jews. But they have been Judaized recently" Abd al-Jabbar ibn Muhammad al-Hamdani, in *The Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Muhammad* (c. 1009-1010): "One of the Jews undertook the conversion of the Khazars, who are composed of many peoples, and they were converted by him and joined his religion. This happened recently in the days of the Abbasids...." For, this was a man who came single-handedly to a king of great rank and to a very spirited people, and they were converted by him without any recourse to violence and the sword. And they took upon themselves the difficult obligations enjoined by the law of the Torah, such as circumcision, the ritual ablutions, washing after a discharge of the semen, the prohibition of work on the Sabbath and during the feasts, the prohibition of eating the flesh of forbidden animals according to this religion, and so on".

"A note by Abraham ibn Daud of Toledo, Spain, in *The Book of Tradition* (1161): "You will find the communities of Israel spread abroad... as far as Dailam and the river Itil where live Khazar peoples who became proselytes. Ibn-al-Athir tells how in the days of Harun, the emperor of Byzantium forced the Jews to emigrate. They came to the Khazar country, where they found an intelligent but untutored race and offered them their religion. The inhabitants found it better than their own and accepted it. Furthermore there were many others who wrote about the Khazars -Elchanan the Merchant a.k.a. Eldad the Danite - 9th century, Anonymous author of the *Schechter Letter* - 10th century, Rabbi Yehuda al-Barseloni - 12th century, Rabbi Abraham ibn Daud - 12th century, Rabbi Moses ben Nahman a.k.a. Nahmanides - 13th century, Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov - 15th century, Rabbi Gedaliah - 16th century, Yitzhak Aqrish - 16th century, Rabbi Yehuda Moscato - 16th century.

This is an important website because it gives detailed information about the extent of literature available in respect of the Khazars.

²⁴ Mortimer Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (London: Bell, 1954).

In conclusion it is worth noting that:

- (i) Koestler's theories have been supported by some but rejected by others, particularly with regard to his theory of the origins of Polish Jewry.
- (ii) Andras Rona-Tas assertion in²⁵ p.276 in which he states that because of linguistic similarities Hungarian and Khazars's lives are interrelated and that the "Hungarian is the most extensive source for the language of Khazars and the Bulgars" see also²⁶ that (iii) Koestler's theory was also used to propagate anti-Semitism by e.g. V.Ushkuinik as mentioned in²⁷ and see also Ushkuinik²⁸.
- (iii) There is an extensive body of literature written about the Khazars and the most up to-date Bibliography in respect thereof was compiled by Kevin Alan Brook who has last updated the Website on the 26th February 2012.²⁹

Chapter III Converts to Judaism

i) Bodo (Eleazar) the Cleric (814-840)

In 839 the French Church was "shocked" to its core by the conversion of a learned cleric, the Deacon Bodo. The event took place during the reign of Louis the Pious the son of Charlemagne see³⁰ and ³¹. The story commences with the permission from the Empress or the Emperor, to go on pilgrimage to Rome. But instead, together with his nephew, he made his way to Saragossa where he changed his name to Eleazar, and openly practiced his Judaism, ultimately marrying a Jewish woman³². There is also a suggestion that he

²⁵ Andras Rona-Tas, Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages : An Introduction to Early Hungarian History (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 1999).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Peter B Golden (ed.), The World of the Khazars : New Perspectives.

²⁸ V. Ushkuinik, Paradoxie Der Geschichte : Ursprung Des Holocaust (Soderbrerup: Luhe-Verlag, 1986).

²⁹ Kevin Alan Brook, 'Bibliography of Khazar Studies', (updated 26/02/2012) <www.khazaria.com/khazar.biblio/toc.html>, accessed 01/03/2012.

³⁰ Jacob Rader Marcus, The Jew in the Medieval World : A Source Book, 315-1791 (Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew congregations, 1938).

³¹ Maurice H. Harris, History of the Mediaeval Jews : From the Moslem Conquest of Spain to the Discovery of America... By Maurice H. Harris (New York: the author (printed by P. Cowen), 1907).page 51

³² Cecil Roth, Personalities and Events in Jewish History (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953).page 150The Church and the Jews in the XIII Century

travelled to Rome, where he became disappointed by what he saw, which may have led him to choose conversion.

Alemann Bodo came from a noble family. He was a court chaplan of the Frankish Emperor Louis I the Pious, the Good-natured, the so- called Le Debonnaire. At the time it was customary to make pilgrimage to Rome to receive a blessing from the Pope. Bodo was apparently given valuable presents from his Masters to take to Rome. There is no record whether he actually reached Rome but we know that he did not return to the French Court but instead may have gone to Saragossa in Spain, where he might have converted to Judaism and then openly espoused it causing considerable disturbance. Both Roth and Eichhorn assume that Bodo never reached Rome.³³ However Caravaca Millan Andres claims that Bodo reached the Holy City of Rome.³⁴

It is noteworthy that neither Roth nor Eichhorn mention the book by Alvaro, which goes into great detail about this "controversial" conversion to Judaism. The book by Andres³⁵ examines the writings of Alvaro Paulo Alvarado Cordubense, better known as Alvaro Albar of Cordoba, (Cordova, 800? - 861), who was a biblical scholar, theologian and poet, educated in the academic environment of the Abbey of Speraindeo, where he wrote the life of Eulogio de Cordova. He was canonised after his death and martyrdom. One of Alvaro's most important works was the *Epistolario*, consisting of twenty letters, of which twelve were written by Paulo Alvarado to different audiences and seven were sent by some of these; others are letters to a Bishop Eulogio described as "in our time a smooth and abundant source of wisdom." He also wrote *Confessio Alvari; Treaties of moral teachings, Liber Scintillarum* and *Indiculus luminosus* (854), and numerous verses in Latin. The book by Paulo Alvarado testifies to the survival of Catholic thought as revealed before the advance of Muslim society.

The claim with regard to Bodo is that in Rome, under someone's influence he became a Jew, was circumcised, let his beard grow and was wearing military uniform. It was said, that his atrocious behaviour led him to marry a Jewess, and also apparently persuaded his nephew who went with him to Rome, to convert and then they allegedly both went to Saragossa, from where Bodo went to Cordova, the capital of the Moorish kingdom of Spain. He then promptly ingratiated himself with the King, and again tried to persuade them to become either Muslims or Jews. It was no wonder that the Christians disliked him, trying to counter his influence.

³³David Max Eichorn, *Conversion to Judaism (a History and Analysis)* (Ktav Publishing House INC., 1965). Page 73

³⁴ Caravaca Millan Andres, *Alvaro Paulo Cordobes, Su Representacione En La Historia De La Cultura Y Controversia Con Bodo Eleazoro* (Cordoba, 1909). pp 224–227

³⁵ Ibid.

Andres's book also confirms that Alvaro who wrote four letters to Bodo was of Jewish descent. From the tenor of the correspondence there is very little doubt that Alvaro was a Jewish convert to Christianity. Alvaro was trying to convince him of his erroneous ways. Bodo has replied but unfortunately the Christian copyists appeared to have been so shocked what they read, that we can find only small fragments of the original text. It is also important to note that no reason is given why Alvaro wrote those letters.³⁶,but it may have been Alvaro's zealous missionary journey attempting to persuade Bodo to return to Christianity.

There have been numerous debates between Jews and Christians in some of which Christianity was represented by a convert to Judaism as the play *The Dispute*^{37 38 39} and⁴⁰.

i/a) The Debate between Alvaro and Bodo

Alvaro writes: "To my beloved Eleazar....Besides, I ask you not to look down on this offering of my love, by which I long to win you in the Lord" But Alvaro's last letter was not so kindly and was in some way or another in the spirit of a traditional medieval, religious disputation, "Do not call us Mad Dogs, but recognise yourself as a snarling fox".

Alvaro was attacking Bodo's outlook and his views of the Messiah. Ironically, Alvaro as a Jew had also attacked Bodo's knowledge of Hebrew. He praised, indeed congratulated himself, on his knowledge of the Hebrew language over Bodo's, though exalting the virtues of Latin over Hebrew. A discussion ensued regarding the word "Alma" Virgin appearing in Isaiah 7:14. Alvaro's first letter is chiefly concerned with showing that according to the chronology of events of the Hebrew Bible, the true Messiah was to come at the time of Jesus. The chronology of the Septuagint differs but that is not the basis of the dispute. It is fascinating to see that form used in the argument was much clearer than it was in the discussion between Wecelin and Henry (see later, regarding an another convert to Judaism).

³⁶ Letters were printed in *Espana Sagrada* Epp xiv,xvi,xviii,xix together with Eleazar's replies Epp.xv,xvii,xx. See also life of Paul Albar of Cordoba-Studies on His Life and Writings Carleton M Sage-Raymond Gray, *Church History* (14: Cambridge University Press for US, March 1945). pp73-74

³⁷ Hyam Maccoby, *The Disputation* (London: Calder, 2001).

³⁸ TV Production on Channel Four *The Disputation a Theological Debate between Christians and Jews* (1986) (I).

³⁹ Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982).

⁴⁰ Gilbertus, Gilbertus, and Karl Werner Wilhelm, *Disputatio Iudaei Et Christiani ; Disputatio Christiani Cum Gentili De Fide Christi : Religionsgesprache Mit Einem Juden Und Einem Heiden : Lateinisch-Deutsch* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005).

Alvaro referring to Genesis 49:10 claimed, that the royal line of Judah will come to an end, and therefore what is written in Hosea 3:4 must be referring to the killing of Jesus. Alvaro thought that this verse was from the time of Daniel, that is, after and not before the Exile to Babylon. In Daniel 9:22 we read that after “Christ” was killed the Jewish people were to be laid waste in the first year of Vespasian, the year of the second exile “the rest of the number of the weeks...was filled up”, that is to say that the Exile came in two phases and the “prophecy” in Daniel actually has been fulfilled.

In the next letter (Ep.xvi) Alvaro blames Bodo for thinking that the time of the Exile was completed by the seventy years in Babylonian captivity (actually 50, but he may not have known). In other words he suggested that this was the ultimate period of Exile, that the Exile period has not passed and that there was little prospect of Jews returning to their homeland, the Promised Land. He recommended to Bodo to read Jerome, whom he dared to attack in spite of his own immorality. He then also pointed out that the translation of the word “Alma” in Isaiah 7:14 meant “virgin” and as such, has been so translated not only by Jerome but also in the Septuagint. There followed yet another attack, saying the Jews have mutilated the Canon, cutting out the *Wisdom of Solomon* because of words in 12:18-20, which deal with the punishment, presumably of the Jews for transgressing and not accepting Jesus, they having falsified the Hebrew text, using in Deuteronomy 21:23 the words “abomination to God” (the Hebrew actually says “it is a curse to God... (“to let a body hang on the tree all night and hence should be buried as quickly as possible). This accusation clearly implies that Christianity, or Christian Theologians of the time, believed that the Bible, as early as in the book of Deuteronomy, predicted the death of Jesus and indeed talked about but having falsified the words of the Torah so as to give credence to the Christian belief about Jesus. Bodo was made to feel guilty about leaving Christianity as it was the Jews as Alvaro claimed, who falsified the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 21:23 re the “accursed God” regarding the hanging of a man and burying him immediately the same day. (Here the writer was clearly referring to Jesus and his resurrection, though this verse has nothing to do with what happened many years later). At the end of his letter Alvaro writes: “You write at the end ‘Farewell, so hold your Jesus fast, here and for ever, hear them fast and for ever, hear them my short reply-Amen and again Amen and a third time Amen. In heaven Amen and in the earth Amen, let not the Angels only but all the people say, Even so, so be it”. Alvaro attacked Bodo for his immorality, presumably based on his marriage and his sexual relationship with a woman.

The fourth-century Church fathers Ambrose and Jerome pointed out that the passage in the First Letter of Paul to Timothy did not conflict with the discipline they knew, whereby a married man who became a bishop was to abstain from sexual relations and not marry again: "He speaks of having children, not of begetting them, or marrying again"; "He does not say: Let a bishop be chosen who marries one wife and begets children; but who marries one wife, and has his children in subjection and well disciplined. You surely admit that he is no bishop who during his episcopate begets children. The reverse is the case – if

he be discovered, he will not be bound by the ordinary obligations of a husband, but will be condemned as an adulterer."

This is very curious and at the same time exciting, because celibacy was in fact introduced much later, under Pope Gregory VII (1073-85) and codified by the 1st Lateran Council⁴¹ in 1123 under Pope Callistus II (1119-24)⁴² and see also⁴³. Alvaro seemed to have condemned Bodo well in advance of the prohibition of marriage for clerics, showing that the battle regarding celibacy and morality being fought well before the 12th Century.

Bodo's second letter appears to have been really attacking Alvaro and reference to blasphemy in Alvaro's third letter (Ep.XVII). They also discussed Genesis 1:26 (dealing with the creation of man, who would dominate the world). The use of symbolism is revealing as we read "As the veil over the face of Moses signifies your blind intellect so do you put a silk veil over the Heptateuch (The Torah scroll as originally a wrapping of fine silk was spread along the full length of the parchment, to protect it from wear and tear, particularly because it is more easily damaged when rolled up). This custom is still practiced in some synagogues today, such as in my own at Westminster and also at the leading reform synagogue established in 1840, West London Synagogue of British Jews. Both the aforesaid Synagogues have Sephardi backgrounds.

Alvaro challenges Bodo as to who has the greater right to claim the name Israelite. Alvaro states his origins and admits to having been a Jew, but attacks Bodo's acquired faith, saying to him "You who have turned from idolatry to the worship of God-(presumably Bodo's origins were heathen) and are not a Jew by race but in faith only or I (namely Alvaro) who is Hebrew both in faith and race". Alvaro gives a reason why he does not call himself a Jew quoting Isaiah 62:2 "And the nations shall see thy triumph, And all kings thy glory; And thou shall be called by a new name.....". Hence he is now a new person, reborn and Christian and not a Jew. Indeed dealing with giving himself a new name namely "Alvaro", he explains this by again quoting Isaiah, "giving a new name".

He is also quoting Isaiah 43:18 "Do not remember the former things, neither consider the things of old" thus again being reborn, renewed as a Christian, hence not keeping the laws of the Jews. He also discusses various Hebrew translations of Isaiah 49:5 dealing with the words "not or to him" and then argues for the doctrine of Trinity using Psalm 33:6 "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (providing an argument about logos, the word).

⁴¹ 'Catholic Encyclopedia: First Lateran Council (1123)', (updated uuuu) <<http://www.knight.org/advent/cathen/09016b.htm> >.

⁴² Kelvin Meek, 'Monks and Pastoral Care in the Late Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries : With Special Reference to the First Lateran Council and Its Impact Upon England', 1996).

⁴³ 'All Catholic Church Ecumenical Councils – All the Decrees'.

Bodo has evidently uttered some coarse remarks about the birth of Jesus, and Alvaro reminds him that, after all, our bodies were made by God. The very sufferings and death of Jesus are trophies of glory.

We should also note an exciting liberal attitude of the court of Louis the Good-natured, as Alvaro mentions to Bodo that there were fourteen men of different religions at Louis's court. Nevertheless the liberal attitude as expressed by Alvaro does not extend to Bodo as Alvaro keeps attacking him, he says he stated that his change of faith was due to the Prophets but ,says Alvaro, "the true reason is the women who are very moths, corrupting body and soul. You had better have become a Muslim, for then you could have had several wives" (Please note my prior comments regarding Celibacy).

In his religious treatise and argument Alvaro also claims that the promise in II Samuel 7:12 could not have been "fulfilled in King Solomon, for it speaks of a ruler born after David's death, and Solomon was born before his death" (see the writings of Peter Alphonsi ⁴⁴, who was a convert from Judaism to Christianity, born in the 11th Century in Muslim Spain, embraced Christianity and baptised at Huesca on St Peter's Day on 29th June 1106 and in honour of the saint and of his royal patron and godfather he took the name of Petrus Alfonsi (Alfonso's Peter) see ⁴⁵ ⁴⁶ and ⁴⁷).

Alvaro also brings texts attempting to show why the Jewish people are not acceptable to God and that as this state of things will never cease, there is no use in praying that it may. "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me; for I will not hear thee. (Jeremiah, 7:16). To have Jesus is the only way to peace".

We do not know, though we may assume, that the letters had no influence on Bodo but they serve as examples showing ancient ways of argumentation. It also shows that Bodo was an intellectual, who converted as a result of thought, not mentally disturbed but genuinely pursuing his beliefs and his quest.

⁴⁴ Joseph F. O'Callaghan and John Tolan, 'Review of Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers', *Catholic Historical Review*, 82/11996), 78–79.

⁴⁵ Barbara Phyllis Hurwitz, 'Fidei Causa Et Tui Amore : The Role of Petrus Alphonsi's Dialogues in the History of Jewish-Christian Debate', 1985).

⁴⁶ H. Reynolds Stone, Joseph Ramon Jones, and John Esten Keller, 'Review of the Scholar's Guide. A Translation of the Twelfth-Century "Disciplina Clericalis" Of Pedro Alfonso', *Hispania*, 55/11972), 176.

⁴⁷ Alfonsi Petrus and Irvn Michael Resnick, *Dialogue against the Jews* (Fathers of the Church, V. 8; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

Golb in 1987 writes in⁴⁸ that Bodo was a literate cleric who came from a prominent European Christian family and after the conversion was active in combatting Christianity. Bodo is quoted as saying that he personally witnessed an argument between fourteen clerics at the Frankish court, each of whom had a different point of view about the theological matter under debate. After all Bodo himself, while a Deacon at Court, had followed the practice of others in having several sexual encounters. Was he leaving Christianity and his profession because of this?-No as it would appear that he was a thoughtful and wise person whose conversion was out of genuine belief and love of Judaism. Perhaps further research of the Geniza materials will show this, noting also⁴⁹.

ii) Obadiah the Norman Proselyte-(b. 1070)

Many scholars including Alexander Scheiber, J Mann, S. D. Goiten and Joshua Prawer, have written about this famous and remarkable Proselyte (see Bibliography) and therefore I shall deal with him only briefly. His life is understood from the Geniza fragments. Many articles and books mention Obadiah who was born Johannes the son of Dreux.

The Scroll of Obadiah is a good example of a genre reflecting an autobiography produced in the Middle Ages. Obadiah lived in the 11th century CE and though the family was not part of the aristocracy or clergy Obadiah was a highly educated man with great musical talent. Alexander Scheiber ("Obadja Norman Prozelyta-" Az Elso Heber Dallam Lejegyzoje") refers to him, quoting E. Werner "Thus far, it is the only Hebrew manuscript containing neumes that has been discovered, and thus far it is the oldest notated music manuscript of Judaism....The manuscript...furnished with neumes used by the Roman Church in the 13th century".

According to Scheiber, and referred to also by Prawer and Golb, we are familiar with the life of Obadiah only from the Cairo Geniza documents. He was born in Oppido, a Southern Italian town. He was a twin and as was customary in ancient times, and also in England in the 19th and 20th Centuries the younger brother went into the Church while the older brother became a soldier. A year after his ordination as either a priest or monk he had a dream and converted to Judaism in around 1102 adopting the name Obadiah. It is

⁴⁸ Golb, 'Jewish Proselytism—a Phenomenon in the Religious History of Early Medieval Europe', paper given at.1987

⁴⁹ Bernhard Blumenkranz , "Un pamphlet juif medio-latin de polemique antichretienne," Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses, 34, 1954 pp.401–413,

interesting to note from Scheiber's comments that Obadiah just as Judah Ha-Levi from Cologne Jewish convert to Christianity in the 12th Century and noting that similarly Bishop Hugh Montefiori who also converted to Christianity in the 19/20th Century, (He came from a well known Anglo-Jewish family and became a Church of England Bishop) converted as a result of a dream. Another influence on Obadiah's conversion may have been the conversion of Andreas the Bishop of Bari (1062-1078)-see further. It seems that it was usual for someone who wanted to or has converted to leave his home and travel and thus Obadiah travelled via Syria and/or Babylon and Palestine to Egypt, where Jews were able to live in peace amongst the Muslims. Obadiah learnt good Hebrew in Baghdad and wrote his Diaries in good Biblical Hebrew. A fascinating part of Obadiah's life is the musical notation referred to above and particularly as written about by Scheiber.

A distinguished Jewish musicologist in England, Dr Alexander Knapp who confirmed the following: "The transcription, found in the Cairo Geniza (and now held in the Cambridge University Library or at the JTS in New York), dates from 1102, and it is, so far, the earliest piece of Jewish music to be written in Western notation. Obadiah, the "Norman Proselyte", lived in Italy at this time and applied the musical skills that he had learned as a monk to writing down Jewish music. Apart from the fact that the language of the text is Hebrew, many would say that the music sounds just like Christian Plainchant, and this is the style according to which it has been sung in present-day performances. However it is essential to bear in mind that this manuscript was found in Egypt - clearly part of the Middle-Eastern sound-world. Therefore, is likely that the notation would have been merely a "skeleton", to be "clothed" by all the performance practices and vocal ornamentations typical of the Eastern Mediterranean. In that case, it would probably not have sounded like Gregorian chant at all, but more like Classical Arabic song, although based on the melodic material notated by Obadiah".

In an essay⁵⁰ which appeared in Volume I of the 6th EAJS Congress we read:"Music and musical notation played a part in Judaism. For example Saadya Gaon who died in around 942 and who was a philosopher and an exegetist was very much concerned with the science of music and not "only with the theoretical aspects of music and music as an ethical and cosmological power, but equally so with music performance".⁵¹ There is no

⁵⁰ Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Saenz-Badillos, 'Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Saenz-Badillos (ed.), European Association for Jewish Studies Congress (6th:1998: Toledo Spain) (Toledo: Brill, 1998).

⁵¹ Ulf Haxen, 'Saadya Gaon on Music, Melody and Rhythm', *Ibid.*

doubt that the discovery of these musical notations, combined with the knowledge of the life of Obadiah add an exciting dimension to Jewish history and learning. This is yet another example of the contribution and influence of non-Jews on Judaism and an example, perhaps the first of many, of the time of 'non-prejudice' by Jews in accepting proselytes, appreciating and accepting how much contribution they have made and what important and legitimate roles they played in Judaism and its history, such as Onkelos's influence regarding the understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Maimonides wrote to Obadiah the proselyte, "There is no difference whatever between us and you"⁵² thus proving that there were many elements of non-prejudice amongst the learned and knowledgeable even as far back as the Middle Ages.

Scheiber has proved beyond doubt that the Diary notes and writings were those of Obadiah. From personal experience in working with Scheiber, I know how thorough he was in his research. He had also a great talent in recognising and reading handwritings and scripts, which I experienced personally when I worked with him in the Libraries of Oxford and Cambridge as well as when travelling with him in Slovakia examining books etc in the various Libraries in Monasteries there. I have no doubt that when he says that he recognised the "handwriting of Obadiah", that is the case.

iii) Andreas the Bishop of Bari (1032-1078)

In 933 Pope John XI granted the Bishops of Bari the use of the pallium (the pallium derived from the Roman *pallium* or *pall-* a woollen cloak is an ecclesiastical vestment in the Roman Catholic Church, originally worn by the Pope, but for many centuries placed by him on metropolitan and primates as a symbol of the jurisdiction delegated to them by the Holy See). In that context it has been connected to the papacy. Essentially the same garment was worn by all Eastern Orthodox bishops, and was called omophor). The Bishops of Bari were dependent on the Patriarch of Constantinople until the tenth century, when Bishop Giovanni II (952) was able to withdraw from this influence, refusing to accept the prescriptions of the patriarch concerning liturgy. All connections were finally severed in the eleventh century, when Bari became a direct dependency of Rome.

Archbishop Bisanzio (1025) obtained from the Pope the privilege of consecrating his suffragans. He has also began the construction of the new cathedral, which was continued

⁵² See also Alexander Scheiber, 'The Origins of Obadiah, the Norman Proselyte', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 5(1954). P.37

by his successors, Nicolo (1035), Andrea (1062), and Elia (1089) of the Benedictine Order. Andrea or Andreas' conversion may have been influenced by the fact that Bari came directly under the influence of Rome.

The story seems to be that Andreas abandoned Bari for Constantinople in 1066, where he converted, and then took a journey to Egypt between the years 1074 and his death in 1078. News of his conversion circulated around the Mediterranean, including Southern Italy, where Obadiah was born and who reported on Andreas' elevation to Archbishop in 1062⁵³. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia (Bari section) there was an Archbishop Andrea in 1062 there. Some scholars think that Andreas's name was confused with Urso (1080-1088 or 1089) who apparently converted to Islam. There was an Archbishop Urso of Bari, mentioned by Thomas Forrest Kelly.⁵⁴ I do not think that this is likely to be the case. Although the First Crusade did not take place until 1095 under Pope Urban II, chaos and uncertainty prevailed in Europe and then later in the Middle East, and it is quite possible that this allowed Andreas to convert in order to leave those problems behind.

Golb speculates about Andreas of Bari, though some still think that the letter found in the Geniza (T.-S 12.732 published by Simha Assaf⁵⁵ pp.143 ff.) might have referred to Obadiah the Proselyte rather than Andreas. However, questions do arise as to why certain events such as these misfortunes and troubles were not mentioned earlier regarding Obadiah (see letter of recommendation from R.Baruch b. Isaac of Aleppo concerning Obadiah (REJ lxxxix, 1930 pp. 347ff.). According to Obadiah, Andreas left his land and priesthood and was circumcised in Constantinople, though the letter makes no mention of the location.

The uncertainty does not exclude the possibility that there might have been someone else from Bari, a priest who converted. We have no firm proof either way but in "The original

⁵³ Norman Golb, 'The Autograph Memoirs of Obadiah the Proselyte of Oppido Lucano and the Epistle of Barukh B.Isaac of Aleppo Together with Appndx.The Music of Obadiah the Proselyte', paper given at Convegno internazionale di Studi Giovanni-Obadiah da Oppido:proselito,viaggiatore e musicista dell'eta normanna, Oppido Lucano (Basilicata) 28-30 March 2004 2004.

⁵⁴ Thomas Forrest Kelly, *The Exultet in Southern Italy* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Pp. 33-36

⁵⁵ Simha Assaf, *Mekorot U-Mehkarim : Be-Toldot Yisrael-Texts and Studies in Jewish History* (Yerushalayim: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, 1946).

Sin and A Disputation with the Jews”⁵⁶ the writer comments that the treatise of 14 pamphlets was written as a result of the conversion of Obadiah the Proselyte and also that of Andreas of Bari. Consequently we may assume the existence of this convert.

iv) Wecelin, the Cleric Convert (990?)

Emperor Henry II (1002-24) expelled the Jews from Mainz around 1012. This may have been a reaction to an anti-Christian pamphlet produced by a new convert to Judaism, Wecelin (a former Cleric and Deacon). However one can see that the following year, the Jews were allowed to return, see Robert Chazan’s article^{57 58}.

Wecelin, worked for Duke Conrad of Carinthia and converted to Judaism in 1005 or 1006. There is written evidence that Wecelin published a brief tract against Christianity and there is evidence from a number of sources recording the persecution of the Jews in and around Mainz, Worms and Spier (Germany), during that time. This evidence includes the Memorbucher from the Middle Ages in Germany. If indeed Wecelin was converted in 1005/6 then perhaps the expulsion or persecution of Jews in 1012 had no connection with him. Graetz thought that this might be connected.

Wecelin probably fled to Egypt and it appears that he was only one of many of the 11th century converts as seen from some of the documents emanating from the Cairo Geniza (see Appendix IV iii). Norman Golb estimates that about 15,000 people converted to Judaism and fled Europe between 1000 and 1200. Cecil Roth mentions Wecelin very briefly in the “Proselytes of righteousness”.⁵⁹ Norman Golb also believes that Wecelin was of Slav origin –this is certainly a valid and, more likely a correct assumption, because the name sounds Slav. However if the name is spelled with “W” then again he might have been of German/ Austrian or even of Hungarian origin, very much depending where he was born, who were his parents and how and where he was brought up. The sound of his name indicates that his family may have been originally Slav but then the

⁵⁶ Of Tournai Odo, Irven Michael Resnick, and Of Tournai Odo, On Original Sin ; and, a Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God : Two Theological Treatises (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) 146p.

⁵⁷ Robert Chazan, '1007–1012: Initial Crisis for Northern European Jewry', Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, 38/39(1970), 101–17. See particularly pp102 and 113

⁵⁸ Robert Chazan, Church, State, and the Jew in the Middle Ages (New York: Behrman House, 1979).p305 and see pp.191 and 194

⁵⁹ Cecil Roth, Personalities and Events in Jewish History.p.150

name became Germanised when they were living within Germanic territory. According to Golb, Wecelin became a Jew following the appearance of a comet and the fright it gave him and following his polemic with a cleric he fled from the German empire to Syria around 1006/7. He may have first travelled to Damascus in Syria where he preached about his acquired new religion and where he was accepted into the Jewish community. During the Festival of Succot he then travelled with the Jews of Damascus to Jerusalem, but there he may have been persecuted by the Christians and so decided to flee to Egypt. Indeed, amongst the Cairo Geniza documents there is a letter of recommendation ((later brought to Shemariah in Fustat by the proselyte himself; (Or.1080J Cairo Geniza), addressed to someone in Fustat and concerning a proselyte who escaped from Damascus and wished to settle in Egypt because of his persecution by Christians in Jerusalem. The proselyte was met at one point by someone called Samuel and it is he who says that the man was a good person, who knew from an early age that “Christianity walked in vanity”. In the document there is no mention of Wecelin’s name, which was either left out deliberately or is missing from the text, however Golb assumes that this document was written somewhere around 1002 to 1009. Golb substantiates his claim by mentioning two factors within the letter, one that there is a mention of the disputant as a barking animal and secondly a reference to Christianity being an accursed faith both factors mentioned in Alpert’s reference to words of Wecelin in the dispute letters. Golb and Sapir agreed to differ and my feeling is that Golb is closer to the truth than Sapir. Professor Alexander Scheiber in his essay “A proselyte Letter to the Congregation of Fostat”⁶⁰ concurs with Golb’s theory that it was Wecelin who came to Egypt from Jerusalem. He may have come to Fustat as did Obadiah having escaped a possible punishment following his disputation.

There is an interesting exchange of ideas and ideologies between Wecelin and Henry, a Court Cleric. The reference to the exchange of letters is in the seventh chapter of “*De diversitate temporum*” by Alpert of Metz, who dedicated the book to Burchard, Bishop of Worms (1000-25). This has been annotated by Anna Sapir Abulafia in her essay⁶¹. The disputation, which takes the form of the exchange of letters, is curious in so far as Wecelin’s letters are short and succinct, while the replies by Henry are long and detailed. There are many reasons expounded on this but the most probable is that Henry’s replies

⁶⁰ Alexander Scheiber, 'A Proselyte Letter to the Congregation of Fostat'.

⁶¹ Anna Sapir Abulafia, 'An Eleventh-Century Exchange of Letters between a Christian and a Jew', *Journal of Medieval History* *Journal of Medieval History*, 7/21981), pp.153–74.

actually incorporate Wecelin's arguments and therefore Alpert had no real need to deal with all that Wecelin might have written down. Wecelin, according to Golb, considered Christianity an "accursed faith" as well as it being a "rhetorical sentence of characteristic acerbity". Golb also quotes Wecelin as saying to Henry, his Christian opponent "are you barking at me, animal?", quoting this as an example of Wecelin's condemnation of Christianity. This however is not necessarily so, because all public debates and attacks were normally vicious and the usual way of expressing distain against the "enemy". So the exclamation is not something we need to interpret as particularly angry, vicious or furious.

It is also important to note that when Alvaro and Bodo/Eleazar exchanged letters (see above), one of the expressions in those letters was the use of the expression the "accursed God" syndrome quoting Deuteronomy 21:23. In Daniel J. Lasker's book *"The Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages"*⁶² there is no mention of either Alpert, or Henry or indeed Wecelin. I briefly corresponded with Lasker who told me that he knew nothing of Wecelin hence his omission from his book. In Alpert's introduction we see clearly that the exchange of letters was between Wecelin and Henry and that the former was an apostate. He was referred to as someone who was being led astray by "fiendish delusion and went over to the false doctrine of the Jews".

Wecelin was convinced of his right to convert to Judaism, having apparently written 14 pamphlets of disputation on the topic of Judaism and Christianity. He wrote the same after he was circumcised: "I was afraid that I shall be killed and so I have written 14 pamphlets in which I gave my reasons for converting and have also asked some questions. I gave these to the chief priest and the other priests, having said to them if only you would know, O my master that I forsook those who are uncircumcised as per the questions and reasons given here. If the Lord be good, then read this book; and if I have done evil in forsaking the religion, then show me, teach me and respond with good answers and reasons: and then quickly shall I return. I was trusting in the grace of the Lord that if they would read them, then surely the knowledgeable among them would return to the religion of Israel". Wecelin was put to prison after this but managed to escape and wrote: "One of the prison guards let me out at night, through the window from the wall with a rope; for that man had a dream regarding me and he said to me, 'as

⁶² Daniel J. Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (2nd ed. edn.; Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007) xxxiv,p. 283

the Lord lives, do not fear come and I shall let you escape'. So I listened to his voice; he let me down with the rope and I fled from prison naked and forlorn; I chose to seek bread..." (Geniza Cambridge T-S 12.732, copy shown in the Appendice). The number of leaflets mentioned is curious as there is a mention of 14 clerics of differing religions at the time of Bodo/Eleazar see above.

v) The Woman from a Narbonne Family- 1090?

This unnamed Proselyte⁶³ appears to have converted in her native Narbonne in Southern France. She was described in the Cambridge Geniza (T.-S.26.100) published by Mann, Texts and Studies I, pp. 13 ff). It was there that she married a Master David from the influential Todros family. The marriage took place probably towards the end of 11th century. Her family objected to her marriage and conversion and were seeking her return, wishing to reverse the conversion. They were ruthless in pursuing her and she feared for her life (not unjustified). Therefore she and her husband escaped. They settled either in Monieux or Muno (see later regarding the question of which town), where she gave birth to three children, a boy named Jacob, a girl Iusta and a baby (name unknown). But a pogrom shattered the lives of the Jews and this family was no exception. Her husband was killed in the Synagogue and her two older children were kidnapped. She managed to escape to Najera in Northern Spain with the baby, possibly during the First Crusade in 1092.

The families who survived the pogrom were unable to care for the woman and her baby and letters of recommendation to help and assist her confirming her conversion were written in Najera. It would appear that these letters written by the same scribe in very poor Hebrew. It is believed that both letters were written by the Court Scribe, who probably did not acquire his Hebrew locally and was not well versed in the language. There are stories, such as those by Ibn Ezra, relating how badly Jews living in that part of the world were educated.(see also Yahalom⁶⁴).The letters were witnessed by people who probably did not know Hebrew. The reason why they were witnessed was to give them authority and authenticity. These letters written in the form of a Witness Statement, also implied the truth of the story. They could be categorised as begging letters,soliciting funds and help.

⁶³ Norman Golb, 'Notes on the Conversion of European Christians in the 11th Century', Journal of Jewish Studies, 16(1965), pp.69-75.

⁶⁴ Josef Yahalom, 'New Clues from an Encounter with Old Spanish', in Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Saenz-Badillos (ed.), European Association for Jewish Studies Congress (6th:1998: Toledo Spain) (Toledo: Brill, 1998), pp.561-67.

The scholars do not doubt the truth of the story, though a dispute remains where it took place: Muno or Monieaux (see Golb's article⁶⁵).

One of the letters was a "begging" letter seeking money to redeem her two captive children, while the second was an attempt to raise money to repay the Jewish community of Najera for the cost of her redemption, when she was in danger of being burnt. A silk head scarf (the Spanish word for the silk scarf was used though written in Hebrew characters. The significance of this is explained later), was prepared for her already as her family caught up with her, She was condemned to death. Indeed all was prepared, including the silk scarf, for her to be burnt at the stake. However the prison guards or church officials were bribed with 35 dinars, which enabled her to escape. The second letter also refers to her seeking support after she has been redeemed, or rather after the guards were bribed. There were 35 Dinars raised, of which 5 Dinars came from the initial fundraising, and the rest were given to her by a person called Yom Tov Narboni, who was either her escort or someone who was asked to follow her to recover the money he or others had given her direct. Although it is also possible that he was prepared to pay the 30 Dinars for her redemption. Who was he? Was he her second husband? It would appear that she gave birth to another baby and so he could have been either her husband or the father of the baby. This is thought to have happened a year or so earlier, before the second letter was written. She also had appeared to have become pregnant, for the second time in Muno or Monieaux, giving birth to a girl. Unfortunately we have no answers to what led to the quarrel with Yom Tov and what their relationship was. Were they lovers? Was he paying alimony or was the quarrel purely a money issue? The community was certainly trying to keep the peace.

The woman was smuggled out of town at night as the next day, when Yom Tov came to find her, she was gone. She apparently sent the man a fabric to a value of some one and a half gold coins as although there was some money left she was unwilling to hand this money over to Yom Tov Narbonni.

She thus seemed to have had some money which she was gradually using for her own purposes. The community supported the woman, having persuaded a Moshe bar Ayash to help to find some money. In the end the woman raised eleven dinars. Following the second letter she went on her way, possibly to Egypt, where the letters were found and are

⁶⁵ Norman Golb, 'Monieux', Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 113/11969), pp. 67-94.

now in the Cairo Geniza collection. It is also possible that prior to her journey to Egypt she was twice in Muno (Monieaux).

A scholar namely Edna Engel has thoroughly examined both letters and has no doubt that they relate to the same story and were written in the same period and same place, using Sephardi Hebrew script. According to documents found in the Cambridge Geniza (T-S 16.100 and T-S 12.732 AppendixIV ii and iii and T-S NS 323.31) there was a female convert referred to in the documents. She confirms that the convert came apparently from a very rich Christian family and married R David in Narbonne, (related to R Todrus Narboni of the 11th century) and the couple were forced to escape from her family.

She examined the providence of the letters and came to the conclusion, together with Yahalom that the Hebrew letters 'mem, nun, yud, vav' refer to Muno as opposed to Monieux, a Spanish not a French town. There is also a reference to the fact that the Najera Jewish community had helped this woman twice, although she was not living there and this would imply that she actually lived in Muno and not Monieux. As Hebrew texts do not contain vowels, reading the Hebrew words can be affected by where and how the vowels are placed. According to Golb, the family arrived in Monieux (a French City), and from there the woman was forced to flee. The argument used by Golb, that the town was Monieux⁶⁶, known historically as a place where Jews were persecuted and therefore plausible that the woman had to escape from there. However, others, such as Josef Yahalom⁶⁷ and Edna Engel.⁶⁸, felt that the actual place where she escaped to from her birthplace was a town called Muno in Northern Spain near Burgos This is mainly supported by the notion that they set out to reach Santiago de Compostella and that Monieux was too far a place for her to reach. Yahalom also analyses the Hebrew letters and found that it was written in an Andalusian style script and that a number of Jewish Spanish sounding words were used by the Scribe confirming that their knowledge of Hebrew was poor making spelling and other mistakes. The words used according to Yahalom are Spanish words e.g. the expression relating to the flax garment (kamisa), the garment to be worn by the convert prior to being burnt at stake. Both Yahalom and Engel assume, as have those before them, that the two letters are linked, referring to the same woman. Gold did seem to

⁶⁶ Golb, 'Jewish Proselytism—a Phenomenon in the Religious History of Early Medieval Europe', paper given at.

⁶⁷ Yahalom, 'New Clues from an Encounter with Old Spanish'.

⁶⁸ Edna Engel, 'Hebrew Letters of Old Castille in the Cairo Genizah', *Ibid.*, pp. 398–405.

have noticed that the way those Hebrew letters were written amounted to Spanish words and were of an Andalusian nature.

Both Golb and other writers argue that the persecution of the Jewish population was severe in both Muno and Monieux. The second letter discovered by Eliyahu Ashtor mentions Najera and that the letter was sent from there. Therefore the most likely town spelled in Hebrew was Muno and not Monieux. It is also worth noting that there was a substantial Jewish population in Burgos, the capital of Castile, near Muno.

Golb's research states that the events referred to took place in Monieux, being the place where the Crusaders of the Midi under Raymond of St Gilles and Adhemar of Le Puy first began to gather before passing directly by the city and on towards the Alps marching eastwards. However a poem about El Cid (Rodrigo or Ruy Díaz de Vivar (c.1040, Vivar, near Burgos – 10th July 1099 Valencia), who was in the fortress of Burgos, refers to money lent to him by Jewish merchants, the money he needed for carrying on his wars. So the escape route from Narbonne via a French road to Santiago de Compostela, was not unusual for the time, so it seems that even this theory supports the assumption that she escaped to Muno, a Spanish town, and not Monieux in France and that she was twice in Muno.

The woman probably ended her journey in Egypt, as the document found its way to Fostat to be discovered in the Cairo Geniza, although of course it could have found its way there through another channel. Whichever town the events took place in, the story recalls a great piece of Jewish history and even adds a note of sexual morality, thrill, attitudes and innuendos. Many questions remain unanswered, such as who was the father of the baby daughter? How was it that the woman was pursued by her own family to such an extent that they were willing to have her killed?

Muno seems to be the now most plausible town where the events took place. Engel also quotes from F. Baer's book⁶⁹, Vol. I pp 81-88, where he refers to a document written in 1290 in which one of the communities noted was that of the Jewish community of Muno, a town situated in the Burgos region (see publication⁷⁰ and review⁷¹).

⁶⁹ Yitzhak Baer, *Die Juden Im Christlichen Spanien* (I; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1929–1936).

⁷⁰ Fritz Baer and Haim Beinart, *Die Juden Im Christlichen Spanien 1. Teil, Urkunden Und Regesten* (Farnborough, Hants: Gregg, 1970).

⁷¹ J. Lee Shneidman, 'Review: [Untitled]', *Speculum*, 37/3(1962), pp. 404–06.

vi) Cornelio Da Montalcino-1553

There is very little that can be found on the background of Cornelio da Montalcino. Nevertheless he is worth mentioning in connection with the period in question. His existence and burning at stake could however be a figment of someone's imagination as all mention of him is based on the reference by the 16th century writer of Emek Ha-Bacha Joseph Ha-Cohen who was born on 4th September 1550 (see⁷²). Joseph ha-Cohen who "created" him in his story in 1575 may have wished to add credence to his claims of the attractiveness of Judaism and for famous people having a reason to convert to Judaism.

With the counter-reformation the entire tenor of Roman Jewish life suddenly changed for the worse. The story in relation to Cornelio da Montalcino is that in 1542, a tribunal of the Holy Office on the Spanish model was set up in Rome and in 1553, Cornelio Da Montalcino, a Franciscan friar who had embraced Judaism, was burned alive on the Camp dei Fiori. In 1543, a home for converted Jews (house of catechumens), later to be the scene of many tragic episodes, was established, and a good part of the burden of upkeep was imposed on the Jews themselves. On Rosh Hashanah (8th or 19th September) depending on how we interpret the Gregorian Calendar) 1553, the Talmud with many other Hebrew books was committed to the flames after official condemnation. On 14th July 1555, Pope Paul IV issued his bull, "*Cum nimis absurdum*", which re-enacted remorselessly against the Jews all the restrictive ecclesiastic legislation previously enforced only intermittently. This led to the segregation of Jews in a special quarter, henceforth called the ghetto and the wearing of the Jewish badge, specified as a yellow hat in the case of men and a yellow kerchief in the case of women. Jews were forbidden to own land, or allowed to be called by any title of respect such as signor, e.g. (when Jewish physicians were employed by Christians). They were also forbidden to deal in corn and other necessities of life and so forced to trade in such things as old clothes and second-hand goods. This initiated the ghetto period in Rome, and continued to govern the life of Roman Jewry for more than 300 years. Occasional raids were made as late as the 18th century on the ghetto to ensure that the Jews did not possess any "forbidden" books - that is, in effect, any literature other than the Bible, Liturgy, and carefully expurgated ritual codes. Each Saturday selected members of the community were compelled to go to a

⁷² Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text : The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century.*

neighbouring church to listen to proselytising sermons, running the gauntlet of insults from the populace. In some reactionary interludes, the yellow Jewish hat, had to be worn even within the ghetto. This was the atmosphere in which Cornelio da Montalcino lived and was killed. Could he be a martyr convert to be remembered?

vii) Deacon Robert of Reading-Haggai

In April 1222 there was a public burning in Reading in England of someone of this name (see Tombstone in the Appendix II).

The story is well described in Vol. 1 of ⁷³ held by the Online Library of Liberty under the title "The Deacon and the Jewess". This nameless convert is often confused with another, Robert of Reading, who converted in the 1270s and took the name 'Haggai' but details of his fate are unknown. See also *The Deacon and the Jewess* ⁷⁴ (pp. 254-276) for a discussion between Robert and the Unknown Deacon. Cecil Roth ⁷⁵ (pp76, 83) also discusses this issue. There may however be a confusion here between the Deacon and Robert of Reading.

In *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* 1977 by Roth, Robert of Reading (c.1275), is described as: an English convert to Judaism. A Dominican friar, he was stimulated by his study of the Bible to adopt the Jewish religion, under the name Haggai, and subsequently married a Jewess. So far as is known, he did not suffer in consequence, though some chroniclers seem to suggest that the episode was partially responsible for the expulsion of the Jews in 1292 and the last episode relating to the Jews of England.

According to Cecil Roth the person burnt in Oxford on this date was unlikely to be the Haggai, a Dominican friar, as he was executed in London. However in 1222 or thereabouts anti -Jewish feeling was at its height, and therefore it is possible that someone of prominence, such as this Deacon who may have converted and as a result created an uproar which led him to be burnt at the stake in Oxford. If it is the same person then he was a student of Hebrew at Oxford University. When he decided to become a Jew, he had circumcised himself (not unusual as someone in Germany called Steblicki-see later did the same in the 18th Century), changed his name to Haggai, and married a Jewess. When asked by the Church authorities to account for his conduct, he

⁷³ Frederic William Maitland and Herbert Albert Laurens Fisher, *The Collected Papers of Frederic William Maitland* 3vols. (1; Cambridge: University Press, 1911).

⁷⁴ Frederic William and Abrahams Maitland, 'The Deacon and the Jewess', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, 161908-1910), pp.254-76.

⁷⁵ Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (OUP, 1941).

is reported to have said: "I renounce the new-fangled Law and the comments of Jesus, the false prophet". This outspokenness cost him his life. His courageous stand and his suffering are commemorated by a plaque on the only surviving wall of Osney Abbey, which is to be found in the boat yard of Osney Marine Engineering Company at the end of Mill Street, Oxford euphemistically called Osney Marina (see Appendix II).

Esther Seidel in her essay "Conversion during the Middle Ages"⁷⁶ makes a reference to a Deacon of Oxford burnt in 1222 but she also states that "the Sheriff of Oxfordshire ordered the burning of Robert in 1275". It does not seem possible that there were two burnings in Oxford even if it was 50 years apart, dealing with almost identical cases. It is therefore possible that this tragic event occurred in 1222, commemorated by the memorial stone referred to above for the following reason: Arthur William Lukyn in *Adversus Judaeos*⁷⁷ refers to the incident and mentions Fawkes de Breante. It is entirely possible that Fawkes of Breante organised the burning of Haggai because he was a powerful baron, the King, and many of the other barons feared him and were subordinate to him. The year in question was the time shortly after King John surrendered his religious powers in 1213 (died in 1216) or more accurately, handed spiritual leadership to the Pope. His brother Richard left to pursue the Third Crusade in 1191. John's eight year old son as Henry III became King. It is therefore likely that one of the barons took over the throne, as John had several disputes with various barons who objected to the high taxes. It is thought that Fawkes de Breante was the most turbulent and unmanageable of the barons, yet at the same time respected by King John and thus entirely possible that he was involved in the demise of Deacon Robert.

viii) Moses ben Abraham Avinu Haas-1686

A Hungarian who converted to Judaism in about 1686 It has been said that Haas married the daughter of a Rabbi and learnt Hebrew and Yiddish, owning books printed in both languages. It was claimed that he was a printer with presses in several towns in Germany. Moses ben Abraham however, aroused suspicion when he approved a Hebrew translation of the New Testament. According to Eichhorn⁷⁸ (p.121) he was born in Nikolsberg (Nikolsburg) in Hungary. However Nikolsberg was never a Hungarian town, it was and is

⁷⁶ Esther Seidel, 'Conversion During the Middle Ages', in Walter Homolka, Walter Jacob, and Esther Seidel (eds.), *Not by Birth Alone : Conversion to Judaism* (London: Cassell, 1997).

⁷⁷ A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos; a Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge [Eng.: University Press, 1935).

⁷⁸ Eichorn, *Conversion to Judaism (a History and Analysis)*.

now a town in Moravia, part of the Czech Republic. It lies on the border with Austria and its current Czech name is Mikulov.

Moses ben Abraham left that town for Amsterdam where he was circumcised and where he converted to Judaism. He travelled extensively, having set up print shops in Halle, Berlin, Desau and also Frankfurt am Oder (Seidel⁷⁹ and Eichhorn). The information regarding Haas comes together as the sources refer to him as being in the printing business.

Although he lived in Moravia this does not preclude the possibility that Haas was originally Hungarian, particularly as Nikolsberg had a reputation for tolerance, and indeed there was a printing industry in the town. However what is left of town records indicate that a printing company only survived in the years between 1526-1527 (This information was obtained from the Jewish Museum of Prague, Czech Republic) and not in Haas's lifetime, though seventeen important publications were printed there. Allegedly Moses ben Abraham opposed Kabbalah and this made him strangely a suspect of being a Jew or a Jewish sympathiser.

Historically, Mikulov was the largest and most important Jewish community in Moravia⁸⁰. The first precise records date from 1560, when 32 houses were owned by Jews. Mention is made that Jews were living there as early as 1369 though some say 1421. In 1657 we find 146 families recorded as living there in 98 houses. Eighty families who were expelled from Vienna settled in Mikulov in 1670. It is interesting to note that Rabbi Yehuda Low ben Bezalel, the famous Prague Rabbi, creator of the Golem fame, lived there before he became Rabbi of the Alt-Neu Schul (1511-1609). There is also evidence that a synagogue was built in 1550 in the northern part of Husova Street. From the historical data of the town, it is known that Jews captured during the conquest of Belgrade were ransomed by the community and settled in Nikolsberg. The oldest legible tomb stones date from 1605 and 1618. As a non-Jew Abraham may have been influenced by the Jewish community, leading to his conversion.

Mikulov is well known for having been a home for other famous Rabbis, as graves of some can be found there, such as that of Petahia ben Josef who died in 1637, and

⁷⁹ Walter Jacob Walter and Seidel Esther and Others Homolka (ed.), *Not by Birth Alone* (London: Cassel, 1997).

⁸⁰ City of Mikulov, 'Www.Mikulov.Cz', accessed 03/09/2011 2010.

Menachem Mendl ben Abraham Krochmal who died in Cracow in 1661. Unfortunately, all available documents of the community were destroyed by fire on the 10th August 1719.

If Moses ben Abraham was from there, he may not have been Hungarian, unless his family moved there from Hungary sometime before or after his birth. It would appear that Eichorn's information is incorrect. The reference to Nikolsberg has perhaps misled both Eichorn and Roth. In *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*⁸¹ there is however an acknowledgment that he actually came from Moravia (page 9). Compelling evidence confirming this theory is a footnote description of Haas, found in the book by Max Freudenthal⁸² p.176, where there is a full description of the life of Moses ben Abraham Haas. The footnote text, translated by me from the German, reads as follows (see the copy from the Book in Appendix V):

“Moses b. Abraham came from Nikolsberg from a Christian family named Haase (this is how I interpret the words mi-Beth Arnebeth which Steinschneider, Cat. Bodl. No. 2623, takes as Haselburg). From Prague, he moved to Amsterdam. There he converted to Judaism and practised his craft with Uri Phöbus and Cosmann Emrich in 1686 and 1687. He then resumed his own business from 1689-1694, concentrating mainly on the printing of Jewish-German writings (compare Cat. Bodl. No. 2623. 2791. 2914. 5545. 6636. 7405.). At the time of the business recession during the French Wars, he gave up his printing business and took to the road. For his family see Cat. Bodl. S. 2994. Elia, the son mentioned there is buried in Halberstadt (gravestone no. 1692). Whether Jacob and Mordechai are the sons of Haas cannot be ascertained. Cat. Bodl. No. 8263 a, b, c refer to the same person. Of the children, in 1696 Israel and Ella were working in Dessau (see page 163 and the typesetter register in the appendix); the latter was not, as Steinschneider suggests, born in 1697 but in 1687. In the following years, the family remained in Berlin and participated in the printing of the Jablonsky Bible. In Frankfurt am Oder, they worked on Berend Lehmann's edition of the Talmud (see Tractate Nidda 1699), on the Machsor that Hirsch Öettingen published in 1700 and in which Ella explicitly sketched herself (Cat. Bodl. No. 8093) and on the big Luther Bible and Wegner's *Opus Quatuor linguarum*, with which Gottschalck together with the new Talmud edition had been privileged (licensed?); see *Zum Jubiläum p. 89*”. It is now reasonable to claim, that Moses

⁸¹ Martin Mulso and Richard H. Popkin (ed.), *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Brill Leiden–Boston, 2004).

⁸² Max Freudenthal, *Aus Der Heimat Mendelssohns, Moses Benjamin Wulff Und Seine Familie, Die Nachkommen Des Moses Isserles* (1900).

b. Abraham was not Hungarian but either German or Czech but more likely a German Christian who converted to Judaism and lived in a place now called Mikulov.

ix) Johann Peter Spaeth (1640-1701) known as Moses Germanus

Dr. N. Samter wrote extensively about this proselyte. What is known about him comes from Johann Spaeth's own writings as well as from contemporary reports. The most valuable of the contemporary writings are the letters by Spener (see *Theologischen Bedenken* (Halle 1715. 4.); *Consilia et Judicia Theological Latina* (Francof. 1709. 4) volume III p.427) and many others. We know that Johann Peter Spaeth was well read and of great literary ambitions. It was also reported that he changed his name to Moses Germanus and attracted massive attention⁸³. He was born a Catholic in Vienna in 1730. His father was a shoemaker, who moved to Augsburg, where Johann Peter attended the Jesuit school, learning about religion and Latin, some Greek but no German. His style in German apparently remained inept and difficult to understand. Due to his parents' impoverishment he earned his living by tutoring. Augsburg at the time was predominantly a Protestant town, though Johann seemed to have been in touch with Catholics but came closer to Protestants when he was teaching a young Italian student. This must have been his first discovery of the differences in religious outlook. He states that he learned the difference between "light and darkness", which led him to prefer Lutheranism, reinforced on his journey to Stuttgart, where he met eminent Protestants, with whom he was able to discuss important theological issues. In Tübingen he became a Lutheran, though it is not known when exactly this happened, save that he was of a mature age. It is important to note that many at the time converted from their own religion (whichever it was at the time), to Catholicism rather than Protestantism as the Protestant Church was in disarray. He may not have been aware of this the time, though once discovered, he may have become dissatisfied, and eventually converted to Judaism.

His conversion to Lutheranism led him to write his first work: *Εκλογαί, Theologico-Philosophico/Enigmatica*. This work which found much favour with M. Spitzel, head of the board of theological studies at Augsburg, who recommended Spaeth to many influential people in Strasbourg and afterward to others in Frankfurt am Main. Spaeth returned to Catholicism, which he defended and praised in a work entitled *udicium Amoris de*

⁸³ N. Samter (ed.), *Judentum Und Proselytism* (Johann Peter Spaeth–Moses Germanus Der Proselyt (Breslau: W.Jacobsohn, 1897).

*Fundamentalibus Quibusdam, Qui Feruntur Erroribus Ecclesiae Romanae*⁸⁴. But this reconciliation with the Church of Rome did not last as new doubts assailed his mind, and after having mingled with the members of certain sects, such as the Socians and Mennonites, and after having taken up the study of Hebrew literature and Kabbalah, he renounced his Christianity and vehemently attacked it. As the Sermon on the Mount required an impossible idealism, it did not escape his criticism⁸⁵ (iv. 194). As for Christian writings, other than the New Testament, he held that until Constantine founded Christianity everything was drawn from Jewish tradition. Johann Peter Spaeth converted to Judaism at Cleves, where he took the name "Moses Germanus", though prior to that he toyed with both Catholicism and Protestantism. His journey to Judaism started, as he himself relates, through the following incident, a crucifix dropped from his pocket, and it was picked up by a Jew, who said: "It is Israel, the man of sorrow!" (Schudt, l.c. p.195). Spaeth says: "From those words I understood the 53rd chapter of Isaiah: the Jews bore the sins of the heathen, while they were daily persecuted by them. From time immemorial they had been treated in a shameful manner. As the whole history of the Passion tended to render the Jews odious, so the same sort of thing happens nowadays. For instance, the Jews are said to have murdered a child, and to have distributed the blood in quills for the use of their women in childbirth. I have discovered this outrageous fraud in time; and, therefore, I abandon Christianity, which permits such things".

Eichorn in his book presents a simplified version of Spaeths conversion but the situation was far more complex. Spaeth had a scientific approach to the biblical texts and to philology. Generally he appreciated Judaism and he may have been equally influenced by his Biblical studies.

His first writing occurred in Strasbourg where he worked as a pharmacist attending university and preached in churches. In Strasbourg people called him a "second Luther". He made some attempts to reform the Protestant Church, objecting to certain rituals such as Holy Communion. Interestingly, he spoke to Friedrich Breckling of the Netherlands who was an outspoken critic of the Lutheran Church. Spaeth wished to know why he still remained part of the Church. Breckling made an attempt to persuade Spaeth to remain in the Church but to no avail. He moved to Frankfurt, which meant that he was to be with Philipp Jacob Spener who was then Oberprediger there, Christian theologian known as "Father of Pietism".

The relationship between Spener and Johann was curious. Was it a "father and son" or something else? Spener saw it as divine providence apparently that both of their names started with "Sp". Both were deeply concerned about the state of the Church, Johann

⁸⁴ *Judicium Amoris Oder Lieb-Gemasse Beurtheilung/ Etlicher So Genanter Glaubens-Grund-Umstossender Fehler/ Und Haupt-Jrthumer Der Rom. Kirchen* (Mayntz: Kuchler, 1682).

⁸⁵ Johann Jacob Schudt and Efraim Frisch, *Von Der Franckfurter Juden Vergangenheit (Sitten Und Brauchen)* : Aus Johann Jacob Schudt's *Judische Merkwurdigkeiten* (Berlin: Schocken Verl, 1934).

trying to reform the Protestant church, objecting to the Holy Communion and other rites. Johann Georg Wachter, who wrote extensively on Kabbalah and who alleged that Spinoza was a secret Kabbalist (see *Der Spinozismus in Judenthumb* (1699)) was deeply alarmed at Moses Germanus' conversion having met him in Amsterdam. Wachter was troubled by the apparent influence of Kabbalah as having "induced" Germanus to convert. He entered into a debate with Spaeth and published the essence of his arguments against him in the book referred to above. It is obvious from this that Spaeth was a serious thinker and not an unstable convert to Judaism, though his vacillation between the various faiths may bring suspicion on his conversion. Adam Sutcliffe⁸⁶ (pages 155/6) states that the general situation in the 17th century appeared to have been conducive to conversion to Judaism. Spaeth wrote extensively and one of his works is a translation of Judah ha-Levi's poem "Mi Chamocho" into Latin, German, and Spanish, with an introduction in Spanish.

x) Alexander Abraham Cooper (1609 -1660)

Alexander Abraham Cooper⁸⁷, was baptised on 11th December 1609, converting to Judaism probably in Amsterdam, where he lived for a time⁸⁸ and see also⁸⁹. He was a painter of landscapes, but better known as a miniature portrait painter, the younger brother, and a lesser known artist, of Samuel Cooper (1607/8-1672)⁹⁰.

Cooper's background can be traced to John Hoskins known as John Hoskins the Elder (c.1590-1665), who was a very successful miniature painter, born in Wells, Somerset, the son of John Hoskins. The latter died as a pauper, a debtor in the Fleet prison in London. He was buried on 3rd May 1610. John Hoskins the Elder seemed to have been married twice but very little is known of his second wife Sarah except that she gave birth to another John, born in 1617, also a miniaturist. Sarah was also the mother of a daughter, Christiana, born on 24th January 1654.

⁸⁶ Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁸⁷ 'Alexander Cooper', *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2007).

⁸⁸ George Charles Williamson, *The History of Portrait Miniatures*. (Edition with Hand-Coloured Plates.) (2 vol. George Bell & Sons: London, 1904, 1904).

⁸⁹ Jean De Bourgoing, *English Miniatures* (London: Benn, 1928).

⁹⁰ Richard R. Holmes, 'The English Miniature Painters Illustrated by Works in the Royal and Other Collections. Article V-Samuel Cooper', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 9/411906), 296-94.

It is also known that John Hoskins' family lived somewhere in Blackfriars, a district outside the jurisdiction of the Painter-Stainers' Company, and a place favoured by immigrant artists such as Van Dyck. From around 1634 he worked in Bedford Street in Covent Garden and was given on 30th April 1640 an annuity of £200 for life, provided he did not do work for others without the King's licence. However the circumstances changed and he only received his annuity in the first year. He made his will on the 30th of December 1662 and died on 22nd February 1665. He was buried in St Paul's, Covent Garden. His wife was also buried there in on 19th February 1669.

John Hoskins employed his nephews Alexander and Samuel to help him to meet demand and Samuel, the more famous of the two brothers continued in the footsteps of John Hoskins. All the Hoskins seemed to have been involved in some form or another at miniature painting.⁹¹ Indeed Samuel became a well known painter with many commissions. It is quite possible that he engaged his brother Alexander in the work (see Alexander, ⁹²). It would seem that Samuel may have converted to Catholicism as he was buried in the church of St Pancras, where many converts were buried at that time. He died at the age of 64, the older of the two brothers.

Alexander Cooper was baptised at the Church of St Nicholas Cole Abbey and was the second son of Richard Cooper (b.1577) and Barbara, who were married at that Church on 1st September 1607. It seems that his parents for whatever reason were unable to look after their sons so they were brought up by their uncle John Hoskins and his wife.

Alexander certainly called himself a Jew when he lived and worked in Sweden, in the service of Queen Christina. Swedish documents say that he was born in 1605 but the correct date is 1609, as shown through his baptism record. Around the years 1632/33 he lived in Holland. In Sweden about 1647⁹³ he called himself Abraham the Jew. He also travelled to Denmark, where he carried out a commission for Christian IV (see under Alexander Cooper ⁹⁴). He also worked in the Hague as illustrated by the fact that he painted the portraits of the German Emperor as well as of Elizabeth, the daughter of James I of England, and the famous Queen of Hearts, Anne of Bohemia, in 1618. He

⁹¹ C.G. Williamson, *Memoirs in Miniature* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1933).

⁹² Oliver Millar, 'Samuel Cooper at the National Portrait Gallery', *The Burlington Magazine*, 116/8551974), pp.346–49.

⁹³ Williamson, *The History of Portrait Miniatures*. (Edition with Hand-Coloured Plates.).

⁹⁴ Corp Lovetoknow, 'Classic Encyclopaedia Based on the 11th Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica', (updated 2002).

probably died in Sweden as documents mention that he was employed and paid by the King of Sweden around the years 1651 to 1653 in the years in which Cooper claimed to be mortally ill. He also tried to indicate his wish to go to Tuscany or to come back to England. In 1658 he appears to have been in England, specifically in York with members of his extended family, as he signed a deposition in a Probate case and claimed to be a resident at his brother's house in Covent Garden. Therefore he probably died in 1660.

There is no doubt that Alexander lived for a time in Amsterdam as he is mentioned by Joachim Sandrart (1606-1668), a historian⁹⁵ who was also a portrait painter.⁹⁶ [Joachim was born in Frankfurt but the family originated from Mons. After studying in Germany, he travelled to Utrecht. In 1625 he became a pupil of Gerrit von Honthurst and in 1627 he was visited by Rubens. When Honthorst was invited to England, Sandrart was his companion. After 1629 Sandrart journeyed to Italy, where he became famous as a portrait-painter. In 1637 he revisited Holland and in 1645 settled in Nuremberg, where he lived for the remainder of his life. His 1649 painting *Peace-Banquet* now sits in Nuremberg's Town Hall. He is best known as an author of books on art, some of them in Latin, and especially for his historical work, the *Deutsche Akademie* (1675-1679), of which there is an edition by Sponzel (1896). The life of Sandrart authenticates the life of Cooper].

It can be said that Alexander Abraham Cooper was a righteous convert Franz Landsberger in his essay⁹⁷ speculates that Alexander Cooper may have been born a Jew, but was baptized. This is highly unlikely as Williamson in his *History of Portrait Miniatures*, London 1904)⁹⁸ would have mentioned this as he has followed the trail of Cooper to Sweden⁹⁹. It is from him that we learn that Cooper announced his Jewish identity when in Sweden. However we cannot totally dismiss the speculation that he was born a Jew, as there may have been quite a few Jews living in England even so many years after the expulsion of

⁹⁵ Christian Klemm and Joachim Von Sandrart, *Joachim Von Sandrart : Kunst Werke U. Lebens Lauf* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1986).

⁹⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Hollstein and John Roger Paas, *Hollstein's German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, 1400–1700. Volume XI, Joachim Von Sandrart, Joachim Von Sandrart the Younger, Johann Von Sandrart, Johann Jacob Von Sandrart, Lorenz Von Sandrart* (Rotterdam: Sound and vision interactive, 1995).

⁹⁷ Franz Landsberger, *Jewish Artists before the Period of Emancipation* (Cincinnati, 1941) 321–414. p.383

⁹⁸ Williamson, *The History of Portrait Miniatures*. (Edition with Hand-Coloured Plates.).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Jews from England in 1292. Lemberger also confirms¹⁰⁰ that Sweden was where Cooper openly proclaimed his Jewishness.

xi) Abraham ben Jacob (1693-1714?)

Ben Jacob's original name is not known. However scholars seem to agree that he was originally from the Rhineland, having later settled in Amsterdam, where he would have converted. His importance lies in the fact, mentioned in most sources including the *Jewish Encyclopedia* that he engraved the portrait of Rabbi Isaac Aboab and that he was the illustrator of the Amsterdam Haggadah,¹⁰¹ published in 1694¹⁰². It is believed that the engravings in the Haggadah are based on the engravings of Mattheus Merian, who may have taken the images from Holbein the Younger (R. Wischnitzer Von Holbein, *Bible zur Amsterdam Haggadah*, MGWJ n.s.39 (1931) p 269ff). His work also included the title-page for Isaiah Horwitz's *Shne Luchot Habrit* published in 1698. Another of his works is an amulet of 1700 and also *Calendarium Christiano-Judaicum Perpetuum* of 1714, after which there is no trace of him. A map of Palestine appended to the *Amsterdam Haggadah* is also thought to be his work.

xii) Aaron D'Antan (c.1710)

Martin Mulsow deals with the life of D'Antan in great detail in his essay (pp.123-181)¹⁰³ *regarding* the history of this convert. Details about D'Antan come from two letters found in the Jagielon Library in Krakow. An interesting pattern emerges if we examine the arguments as expounded by Bodo/Eleazar (see above) from 800 years earlier, in which it is evident that theological as well as moral pressure were exerted to renounce his newly acquired religion. D' Antan claimed that he never met a Jew or had any social interaction with one, though it is possible that he met Jews in Paris or in Metz or Avignon as a young soldier see (see Mulsow). He travelled via Germany to Bohemia and then to Hungary,

¹⁰⁰ Ernst Lemberger, *Die Bildnis-Miniatur in Skandinavien ... Mit Hundert Tafeln in Farbigen Lichtdruck* (Berlin, 1912). P.19

¹⁰¹ Cecil Roth (ed.), *Jewish Art* (Tel Aviv: Massadah-P.E.C. Press Ltd, 1961).

¹⁰² Alexander Marx, 'Review: Illustrated Haggadahs', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 13/4(1923), 513-19.

¹⁰³ H.Popkin (ed.), *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*.

from where he went to Bavaria and to the Tyrols. Eventually he crossed the Alps into Italy and from there he seems to have travelled from Livorno to Palestine.

D'Antan is likely to have travelled to Palestine from Livorno, which at the time was a tolerant city¹⁰⁴ and where many Jews lived in the 18th century¹⁰⁵. Livorno was one of the main trading centres in Tuscany, which expanded and became a major port during the rule of the Medici family in the 16th century. In 1675 it received the status of a free port, recognising it as an important connecting point between the Mediterranean, North Sea and the Near East ports.

In the 16th century, Cosimo I (1537-1574), wishing to increase the importance of Livorno, invited foreigners, including Marranos, to come to the new port and In 1587 the Grand Duke invited merchants of all nations to come to Livorno and Pisa. Further invitations were made in 1593 by Ferdinand I (1587-1609), who offered asylum to all Levantines, Spanish, Portuguese, Germans and Italians. Jews and other nationalities were given many rights and privileges. Ferdinand I's charter offered the Jews religious freedom, amnesty from previous crimes, full Tuscan citizenship and special courts with civil and criminal jurisdictions. Safe passage of goods and persons was guaranteed to all Jews who moved to Livorno. Here Jews could own houses, inherit property, carry arms at any hour, open shops in all parts of the city, have Christian servants and nursemaids, study at the university, work as doctors and did not have to wear the Jewish badge. Unlike many other cities in Tuscany, Jews did not have to live in a ghetto. Moses Montefiori,(1784-1885), the well known philanthropist and best known of British Jews, was born in Livorno and he and his family lived there for a time. These conditions proved attractive to Marranos and Levantines and the Jewish population grew from 114 in 1601 to 3,000 by 1689. In 1765, more than one-third of Livorno's 150 commercial houses were owned by Jews. The Jews' fame and fortune were well-known throughout Europe and inspired an offer by Louis XIV, King of France, to resettle the whole community in Marseilles.

When sovereignty of Tuscany changed to the house of Lorraine in 1737, conditions for the Jews remained the same. Leopold I (1745-1790) offered more privileges to the Jews, including the right to representation on the Municipal Council. By the end of the 18th century, nearly 5,000 Jews lived in Livorno in an open quarter.

Aaron D'Antan seems to have been a rather extraordinary young man, and an example of why certain well educated Christians, particularly those who studied theology, decided to convert perhaps by having recognised the spiritual, philosophical and historical value of

¹⁰⁴ Francesca Bregoli, 'Mediterranean Enlightenment : Jewish Acculturation in Livorno, 1737-1790', 2007).

¹⁰⁵ David G. Loromer, Merchants and Reform in Livorno, 1814-1868 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Judaism. It is also interesting to note as in earlier conversions such as Bodo/Eleazar's and Wecelein's, that there was someone who was using theological arguments in order to persuade him not to convert sometime around 1710. Letters were written to Mathurin Veyssiere La Croze who was a Librarian to the Prussian King. Those letters are in French and Italian, though the original was probably in French and referred to as a philosophical-religious correspondence. It was the Librarian who tried to persuade the young D'Antan to return to Christianity.

Mulsow speculates that perhaps Aaron's conversion was influenced by the words in Leviticus 14:2 "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest". It appears to be the case that that the young man felt unclean as a Christian and having considered other religions, he chose to become a Jew. He certainly felt guilty concerning his doubt in God and religion, so this verse may indicate his tortured soul and eventual search for something more relevant.

Mulsow suggests that Aaron was born between 1683 and 1686. In 1720, when he met Rabbi Isaac Cohen Rafa at the age of around 37, he would have been sufficiently good looking to be described as such by the Rabbi who gave him an introductory letter to the French Librarian, which is now appended to the Cracow Codex and probably written in that year. According to Rabbi Rafa's description, D'Antan came from a rich Parisian family and was a tall, young military man of beautiful stature, who converted to Judaism around 1710. D'Antan seems to have been honest and direct (see pp 131/132 of Mulsow).

It is interesting to speculate why Aaron D'Antan converted and how he found his way to Judaism, particularly noting that it happened only after the French revolution when French Jews were granted citizenship. Until that time the Jews were not considered as being French. It is possible that it was through Cartesian reasoning that he arrived at his newly acquired religion, though it might equally have been simply through faith, reason and his understanding of Judaism's approach to life. A positive approach to life, was the basic element of Judaism, according to the teachings of Gersonides, who lived in Provence.¹⁰⁶ He rejected the Trinity, and thought of the Messiah as a Redeemer bringing the Jews to Israel, nurturing and giving them a future. It is also quite possible that as far as D'Antan was concerned the final impetus for him to becoming a Jew, rather than just a Jewish sympathiser, was his illness and then subsequent recovery.

¹⁰⁶ Jacob J. Staub and Gershom Levi Ben, *The Creation of the World According to Gersonides* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

xiii) The Righteous Convert (Ger) Count Valentin Potocki (d.1749?)

Although a great deal has been written about Count Potocki the literary evidence seems to indicate that much of the story about the “martyr Count” is no more than a legend. The well known Potocki family existed but it is not clear that any of them converted to Judaism, or even considered the idea.

Joseph H. Prouser¹⁰⁷ appears to have researched all that was available on the subject and still was not able to give a conclusive answer, having extensively quoted from Avrom Karpinowitz’s book¹⁰⁸, written in Yiddish. Prouser expressed the idea that Count Potocki was a genuine convert, and that Jews are tolerant and accept proselytes. He also seemed to have wished that someone of such noble background would want to identify with the Jews at the time of the anti-semitism which prevailed in 18th Century Central Europe.

It should be noted that the Polish author Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski, acknowledged as the oldest verified source, cites this story, but on the other hand he actually may be its creator. Kraszewski (1812 – 1887) was a prolific Polish writer (Internet Article by Professor Dr. Hab. Józef Bachórz accessed in May 2011). Kraszewski’s works comprise more than 220 novels, around 150 novellas, short stories and literary pictures, some 20 theatre plays, and more than 20 volumes of historical studies (including the 3-volume *Historia Wilna*-History of Vilnius). He included the story about Potocki in the third volume of the aforesaid book (1841), *Wilno od początków jego do roku 1750*” (1840-1842) –Vilnius from the Beginning of the Year 1750), in which he claims to have followed a Hebrew original, thought by some to be from Ammudei Beit Yehudah (Judah Hurwitz, Amsterdam 1766). However the remaining copies of the this source contain no reference to the story other than a brief mention of the execution of an elderly Rabbi Mann in Wilno. One version of the story (perhaps a most romantic one) relates the story in the following manner: Young Potocki and his friend Zaremba, who went from Poland to study in Paris, became interested in an old Jew whom they found poring over a large volume when they entered his wine-shop. This Jew might have been their own countryman Menahem Man ben Aryeh Löb of Visun, who was tortured and executed in Vilna at the age of seventy (1749). Tradition has brought this Jewish martyr into close connection with the *Ger Tzedek*, but fear of the censor has

¹⁰⁷ H.Prouser, Noble Soul the Life and Legend of the Vilna Ger Tzedek Count Walenty Potocki.

¹⁰⁸ Karpinovitsh, Die Geschichte Fun Vilner Ger-Tsedek Graf Valentin Pototski Tel Aviv 1990

prevented writers in Russia from saying anything explicit on the subject. His teachings and explanations of the Hebrew Bible, to which they, as Catholics, were total strangers, so impressed them that they prevailed upon him to instruct them in Hebrew. In six months they acquired proficiency in the Biblical language and a strong inclination toward Judaism. They resolved to go to Amsterdam. But Potocki first went to Rome, whence, after convincing himself that he could no longer remain a Catholic, he went to Amsterdam and took upon himself the covenant of Abraham, assuming the name of Abraham ben Abraham.

After residing a short time in Germany, a country he disliked, he returned to Poland, and for a time lived among the Jews of the town of Vilna, some of whom seemed to be aware of his identity. He became close to the Gaon of Vilna. While in the synagogue he was irritated into commenting severely upon the conduct of a boy who was disturbing those occupied in prayer and study. The boy's father was so enraged that he informed the authorities that the long-sought Convert was there. Potocki was imprisoned awaiting his death - it had been decreed he would be burned alive at the stake - the Vilna Gaon sent a message offering to rescue him using Kabbalah. Avraham ben Avraham refused, preferring instead to die 'al kiddush Hashem' and inquired of the Vilna Gaon which blessing he should make immediately before his passing. The Vilna Gaon answered "...M'Kadesh et Shimcha be'rabim" and sent an emissary to hear and answer amen. Apparently the Jewish community in Vilna soon heard about the arrest of Potocki, and the rabbi R. Yeshue-Heshl and the religious judge R. Yehude ben Eliezer tried to intercede for him with the Church authorities and with the local government. It is known that the governor of Vilna, Duke Radziwil, was a liberal ruler, sympathetic towards the Jews. But the case was not under his jurisdiction, and the tribunal of the Catholic Church had condemned the convert to death by burning. There is also a story, that Valentin's mother, Countess Potocki, visited her son in prison in Vilna before his death and then went off to Warsaw to intercede for him with the Polish King August III. But it was all in vain. A letter of pardon from the king arrived too late to save the victim. Count Valentin Potocki was publicly burned at the stake by the Inquisition on the square of the cathedral in Vilna on 24 May 1749, the second day of the festival of *Shvues* (*Shavuot*). His ashes were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Vilna. According to legend, it was a Jewish beggar by the name of Leyzer Ziskes who took it upon himself to collect the ashes of the righteous proselyte, which he handed over to the Jewish community. There was no gravestone on the grave of the "Ger-Tzedek" (the righteous convert) in the old cemetery, as apparently the Jewish

community had to be very careful with the Church authorities. But then there was a tree growing over the grave, whose branches were chopped off by vandals many generations later.

Potocki's friend, Zaremba had returned to Poland several years before, married the daughter of a great nobleman and had a son. He remained true to the promise to embrace Judaism and took his wife and child to Amsterdam, where, after he and his son had been circumcised, his wife also converted to Judaism; they then went to Palestine.

There is no doubt that the aristocratic Potocki family played a significant part in Polish history. The family's palace can still be found in the centre of Łańcut. Throughout the centuries, the Potocki family was famous for its liberalism and its sympathy for the Jews. The Potocki family owned large estates in Łańcut a place founded by the Polish King Kasimir the Great in 1349. There had been fierce religious disputes between Catholics and Protestants in Łańcut in the 16th and early 17th century. Some significant Protestant synods had been held in the town, which only returned to Roman Catholicism in 1620. There was already a Jewish community in Łańcut at the time, but it is not known whether the young Valentin Potocki had any contact with them.

After the Second World War, when Vilna was under Soviet rule, the Soviet authorities closed the old Jewish cemetery, but allowed the community to carry the remains of several important Jewish personalities over to the new Jewish cemetery (Saltoniškių) in the area of Šeškinės. The ashes of the "Ger-Tzedek" were buried there together with the remains of the Vilna Gaon, R. Eliyohu, and his wife and son, and a common mausoleum was erected over their graves. This is a very unlikely story. Would ashes be indeed buried with a famous Rabbi's remains? This is certainly not part of the Jewish custom, law or tradition, even if he was burnt at stake and considered to be a martyr of the Jewish faith.

Avrom Karpinovitsh¹⁰⁹ admits that it is not very easy to write about a historical personality about whom there is very little information in the archives of his own time, but whose life has been surrounded by many legends. Poets and playwrights have written about this Polish aristocrat. One cannot find any exact details about Potocki's conversion and death in the church archives in Vilna. The Jewish community in Vilna, on the other hand, was keen to preserve the memory of the "righteous proselyte", and the story of his life and death was passed on from generation to generation. Karpinovitsh speculates what might

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

have motivated the young Valentin Potocki to convert to Judaism, perhaps the simplicity and purity of the Jewish faith. It might also have been his desire to identify with a weak, persecuted minority that was left without any protection at the time. Karpinovitsh thinks that in his liberalism Potocki was far ahead of his time, and he undertakes to write about this impressive personality according to the extant Jewish sources dedicated to his memory.

Polish historian Janusz Tazbir notes that the story - he uses the term "legend" - originated at the turn of the eighteenth century, and was published in a Jewish periodical issued in London as *The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel*¹¹⁰. He also notes that the literary version of the legend was created by Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski. Tazbir has concluded that "the court trial and death of Walentyn Potocki should be recognised as an historical legend deprived of all source-material foundations".

For his book on Count Valentin Potocki, Avrom Karpinovitsh employed sources from Dick¹¹¹, Broydes¹¹² and Kornhendler¹¹³. See also Walzer-Fass, Kudish¹¹⁴ and Cohen¹¹⁵ as well as an unpublished essay about Count Potocki by the author's brother, Dovid Karpinovitsh, found among his manuscripts after his death.

Avrom Karpinovitsh has also been in contact with a descendant of Count Valentin Potocki, Piotr Potocki, whose father was the last Polish ambassador to Spain before the Second World War. In a letter from Madrid, dated 6th July 1990, Piotr Potocki, promised Karpinovitsh to research the life of his ancestor on his next trip to France and London and to provide him with any more details he might find but nothing has come from it. There is a great interplay between the story of Zaremba and Potocki.

In the library of the Leo Baeck College in London is a publication called *Count Potocki, The True Convert* by J. Kagan which does seem to have been mentioned before. Here is

¹¹⁰ Janusz Tazbir, 'The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel', *The Jewish Periodical*, 81822).

¹¹¹ Isaac Meir Dick, *Gere Tsedek : Shete Agadot `Am : Ma`Aseh Rav... : Ma`Aseh Be-Ger Tsedek* (Berlin: [s.n.], 1921).

¹¹² Isaac Broydes, *Agadot Yerushalayim De-Lita* (Tel-Aviv: N. Tverski, 1946).

¹¹³ Yehezkel Kornhendler, *Yidn in Pariz* (Pariz, 1970).

¹¹⁴ Michael Walzer-Fass and Natan Kudish, *Lantsut Hayeha Ve-Hurbanah Shel Kehilah Yehudit* (Steven Spielberg Digital Yiddish Library, No. 13848; Tel Aviv: Irgune yotse Lantsut be-Yisrael uve-Artsot-ha-Berit, 1963).

¹¹⁵ Israel Cohen, *Vilna* (Jewish Communities Series; Philadelphia [Pa.]: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1943).

a brief summary of this exciting discovery, written in Yiddish. The writer takes us to the the Vilna Cemetery and says: (my translation) “Amongst the old graves in Vilner Cemetery lies a grave that attracts the attention of all those that visit. From a small mound of earth grows a stumpy bent tree. Although many years old, its stem is still thick, and very strong. Its branches lean towards the ground and are covered with very few leaves. It’s as if they were emulating that old Polish Count who discarded his regal clothing for a Kapota (tunic).

There was no gravestone with any writing, indeed no evidence of the person whose remains lay there beneath the tree’s shade. It became customary for the Vilna Jews to remember that special person, Count Potocki, who converted to Judaism, on the second day of Shavuot. This was his “Yahrzeit” (Anniversary of his death). His appointed name was Abraham the son of Abraham.

This is the truly extraordinary story of a person who chose to leave behind vast wealth with all its creature comforts in exchange for the difficult life of an observant Jew in difficult times. It is understandable that the Jews of Poland, Spain, Portugal and Ukraine would want to continue practising their religion since it was instilled in them from childhood. Also, to risk life and limb would be second nature. But for a person that emanated from a totally foreign background, royalty, palaces and untold wealth, who was then prepared to give over his life and soul to becoming Jewish and living in squalor – such a person surely makes us all stand back in awe.

The name of this true convert must therefore remain holy in the annals of the historical events of the Jewish nation, but only as a legend in spite of the story of Lord Gordon, (see later herein), who accepted his fate, died as a Jew but at different times and circumstances. This discovery and other literature on Count Potocki shows that the story about him, and seemingly of Zaremba, are legends and wishful thinking on the part of those who decided to romanticise this and possibly other conversions. However the story itself shows a very liberal view of Judaism and its acceptance of the “true convert”, Finally we need to note Magda Teter’s footnote, referring to the Count Potocki’s conversion as a legend ¹¹⁶ pp.237-263 *Issue 2, Vol.29 of the AJS Review 2005*:

“Some time in the second half of the eighteenth century, there emerged a Jewish legend that glorified a conversion to Judaism and a martyr's death of a Polish noble from a very prominent Polish aristocratic family, sometimes referred to as Walentyn Potocki, or Graf Potocki-the legend of Ger Tzedek, a righteous convert, of Wilno. The story was

¹¹⁶M.Magda Teter, 'The Legend of Ger Zedek of Wilno as Polemic and Reassurance', *AJS Review*, 29/22005), pp.237-63.

enthusiastically embraced by Eastern European Jews, and it subsequently became a subject of numerous novels and novellas. Even today its appeal continues. It is currently mentioned on a number of Jewish web sites as a true story of a Polish Hrabia (count) . . . who descended from a long line of noble Christian rulers and who sacrificed wealth and power to convert from Christianity to Judaism,... and it serves as a basis for school plays in some schools for girls. Although converts to Judaism were not unheard of in the premodern era, few stories of this kind emerged. Rabbinic authorities had an ambiguous attitude toward non-Jewish conversions, and few encouraged proselytizing or glorified non-Jewish converts. The legend of ger zedek of Wilno, though said to be a true story, appears to be a carefully crafted tale of conversion, a polemical and apologetic response to a number of challenges that the Polish Jewish community faced from the mid-eighteenth century”.

xiv) Lord George Gordon (1751 – 1793)

There is an extensive body of literature about Lord Gordon and about his life and family. Lord George Gordon was a Member of the British Parliament, a soldier, a rebel, and a revolutionary, particularly against Catholicism, as well as a severe critic of the government of the day; he was particularly against slavery and the Civil War in America.

It is important to deal briefly with his life and death as it is essential to concentrate on Lord Gordon’s character, giving it a more sympathetic and understanding meaning, showing how unpopular he became within the English aristocracy and the Jewish establishment and how his life became progressively more and more difficult to bear.

In the opening of the essay which appeared in *The Secret Conversions to Judaism in early Modern Europe*¹¹⁷, Marsha Keith Schuchard said “My interest in the quixotic figure of Lord George Gordon grew out of a research project on the Cabalistic-Masonic milieu of four equally outré eighteenth-century characters- Emanuel Swedenborg, Dr Samuel Jacob Flak, count Cagliastro and William Blake....”.

Lord Gordon was neither quixotic nor a figure to be ridiculed, although he turned out to be a tragic figure of English history. He certainly did not fit into some of the 18th century stereotypes although there were many others who also opposed slavery and were concerned about the way that politics at the time were being conducted.

¹¹⁷ H.Popkin (ed.), *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe* pp.183–231

William Vincent, a pseudonym for Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), the playwright, said of Lord George Gordon, "Gordon had the air of a Puritan, a figure tall and meagre, hair straight and dress plain. He was sweet natured and never satirical". Edmund Burke (1729 -1797) described him as "Don Quixote" and Horace Walpole "the Lunatic Apostle". Burke was a hugely influential Anglo-Irish politician, orator and political thinker, notable for his strong support for the American Revolution and his fierce opposition to the French Revolution.

Both Burke and Holcroft were contemporaries of Gordon and held differing views of him. Burke as a politician and a fierce opponent of the French Revolution, would have not found Gordon very palatable and indeed became his enemy, in spite of the fact that at one time they were good friends (see p.199 Popkin¹¹⁸).

Lord George Gordon was the third and youngest son of Cosmo 3rd Duke of Gordon and the brother of Alexander, the 4th Duke, Member of Parliament for Ludgershall. Born in London in 1751, he went to Eton College and then entered the Royal Navy, where he rose to the rank of lieutenant in 1772. In spite of being extremely talented and indeed ambitious, he was not given command of a ship by Lord Sandwich, to whom he applied for a commission and who was then the head of the Admiralty. Although the request was not refused it was delayed under various pretexts. As a result, he resigned his commission shortly before the beginning of the American Revolutionary War and returned to the family home in Scotland. He expressed his love of freedom and independence, which was not much liked by the authorities, particularly when he discussed with the Governor of Jamaica the cruel treatment of the blacks and the injustice of slavery.

Entering politics he contested Invernesshire against General Fraser of Lovat, the sitting member for that constituency. Wearing Highland dress and speaking Gaelic he canvassed the whole of the shire, on occasions playing the bagpipes to "soothe the savage breast of the dubious voter". Fraser was alarmed by this ambitious and talented young man, so Gordon was "given" (in fact Fraser bought for him in 1774) the pocket borough of Ludgershall, bribing him not to contest the county. He duly entered Parliament and remained independent. After being in Parliament about two years he attacked those whom he considered corrupt and double-dealers, opposing the American War. He opposed bills such as "Catholic Relief Act of 1778" because he feared that that it would encourage growth of the "Popish Religion" and enable more soldiers to be recruited for the American War. He became the head of the Protestant associations, formed to secure the repeal of

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

the above 1778 Act. The Bill was passed however and he was accused of having organized, the so-called Gordon Riots. ¹¹⁹

On 2nd June 1780 he was present when a mob marched in procession from St George's Fields to the Houses of Parliament in order to present a petition against Catholic Emancipation. After the mob reached Westminster the riots began. Initially, the mob dispersed after threatening to force their way into the House of Commons, but reassembled soon afterwards and, over several days, destroyed several Roman Catholic chapels, pillaged the private dwellings of Catholics, set fire to Newgate Prison, broke open all the other prisons, and attacked the Bank of England and several other public buildings. The army was finally brought in to quell the unrest and killed or wounded around 450 people before they finally restored order. For his role in apparently instigating the riots, Lord Gordon was charged with high treason. However, thanks to a defence by Baron Erskine, his cousin, a very talented and clever barrister, he was acquitted on the grounds that he had no treasonable intent. The apparently remarkable sight of seeing some 40-60000 demonstrators was witnessed by a Jew, Nathan Henry, the great grandfather of Reverend Morris Joseph, the first Minister of West London Synagogue of British Jews a Synagogue established in 1840. In 1786 Lord Gordon was excommunicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury for refusing to bear witness in an ecclesiastical court hearing and the following year he was convicted of defaming Marie Antoinette. He was, however allowed his freedom and so he made his escape to Holland. Following an intervention from the court of Versailles he was ordered to leave Holland and return to England.

Lord Gordon was determined to confront the Jesuit influence in Europe. He offered his services to the States of Holland against their Popish enemies. He wrote letters to the Governments of every Protestant country asking them to resist the advance of Catholicism. He seemed to have had some influence with the Courts of Constantinople, Tripoli, Algiers, Tunis and the United Provinces of Holland.

The beginning of his downfall was his support of Joseph Balsamo (1745-94) known as Cagliostro the Magician. Cagliostro, just released from the Bastille by Marie Antoinette, was apparently involved in the complicity of the theft of a diamond necklace.(See also Popkin p.183 *passim*) and Alexander Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*, which deals with the theft of the necklace.

In 1786 Lord Gordon wrote *The Prisoner's Petition to the Right Hon. Lord George Gordon to preserve their lives and Liberties and prevent their banishment to Botany Bay*. Botany Bay was planned as a penal colony. This pamphlet was considered to be libelous against the Judges and he was tried on 6th June 1787, and sentenced in January 1788 to five years in prison in Newgate. Gordon first escaped to Amsterdam, where he apparently

¹¹⁹ John Paul De Castro, Gordon Riots (Vol.8, 1926).

expressed a wish to become a Jew. Lord Gordon managed to evade the police, because he wore a black dress and had a long beard. However Charles Dickens claimed in his book *Barnaby Rudge* that he conceived of Judaism at the time of the riots. Moses Margolioth, a convert to Christianity ¹²⁰ quotes a Hebrew letter by one Meyer Joseph, who apparently acted as preceptor in Judaism for Lord Gordon. He was a poet and a scholar. According to the *Jewish Chronicle* of 25th April 1890 p.5, Lord Gordon received the customary tuition of a proselyte from Aaron Barnet, Chazan/Cantor of the Hambro Synagogue. We are also informed here that he was “called up” to the Torah at the Hambro Synagogue. He was honoured with a Blessing (Misheberach) when he offered a gift of £100-a huge amount at that time. Joseph says that the visit occurred after the conversion which took place in Birmingham. (However, in a short note in the *Jewish Chronicle* dated 19th July 1872 (p. 221) there is reference that Gordon was converted in Holland, quoting *Barnaby Rudge*) and his earlier visit to Paris in 1782 (not borne out by the Press as they say that he was converted in 1787). But again in the “Notes of the Week” *Jewish Chronicle* of 25th April 1890 under a report regarding the late John Barnet it is mentioned that this gentleman’s grandfather Aaron Barnet, the Chazan (Cantor) of the Hambro Synagogue, was one of the teachers of Judaism who taught Lord Gordon Judaism. The Minute Book of the Hambro Synagogue was allegedly lent by Rabbi Hermann Adler to Professor David Kauffman of Budapest as he was writing an article on Zvi Ashkenazi. However the book was not returned after Kauffman’s premature death. Among the missing documents were not only the first minute book, but also the pages that referred to Lord George Gordon’s famous donation, which were exhibited at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition in 1887 (item no 601).¹²¹ (Hambro Synagogue was formed 1707, the synagogue built in 1725 and closed in 1936, when it amalgamated with the Great Synagogue) ¹²². It was founded in London by Mordecai Hamburger as a protest against the tyranny of Abraham of Hamburg, the Parnas of the Great Synagogue). It would seem, that Lord Gordon was connected with the Hambro Synagogue through Michael Joseph, a member of that Synagogue. Michael Joseph was in 1818 one of the people who was involved in the establishment of the Jewish Free School, a school which still exists. It seems befitting that members of a

¹²⁰ History of the Jews in Great Britain” 1851 volume II pp.122-124

¹²¹ Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition : Catalogue (London: [s.n.], 1887). pp.19 & 52

¹²² Pamela Fletcher Jones, The Jews of Britain : A Thousand Years of History (Adlestrop, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire: Windrush Press, 1990).

rebellious synagogue should honour Lord Gordon. Rabbi Tevele Schiff of the Duke's Synagogue had refused to accept Lord Gordon as a Proselyte.

A most intriguing booklet was published in London circa 1785/6 called *The Christian Turned Jew, Being the most remarkable life and adventures of Lord George Gordon*. The booklet contained a letter sent to Gordon by a certain great lady after his imprisonment. Apart from giving a brief history of Lord Gordon it also claims that he lived in Birmingham at the house of a widow where he was apprehended, having lived there since August "wearing a habit, having a long beard, and refusing to eat pork or anything contrary to the Jewish Laws". The booklet further claims that he made promises to help the Jewish community with their Synagogue. See also *The Bristol Journal* of 15th December 1787 reporting that Gordon had been living in Birmingham since August, 1786. The letter was sent by a noble lady who is "nearly related to him" and whose Poem is sarcastic, condemning him for what he had done and it ends:

"Tho' my tale is odd, yet I'm sure it is true

So farewell My Lord, since to Newgate you're taken

You may find it hard case to save your own bacon",

Gordon's imprisonment was indeed harsh, but little different from what has been seen before in respect of those who converted, coming either from their "friends" or those who sought their downfall.

The long beard has been confirmed by the wife of Rev. Solomon Lyon who came to bring him food, see (*Jewish Chronicle* 19th July 1872 p.221). The event is also recorded in Arthur Barnett's book¹²³. He was despised by the rich Jews but not by the poor and those who came to England such as the Polish and Turkish Jews, who went to see him and indeed regarded him as a second Moses. There is no doubt that Lord Gordon was the butt of many satirists and cartoonists such as Solomons "Gordon" 265-71. There is a large collection of 'Gordonalia' deposited in the Jewish Theological Seminary New York TJHSE 12 (1931), I.

It is said that Gordon was politically active in prison and frequently invited people for dinner, except those who shaved. He attracted the bizarre and the unusual and it is no

¹²³ Arthur Barnett *The Western Synagogue through Two centuries (1761-1961)*, London, Valentine Mitchell, 1961 p.117

surprise that he was ridiculed and that many disliked him, such as Edmund Burke. Gordon's prison sentence came to an end on 28th January 1793 and he duly appeared in the Court of King's Bench covering his head. However as he failed to deposit the necessary financial sureties he remained in prison and died there, probably of typhus on the 1st November 1793 (see Watson ¹²⁴pages 130 to 133 and pages 135 to 137).

Gordon was not given a Jewish funeral, as apparently his family objected and he was buried in a cemetery which now no longer exists, behind what is now Euston Station in London. There is however a little graveyard next to a disused Church and a communal garden. His family apparently offered to help with money but he refused. (Christopher Hibbert, another biographer, writes that scores of prisoners waited outside his door for news of his health; friends, regardless of the risk of infection, stood whispering in the room and praying for his recovery. He certainly did not seem to have had any powerful friends, Gordon was a colourful personality, his life full of controversies, including his conversion to Judaism for which he was ostracized. The records of the United Synagogue in the UK, and *Jewish Chronicle* (see below the same date and same article) show that his "remains were interred with the utmost privacy in a vault in St James's burying ground, Hampstead Road").

xv) Richard Brothers (1757-1824)

Richard Brothers was classified by the English courts as "mad" and spent some eleven years in a Mental Asylum¹²⁵. He was a millenarian, having gathered around himself a group of Jews, who considered themselves to be a part of the "Lost Tribes" of Israel, which disappeared when the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed and who may yet be found. Millenarians believed that with the Second Coming of Christ would arrive the Kingdom of God on earth, which would last for a thousand years.

Brothers was released from the asylum in 1806, finding accommodation with one of his followers. From 1815 he lived with John Finlayson, a Scottish lawyer who, convinced of Brothers' mission, gave up his work and moved to London where he practised as a House

¹²⁴ Robert Watson, 'The Life of Lord George Gordon with a Philosophical Review of His Political Conduct. By Robert Watson, M. D', (updated 1795)

¹²⁵ Deborah Madden, *The Paddington Prophet : Richard Brothers's Journey to Jerusalem* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

Agent. He published a booklet called *Admonition to all countries*, in which he tried to convince others of Isaac Newton's mistakes ¹²⁶ and ^{127"/>}.

Richard Brothers entered the Royal Navy and served under Admirals Keppel and Rodney. In 1783 he became a lieutenant and was honourably discharged in 1783, receiving a pension which amounted to half-pay (£54 p.a.). He then travelled in Europe and married Elizabeth Hassall in 1786. His marriage said to be unhappy and he returned to service in the Royal Navy. He came to believe that military service was not compatible with his new calling to serve Christianity and again left the Navy in 1789. Brothers claimed to hear the voice of an attending angel which proclaimed to him the fall of Babylon the Great, which he took to be in fact London. Upon Brothers' plea for mercy, God decided to spare London for a time and the destruction was halted. Around this time, Brothers awaited a heavenly lady who would descend from the clouds showering him with money, love and happiness. In February 1792 Brothers declared himself a healer and claimed he could restore sight to the blind. He drew large crowds, due less to his healing ability than to his small gifts of money to those he prayed for.

In 1793 Richard Brothers declared himself to be the apostle of a new religion. He began to see himself as possessing a special role in the gathering of the Jews to return to the Promised Land ¹²⁸.

He wrote in his publication "*British-Israel publication* : 'A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies at Times, Book the First, wrote under the direction of the LORD GOD and published by His Sacred Command, it being the first sign of Warning for the benefit of All Nations; Containing with other great and remarkable things not revealed to any other Person on Earth, the Restoration of the Hebrews to Jerusalem by the year of 1798 under their revealed Prince and Prophet (i.e., Richard Brothers) London, Printed in the year of Christ 1794.'

As a result of prophesying the death of the King and the end of the monarchy, he was arrested for treason in 1795, and imprisoned on the grounds of being criminally insane. His case was, however, brought before Parliament by his ardent disciple, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, an orientalist and a Member of Parliament. As a result, Richard Brothers was removed to a private asylum in Islington. While he was there he wrote a variety of prophetic pamphlets, which gained him many believers. Among his supporters was William

¹²⁶ John Finlayson and Richard Brothers, *An Admonition to the People of All Countries; That Our Saviour's Second Coming Is at Hand and the Establishment of His Kingdom Upon Earth, Etc* (Edinburgh, 1797, 1797)

^{127"/>}¹²⁷ Richard Brothers and William Sharp, *Richard Brothers Letter to William Sharp* (1795)

¹²⁸ Richard Brothers ([London]: B. Crosby, 4 Stationers Court, Ludgate Street, 1795).

Sharp ¹²⁹, the engraver. Some of his political predictions (such as the violent death of Louis XVI) seemed to be proof that he was inspired. But when he predicted that on 19th November 1795 he would be revealed as Prince of the Hebrews and Ruler of the World and the date passed without any such manifestation, William Sharp deserted him to become a religious follower of Joanna Southcott ¹³⁰. His followers drifted away, either disillusioned or embarrassed.

Brothers spent the last 30 years of his life designing the flags, uniforms and palaces of the New Jerusalem. John Finlayson of London secured his release from the private asylum in 1806 and Brothers moved into his home, where he died a lonely figure on 25th January 1824. John Finlayson then began his own financial campaign against the Government, seeking payment of an enormous claim for his maintenance of Brothers prior to his death. He is one of the examples of someone who appears to have been truly disturbed, having declared himself as the Prince of the Hebrews and there is no tangible evidence that he had actually converted to Judaism.

xvi) Warder Cresson Michoel Boaz Yisroel ben Abraham (1798-1860) ¹³¹ and p.319¹³²

Warder Cresson's journey to Judaism took a convoluted path ¹³³. He was born in Philadelphia in 1798 and brought up as a Quaker. He became a wealthy farmer in rural Pennsylvania, married and had a son. He became a "lifelong seeker of religious truth". By the 1840s, Cresson had become, in turn, a Shaker, a Mormon, a Seventh-Day Adventist and a Campbellite (the latter two believed that the Second Coming of Christ was close at hand).

Cresson became well known in Philadelphia for religious "haranguing in the streets," warning all within earshot of the approaching apocalypse and in 1844 he expressed his certainty that God was about to gather the Jewish people in Jerusalem as a prelude to the "end of days." Cresson wrote, "God must choose some medium to manifest and act through, in order to bring about his designs and promises in this visible world; ...This medium or recipient is the present poor, despised, outcast Jew ... God is about to gather

¹²⁹ Richard Brothers and William Sharp, Richard Brothers Letter to William Sharp (1795).

¹³⁰ Deborah M. Valenze, 'Millenarianism in Britain, 1794–1814 : The Movements of Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott', 1975).

¹³¹ Frank Fox, Quaker, Shaker, Rabbi: Warder Cresson, The Story of a Philadelphia Mystic (1971).

¹³² Stuart Schulman, "Insane on the Subject of Judaism": Pursuing the Ghost of Warder Cresson", The Jewish Quarterly Review, 94/2004, pp.318-360

¹³³ Jewish American History Foundation, 'The Lunacy Trial of Warder Cresson', The Occident, /1856 (1856 1856), pp.203–309.

them again (in Jerusalem)." Cresson decided to move to Jerusalem to witness the great event, leaving his family ¹³⁴.

Before leaving the USA, Cresson volunteered to work as the first American consul in Jerusalem, which was then a part of Syria. His Pennsylvania congressman, Edward Joy Morris, lobbied the State Department to have him appointed. Soon after Cresson sailed, however, a former cabinet official informed John C. Calhoun, then Secretary of State, that Cresson was mentally unstable. Calhoun dispatched a letter to Cresson, which reached him in Jerusalem, informing him that his appointment had been rescinded. Cresson decided to stay on in Jerusalem despite this disappointment. He had come as an evangelical Christian to witness God's ingathering of the Jewish Diaspora. His time in Jerusalem, however, drew him to become a Jew. The impoverished, deeply religious Jews he found in Jerusalem touched his heart and he was offended by the "soul snatching" behaviour of Christian missionaries who attempted to bribe some Jews with food and clothing into accepting conversion. He wrote, "The conversions which have been reported . . . by the Protestant Episcopal Mission were owing to the wants of the converts, not to their conviction." He expressed admiration for those Jews who resisted conversion despite the material incentives.

As historian Abraham J. Karp notes,¹³⁵ (see also ¹³⁶). By 1847 Cresson already felt himself more Jew than Christian." In March 1848, Cresson converted. "I became fully satisfied," he wrote, "that I could never obtain Strength and Rest but by doing as Ruth did, and saying to her mother in law: ... 'thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God' ... I was circumcised, entered the Holy Covenant, and became a Jew."

To close his affairs in America, Cresson returned to Philadelphia, where he found himself in trouble. "Soon after my return," Cresson wrote, "I found that there was a growing opposition and enmity toward the course I had taken." Cresson's wife and son started a civil "Inquisition of Lunacy" to have Cresson declared insane for choosing Judaism. The jury declared Cresson a lunatic ¹³⁷. In 1850, Cresson appealed against it and there was an order for a retrial¹³⁸. The press sensationalised it. There were more than 100 witnesses called. The jury ultimately found for Cresson and an editorial in the *Philadelphia Public*

¹³⁴ Warder Cresson, *The Great Restoration and Consolidation of Israel in Palestine, and the Masora : Or, Jewish Counterfeit Detector* (S.l.: s.n., 1977).

¹³⁵ Irving Katz and Abraham J. Karp, 'Review of Beginnings: Early American Judaica: A Collection of Ten Publications, in Facsimile, Illustrative of the Religious, Communal, Cultural Amp; Political Life of American Jewry, 1761-1845', *The Journal of American History*, 63/4(1977), 991.

¹³⁶ Edward S. Shapiro and Abraham J. Karp, 'Review of the Jewish Experience in America', *American Quarterly*, 22/2(1970), 291.

¹³⁷ Arthur A. Chiel, *An Inquisition of Lunacy* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub., 1980).

¹³⁸ Horatio Hubbell, *Warder Cresson, and Pleas Pennsylvania. Court of Common, The Lunacy Trial of Warder Cresson* (Miscellaneous Trials, V. 25; S.l.: s.n.).

Ledger celebrated the verdict "as settling forever ... the principle that a man's 'religious opinions' never can be made the test of his sanity." *The Occident* of 1863¹³⁹ published the detailed transcript of the trial. The trial was bizarre in so far as Cresson was accused of apparently seeing the room full of angels at the time of his circumcision. There is no doubt that his enemies, especially his family, were trying to confine him to a lunatic asylum but his defence was very forceful and indeed dealt with the basics of freedom. In his defence his lawyers mentioned people like Sir Moses Montefiore and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, all dealing with agriculture and land for Israel and, no less than Cresson, involved in the same venture and purpose. The verdict, after a magnificent speech from the defence lawyer was in favour of the defendant Warder Cresson.

His entire family stood against him in the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County. The case was filed by Horatio Hubbell at the request of Cresson's wife Emma, and the other principal witnesses against him were his brothers in law James and John Townsend, Jacob Cresson his son, and other members of his family, The allegations concerned the changing of religious beliefs ¹⁴⁰, and in the background was the fear of the family losing his wealth which he wished to use to develop his vision for agricultural development. Cresson seemed to anticipate the dream of Zionism to develop Israel's agriculture. He called for "the Restoration and Consolidation of all Israel to their own land ... because unity and consolidation is strength." He announced that he was starting a model farm in the Valley of Rephaim outside Jerusalem "to introduce an improved system of English and American Farming in Palestine." He hoped for a Jewish agricultural Palestine "a great centre, to which all who rest may come and find rest to their persecuted souls."

During the four years Cresson spent in Philadelphia waiting for his trial to end, he worshipped at Congregation Mikveh Israel, lived the life of a religious Jew and participated in Jewish communal life. At some point, he divorced his wife. He also took on a new Hebrew name, and in 1852 he left for Jerusalem bringing with him a self-published plan "for the Promotion of Agricultural Pursuits and for the Establishment of a Soup-House for the Destitute Jews in Jerusalem." Cresson's desire for a soup kitchen was to "prevent any attempts being made to take advantage of the necessities of our poor brethren" that would "force them into a pretended conversion."

Cresson's planned model farm never developed for lack of capital, but he continued to pray for its success. In the mid-1850s, he married Rachel Moleano and became an honoured member of Jerusalem's Sephardic community. He died in 1860, and was buried on the Mount of Olives "with such honours as are paid only to prominent rabbis." After a

¹³⁹ Isaac Lesser (Horatio Hubbel Jnr), 'The Lunacy Trial of Warder Cresson', *The Occident*, (1863), pp.203-309.

¹⁴⁰ Stuart Schoffman, "'Insane on the Subject of Judaism': Pursuing the Ghost of Warder Cresson', *The Jewish quarterly review.*, 94/22004), 318.

long journey, Warder Cresson found his spiritual home in Jerusalem as Michael Boaz Israel (see ¹⁴¹).

xvii) Joseph Abraham Steblicki (1726 – 1807)

Joseph Abraham Steblicki was born in Nikolai, Upper Silesia in Germany in about 1726 and died there on 16th May 1807. He was the son of a Catholic butcher, and brought up a Catholic. He lived with his parents until the age of eleven and was then sent to the Jesuits in Troppau, Tarnowitz and Teschen. After six years of studies, including a course in rhetoric, he returned to his home town to learn his father's trade. However, he became a teacher, later city treasurer in his native town and finally a member of the city council. In 1755, he married a 20-year-old catholic, Marianne Steier, who bore him four children, two of whom survived, a son Johann Anton (born 1757) and a daughter Anna (born 1760). Retiring from active life in 1780, he occupied himself with religious studies, and then decided to convert to Judaism. Steblicki considered circumcision to be of paramount importance. He based this on his understanding of the scriptures and on the fact that even the founder of the church was circumcised.

Every Jew whom Steblicki approached in the matter of his circumcision declined to help him. He eventually went to Poland in the wintertime to seek assistance there, first in Oswiecim, then in Krakow where he found a large Jewish community. Given that he was a foreigner, they seemed inclined to help him and promised to send a representative to his home town to do the operation there. It was only in the late summer that an envoy came to Nikolai and even then refused to perform the procedure himself. Instead, he told Steblicki what to do and handed him the knife. Steblicki performed the operation himself in the presence of the envoy.

The stranger gave him the name Josef Abraham according to the Jewish law. He was paid two ducats and left immediately afterwards. Nobody in Nikolai, not the local Jews and not even his wife, learned about this. Steblicki became ill and recovered only after fourteen days. He began to observe the Sabbath and the dietary laws; On Yom Kippur in 1785 he attended services in the synagogue dressed in a white gown (Kittel), like other worshippers. The Jews had heard of his inclination and let him enter after he had shown

¹⁴¹ Schoffman, "'Insane on the Subject of Judaism": Pursuing the Ghost of Warder Cresson'. particularly p.319

them his kittel and declared that he had performed a circumcision on himself. He remained in the synagogue until the end of the Day of Atonement. His appearance in the synagogue was met with great interest by many people and rumours quickly arose. When the authorities were informed of Steblicki's conversion, proceedings against him were immediately instituted which, according to the law of Leopold I of 1709, then still in force, should have led to a sentence of death. This was a severe crime under canon as well as civil law. It was understandable therefore that the authorities started procedures immediately. His wife and son were called as witnesses and questioned on 7th November 1785. However Frederick II ordered the proceedings to be suspended and left to the revenue authorities the questions as to whether Steblicki, as a Jew without right of residence ("unvergleiteter Jude"), should be tolerated and whether he should be required to pay the special Jewish taxes. On 28th July 1786, the authorities decided that he should not be molested, on the ground that he must be mentally unbalanced. After his conversion Steblicki lived more than twenty years in harmony with his wife and his son and was highly respected by the small Jewish community of Nikolai. His life was made the subject of legendary exaggerations in David Samosez's *Ger Tzedek* (Breslau, 1816) and in M. A. Hertzberg's *Der Neue Jude* (Gleiwitz, 1845).

His excellent education had given Steblicki an elevated position in his local community: chronicler of the town in 1766, in school service and as member of the catholic clergy in 1775, as head teacher and member of the town magistrates (as treasurer) in 1778. In 1780, he resigned from his work in the school and concentrated on his official functions for the town. The reason for this is that when he returned to his hometown, he continued studying privately as soon as his financial position allowed him. He mostly read the bible and soon became convinced that if God was unchanging then the Jewish faith was the only true and unchanging faith.

Neustadt's booklet ¹⁴² describes how he started to practise Judaism by abstaining from forbidden foods, by preparing meat according to the Jewish custom, by celebrating Shabbat and by not shaving. He did all these things privately but made no effort to keep them secret in the little village where he lived. However local clergymen noticed his behaviour and tried to dissuade him. In 1780, they banned him from going to confession. Steblicki continued to attend mass but ceased doing so on 25th July 1785. Aware of the consequences, he stepped down from his position as a magistrate making sure that his

¹⁴² Louis Neustadt, Josef Steblicki : Ein Proselyt Unter Friedrich Dem Grossen : Auf Grund Der Amtlichen Untersuchungsakten Mit Urkundlichen Beilagen (Breslau: T. Schatzky, 1894).

personal and financial matters were in order and handed over control on all his affairs to his son, reserving only a certain amount of money for his own personal needs and making sure that his wife and daughter were being looked after financially. The formal steps were taken on 1st September in front of a court and witnesses.

All attempts to deter Steblicki from practising his new faith remained unsuccessful. He performed daily morning prayers with Tefillin, ate none of the food his wife prepared apart from milk and coffee, and ate with the widow of Rabbi Salomon once a day. He observed Shabbat strictly and mostly spent it with other Jews. Steblicki thus became known as a Jew to the citizens of Nikolai. Both his wife and son said that they found his decision inexplicable but spoke about it with great care and respect. His wife confirmed that he had always been a formidable husband and that she did not wish to divorce him but rather spend the rest of her days in his company so that at the end of times the divine judge would not be able to reproach her for neglecting her promise of marital support. His son blamed his father's actions on melancholy adding that he didn't have even the minutest complaint against his father and only wished him to be allowed to spend the rest of his days in peace, quietly enjoying his fortune. Steblicki was questioned the following day. He explained why he had decided to convert, believing that Judaism is the only true, unchanging faith and that he hoped to remain unpunished because he had neither claimed that the Christian faith led to condemnation nor had he done any harm to anyone.

The commission asked a physician to assess Steblicki's medical state. He found him to be deeply affected by melancholy, physically as well as mentally, and described his head as having an abnormal form due to a fall he suffered in his youth. It seemed that by giving this evidence the physician had understood the subtle hint of the court and tried to save a man of great reputation from punishment. The head of the Synagogue, Abraham Samson, was called as a witness but the court could not find any indication that the Jewish community had in any way been involved in Steblicki's actions. Finally, all members of the court were called as witnesses and they all confirmed that Steblicki was a man of impeccable reputation and that he had always behaved in an irreproachable manner. Some of the members of the court continued to be in contact with him after they learned of his conversion to Judaism. Documents were sent to Brieg first and then to Berlin. The Fredericians made the authorities recommend to the highest department of justice that no further investigation should take place. They were doubtful about the evidence given by the physician but felt that matters of faith could not be attributed to folly; because Steblicki was known as a good man and because the Jews had nothing to do with his case the

matter should be dealt with leniently. In Berlin, this strange case was decided surprisingly quickly. The documents arrived in Berlin on 4th December and a decision was taken on 12th December. The decision was to send back all documents and to order that no further investigation should take place and no punishment be imposed. The settlement of all financial matters was referred to the Department of Finances. It took the provincial government much longer to decide on the matter and though they basically reached the same conclusions they could not abstain from commenting on Steblicki's doubtful mental health. The Financial Department eventually decided that he should be allowed to reside in Nikolai and not be obliged to pay the tax required from the Jews. They added that Steblicki was probably insane. His fellow citizens thought differently as did the Jews. They elected him as the first chair of their community because they trusted his experience in all administrative matters. On 20th May 1794 a huge fire destroyed most of the town. Almost all archive material was lost. It is supposed that Steblicki left Nikolai after this catastrophe and settled in Sohrau where his son lived, going on to have a distinguished career serving in many different functions of the local administration.

Steblicki was held in high esteem by everyone who knew him, spent most of his time studying and never tried to bring anyone any closer to Judaism. His wife died in 1806, causing him much pain. He himself died on a Shabbat, 16th May 1807, aged 73. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Nikolai and a small monument was erected for him. There is no evidence that Steblicki's case, which took place in the last year of Frederick's reign, ever came to the attention of the king. The community i.e. Neustadt's own community was given a cemetery for the first time in 300 years under Frederick, giving also governmental powers to the rabbi of Breslau and awarding him the title of Königlicher Landesrabbiner in Schlesien.

In his booklet Neustadt quotes the following sources for his information on Steblicki's conversion a) report by the Upper Silesian Oberamtsregierung (Nov. 1785); b) the decision of the Staatsrat (Dec. 1785) and c) The order of the Government in Breslau (Aug. 1786). None of these is directly relevant to the conversion matter, simply discussing whose responsibility is the handling of the case. Neustadt examines the origins of the stories about Steblicki, mentioning in particular two sources of these stories: a report in Yiddish,

printed in Breslau in 1816, based on a report by the Nikolai Rabbi Samuel Zulz, published after the rabbi's death and Herzberg, op.cit.,¹⁴³ and ¹⁴⁴.

The Steblicki story is much more credible than that of Count Potocki, because we know more and there is more documentary evidence.

xviii) Eliza Nathan (1795-1824)

Some of the information about Eliza Nathan comes from Arthur Barnett's book *The Western Synagogue through the Centuries*,¹⁴⁵ the first wife of Isaac Nathan, the composer.

Eliza Nathan died giving birth to her fifth child in 1824 and was buried in the Brompton Jewish cemetery. According to the note in the book she was buried as if she was one who has committed suicide, i.e. on the edge of the cemetery. The writer speculates that because she was a convert the Rabbinic authorities it took several days before they agreed for her to be buried in the Jewish cemetery. She died on a Monday and was buried on a Friday although it is customary to bury Jews as quickly as possible after death. The Cemetery in South West London just off Fulham Road, can be visited, though burials no longer take place there. Unfortunately Eliza Nathan's grave cannot be identified as many tombstones are broken and the inscriptions unreadable.

In 1819 Eliza Nathan published *Elvington, A Novel*. *Elvington* was Eliza Nathan's first book and according to Catherine Mackerras (granddaughter of Isaac Nathan and mother of Charles Mackerras the distinguished conductor)¹⁴⁶ and ¹⁴⁷, "her works are no more unreadable today than are most of the minor effusions of Regency England". "*Elvington*" a highly romantic melodrama was written when she was sixteen, in the form of letters exchanged between several characters. This epistolary style had flourished in eighteenth century England with many authors influenced by its greatest exponent, Samuel

¹⁴³ M.A. Herzberg, *Der Neue Jude Des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Gleiwitz: Gedruckt bei G. Neumann, 1845). 1845

¹⁴⁴ M.A. Herzberg, *Der Neue Jude [Joseph Ben Abraham Steblicki] Oder Weisheit Sr. Maj : Friedrich Des Grossen... Praktisches Beispiel Zur Nothwendigsten Wahrheits-Leuchte Der Gegenwart* (Rudelheim, 1852). 1852

¹⁴⁵ Arthur Barnett, *The Western Synagogue through Two Centuries (1761–1961)* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1961).

¹⁴⁶ Catherine Mackerras, *Divided Heart : The Memoirs of Catherine B. Mackerras* (Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Little Hills Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁷ *Conversation with Catherine Maclaurin Mackerras* (1974).

Richardson. *Elvington* is lovingly dedicated to Nathan: "To Him whose example has taught me fortitude in adversity, and whose firm reliance on the dispensation of Providence presented a bright beacon of hope to guide me through the mazes of affliction. Whose unutterable tenderness has withstood the machinations of malevolence and duplicity, and whose cheering smile of approbation first encouraged me to present the following work to the public. To my Husband, these pages are dedicated as a very small tribute of gratitude by an affectionate wife." Catherine Mackerras comments: much has been made of this dedication, with commentators hinting at various lurid explanations for its wording. In fact it expresses sentiments perfectly consistent with the sensibility of a young woman disowned by her family and cut adrift forever from the scenes of her childhood". In 1822 she also published a three-volume novel called "*Langreath, a Tale.*",

Eliza Nathan's husband and father of her five children was Isaac Nathan (1792-1864), musician and the eldest son of the Chazan Menachem Mona, a Polish refugee language master, who claimed to be the son of Stanislaus II, the last Polish King¹⁴⁸. It is said that Isaac Nathan eloped in 1812 with a pupil called Elizabeth Rosetta Worthington, then seventeen years old. She was the only child of an Irish army officer and a niece of Sir William Worthington who had been thrice Lord Mayor of Dublin. Another of her uncles was a Judge of the Irish Supreme Court. After she became Mrs Nathan she has probably as a result of her conversion changed her name to Eliza. Isaac Nathan had, so it seems, two weddings, first in church at St Mary Abbot's, Kensington (see copy of the Marriage Certificate in Appendix II (ii)) and three months later at the Western Synagogue, following her conversion to Judaism. Eliza Nathan's death was tragic and we learn of it thus from C. Mackerras's book : "One winter afternoon in 1824 Eliza and Nathan were giving a musical party, when Eliza suddenly left the room. According to her daughter Louisa, then six years old, her mother "...fell with great violence against her bedroom door, which she slammed behind her". The next day she died having given birth to a baby girl. Nathan and Eliza had five children, two sons and four daughters though none remained Jewish.

Part of Nathan's claim to fame lay in his setting to music of Lord Byron's series of poems on Hebrew themes. The music was an adaptation of ancient Jewish chants. *Hebrew Melodies* was published in 1813.

Byron left England for Greece in 1816, and Nathan lost his patronage and decided to leave England for Australia. He married for the second time, to Henrietta Buckley a dancer.

¹⁴⁸ Catherine Maclaurin Mackerras, *The Hebrew Melodist : A Life of Isaac Nathan* (Sydney: Currawong, 1963).

She apparently also converted to Judaism but there is no evidence of the same though there is a claim that a Ketubah (Jewish Marriage contract was drawn up but never signed). Nathan died in Australia, being the first tram mortality as he was killed whilst getting off a horse drawn tram in Sydney. His descendant are Sir Alan Charles Maclaurin Mackerras (1925-2010) the Australian conductor and his brother Malcolm. (See also 1901–1906, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*).

xix) Baron Ernst Albert Emil von Manstein (1869-1944)

At one time it was rumoured that Nazi Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's brother converted to Judaism, but this is incorrect because the biography of the Field Marshall does not bear it out. The Marshal was born Fritz Erich Lewinsky in 1887 and was adopted by Lieutenant General Georg von Manstein who was married to the Marshal's sister and they could not have children. There are many books written about the Nazi Field Marshal e.g. Marcel Stein's book (2007) *The Janushead; Field Marshal Von Manstein, A Reappraisal*, (Solihull, West Midlands, England: Helion and Company). The British records of the Manstein trial are now housed in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College London.

A short essay in the *The Jewish Monthly*¹⁴⁹ published by the Anglo-Jewish Association, sheds light on the true identity of the "Manstein" who converted to Judaism and that the convert could not have been the Nazi von Manstein.

The convert was a Baron Ernst Emil von Manstein, who was born on 19 May 1869 at Donessleben to Otto von Manstein and Karolina nee Mevius. The Baron married on 28th November 1892 at Wurzburg to Fanny.

The description of the situation in the *Jewish Monthly* is instructive and authentic because of the writer's personal knowledge of von Manstein the proselyte. According to Rev. Gut's parents, Baroness von Manstein was a very pious convert to Judaism and was said to have been a Spanish princess by birth. She became interested in Judaism when she went to a Succot service in Southern Germany. She met the Baron, a gifted conductor who belonged to one of the long-established aristocratic German families of the iron and steel industry in the Ruhr. They fell in love and she persuaded him to convert as well. Gut

¹⁴⁹ Rev. Dr. S. N. Gut, 'An Unusual Proselyte', *The Jewish Monthly*, 4/5 (1950), 265–67.

remembered being taken by his father to visit the couple. The Baron was an educator, painter and a Talmudic scholar, a highly esteemed and well loved lecturer in the Wurzburg Orthodox Jewish Teachers' Seminary. He was known to the parents of the writer of this short story, the couples being intimate friends. Gut's mother was the daughter of Hauptlehrer Nathan Eschwege, the Principal of the Teachers' College in Hochberg near Wurzburg, the renowned school where Dr. David Hoffman later the famous Rektor of the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin was once a teacher of religion.

The Nazis did not recognize von Manstein's conversion and did not send him to a concentration camp. He was forbidden to have contact with Jews and he in turn had no wish to have contact with those who were not Jewish. He and his wife ended their days persecuted and closely watched. They lived like hermits, starving to death because they would not eat non kosher food. The Baron died in 1944 and was buried in a Christian cemetery in Wurzburg.

Chapter IV

Examples of little known Proselytes in Germany and France

A number of proselytes recorded in the various Memorbuchs, Memorial Books- collated from places such as Mainz, Nuremberg and Frankfurt .(see Sigfmund Salfeld's book)¹⁵⁰. The Dusseldorf University Library is a good source for these names and seem to indicate that they were converts:

i) Frau (Mrs) Pesslin, daughter of... (d.1341) and Reb Isaac son of Abraham

Frau Preslin¹⁵¹ appears to have left money to Jews. She died in 1341. There is a mention of Reb Isaac son of Abraham who also left money to the Jews. He was killed in 1288 in Nuremberg having converted to Judaism. (see pages 149,302 and 303 in Memorbuch). There are some other names mentioned by Roth¹⁵² and similarly sourced from the Memorbuchs (Book of Martyrs), which were published as reminders of the tragic events.

¹⁵⁰ Siegmund Salfeld, Martyrologium Des Nurnberger Memorbuches (Berlin: Simion, 1898).

¹⁵¹ Siegmund Salfeld, Das Martyrologium Des Nurnberger Memorbuches : In Auftrage Der Historischen Commission Fur Geschichte Der Juden in Deutschland, Herausgegeben Von Dr. Siegmund Salfeld (Berlin: L. Simion, 1898).

¹⁵² Cecil Roth, Personalities and Events in Jewish History. The Jewish Publication Society of America 1953

ii) Miscellaneous Accounts of Proselytes

During the massacre in Cologne in 1096, on the second day of Shavuot, at least two proselytes were killed and several others burned such as Isaac ben Abraham of Wurzburg. Another massacre is recorded in 1298 and two of the victims may have been two women proselytes. On 23rd July 1298 there was a general massacre of Jews, so perhaps it is wrong to single out the proselytes. Cecil Roth¹⁵³ mentions a Rabbi Isaac, son of Abraham from Wurzburg, but he might have also mentioned another (noted in the Dusseldorf University Archives) Isaac bar Abraham, burnt together with his wife Dolca, but it is doubtful if they were proselytes, a conclusion some way confirmed by reference to several other individuals, such as those from Augsburg and Weissenburg mentioned in the Memorbuch of Nurnberg. Abraham from Augsburg was burnt at the stake on 25th Kislev 5007 corresponding to Wednesday 12th of December 1246 (first day of Chanukah) and not as mentioned by others that the burning took place on 21st November 1265 or 1268 as those dates were not Chanukah. There is reference to the tragic event by Mordechai ben Hillel, a great Talmudic scholar of the 13th century who mentioned a French proselyte who was a Franciscan and put to death at Sinzig in the Rhineland in 1268. Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel also died as a martyr at Nurnberg on 1st August 1298 (*Encyclopedia Judaica*). However, this is curious as unfortunately Roth does not quote his sources.

An article by Ben Zion Wacholder¹⁵⁴ mentions Abraham ben Abraham (Abraham bar Abraham from France) mentioned in the Memorbuch¹⁵⁵ on p.513 (Daf page 81 of the original Book) who was formerly a monk. He went from Wurzburg to Speyer and then to Bonn. The martyrological texts also record the death of a convert, formerly a member of the "barefooted" (a religious order) was burnt at the stake by the Inquisition. It is a reasonable conclusion that both Roth and Wacholder have in mind the same person, though Wacholder does not mention that he was French. According to both, some converts became real scholars but by no means all.

The Memorbuch of Mainz, according to Roth, indicated that there were fewer than ten proselytes between the years 1264 and 1341, seven men and three women. There is mention of a French convert called Perrot buried in Toulouse and that the pious Rabbi

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ben Zion Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytizing in the Tosafist Responsa', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 51/4(April 1961), pp.288-315. p.305)

¹⁵⁵ J. Perles, *Das Memorbuch Der Gemeinde Pfersee* (1873).

Isaac Males was burned alive in 1278. There is, however, also an assumption that his death occurred after a Jew who first converted to Christianity made *teshuvah* (returned to Judaism) and as a consequence the Rabbi was burned. Unfortunately Roth gives no source for his names or comments.

Professor Scheiber¹⁵⁶ refers to “A letter of Recommendation on behalf of the Proselyte Mevorakh” and he mentions Tobia, the proselyte who emigrated to Jerusalem. He also mentions Tobia, when he publishes a “rhyming epistle” from the Kaufmann Geniza in which Tobia describes his turbulent life in the period of the First Crusade (1099), when he was caught, persecuted and attempts were made to persuade him to change his mind and not become a member of the Jewish community. However, they did not succeed, and he had to be redeemed by the Jewish community finally living in Egypt. Professor Scheiber discovered the second part of the story the Cairo Geniza¹⁵⁷ (in Cambridge) mentioning also a proselyte called Moses (Cambridge Geniza T.S.A.S. 148.93) about whom very little is known.

Chapter V

i) Why did anyone wish to convert to Judaism? Social, Economic (and Political) Background to Conversion & Conclusion

One of questions which we might ask : What led people during Biblical or Talmudical times or indeed at any other time to convert to Judaism, noting that some even discussed whether Jews were a race¹⁵⁸, or was it a combination of many things? ¹⁵⁹There were no sacraments or tangible idols to hold on to, and therefore could it have been for economic reasons, admiration of the ritual, concept of Jewish teaching of freedom or rational hope for the future? All of these factors or none could have played their part in bringing men and women to Judaism. It may have been attractive to learn that humanity was encouraged throughout the existence of Jewish life to build a “Kingdom of God” on

¹⁵⁶ Alexander Scheiber, 'New Texts from the Genizah Concerning the Proselytes', PAAJR, 46(1979).

¹⁵⁷ See also Alexander Scheiber, Miok Evkonyve (1977/8) p.326

¹⁵⁸ Robert E. Park and Karl Johann Kautsky, 'Review of Are the Jews a Race?' American Journal of Sociology, 32(41927), p.671.

¹⁵⁹ Walter Jacob, Moshe Zemer, and Halakhah Freehof Institute of Progressive, Conversion to Judaism in Jewish Law : Essays and Responsa (Studies in Progressive Halakhah, V. 3; Tel Aviv; Pittsburgh: Freehof Institute of Progressive Halakhah ; Rodef Shalom Press, 1994).

earth.¹⁶⁰ Indeed this may have been the invisible driving force of Judaism becoming attractive to the thinking person, the intellectual rather than the masses. Could this be an answer as to why there were no mass conversions, as it happened in Christianity or Islam apart from the phenomenon of the Khazars¹⁶¹? There is the speculation that many thousands converted to Judaism in the Middle Ages¹⁶², in such places as Mainz (the interpretation placed on the names and numbers mentioned in the Memorbucher). We can also recall the forced conversions during the rule of the Maccabees in the years following the defeat of the Greek Syrians in the 2nd Century BCE. Hope and the arrival of the (Kingdom of God) have been part of the thinking and philosophy of the Jewish people, (see I Kings 8:41 ff) as well as the triumph of conversion as seen in the statement in Ruth 1: 16 “And Ruth said: ... for whither thou goest I will go and whither you reside I will reside. Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God”.

The reasons for conversion to Judaism (see,¹⁶³) would appear to have been the belief-rejecting pagan religions, with Judaism as demonstrated by Abraham and Sarah, accepting monotheism. The reference in Genesis 12:5 indicates the reality of their conversion and that of their kinsman “... and Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son and all their possessions that they had acquired, and the souls they had acquired in Haran and they went to the land of Canaan....”.

According to the Book of Esther, many at that time joined the Jewish people when they were saved from the “wicked Haman”, and so there were times when there was no opposition to converts and conversion. The word used for converts in the Book of Esther was “mityachadim”(coming together becoming one and part of the Jewish people), showing a positive attitude and intention.

So, where did the notion of rejecting proselytes come from? ¹⁶⁴ From many sources, such as fear from proselytizing, because of the danger of death and where there was opposition

¹⁶⁰ Joseph R Rosenbloom, 'Conversion to Judaism:From the Biblical Period to the Present', (1978).

¹⁶¹ D. M. Dunlop and University Princeton, The History of the Jewish Khazars, by D. M. Dunlop (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1954).

¹⁶² Solomon Grayzel and Guido Kisch, 'The Jews in Medieval Germany', The Jewish Quarterly Review, 41/41951), pp.419–21.

¹⁶³ Norman Bentwich, The Rightfulness of the Jews in the Roman Empire.

¹⁶⁴Norman Golb, 'Jewish Proselytism—a Phenomenon in the Religious History of Early Medieval Europe'.

of others, the uncertainty of exile and the cruelty exercised against Jews in the Middle Ages.

The prophets through their writings may have indirectly or perhaps deliberately propagated Judaism, by saying that by being Jewish the individual will be better and thus the world an improved place, (Isaiah 2:2ff): “In after days, it shall be that the Lord’s hill shall rise towering over other heights; to which all nations shall stream and many folk exclaim, come, let us go up to the Lord’s mountain to the House of Jacob’s God, that God may instruct us in His ways and we may walk in His paths; for revelation comes from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”. These were majestic and powerful words, announcing to the world the uniqueness of Judaism, encouraging doubters to become part of the Jewish people, (Micah 6:8) where there is a statement regarding ethical monotheism, inviting all humanity to join “It has been told you, O man, what is good and what God demands of you-only that you do justice, appreciate kindness and live in harmony with God”.

It is clear that more active conversions took place at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, Jews having served as soldiers in Egypt and elsewhere as well as in the army of Alexander the Great, marrying non-Jews who then may have converted. Philo mentions (perhaps not a most reliable source) that there were some one million Jews in Egypt ¹⁶⁵ p. 7, quoting from ¹⁶⁶ -Could this have been purely through natural propagation or indeed were there many conversions and could we conclude that Judaism was indeed attractive to non-Jews? –as shown in Flavius Josephus Book 2 Chapter 40¹⁶⁷ “....the earliest Grecian philosophers, though in appearance they observed the laws of their own countries, yet did they, in their actions, and their philosophic doctrines, follow our legislator, and instructed men to live sparingly, and to have friendly communication one with another..... So that if any one will but reflect on his own country, and his own family, he will have reason to give credit to what I say.”

It is interesting to note in the Apocrypha the words of Tobit 13:3, “Extol God before the gentiles, ye children of Israel, because for this purpose has God scattered us among

¹⁶⁵ Sarah Pearce, *The Land of the Body : Studies in Philo's Representation of Egypt* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

¹⁶⁶ Philon D'alexandrie and A Pelletier, *In Flaccum* (Paris: Cerf, 1967).

¹⁶⁷ William Whiston, 'The Works of Flavius Josephus', [Web Page], (updated January 25 2012) www.ccel.org, accessed November 10 2011

them". Was this a call to proselytize or mere self aggrandizement? Were Jews forcefully converting? See Psalm 118, which is part of Hallel, the festival Psalms. If one accepts that this Psalm was one of the Maccabean Psalms, then perhaps the word "Amilam" occurring in quick succession in verses 10, 11 and 12 and which is translated as "I will cut them off", could be and perhaps should be translated "and I shall circumcise them" i.e. even doing so forcefully. There is also the example of Alexander Yannai (103-76 BCE) who killed the Moabites who refused to convert.

Fluctuation of attitudes towards proselytes was prevalent amongst Jews in years past and that has not changed. Orthodoxy today finds it difficult to welcome converts while the Progressive faction of Judaism accepts much more readily those who wish to convert. It is however, true to say that today there is very little evidence (if any) of someone or some groups going out of their way to proselytize, certainly not as it was at the time of the Hasmoneans, and in a less aggressive way in the days of Abraham and Sarah.

There are two general questions we need to ask: 1. Why is Judaism so exclusive and thus a minority? and

2. How is it that Jews do not seem to go out of their way to convert people to Judaism?

The answer may lie in the words expressed in Masechet Pesachim 87b:

"R. Eleazar said: Even when the Holy One, blessed be He, is angry, He remembers compassion, for it is said, for I will no more have compassion upon the house of Israel. R. Jose son of R. Hanina said [i.e., deduced] it from this: that I would in any wise pardon them. R. Eleazar also said: The Holy One, blessed be He, did not exile Israel among the nations save in order that proselytes might join them, for it is said: And I will sow her unto Me in the land; surely a man sows a se'ah in order to harvest many kor! While R. Johanan deduced it from this: And I will have compassion upon her that hath not obtained compassion".

In 1233 Pope Gregory the IX reprimanded the German Princes of the Church in an epistle because, they tolerated Christians who without being forced accepted and adopted Jewish customs and, indeed were circumcised, thereby telling the world that they were openly Jews and as such have been mentioned in "Memorbucher"¹⁶⁸. This article mentions

¹⁶⁸ Ben Zion Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytising in the Tosafist Responsa', The Jewish Quarterly Review, 51 /No 4 (April 1961 1961), p.28

Louis I. Newman who claimed that there was “extensive Jewish Proselytism” and “conversionary zeal” amongst 13th Century Western Jewry.

This however must be tempered with the view that some Rabbis opposed such actions and the article continues, quoting Solomon Grayzel who agrees with this view and there seems to be some support given by Guido Kisch, as he says that there were no laws dealing with Jewish proselytisation. However it does seem that there were proselytes throughout the Middle Ages, even if it caused panic amongst the Jews of the time indeed it was a dangerous activity for anyone who risked life and limb if he decided openly to convert to Judaism.

It is of interest to note a frequently discussed case and the ruling of Rabbi Jacob Tam of Rameru in Tosafists codes. The case revolves around a man who divorced his wife, because she had an affair with a gentile, she then became a Christian and married her lover. The same woman later went back to being Jewish and her husband converted, and they asked to be married under the Chuppah. The objection to this marriage was that Talmudic Law prohibits marriage between parties who have committed adultery. Rabbi Tam however ruled that there was no technical adultery as the seed of a gentile was regarded by the Biblical Law as null and the convert was permitted to marry the woman. This decision was based on Rabbi Tam’s understanding and interpretation of the Talmudic version of the Esther Precedent (The Book of Esther). This particular article gives a most detailed description of the discussions which took place amongst the Tosafists in the Middle Ages quoting most if not all the sources in that respect¹⁶⁹.

The other area to be briefly touched on relates to the instances of Jews converting to Christianity either to enhance their careers, or because they were forced to, but who remained secret Jews (Marranos), or simply wanted to leave the Jewish ghettos. Thus some Jews converted to Christianity for economic, social, political reasons or simply to save their lives. However there is also an impression that conversions and the reasons for converting from Christianity to Judaism were very different from those in the other direction. Many however returned to Judaism when they were free to do so, like the Marranos.

¹⁶⁹ Ben Zion Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytizing in the Tosafist Responsa', Ibid.51/4, pp.288–315. p.170

It would seem that for many who converted from Christianity to Judaism, there were powerful intellectual or, in some instances, emotional reasons so to do. To leave a secure and well-established religious order required courage.

Interestingly enough, there may have been some who converted for political or socio-economical reasons. For example, in the Ottoman Empire Jews were more respected and accepted than Christians. There is also an example of Simon Pechi who was the leader of the Sabbatarians in Transylvania in the 16th Century and had inclinations towards Judaism, having studied Hebrew and translated Hebrew prayers. His first literary work was a collection of sayings from the Ethics of Fathers from the Talmudical Tractate Avot as well as a translation of Psalms. Apparently he was also part of some twenty thousand peasants who were his followers but who changed when Rakoczi II came to the throne, as he demanded that his peasants revert back to Christianity. See Robert Dan. This shows that Judaism held some attraction even to someone as intellectual and well educated as Pechi, though he did not convert and eventually became part of the establishment.

The Geniza literature is also an important source of information and we can see this from the findings about Obadiah and the Woman from Narbonne (herein). (Currently most of the material is in Cambridge, the *Cambridge Geniza*). This is the archive found by Solomon Schechter, in Fustat in Egypt, Basatin cemetery east of Old Cairo. Some of the material has also found its way to Hungary (*the Kaufmann Collection*) so movingly mentioned by Professor Alexander Scheiber. There is now some at Manchester University's Library and scattered in many Universities in the USA. The story behind the Cairo Geniza is exciting and interesting and much has been written about it. Briefly the significance of the Cairo Geniza was first recognized by the Jewish traveller and researcher Jacob Sapir in the mid 1800s, but it was chiefly through the work of Solomon Schechter at the end of the 19th century that the content of the Geniza was brought to wider attention.

These documents were written between 870 and 1880. The reason, why it is called Geniza is that it was buried and placed away, as the people did not wish to destroy documents which contained the name of God. This is a traditional way for Jews to maintain and preserve documents though not necessarily have them readily available.

Golb in ¹⁷⁰ his *Jewish Proselytism a Phenomenon* refers to many names of converts to Judaism, as Cecil Roth does before him. Golb writes about the positive attitude and

¹⁷⁰ Norman Golb, 'Jewish Proselytism—a Phenomenon in the Religious History of Early Mediaval Europe', paper given at. The Tenth Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in 1987

willingness of intellectuals to engage in the process of converting. The importance of the Geniza materials for reconstructing the social and economic history of the period between 950 and 1250 cannot be overemphasized; the index that the scholar Goitein created covers about 35,000 individuals, which includes about 350 "prominent people" (such as Maimonides) 200 "better known families", and mentions of 450 professions and 450 goods. There are materials which refer to Europe, Egypt, Lebanon Italy, Germany, France and Russia amongst others. Goitein estimated there are 250,000 leaves, including parts of Jewish religious writings and fragments also from the Koran.

The Geniza remains an important source of material and knowledge. Similarly there are fragments referring to proselytes in the Kaufman Geniza see articles/essays by Alexander Scheiber such as 2E in *Arabischer Gefangenschaft befreiter Christlicher Proselyte in Jerusalem* HUCA 39 (1968)-(Fragment number 168) and material concerning Obadiah the Proselyte again written by Alexander Scheiber and Golb.

Many important persons have converted due to their beliefs, value judgments and for theological reasons, such as Wecelin, Bodo and Lord Gordon but also where marriage might have been the sole motivation such as in the case of the Woman from Narbonne, though this would have been strictly against the ruling of Jewish law. These converts were finding it difficult to remain Christians because, having studied their own religion they decided that they were not able or willing to believe in the doctrines of Christianity yet still wished to espouse Monotheism. The conversion to Judaism of Eliza Nathan was also one of those where the reason was marriage to a Jewish man. The question which arose was how was this possible? Was Anglo Jewry more tolerant then than it is today? From various references and comments it seems that was indeed the case. The British Library in London are 13 Ketuboth from the year 1810 and in three of which there is reference to marriage between a Jewish man and a convert.

Anglo-Jewry at that time seemed to have been remarkably tolerant and understanding. This can be seen from a letter to the Chief Rabbi, Herman Adler dated 16th September 1891 (page 22)¹⁷¹. It must be noted that in 1840 a community called the West London Synagogue of British Jews was formed (WLS Synagogue built in 1870), the first Reform Community. It played an equal part donating to the Chief Rabbi. See also p.14¹⁷², where it confirms that Reform Rabbis visited the Orthodox Bayswater Synagogue, p.31¹⁷³. Undoubtedly Anglo-Jewry had its detractors but there seem to have been a great deal of co-operation between all factions of the Anglo Jewish community.

¹⁷¹ Olga Somech Phillips and Hyman A. Simons, *The History of the Bayswater Synagogue, 1863–1963* (London: [Printed by Harmac Press], 1963).

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Some countries were more tolerant of converts than others, one example was Egypt, where many converts finally lived, Alexander Cooper, the portrait artist for example, found peace and tolerance in Scandinavia after leaving Holland. Many changed their religion as adults and were distressed by the Church's persecution of the Jews. They saw, perhaps by the mere fact of persecution after so many hundreds of years of established Christianity, that the Church was fearful of the witnesses of the past, seeing them as a threat for refusing to accept Christianity. It is clear that these converted Jews were accepted and became part of the community. The Jewish communities were justifiably fearful; many paid with their lives for helping others to convert. Indeed, there are many examples in the German cities' Memorbooks (Memorial books) such as that of Nurnberg¹⁷⁴ that show that apart from the converted themselves, Jews who helped them were persecuted or killed.

In the opinion of David Eichhorn Judaism for some offered an exotic attraction and had a particular charm. However, one wonders if they would have retained their Jewish identity in the face of persecution, forced to wandering from one place to another, without finance and support and even some resistance on the part of the Jewish community.

Rabbi Istvan Doman¹⁷⁵ states that the Roman Empire's acceptance of Christianity was born out of necessity to unify and provide a spiritual dimension to the many nations which comprised the Roman Empire, to help its "centrist" ambitions. For this the teachings of the Torah were undeniable. Therefore it is not surprising that when theological debate ensued between Jews and Christians, some Christians felt that they wished to commit to something which was the epicentre of their faith, the teachings regarding the oneness of God and loving one's neighbour as well as the stranger.

There is a story related to a Father Nestor in the ninth century referring to his conversion, he says that he "loves God with all his heart and all his soul, despising the religion of the uncircumcised and their errors, seeking protection under the Shechinah-Gods presence" (see Eichhorn page 69). It is claimed that Father Nestor made enquiries regarding other religions but chose Judaism and made a Declaration concerning his beliefs and reasons for conversion, no doubt lifting the spirits of those Jews who thought that Judaism was disappearing. Speculating on whether there were ulterior motives behind those who converted, none seem evident. Even in the case of Lord George Gordon,

¹⁷⁴ Salfeld, Martyrologium Des Nurnberger Memorbuches.

¹⁷⁵ Doman Istvan, Talmud (Budapest: Ulpius-haz, 2007).p. 361

Judaism was providing protection and perhaps a shield from his enemies. Eliza Nathan's conversion was probably due to her marrying a prominent Jew. She must have believed in her Judaism with all heart to be able to accept it in spite of having been brought up as a Catholic.

However, several chapters in the Talmud such as Yebamot 109b, condemn those who are willing to accept proselytes. Yebamoth 47b says "converts are troublesome to Israel as the plague of leprosy". Rabbi Chelbo, to whom this passage is ascribed, was an Amora at the time when Christianity was the State religion of the Roman Empire and any conversions merited severe punishment, also meted out to those who helped them to convert. Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yicchak) of the 12th century, interpreted this passage by saying that any convert could put a Jew to shame in their observance of Judaism and Jewish laws.

One of the most negative attitudes toward converts was that of Rashal (Rabbi Salomon Luria) of the sixteenth century, who encouraged those who were responsible for conversion to refuse the convert, as Jews were not living in their own land and therefore conversions might endanger Jewish life and lives. It would seem in that case that surely today conversions in the Land of Israel should be easier and more acceptable. Living in a more tolerant society should bring an air of approval in accepting converts into the Jewish community. More encouraging was Rabbi Gershon ben Jacob in the thirteenth century, who stated that while the hurt to non-Jews that might be caused by converts should be taken into consideration, once they been told of the dangers and they acknowledged them, obstacles should not be placed in their way.

Most of the converts so far dealt with are those who converted from Christianity to Judaism, though the most noted Muslim convert was Obadiah, who asked for the support from Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon). Maimonides addressed Obadiah saying:

"He who called you a fool surprises me greatly. A man who has left father and mother, forsaken his birthplace and his country and has attached himself to a lowly, despised and enslaved race, who recognises the truth and righteousness of this people's law and who has cast the things of this world from his heart, shall such a one be called a 'fool'? God forbid. Not witless but wise does God consider you, disciple of Abraham, our father who also abandoned his faith and his parents to follow God. And He who blessed Abraham will bless you and make you worthy to behold all the consolation designed for Israel. And in all the good that God shall do unto us, He will also do good to you". Further Maimonides confirmed to Obadiah that he may pray to the Almighty saying "God of Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob” (see letter to Obadiah the Proselyte, in Twersky (ed.) pp.475f.). Maimonides in his Mishneh Torah writes; “To love the proselyte who comes to take refuge beneath the wings of the Shechinah is the fulfilment of two positive commandments, first because he is included among neighbours whom we are commanded to love (Leviticus 19:18) and secondly because he is a stranger, and the Torah clearly commands us to ‘Love the strangers because we were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:19) etc.....”.

It is known that in 1575 an aristocrat from Lyon went to Venice with his sons to convert, but apparently again the Jews of Venice rejected his request. The reasons remain to be discovered.

A Marburg school Master named Conrad Victor became a Jew in 1614 changing his name to Moses Pardo. He withdrew from Christian Europe and lived in the more acceptable environment of Padishah in Thessaloniki. He too could not come to terms with the idea of Trinity and the claims that went with this.

It is still however surprising that converts to Judaism are not universally accepted and that the concept even today, in free and democratic societies of the Statement made by Ruth “....For whither thou goest, I will go, where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God, where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried, the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me, and me”. (Book of Ruth, 1:16 and 17). Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfast in her decision and so accepted her and took her with her to her home land.

There is no doubt that the reasons for conversion were and are varied but the principal point is that unless, there were forced conversions those referred to herein appear to have been for genuine reasons rather than to gain either social, political or economic advantage. By giving examples of converts to Judaism I have showed that not all who converted if at all should be considered as “mentally unstable” but, as it were, “normal” people, from reasonable and often extremely respectable backgrounds, converting as a result of well established and reasoned arguments.

Examining the reasons for conversion is also an important test, as many conversions did not follow the “normal” patterns of either intellectual approach or historical necessity or argument.

There may have been a number of converts who came from Eastern Europe in the 16th century. The reasons for their conversions could have been their anti- Trinitarianism,

as they were individuals, who preferred the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) to the New Testament (see¹⁷⁶).

The current attitude denies the words of Hosea 2:24 and 25 and attitudes of some of the Jewish Sages. Whatever we call Proselytes and whatever names they were given, whether in the Hebrew Bible or Talmud, there is no doubt that conversion was and is part of Jewish life and that the debate shall continue. As we saw, even tragedy and tragic consequences did not prevent acceptance of converts nor indeed did it prevent proselytes seeking acceptance into the Jewish faith, a remarkable though surprising element of the Jewish faith. (Please see page 8 herein-the attitudes of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai). One can see from the attitude of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai, the former being more accepting while the latter strict and uncompromising. we can see that even in antiquity there were no “black and white” answers to the vexed question of conversion.

The history of conversions is exciting as shown by uncovering some of the mysterious ways in which conversions took place, by delving into the lives of individuals and by looking at the general law and attitudes.

In the light of the above it is important to note however that throughout the ages and even today, there was opposition to accepting proselytes and to proselytizing.

¹⁷⁶ Robert Dan, *Humanizmus Es Reformacio Az Erdelyi Szombatosok Es Pechi Simon* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1987).

Appendix I

Jews Converting to Christianity

There is no doubt that in the Middle Ages just as there were converts from Christianity to Judaism so there were those going in opposite direction, for instance Alvaro who was trying to bring Deacon Bodo back to Christianity. There were also individuals who became censors for the catholic church of Hebrew books such as Haggadot, the Golden Haggadah for example.

There is a monumental work by Elisheva Carlebach¹⁷⁷ in which she dealt with Jewish converts in Germany between 1500 and 1750. She provides a fascinating insight into their lives. Several notable names are mentioned in her book as well as in other sources, such as Johannes Pfefferkorn, Victor von Carben and Anthonius Margaritha. According to Josel of Rosheim these were people who contributed to the suffering of the Jews.

A number of men and women who converted from Judaism to Christianity are not mentioned anywhere in much detail, but such one was John Braham,¹⁷⁸ who was a former Chazan (Cantor), becoming after his conversion a leading tenor in London¹⁷⁹. It was Braham who agreed to sing Nathan's settings to Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* in a theatre in London. It is worth noting that he sang other songs by Nathan such as *The Soldier's Farewell*, (see¹⁸⁰and¹⁸¹).

Another interesting person who converted to Christianity was the son of Marcus Moses, who together with his associates had broken the monopoly of the Ashkenazi worship in England and set up the Hambro Synagogue mentioned above Marcus Moses, the younger continued creating trouble as he converted in 1722/3 having been ordained as a Rabbi and studied in Hamburg. He wrote a pamphlet about his conversion, which he dedicated to

¹⁷⁷ Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (Yale University Press, 2001).

¹⁷⁸ Michael R. Turner and Antony Miall, *The Parlour Song Book : A Casquet of Vocal Gems* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972).

¹⁷⁹ Dennis Arundell, *The Story of Sadler's Wells : 1683–1964* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965).

¹⁸⁰ H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and Academy British, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁸¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. New Biography Published in October 2005* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Morgan Library, Grace College and Seminary, 2005).

the Archbishop of Canterbury¹⁸². However in a letter to his parents dated 2nd May 1724, he apologised for his action and blamed it on those who persuaded him to do so. A law provided that parents had to support their Protestant Children so it is possible that this was the temptation. He peddled Jewish Knowledge and in 1729 produced an English translation of Carpzov's *Critica Sacra Veteris Testamenti*^{183 184} and ¹⁸⁵ and claimed to have heard the professor giving lecture on this. Apparently he was to vindicate the Jews, provide protection for his brethren from "so heavy and heinous a Charge sacrilegiously corrupting and depraving the "sacred text". Carpzov's book was published with notes by Moses Marcus the younger¹⁸⁶, who described himself as a converted Jew and teacher of oriental languages. He was something of a scoundrel, and imprisoned as a debtor.

Elizabeth Verboon- Eve Cohan converted from Judaism to Christianity. Her conversion created a huge uproar in London towards the end of the 17th Century London. The story of her conversion to Christianity is to be found in a booklet published in London in 1680¹⁸⁷. The front cover of the booklet reads: "A Person of the Quality of the Jewish Religion, Who was baptised the 10th October 1680 At St. Martins in the Fields, by the Right Reverend Father in God, William Lord Bishop of St. Asaph"¹⁸⁸. It gives a picture not only of the society in which Elizabeth lived but also a dynamic background to her family.

¹⁸² Marcus Moses, *The Principal Motives and Circumstances That Induced Moses Marcus to Leave the Jewish, and Embrace the Christian Faith* (London: printed by J. Humfreys, for E. Bell; and sold by J. Roberts).

¹⁸³ Heinrich Engelbert Schwarz, *Index Octuplus Criticae Sacrae Carpzovianae* ([Leipzig?]: Impressit Godofr. Aug. Stopffel, 1748).

¹⁸⁴ Johann Gottlob Carpzov, *A Defence of the Hebrew Bible, in Answer to the Charge of Corruption Brought against It by Mr. Whiston, in His Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament, C. By the Reverend Dr. Carpzov. ... Translated from the Latin, with Additional Notes, by Moses Marcus* (London: printed for Bernard Lintot, 1729).

¹⁸⁵ Johann Gottlob Carpzov, *Critica Sacra Veteris Testamenti. Parte I. Circa Textum Originalem. li. Circa Versiones. lii. Circa Pseudo-Criticam Guil* (Lipsiae: impensis J. C. Martini, 1728).

¹⁸⁶ Marcus, Moses, *The Principal Motives and Circumstances That Induced Moses Marcus to Leave the Jewish, and Embrace the Christian Faith*.

¹⁸⁷ Right Reverend Father in God William Lord Bishop of St. Asaph, *The Conversion Persecution of Eve Cohan Now Called Elizabeth Verboon* (London: J.D. for Richard Chiswell at the Rose and Crowe in St. Paul's Church Yard, 1680).

¹⁸⁸ Gilbert Burnet, *The Conversion Persecutions of Eve Cohan : Now Called Elizabeth Verboon, a Person of Quality of the Jewish Religion, Who Was Baptized the 10th of October, 1680, at St. Martins in the Fields By ... William, Lord Bishop of St. Asaph* (London: Printed by J.D. for Richard Chiswell, 1680).

The Preface read as if it was written by a Jew, asserting that many who convert from Christianity to Judaism are not sincere in their undertaking. Similar doubts are expressed by the writer. In the instance of Eve Cohan the author believes that she was a “true convert”. He says and as he puts it “But here is a Convert that is indeed a Disciple of the Cross, and has, in all the steps she made towards her Change, been oft in danger of her life, and has suffered much from her Mother and Kindred: whose Persecutions ceased not after she had taken sanctuary in this Country, where she might reasonably have thought , that either the Jews durst not presume to have pursued her any longer; or if they would have attempted it,could not have found Instruments to have served their wicked Designs. But even here, as they found out cursed tools to have spirited her away;so when they failed, they betook themselves to all the Arts of Villainy, in which they are so well practised: and hoping that nothing could resist their Wealth, of which they resolved to be prodigal upon this Occasion, they carried their Designs so far, that she was neglected by some, and hardly used by others, from a greater Zeal to the Christian Religion ought to have been expected”. In these words, the prejudice and presumptions of wealth,strength and evil of the Jews are readily apparent. The Preface is a mirror of the society in which the event has occurred. It also brings to notice a convert from Judaism to Christianity,Charles du Veil and his brother, who converted to Catholicism in France, but later fled from “the detesting Idolatry of the Church of Rome, forsook the great Advantages they had, and might have expected there, and came hither, and joined themselves to our Church. “

Elizabeth Verboon was born as Eve Cohan in Holland to a wealthy businessman, Abraham Cohan, Chief Governor of the Dutch Plantations in Brazil. He lost a fortune, when the Portuguese defeated the Dutch and occupied Brazil. Nevertheless he was still a wealthy man worth apparently £20000 and upwards when he died, when Eve was not yet twelve years old. She was brought up by her mother, whose name was Rebekah, alias Elizabeth. It would appear that Elizabeth herself was a convert from Christianity to Judaism, the daughter of Pallacius, an Ambassador and Professor at the University of Leyden, though she could have been a Marrano. Eve Cohan converted to be married to Michael Verboon who came from humble but “honest” parents and who inter alia was working for the Cohan household for nine months and discharged from service on 17th May 1680.

The Jewish family tried to have Verboon arrested, but when the Bailiffs came he was spirited away through the window. He tried to use all their connections and influence in England. The writer concludes:

“I do not design to inflame any rage or fury against the Jews, nor do I desire to have force put upon their Consciences : for the wrath of man worketh not out the Righteousness of God; but I have rather written this, to provoke all, that may be concerned in the Sequel of this Affair, to proceed in it as becomes truly zealous Christians, and to redeem the Nation from the Infamy that so base a Conspiracy (if not severely punished) will bring on it; that so those enemies of Christ, if they are suffered to live among us, yet may not again dare to adventure on such practices, against those who forsake their blind Superstitious, and come to believe in the Saviour of the World: And that those who are called Christians, may by the signal punishment of those Instruments of wickedness, whom they found among us, be so terrified, that they may no more, with Judas, for little money, betray a member of Christ, to be crucified by them”. This story of intrigue and conspiracy shows how bigotry on both sides can work against the individual with mistrust and betrayal all playing a part.

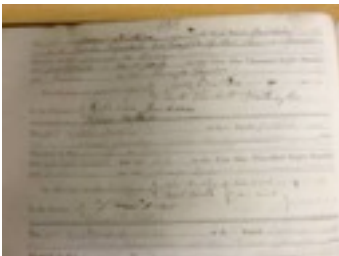
Jews converted to Christianity and Christians converted to Judaism for the same reasons such as marriage, fear, theological differences and sometime self interest and protectionism.

It is important to note and it is patently obvious from the debate between Bodo and Alvaro (see pages 23 and 25), that there is a fundamental difference in the way conversions are viewed in Christianity and Judaism. Judaism does not believe that one must be a Jew to be “saved”. Judaism also accepts that an unconverted non-Jew may serve God and would gain a place in the world to come provided he lives a righteous life.

Jews form neither a, religious, racial nor national entity. They are a people joined together by common values and ethical and moral teachings brought together by worship in the Synagogue and deriving strength and learning from the Torah and the Hebrew Bible. Jews today do not believe that they hold the absolute truth and in a multicultural society hope that others do not either. This was not always the case. It does not appear that conversion in either direction diminishes one or the other religion, on the contrary it should, if accepted gracefully, benefit all.

Appendix IIi) Deacon Robert of Reading-Haggai

In April 1222 there was a public burning of a man known as Robert of Reading (see picture of the Tombstone from the Oxford Jewish Heritage Website “*Near this stone in Osney Abbey, Robert of Reading, otherwise Haggai of Oxford, suffered for his faith on Sunday 17 April 1222 AD, corresponding to 4 Iyar 4982. This stone was erected in 1931 in the ruins of the Abbey*”).

(ii) Marriage Certificate of Isaac Nathan and Rosetta Elizabeth Worthington 16th July 1812

Appendix III

i) Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 268 Laws Pages 1-7 in Hebrew and English

סעיף א

גר שנכנס לקהל ישראל חייב מילה תחילה. ואם מל כשהיה עובד כוכבים או שנולד מהול (טור בשם הרא"ש) – צריך להטיף ממנו דם ברית, ואין מברכין עליו. ואם נכרת הגיד – אין מילתו מעכבת מלהתגייר, וסגי ליה בטבילה

טבל קודם שמל – מועיל דבדיעבד הוי טבילה (בית יוסף בשם הרמב"ן, וכן כתב המגיד משנה פרק ארבעה עשר מהלכות איסורי ביאה.) ויש אומרים דלא הוי טבילה (נימוקי יוסף פרק "החולץ" בשם הרא"ה)

סעיף ב

כשבא להתגייר אומרים לו: "מה ראית שבאת להתגייר? אי אתה יודע שישראל בזמן הזה דחופים, סחופים (פירוש: אבודים וסחופים מן "מדוע נסחף אבירך" (ומטורפים, ויסורים באים עליהם?) אם אמר: "יודע אני ואיני כדאי להתחבר עמהם" – מקבלין אותו מיד.

ומודיעים אותו עיקרי הדת שהוא יחוד ה' ואיסור עבודת כוכבים, ומאריכין עמו בדבר זה. ומודיעים אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות. ומודיעים אותו מקצת עונשין של מצות, שאומרים לו: "קודם שבאת למידה זו אכלת חלב – אי אתה ענוש כרת, חללת שבת – אי אתה חייב סקילה. ועכשיו אכלת חלב אתה ענוש כרת, חללת שבת אתה חייב סקילה." ואין מרבין עליו, ואין מדקדקין עליו.

וכשם שמודיעים אותו ענשין של מצות, כך מודיעים אותו שכרן של מצות. ומודיעים אותו שבעשיית מצות אלו יזכה לחיי העולם הבא, ושאינן שום צדיק גמור אלא בעל החכמה שעושה מצות אלו ויודעם. ואומרים לו: "הוי יודע שהעולם הבא אינו צפון אלא לצדיקים, והם ישראל. וזה שתראה ישראל בצער בעולם הזה – טובה היא צפונה להם, שאינם יכולים לקבל רוב טובה בעולם הזה כעובדי כוכבים, שמא ירום לבם ויתעו, ויפסידו שכר עולם הבא. ואין הקדוש ברוך הוא מביא עליהם רוב פורענות כדי שלא יאבדו. אלא כל העובדי כוכבים כלים והם עומדים." ומאריכין בדבר זה כדי לחבבן.

אם קבל – מלין אותו מיד. וממתנינים לו עד שיתרפא רפואה שלימה, ואחר כך מטבילין אותו טבילה הוגנת בלא חציצה. ויש אומרים שיגלח שערותיו ויטול צפורני ידיו ורגליו קודם טבילה (טור ורי"ף ורא"ש). ושלושה תלמידי חכמים (גם זה טור) עומדים על גביו, ומודיעים אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות פעם שניה, והוא עומד במים.

ואם היתה אשה – נשים מושיבות אותה במים עד צוארה, והדיינים מבחוץ, ומודיעין אותה מקצת מצות קלות וחמורות, והיא יושבת במים. ואחר כך טובלת בפניהם, והם מחזירים פניהם ויוצאין, כדי שלא יראו אותה כשתעלה מהמים.

ויברך "על הטבילה" אחר שיעלה מן המים. וכיון שטבל – הרי הוא כישראל. שאם חזר לסורו – הרי הוא כישראל שאם חזר לסורו-הרי הוא כישראל מומר שאם קידש-קידושין קידושין

סעיף ג

כל ענייני הגר, בין להודיעו המצות לקבלם, בין המילה, בין הטבילה – צריך שיהיו בשלושה הכשרים לדון, וביום (תוספות ורא"ש פרק "החולץ").

מיהו דוקא לכתחילה, אבל בדיעבד אם לא מל או טבל אלא בפני שנים או קרובים (הגהות מרדכי) ובלילה, אפילו לא טבל לשם גרות אלא איש שטבל לקריו ואשה שטבלה לנדתה – הוי גר, ומותר בישראלית. חוץ מקבלת המצות שמעכבת אם אינה ביום ובשלושה.

ולהרי"ף ולהרמב"ם אפילו בדיעבד שטבל או מל בפני שנים או בלילה מעכב, ואסור בישראלית. אבל אם נשא ישראלית והוליד ממנה בן – לא פסלין ליה

סעיף ד

הואיל וטבילת גר צריך בית דין של שלושה – אין מטבילין אותו בשבת, ולא ביום טוב, ולא בלילה. ואם טבל – הרי זה גר

סעיף ה

המל את הגרים מברך: "ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו למול את הגרים".

ואחר כך מברך: "ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו למול את הגרים ולהטיף מהם דם ברית. שאלמלא דם ברית לא נתקיימו שמים וארץ, שנאמר: אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חוקות שמים וארץ לא שמתי".

סעיף ו

עובדת כוכבים שנתגיירה והיא מעוברת – בנה אין צריך טבילה

סעיף ז

עובד כוכבים קטן, אם יש לו אב – יכול לגייר (אותו). ואם אין לו אב ובא להתגייר, או אמו מביאתו להתגייר – בית דין מגיירין אותו, שזכות הוא לו וזכין לאדם שלא בפניו.

בין קטן שגיירו אביו, בין שגיירוהו בית דין – יכול למחות משיגדיל, ואין דינו כישראל מומר אלא כעובד כוכבים.

סעיף ח

במה דברים אמורים? כשלא נהג מנהג יהדות משהגדיל. אבל נהג מנהג יהדות משהגדיל – שוב אינו יכול למחות

סעיף ט

עובד כוכבים שבא לחתוך ערלתו מפני מכה או מפני שחין שנולד לו בה – אסור לישראל לחתכם, מפני שלא נתכוון העובד כוכבים למצוה. לפיכך אם נתכוון העובד כוכבים למילה – מצוה לישראל למול אותו ובמקום שמותר לרפאות העובד כוכבים – מותר בכל ענין (נ"י פ' נושאין על האנוסה ורמב"ם ורש"י; ועיין לעיל סימן קנ"ח)

סעיף י

עובד כוכבים או עובדת כוכבים שבא ואמר: "נתגיירתי בבית דינו של פלוני כראוי" – אינו נאמן לבא בקהל עד שיביא עדים. ואם ראינום נוהגין כדרכי ישראל ועושים כל המצות – הרי אלו בחזקת גרי צדק, ואף על פי שאין שם עדים שמעידים בפני מי נתגיירו. ואף על פי כן, אם באו להתערב בישראל – אין משיאין אותם עד שיביאו עדים, או עד שיטבלו בפנינו, הואיל והוחזקו עובדי כוכבים

אבל מי שבא ואמר שהוא עובד כוכבים ונתגייר בבית דין – נאמן, שהפה שאסר הוא הפה שהתיר

וכתב הרמב"ם: במה דברים אמורים? בארץ ישראל באותן הימים, שחזקת הכל שם בחזקת ישראל. אבל בחוץ לארץ צריך להביא ראיה ואחר כך ישא ישראלית, שמעלה עשו ביוחסין

סעיף יא

מי שהיה מוחזק בישראל שאמר "נתגיירתי ביני לבין עצמי", ויש לו בנים – אינו נאמן על הבנים. אבל נאמן על עצמו לשווייה נפשיה חתיכא דאיסורא, ליאסר בבת ישראל עד שיטבול בפני בית דין

סעיף יב

כשיבא הגר להתגייר בודקים אחריו, שמא בגלל ממון שיטול, או בשביל שררה שיזכה לה, או מפני הפחד בא ליכנס לדת. ואם איש הוא, בודקין אחריו שמא עיניו נתן באשה יהודית. ואם אשה היא, בודקין אחריה שמא עיניה נתנה בבחורי ישראל.

ואם לא נמצאת להם עילה – מודיעים להם כובד עול התורה וטורח שיש בעשייתה על עמי הארצות, כדי שיפרשו. אם קיבלו ולא פירשו, וראו אותם שחזרו מאהבה – מקבלים אותם

ואם לא בדקו אחריו, או שלא הודיעוהו שכר המצות ועונשן, ומל וטבל בפני שלושה הדיוטות – הרי זה גר. אפילו נודע שבשביל דבר הוא מתגייר – הואיל ומל וטבל יצא מכלל העובדי כוכבים, וחוששים לו עד שתתברר צדקתו. ואפילו חזר ועבד עבודת כוכבים – הרי הוא כישראל מומר שקידושיו קידושין

ישראל מומר שעשה תשובה – אינו צריך לטבול. רק מדרבנן יש לו לטבול ולקבל עליו דברי חבירות בפני שלושה (נ"י פרק "החולץ")

Law No: 1 – A convert who enters the congregation of Jews is obligated first for circumcision. If he was circumcised when he was a non-Jew (or he was born circumcised), it is necessary to take from him a drop of the blood of the covenant, but one does not bless over him. If his penis has been cut off, [the requirement of] his circumcision does not hinder him from converting to Judaism – it is enough for him to dunk. (If he immersed prior to circumcision, it is effective, because post facto it is considered immersion, and some say that it is not a valid immersion).

Law No: 2 - When one comes to convert, three people say to him: What prompted you to come and convert? Or, don't you know that at this point in time Israel is pushed, oppressed, (hopeless

and oppressed from, “Why are your stalwarts swept away”[Jeremiah 46:15]?) and insane and tormented ones come upon them? If he (the prospective convert) says, “I know, yet still I am not worthy to join them,” accept him immediately and inform him of the principles of the faith, of the unity of God, of the prohibitions against idolatry, and go on at length with him about this. Also, instruct him a bit in a few of the less strenuous mitzvot and a few of the more serious mitzvot, about a few of the punishments (for transgressing) the mitzvot, and say to him, “When you first came to learn this, if you ate (forbidden fats) you would not be punished by being cut off. If you desecrated Shabbat, you would not be stoned, and now if you eat (forbidden) fats, you will be cut off, and if you desecrate Shabbat, you will be stoned. Do not expound on this at too great a length, and in as much as you have informed him about the punishments (for the transgressing) of the commandments, so too should you inform him of the rewards of (following) the mitzvot, that in the doing of these mitzvot he will merit life in the world to come, and that there is no such thing as a complete saint except for one who has wisdom and that does the these commandments and knows them. Say to him, “As for the world to come, it is not hidden, rather it is for the righteous ones, that is, Israel, and that those who see Israel in sadness in this world, they will see goodness for them (in the world to come), for they are not able to receive the majority of their goodness in this world as idolaters lest they shoot them and they make a mistake and they loose their reward in the world to come. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not bring them most of the calamities in order that they are not destroyed, rather all of the idolaters are tools (of God), and they are standing. Expound at length upon this in order to make the words attractive. If he accepts, circumcise him immediately. Wait until he heals completely and afterwards dunk him (in the mikveh), and he should have no clothing or barrier between him and the water. Three people stand behind him and inform him of a few of the less strenuous and a few of the more serious mitzvot a second time and he stand in the water. If the convert is a woman, women sit her down in the water up to her neck and the rabbinic judges remain outside and inform her of a few of the less strenuous and more serious mitzvot while she sits in the water and afterwards she submerges in front of them and they return their and leaves in order that they do not see her while she is getting out of the water. And then comes the blessing over immersion after the convert gets out of the water, and because he immersed, behold, he’s an Israelite! And if he returns to his original state, he’s an apostate of Israel. If he becomes holy, he remains holy.

Law No: 3 - All of the elements of conversion – whether informing him of the mitzvot in order to receive them, milah (i.e. ritual circumcision), immersion (i.e. in a mikvah) – they need to be done before three who are kosher to judge, and during the day. However, this is limited to ab initio circumstances, but in post facto circumstances, if his circumcision or immersion was in front of only two (or relatives) or at night, even if he did not immerse for the sake of conversion but a man who immersed because of a seminal emission or a woman who immersed on account of her state of separateness (i.e. because of her period) this is a convert and is permitted to a Jewish woman – except for the receiving of mitzvot, which blocks [conversion] if it is not done in front of three and during the day. But according to the Ri”f and the Ramb”am, even bediavad if someone immersed

or was circumcised in front of two or at night, this blocks and he is forbidden to a Jewish woman. But if he married a Jewish woman and he had a child with her, we do not invalidate that child.

Law No: 4 - Since the immersion of a convert needs a bet din of three, they do not immerse him on Shabbat, and not on the yom tov (holidays), and not at night. But if he immersed, he has converted.

Law No: 5 - One who circumcises converts blesses "Praised are you Adonai, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with commandments and commanded us to circumcise converts." And afterwards he blesses, "Praised are you Adonai, King of the universe who has sanctified us with commandments and commanded us to circumcise converts and to draw a drop of covenantal blood from them since without the covenantal blood, the heavens and the earth would not have existed as it says, 'As surely as I have established My covenant with day and night – the laws of heaven and earth...'"

Law No: 6 - A non-Jewish woman who converted while she was pregnant, her child does not require immersion.

Law No:7 - If a non-Jewish minor has a father, he may convert him, and if he does not have a father and he comes to convert, or his mother brings him to convert, a bet din (i.e. religious court) converts him since it is to his advantage and we do things that are beneficial for someone even without that person's knowledge. Either a minor whose father converted him or he was converted by a bet din, he may reject the conversion when he matures and his legal status is not like a yisrael mumar (i.e. a Jew who converts out of Judaism), but rather like a non-Jew.

Translated by Thomas Salamon whilst the previous translation came from the Internet site:
Wikipedia Shulchan Aruch-he.wikisource.org/wiki

Law No: 8 What is involved?He who has not been accustomed to behave as a Jew as he was growing up, but when he grew up and took on Jewish customs then he cannot protest (that he is not a Jew)

Law No: 9 A pagan who is to be circumcised because of a wound or because he has a growth on his foreskin must not be circumcised by anyone from the Jewish community so that no one would be under the impression that a pagan has performed a Mitzvah (a commandment-Mitzvah). However if a pagan is to intend to convert to Judaism then it is a commandment (Mitzvah) for a Jew to circumcise him. But if it is for health reasons then it is permitted (Maimonides)

Law No:10 If a male of female pagan comes and says: I have converted through an unknown Rabbinic Court, then do not bring him to the community until he brings witnesses. If he behaves as a Jew and fulfills all the commandments (Mitzvoth), it is presumed that he is a True Convert even if there are no witnesses to say which Rabbinic Court has converted him. However if they interfere in the lives of Israel do not accept them until they bring witnesses, or until they immerse themselves (Tevilah) they have agreed to hold out themselves as pagans. BUT, who comes and says that he was a pagan and converted through a Rabbinic Board he is to be believed because what was forbidden to say becomes allowable. Rambam wrote-What is involved? What was acceptable in those days in the Land of Israel is different outside Israel as it is necessary to bring proof and only then can be accepted (as a Jew).

Law No:11 He who was held amongst the people of Israel and says "I have converted myself" and he has sons, he is not to be believed with regard to his sons but is to be believed as far as he himself is concernedIt is forbidden to accept him until he has undergone immersion (Tevilah)

Law No:12 When a stranger comes to convert you must enquire about him as he could be (saying this) because of coercion, or fear he wishes to enter the faith (the Jewish Religion). If it is a man perhaps he wishes to acquire a woman from the children of Israel. If that is not the reason then you are obliged to inform him of the heavy burden (yoke) of the Torah and if he gets circumcised, immerses in front of three common people then he should be accepted, even it is know that these were the reasons why he converted.Once he is circumcised and have had immersion then he has left paganism. You are however suspicious of him until it transpires that he is righteous, even if he then returns to be a pagan, because he is like a Jew who converted but later returned to Judaism remains holy.

ii) Talmud Masechet Yevamoth 46a.46b.47b.48a in Hebrew and English

יבמות דף מו.א

עובד כוכבים גופא לא קני ליה, מאי דקני ליה הוא דמקני ליה לישראל, וכיון דקדם וטבל לשם בן חורין אפקעיה לשעבודיה כדרבא, דאמר רבא: הקדש, חמץ, ושחרור - מפקיעין מידי שעבוד. מתיב רב חסדא: מעשה בבבולריא הגיורת, שקדמו עבדיה וטבלו לפניו, ובא מעשה לפני חכמים, ואמרו: קנו עצמן בני חורין לפניו אין, לאחריה לא אמר רבא: לפניו - בין בסתם בין במפורש, לאחריה - במפורש אין, בסתם לא. אמר רב אויא: לא שנו אלא בלוקח מן העובד כוכבים, אבל עובד כוכבים גופיה קני, דכתיב: (ויקרא כ"ה) וגם מבני התושבים הגרים עמכם מהם תקנו, אתם קונים מהם, ולא הם קונים מהם, ולא הם קונים זה מזה ולא הם קונים מהם, למאי? אילימא למעשה ידיו, אטו עובד כוכבים לא קני ליה לישראל למעשה ידיו? והכתיב: (ויקרא כ"ה) או לעקר משפחת גר, ואמר מר: משפחת גר - זה העובד כוכבים אלא לאו לגופיה, וקאמר רחמנא: אתם קונים מהם אפילו גופיה. פריך רב אחא, אימא: בכספא ובטבילה קשיא. אמר שמואל: וצריך לתקפו במים כי האי דמנימין עבדיה דרב אשי בעא לאטבולי, מסריה ניהלייהו לרבינא ולרב אחא ברי' דרבא, אמר להו: חזו דמיניכו קבעית ליה. רמו ליה ארויסא בצואריה, ארפו ליה וצמצמו ליה, ארפו ליה - כי היכי דלא להוי חציצה, צמצמו ליה - כי היכי דלא לקדים ולימא להו לשם בן חורין אני טובל. בהדי דדלי רישיה ממיא, אנחו ליה זולטא דטינא ארישיה, ואמרו ליה: זיל אמטי לבי מרך. א"ל רב פפא לרבא: חזי מר, הני דבי פפא בר אבא, דיהבי זוזי לאינשי לכרגייהו ומשעבדי בהו, כי נפקי צריכי גיטא דחירותא או לא? א"ל: איכו שכיבי, לא אמרי לנו הא מילתא, הכי א"ר ששת: מוהרקייהו דהני בטפסא דמלכא מנח, ומלכא אמר: מאן דלא יהיב כרגא משתעבד למאן דיהיב כרגא. ר' חייא בר אבא איקלע לגבלא, חזא בנות ישראל דמעברן מגרים שמלו ולא טבלו, וחזא חמרא דישראל דמזגי עובדי כוכבים ושתו ישראל, וחזא תורמוסין דשלקי עובדי כוכבים ואכלי ישראל, ולא אמר להו ולא מידי. אתא לקמיה דר' יוחנן, א"ל: צא והכרז על בניהם שהם ממזרים, ועל יינם משום יין נסך, ועל תורמוסין משום בישולי עובדי כוכבים לפי שאינן בני תורה. על בניהן שהם ממזרים - ר' יוחנן לטעמיה, דאמר ר' חייא בר אבא אמר ר' יוחנן: לעולם אין גר עד שימול ויטבול, וכיון דלא טביל - עובד כוכבים הוא, ואמר רבה בר בר חנה א"ר יוחנן: עובד כוכבים ועבד הבא על בת ישראל - הולד ממזר. ועל יינם משום יין נסך - משום לך לך אמרין, מזירא, סחור סחור לכרמא לא תקרב. ועל תורמוסין משום בשולי עובדי כוכבים לפי שאינן בני תורה - הא בני תורה שרי, והאמר רב שמואל בר רב יצחק משמי' דרב: כל הנאכל כמות שהוא חי - אין בו משום בשולי עובדי כוכבים, והא תורמוס אינו נאכל כמות שהוא חי, ויש בו משום בשולי עובדי כוכבים ר' יוחנן כאידך לישנא סבירא ליה, דאמר רב שמואל בר רב יצחק משמי' דרב: כל שאין עולה על שולחן מלכים לאכול בו את הפת - אין בו משום בשולי עובדי כוכבים, וטעמא דאינן בני תורה, הא בני תורה שרי. ת"ר: גר שמל ולא טבל - ר"א אומר: הרי זה גר, שכן מצינו באבותינו, שמלו ולא טבלו טבל ולא מל - ר' יהושע אומר: הרי זה גר, שכן מצינו באמהות, שטבלו ולא מלו וחכמים אומרים: טבל ולא מל, מל ולא טבל - אין גר, עד שימול ויטבול. ורבי יהושע נמי נילף מאבות ור"א נמי נילף מאמהות וכי תימא, אין דנין אפשר משאי אפשר, והתניא, ר"א אומר: מנין לפסח דורות שאין בא אלא מן החולין? נאמר פסח במצרים ונאמר פסח בדורות, מה פסח האמור במצרים אין בא אלא מן החולין, אף פסח האמור לדורות אין בא אלא מן החולין א"ל ר' עקיבא: וכי דנין אפשר משאי אפשר? א"ל: אע"פ שאי אפשר, ראייה גדולה היא ונלמד הימנה אלא,

יבמות דף מו.ב

בטבל ולא מל - כולי עלמא לא פליגי דמהני, כי פליגי - במל ולא טבל, רבי אליעזר יליף מאבות, ורבי יהושע? באבות נמי טבילה הוה. מנא ליה? אילימא מדכתיב: (שמות י"ט) לך אל העם וקדשתם היום ומחר וכבסו שמלותם, ומה במקום שאין טעון כבוס טעון טבילה, מקום שטעון כבוס אינו דין שטעון טבילה, ודלמא נקיות בעלמא אלא מהכא: (שמות כ"ד) ויקח משה את הדם ויזרוק על העם, וגמירי, דאין הזאה בלא טבילה. ורבי יהושע, טבילה באמהות מנלן? סברא הוא, דאם כן, במה נכנסו תחת כנפי השכינה? א"ר חייא בר אבא א"ר יוחנן: לעולם אינו גר עד שימול ויטבול. פשיטא, יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים מאן חכמים? רבי יוסי דתניא: הרי שבא ואמר מלתי ולא טבלתי - מטבילין אותו ומה בכך, דברי ר' יהודה, רבי יוסי אומר: אין מטבילין לפיכך מטבילין גר בשבת, דברי ר' יהודה, ור' יוסי אומר: אין מטבילין. אמר מר: לפיכך מטבילין גר בשבת. פשיטא, כיון דא"ר יהודה בחדא סגיא, היכא דמל לפנינו מטבילין, מאי לפיכך? מהו דתימא, לרבי יהודה טבילה עיקר, וטבילה בשבת לא, דקא מתקן גברא, קמ"ל, דר' יהודה או הא או הא בעי. ר' יוסי אומר: אין מטבילין.

פשיטא, דכיון דאמר רבי יוסי תרתי בעינן, תקוני גברא בשבת לא מתקנינן מהו דתימא, לר' יוסי מילה עיקר, והתם הוא דלא הואי מילה בפנינו, אבל היכא דהויא מילה בפנינו - אימא ליטבל זה בשבתא, קמ"ל, דרבי יוסי תרתי בעי. אמר רבה: עובדא הוה בי רבי חייא בר רבי, ורב יוסף מתני: רבי אושעיא בר רבי, ורב ספרא מתני: ר' אושעיא בר' חייא, דאתא לקמיה גר שמל ולא טבל, א"ל: שהי כאן עד למחר ונטבלינך. ש"מ תלת: ש"מ גר צריך שלשה, וש"מ אינו גר עד שימול ויטבול, וש"מ אין מטבילין גר בלילה. ונימא: ש"מ נמי בעינן מומחין דלמא דאיכלעו. אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן: גר צריך ג', משפט כתיב ביה. ת"ר: מי שבא ואמר גר אני, יכול נקבלנו? ת"ל: אתך, במוחזק לך. בא ועדיו עמו, מנין? ת"ל: (ויקרא י"ט) וכי יגור אתך גר בארצכם.

מז ב

לא רוב טובה ולא רוב פורענות ואין מרבין עליו ואין מדקדקין עליו קיבל מלין אותו מיד נשתיירו בו ציצין המעכבין את המילה חוזרים ומלין אותו שניה נתרפא מטבילין אותו מיד ושני ת"ח עומדים על גביו ומודיעין אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות טבל ועלה הרי הוא כישראל לכל דבריו אשה נשים מושיבות אותה במים עד צוארה ושני ת"ח עומדים לה מבחוץ ומודיעין אותה מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות אחד גר ואחד עבד משוחרר ובמקום שנדה טובלת שם גר ועבד משוחרר טובלין וכל דבר שחוצץ בטבילה חוצץ בגר ובעבד משוחרר ובנדה אמר מר גר שבא להתגייר אומרים לו מה ראית שבאת להתגייר ומודיעים אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות מ"ט דאי פריש נפרוש דא"ר חלבו קשים גרים לישראל כספחת דכתיב (ישעיהו יד, א) ונלוה הגר עליהם ונספחו על בית יעקב:

ומודיעים אותו עון לקט שכחה ופאה ומעשר עני:

מ"ט א"ר חייא בר אבא א"ר יוחנן בן נח נהרג על פחות משהו פרוטה ולא ניתן להשבון ומודיעים אותו עון שכחה ופאה):

ואין מרבין עליו ואין מדקדקים עליו:

אמר רבי אלעזר מאי קראה דכתיב (רות א, יח) ותרא כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אתה ותחדל לדבר אליה אמרה לה אסיר לן תחום שבת (רות א, טז) באשר תלכי אלך אסיר לן יחוד (רות א, טז) באשר תליני אלין מפקדינן שש מאות וי"ג מצות (רות א, טז) עמך עמי אסיר לן עבודת כוכבים (רות א, טז) ואלהיך אלהי ארבע מיתות נמסרו לב"ד (רות א, יז) באשר תמותי אמות ב' קברים נמסרו לב"ד (רות א, יז) ושם אקבר מיד ותרא כי מתאמצת היא וגו':

קיבל מלין אותו מיד:

מ"ט שהויי מצוה לא משהינן:

נשתיירו בו ציצין המעכבין המילה וכו':

כדתנן אלו הן ציצין המעכבין המילה בשר החופה את רוב העטרה ואינו אוכל בתרומה וא"ר ירמיה בר אבא אמר רב בשר החופה רוב גובהה של עטרה:

נתרפא מטבילין אותו מיד:

נתרפא אין לא נתרפא לא מאי טעמא משום דמיא מרזו מכה:

ושני ת"ח עומדים על גביו:

והא א"ר חייא א"ר יוחנן גר צריך שלשה הא א"ר יוחנן לתנא תני שלשה:

טבל ועלה הרי הוא כישראל לכל דבריו:

למאי הלכתא דאי הדר ביה ומקדש בת ישראל ישראל מומר קרינא ביה וקידושיו קידושין:

אחד גר ואחד עבד משוחרר:

קסלקא דעתך לקבל עליו עול מצות ורמינהו במה דברים אמורים בגר אבל בעבד משוחרר אין צריך לקבל
 אמר רב ששת לא קשיא הא ר"ש בן אלעזר הא רבנן דתניא (דברים כא, יג) ובכתה את אביה ואת אמה וגו'
 בד"א שלא קבלה עליה אבל קבלה עליה מטבילה ומותר בה מיד ר"ש בן אלעזר אומר אע"פ שלא קבלה
 עליה כופה ומטבילה לשם שפחות וחוזר ומטבילה לשם שחרור ומשחררה

א מ ח

ומותר בה מיד אמר רבא מאי טעמא דרבי שמעון בן אלעזר דכתיב (שמות יב, מד) כל עבד איש מקנת כסף
 עבד איש ולא עבד אשה אלא עבד איש אתה מל בעל כרחו ואי אתה מל בן איש בעל כרחו ורבנן אמר עולא
 כשם שאי אתה מל בן איש בעל כרחו כך אי אתה מל עבד איש בעל כרחו ואלא הכתיב כל עבד איש הוא
 מיבעי ליה לכדשמואל דאמר שמואל המפקיר עבדו יצא לחירות ואין צריך גט שחרור שנאמר כל עבד איש
 מקנת כסף עבד איש ולא עבד אשה אלא עבד שיש לו רשות לרבו עליו קרוי עבד ושאיין רשות לרבו עליו אין
 קרוי עבד מתקיף לה רב פפא אימור דשמעת להו לרבנן ביפת תואר דלא שייכא במצות אבל עבד דשייך
 במצות הכי נמי דאפי' רבנן מודו דתניא אחד גר ואחד לוקח עבד מן העובד כוכבים צריך לקבל הא לוקח
 מישראל אין צריך לקבל מני אי רבי שמעון בן אלעזר האמר לוקח מן העובד כוכבים נמי אין צריך לקבל אלא
 לאו רבנן וש"מ דלוקח מן העובד כוכבים צריך לקבל אבל לוקח מישראל אין צריך לקבל ואלא קשיא אחד גר
 ואחד עבד משוחרר כי תניא ההיא לענין טבילה תניא תנו רבנן (דברים כא, יב) וגלחה את ראשה ועשתה את
 צפרניה רבי אליעזר אומר תקוץ רבי עקיבא אומר תגדיל אמר רבי אליעזר נאמרה עשיה בראש ונאמרה
 עשיה בצפרנים מה להלן העברה אף כאן העברה רבי עקיבא אומר נאמרה עשיה בראש ונאמרה עשיה
 בצפרנים מה להלן ניוול אף כאן ניוול וראיה לדברי רבי אליעזר (שמואל ב יט, כה) ומפיבושת בן שאול ירד
 לקראת המלך לא עשה רגליו ולא עשה שפמו מאי עשיה העברה ת"ר (דברים כא, יג) ובכתה את אביה ואת
 אמה

Talmud - Mas. Yevamoth 46a

— The idolater has no title to the person [of the slave] and he can transfer to the Israelite only that which is his. And [the slave], since he forestalled him and performed ritual ablution for the purpose of acquiring the status of a freed man, has thereby cancelled the obligations of his servitude, in accordance with the ruling of Raba. For Raba stated: Consecration, leavened food and manumission cancel a mortgage.

R. Hisda raised an objection: It happened with the proselyte Valeria that her slaves forestalled her and performed ritual ablutions before her. And when the matter came before the Sages they decided that the slaves had acquired the status of freed men. [From here it follows that] only if they performed ablution before her, but not if after her! — Raba replied: 'Before her' they acquire their emancipation whether the object of their bathing had, or had not been specified; 'after her' emancipation is acquired only when the object had been specified, but not when it had not been specified.

R. Iwya said: What has been taught applies only to one¹⁵ who buys from an idolater; but the idolater himself may well be acquired; for it is written in Scripture, Moreover from the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them may ye buy: you may buy of them but they may not buy of you, nor may they buy of one another. 'But they may not buy of you'. — What can this refer to? If it be suggested [that it refers] to one's manual labour, may not an idolater, [it may be asked,] buy an Israelite to do manual labour? Surely it is written, Or to the offshoot of a stranger's family, and a Master said that by 'stranger's family' an idolater was meant? Consequently it must refer to his person; and the All Merciful said, 'You may buy of them, even their persons'. R. Aha objected: It might be said [to refer to acquisition] by means of money and ritual ablution! — This is a difficulty.

Samuel said: He must be firmly held while he is in the water; as [was done with] Menjamin, the slave of R. Ashi who wished to perform ritual ablution, and was entrusted to Rabina and R. Aha son of Raba. 'Note', [R. Ashi] said to them, 'that I shall claim him from you'. They put a chain round his neck, and loosened it and again tightened it. They loosened it in order that there might be no interposition. They then tightened it again in order that he might not forestall them and declare, 'I perform the ablution in order to procure thereby the status of a freed man'. While he was raising his head from the water they placed upon it a bucket full of clay and told him, 'Go, carry it to your master's house.

R. Papa said to Raba: The master must have observed the men of Papa b. Abba's house who advance sums of money on people's accounts in respect of their capitation taxes, and then force them into their service. Do they, when set free, require a deed of emancipation or not? He replied: Were I now dead I could not have told you of this ruling. Thus said R. Shesheth: The surety for these people is deposited in the king's archive, and the king has ordained that whosoever does not pay his capitation tax shall be made the slave of him who pays it for him.

R. Hiyya b. Abba once came to Gabla where he observed Jewish women who conceived from proselytes who were circumcised but had not performed the required ritual ablution; he also noticed that idolaters were serving Jewish wine and Israelites were drinking it, and he also saw that idolaters were cooking lupines and Israelites ate them; but he did not speak to them on the matter at all. He called, however, upon R. Johanan who instructed him: Go and announce that their children are bastards; that their wine is forbidden as nesek wine; and that their lupines are forbidden as food cooked by idolaters, because they are ignorant of the Torah.

'That their children are bastards', R. Johanan ruling in accordance with his view. For R. Hiyya b. Abba stated in the name of R. Johanan: A man cannot become a proper proselyte unless he has been circumcised and has also performed ritual ablution; when, therefore, no ablution has been performed he is regarded as an idolater; and Rabbah b. Bar Hana stated in the name of R. Johanan that if an idolater or a slave cohabited with the daughter of an Israelite the child [born from such a union] is a bastard.

'That their wine is forbidden as nesek wine', because a nazirite is told, 'Keep away; go round about; approach not the vineyard'.

'That their lupines are forbidden as food cooked by idolaters, because they are ignorant of the Torah'. [Would their lupines have been] permitted if the men had been acquainted with the Torah? Surely R. Samuel b. R. Isaac stated in the name of Rab, 'Any foodstuff that may be eaten raw does not come under the prohibition of food cooked by idolaters', and since lupines cannot be eaten raw the prohibition of food cooked by idolaters should apply! — R. Johanan holds the view as expressed in a second version. For R. Samuel b. R. Isaac stated in the name of Rab, 'Whatever is not served on a royal table as a dish to be eaten with bread is not subject to the prohibition of food cooked by idolaters The reason, therefore, is because they were ignorant of the Torah; for had they been acquainted with the Torah [their lupines would have been] permitted.

Our Rabbis taught: 'If a proselyte was circumcised but had not performed the prescribed ritual ablution, R. Eliezer said, 'Behold he is a proper proselyte; for so we find that our forefathers were circumcised and had not performed ritual ablution'. If he performed the prescribed ablution but had not been circumcised, R. Joshua said, 'Behold he is a proper proselyte; for so we find that the mothers had performed ritual ablution but had not been circumcised'. The Sages, however, said, 'Whether he had performed ritual ablution but had not been circumcised or whether he had been circumcised but had not performed the prescribed ritual ablution, he is not a proper proselyte, unless he has been circumcised and has also performed the prescribed ritual ablution.

Let R. Joshua also infer from the forefathers, and let R. Eliezer also infer from the mothers! And should you reply that a possibility may not be inferred from an impossibility, surely [it may be retorted] it was taught: R. Eliezer said, 'whence is it deduced that the paschal lamb of later generations may be brought from hullin only? Those in Egypt were commanded to bring a Paschal lamb and those of later generations were commanded to bring a Paschal lamb; as the Paschal lamb spoken of in Egypt could be brought from hullin only, so may also the paschal lamb which had been commanded to later generations be brought from hullin only'. Said R. Akiba to him, 'may a possibility be inferred from an impossibility!' The other replied. 'Although an impossibility, it is nevertheless a proof of importance and deduction from it may be made'! — But

Talmud - Mas. Yevamoth 46b

all agree that ritual ablution without circumcision is effective; and they differ only on circumcision without ablution. R. Eliezer infers from the forefathers, while R. Joshua [maintains that] in the case of the forefathers also ritual ablution was performed. Whence does he deduce it? If it be suggested, 'From that which is written, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments, if where washing of the garments is not required ablution is required, how much more should ablution be required where washing of the garments is required', [it may be retorted that] that might have been a mere matter of cleanliness. — It is rather from here: And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and we have a tradition that there must be no sprinkling without ritual ablution.

Whence does R. Joshua infer that the mothers performed ritual ablution? — It is a logical conclusion, for, otherwise, whereby did they enter under the wings of the Shechinah!

R. Hiyya b. Abba stated in the name of R. Johanan: A man can never become a proselyte unless he has been circumcised and has also performed the prescribed ritual ablution. Is not this obvious? [In a dispute between] an individual and a majority the halachah is, surely, in agreement with the majority!— The expression 'Sages' is in fact meant for 'R. Jose'. For it was taught: If [a proselyte] came and stated, 'I have been circumcised but have not performed ritual ablution' he is 'permitted to perform the ablution and [the proper performance of the previous circumcision] does not matter; so R. Judah.

R. Jose said: He is not to be allowed ablution, Hence it is permissible for a proselyte to perform the prescribed ablution on the Sabbath; so R. Judah. R. Jose, however, said: He is not to be allowed to perform the ablution.

The Master said, 'Hence it is permissible for a proselyte to perform the prescribed ablution on the Sabbath; so R. Judah'. Seeing that R. Judah stated that one suffices is it not obvious that, if circumcision has been performed in our presence, he is permitted to perform ablution! Why then, 'Hence'?— It might have been assumed that in the opinion of R. Judah, ablution forms the principal [part of the initiation], and that ablution is not to take place on the Sabbath because, thereby, a man is improved; hence we were taught that R. Judah requires either the one or the other.

'R. Jose, however, said: He is not to be allowed to perform the ablution'. Is not this obvious? Since R. Jose said that both are required [ablution must be forbidden as] the improvement of a man may not be effected on the Sabbath! — It might have been assumed that in the opinion of R. Jose circumcision forms the principal [part of the initiation] and that the reason there is because the circumcision had not been performed in our presence but where the circumcision had taken place in our presence it might have been assumed that a proselyte in such circumstances may perform the prescribed ablution even on the Sabbath, hence we were taught that R. Jose requires both.

Rabbah stated: It happened at the court of R. Hiyya b. Rabbi (and R. Joseph taught: R. Oshaia b. Rabbi; and R. Safra taught: R. Oshaia b. Hiyya) — that there came before him a proselyte who had been circumcised but had not performed the ablution. The Rabbi told him, 'Wait here until tomorrow when we shall arrange for your ablution'. From this incident three rulings may be deduced. It may be inferred that the initiation of a proselyte requires the presence of three men; and it may be inferred that a man is not a proper proselyte unless he had been circumcised and had also performed the prescribed ablution; and it may also be inferred that the ablution of a proselyte may not take place during the night.

Let it be said that from this incident it may also be inferred that qualified scholars are required! — Their presence might have been a mere coincidence.

R. Hiyya b. Abba stated in the name of R. Johanan: The initiation of a proselyte requires the presence of three men; for law has been written in his case.

Our Rabbis taught: As it might have been assumed that if a man came and said, 'I am a proselyte' he is to be accepted, hence it was specifically stated in the Scriptures With thee, only when he is well known to thee. Whence is it inferred that if he came, and had his witnesses with him, [that his word is accepted]? — It was specifically stated in Scripture, And if a proselyte sojourn . . . in your land.

Talmud - Mas. Yevamoth 47b

either too much prosperity. or too much suffering'. He is not, however, to be persuaded or dissuaded too much. If he accepted, he is circumcised forthwith. Should any shreds which render the circumcision invalid remain, he is to be circumcised a second time. As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution, when two learned men must stand by his side and acquaint him with some of the minor commandments and with some of the major ones. When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.

In the case of a woman proselyte, women make her sit in the water up to her neck, while two learned men stand outside and give her instruction in some of the minor commandments and some of the major ones.

The same law applies to a proselyte and to an emancipated slave; and only where a menstruant may perform her ablution may a proselyte and an emancipated slave perform this ablution; and whatever is deemed an interception in ritual bathing is also deemed to be an interception in the ablutions of a proselyte, an emancipated slave and a menstruant.

The Master said, 'If a man desires to become a proselyte . . . he is to be addressed as follows: "What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte . . ." and he is made acquainted with some of the minor, and with some of the major commandments'. What is the reason? — In order that if he desire to withdraw let him do so; for R. Helbo said: Proselytes are as hard for Israel [to endure] as a sore, because it is written in Scripture. And the proselyte shall join himself with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

'He is informed of the sin [of the neglect of the commandment of] Gleanings, the Forgotten Sheaf, the Corner and the Poor Man's Tithe'. What is the reason? — R. Hiyya b. Abba replied in the name of R. Johanan: Because a Noahide would rather be killed than spend so much as a perutah which is not returnable.

'He is not, however, to be persuaded, or dissuaded too much'. R. Eleazar said: What is the Scriptural proof? — It is written, And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her. 'We are forbidden', she told her, '[to move on the Sabbath beyond the] Sabbath boundaries!' — 'Whither thou goest' [the other replied] 'I will go'.

'We are forbidden private meeting between man and woman'!24 — 'Where thou lodgest. I will lodge'

'We have been commanded six hundred and thirteen commandments!' — 'Thy people shall be my people'.

'We are forbidden idolatry!' — 'And thy God my God'.

'Four modes of death were entrusted to Beth din!' — 'Where thou diest, will I die'.

'Two graveyards were placed at the disposal of the Beth din!' — 'And there will I be buried'. Presently she saw that she was steadfastly minded etc.

'If he accepted, he is circumcised forthwith'. What is the reason? — The performance of a commandment must not in any way be delayed.

'Should any shreds which render the circumcision invalid remain etc.', as we learned: These are the shreds which render the circumcision invalid: Flesh which covers the greater part of the corona, [a priest having been so circumcised] is not permitted to eat terumah; and R. Jeremiah b. Abba explained in the name of Rab: Flesh which covers the greater part of the height of the corona.

'As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution'. Only after he is healed but not before! What is the reason? — Because the water might irritate the wound.

'When two learned men must stand by his side'. Did not R. Hiyya, however, state in the name of R. Johanan that the initiation of a proselyte requires the presence of three? — But, surely. R. Johanan told the tanna: Read, 'three'.

'When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects'. In respect of what practical issue? — In that if he retracted and then betrothed the daughter of an Israelite he is regarded as a non-conforming Israelite and his betrothal is valid.

'The same law applies to a proselyte and to an emancipated slave'. Assuming this to apply to the acceptance of the yoke of the commandments, the following contradiction may be pointed out: This applies only to a proselyte. but an emancipated slave need not accept! — R. Shesheth replied: This is no contradiction, One statement is that of R. Simeon; the other, that of the Rabbis. For it was taught: And bewail her father and her mother etc. This only applies when she did not accept, but if she did accept, her ablution may be arranged, and he is permitted to marry her forthwith. R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: Even though she did not accept³⁹ he may force her to perform one ablution as a mark of her slavery and a second ablution as a mark of her emancipation, and having liberated her

Talmud - Mas. Yevamoth 48a

he is permitted to marry her forthwith.

Raba said: What is R. Simeon b. Eleazar's reason? — Because it is written, Every man's slave that is bought for money; [could it mean] the slave of a man and not the slave of a woman? But [this is the implication]: The slave of a man may be forcibly circumcised but no son of a man may be forcibly circumcised. And the Rabbis? — 'Ulla replied: As you, admittedly, may not by force circumcise the son of a man so you may not forcibly circumcise the slave of a man. But, surely, there is the Scriptural text, Every man's slave!— That text is required for a deduction made by Samuel. For Samuel stated: If a man declared his slave to be ownerless that slave acquires thereby his freedom and requires no deed of emancipation; for it is stated in Scripture. Every man's slave that is bought for money, [could it mean] the slave of a man and not the slave of a woman? But [the meaning is that] a slave who is under his master's control is a proper slave but he who is not under his master's control is not a proper slave.

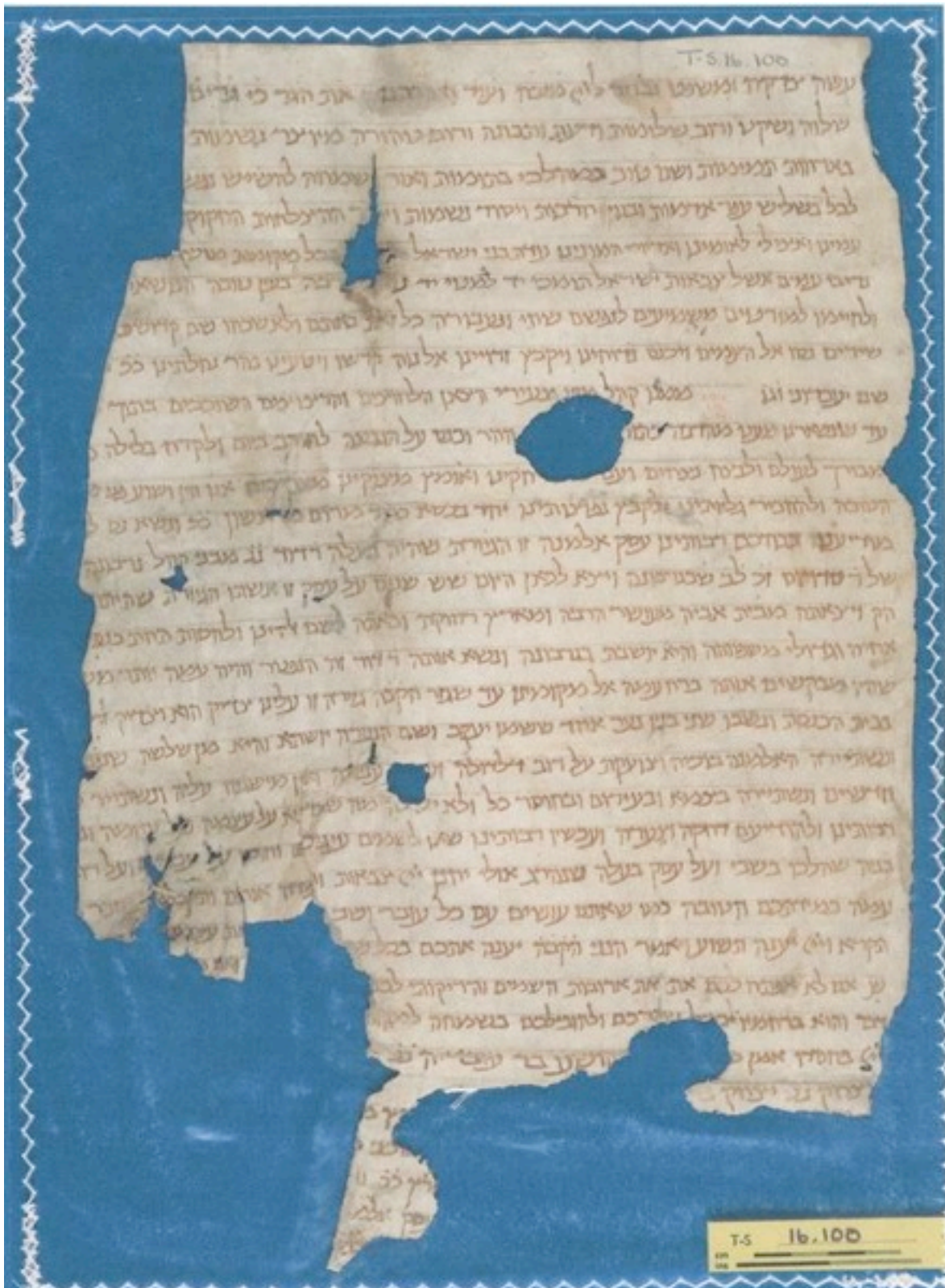
R. Papa demurred: It might be suggested that the Rabbis were heard in respect of a woman of goodly form only, because she is under no obligation to observe the commandments; but that in respect of a slave, who is under the obligation of observing commandments, even the Rabbis agree! For it was indeed taught. 'Both a proselyte and a slave bought from an idolater must make a declaration of acceptance'. Thus it follows that a slave bought from an Israelite need not make a declaration of acceptance. Now, whose view is this? If that of R. Simeon b. Eleazar, he, surely, had stated that even a slave bought from an idolater need make no declaration of acceptance! Consequently it must be the view of the Rabbis; and so it may be inferred that only a slave bought from an idolater is required to make a declaration of acceptance but a slave bought from an Israelite is not required to make a declaration of acceptance. But then the contradiction from the statement 'The same law applies to a proselyte and to an emancipated slave' remains! — That was taught only with reference to the ablution.

Our Rabbis taught: And she shall shave her head, and do her nails, R. Eliezer said, 'She shall cut them'. R. Akiba said, 'She shall let them grow'. R. Eliezer said: An act was mentioned in respect of the head, and an act was mentioned in respect of the nails; as the former signifies removal, so does the latter also signify removal. R. Akiba said: An act was mentioned in respect of the head and an act was mentioned in respect of the nails; as disfigurement is the purpose of the former so is disfigurement the purpose of the latter. The following, however, supports the view of R. Eliezer: And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and he had neither dressed his feet, nor had he done 'his beard; by 'doing' removal was meant.

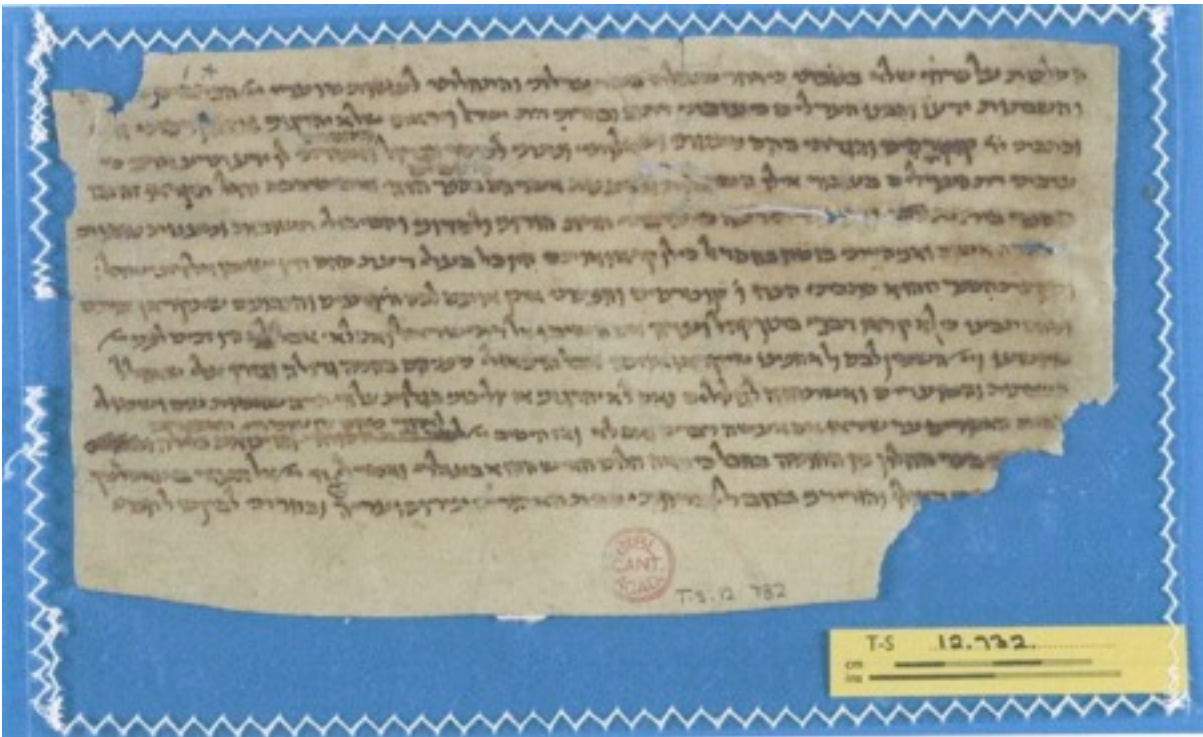
Our Rabbis taught: And bewail her father aid her mother;

Appendix IV

i) T.S. 16.100



ii) T.S. 12.732

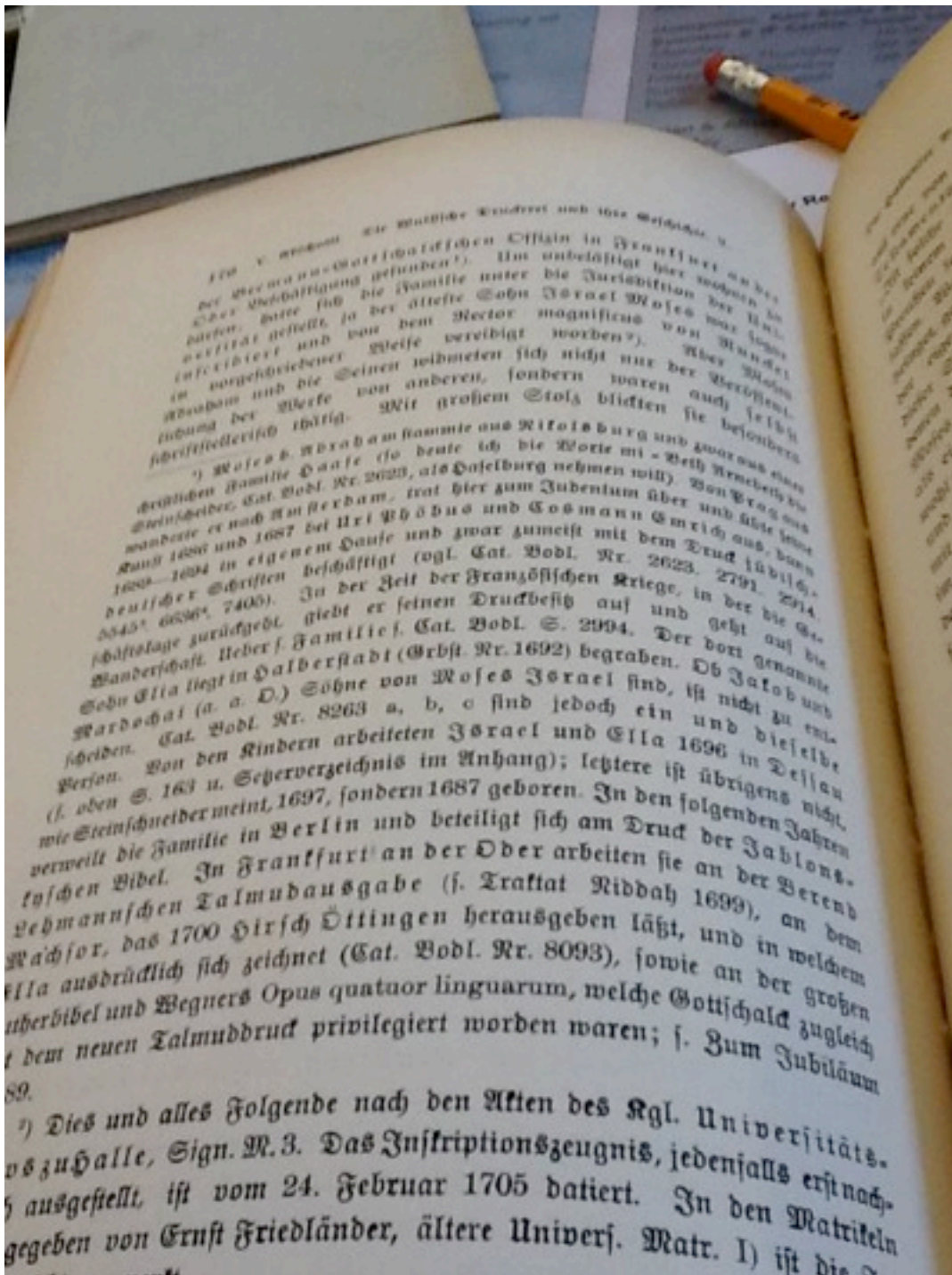


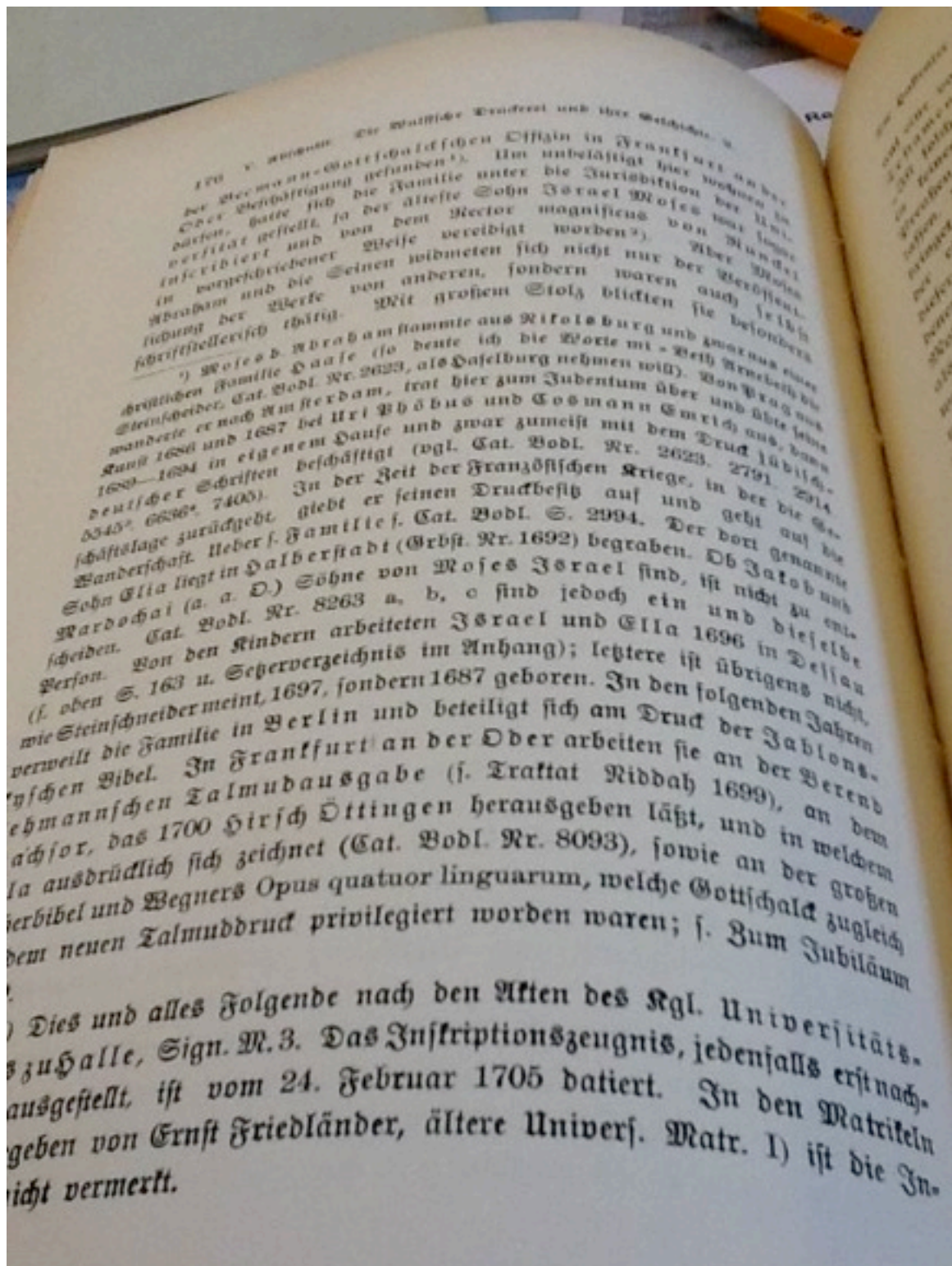


iii) Or 1080 J115

Appendix V

Freudenthal Book -Footnote





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Absztrakt

Életrajzi illusztrációk, prozeliták és befogadási tendenciák a judaizmusban a 9. és a 19. század között

Disszertációm témája: betérés a zsidó vallásba, valamint a betértek személyiségének, motivációinak, életüknek ehhez kapcsolódó eseményeinek vizsgálata. Téziseimben kifejtettem azt az álláspontomat, miszerint a zsidóság vallási és szellemi életére egyaránt nagy hatással, még hozzá kimutathatóan pozitív hatással bírt a betérés. A történelem során jóval többször volt elfogadott és támogatandó ez a folyamat a zsidóságban, s jóval rövidebbek voltak azon időszakok, amikor elzárkóztak előle. Értekezésemben számtalan életpálya bemutatásával, kutatásával, valamint a történeti és egyházi források vizsgálatával bizonyítom, hogy a betérés egészen a zsidóság őseinek idejétől kezdve a szervezett egyház és állam megjelenéséig és azután is jelen lévő "természetes" aktus volt (sőt, olykor erőszakkal kikényszerített), s csak a történelem egyes, a zsidókra negatívan ható eseményei vezettek e régi, bevett szokás torzulásaihoz, annak hagyományának időnkénti felfüggesztéséhez.

A zsidóság Ábrahám és Sára létezése óta, nem zárkózott el azoktól, akik be akartak térni a zsidó vallásba. Nem lenne zsidóság és zsidó vallás, ha ősatyánk és ősanánk nem haladt volna ezen az úton, vagyis nem bátorította, ösztönözte és fogadta volna be azokat, akik hittek vagy akartak hinni az "Egy Istenben", hisz se Ábrahám, se Sára nem voltak "zsidók". A "betérés" előtt Ábrahám és Sára – akiknek eredetileg Ábrám és Száráj volt a nevük – pogányok voltak, s a hitük az Örökkévalóban tette őket a zsidóság "forrásává". Igazából, a zsidóság múltja, jelene és jövője csak akkor tud létezni és kiteljesedni, ha szabadon (és nem megnehezítve) fogadja be azokat, akik Ger Cedekké, vagyis igazi, hű zsidóvá akartak válni.

Rút könyvében is így olvassuk (1:16) "Ne kényszeríts rá, hogy elhagyjalak és elmenjek. Mert ahova te mész, megyek én is. Ahol te letelepszel, letelepszem én is. A te néped az én népem, a te Istened az én Istenem." Jesajahu próféta (49:6) hirdette a zsidóknak: "teszlek nemzetek világosságává". Voltak persze kivételek, akik elleneztek a betérést, például Ezra (10:1), aki elküldette az idegen asszonyokat.

Nem csak a T'nach idejében találunk példákat a betérésekre. A Makkabeusok idejében még erőszakkal is betérítették a lakosságot. A 9. századi kazárok még segítő kezet is kaptak.

Amikor a kereszténység betiltotta a térítést és máglyára vetette emiatt a zsidókat, attól kezdve a zsidókban állandósult a félelem az idegenek befogadásától, s ezért a közvéleményben - mindenekelőtt Európában - az a nézet vált dominánssá, hogy a judaizmus nem befogadó vallás. Kutatásaim azt bizonyítják, hogy a nehéz történelmi időszakok ellenére, a zsidóság nem utasította el soha teljesen a betérni szándékozókat, mint ahogy azt a dolgozatomban leírt Lord Gordon, Deacon Robert of Reading és Warden Cresson esete bizonyítja.

A modern kor utóbbi kétszáz évében a reform és liberális zsidóság nyitva tartja ajtaját, az ortodoxia az orosz és etióp zsidók útját egyengeti. A disszertációm első részében bemutatom, hogy mi vezette a betérőket a T'nach és Talmud idejében, és, mi motiválta a későbbi időkben betérteket (és a kitérőket).

Leo Baeck berlini rabbi mondta a következőt (1949):

“A világ éhes és szomjas arra amit a zsidóság tud a világnak adni....a világ történetében a mi történelmünkért volt sok olyan keresztény, akik a zsidóság felé fordultak....Ki kell küldeni misszionáriusokat Ázsiába és más világrészekbe, ez a feladat nem ismeretlen előttünk...Szükségünk van növekedésre”.

Scheiber Sándor professzor úrtól (zichrono livracha) kaptam 1977 október 24-én azt a levelet, amelyben e témát javasolta feldolgozásra. Domán István professzor úr pedig nagy segítségemre volt azzal, hogy javasolta, az utószóban a kitérők köréből is hozzak példákat. Disszertációm a zsidó vallás befogadási tendenciáit és a prozeliták életét kutatja és tárja fel, olyan részletességgel, ami az én terveimet és remélhetőleg e két, kiemelkedő rabbi gondolatait egyaránt valóra váltja.