

‘ONE CUP OF COFFEE’ :
ORDINANCES CONCERNING LUXURIES
AND RECREATION
A Chapter in the Cultural and Social History
of the Jewish Sephardi Community
of Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century

The Sephardic Jewish community of Jerusalem, most of whose members originated in the western provinces of the Ottoman Empire, constituted an offshoot of sorts of Ottoman Jewry. This was an hierarchical society, in which social status and rank were directly related to one's wealth and the manner in which it was exploited. Though much has been written about Jerusalem's nineteenth-century Jewish community, we actually know very little about its religious and cultural character.

This article examines Jewish communal ordinances (*takanot*) issued by the community's lay and religious leaders in the first half of the nine-

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teenth century in order to limit the consumption of luxury items and to control recreation patterns. The ordinances are a source of information about consumption as a reflection of economic and social status, this in addition to the information they provide about the social customs and behavior of Jerusalem's Jews. By studying the ordinances and explaining their cultural context we will throw light on the social and cultural milieu of the Sephardic Jews in Ottoman Jerusalem. It is precisely regulations that were issued for the general public which shed some light on the lower classes, who are generally absent from historical documentation, and thus are also overlooked in historical research.

Our study shall focus on consumption as both a social and a cultural phenomenon—a means of flaunting wealth and high social status, or as an attempt by lower- or middle-class people to achieve the status of those higher up the social ladder, and the resulting efforts by the upper classes to prevent this, to establish strict social lines of definition, and prevent even the appearances of social mobility.

Until about two decades ago, scholars tended to relate mainly to the economic aspects of consumption in pre-modern societies. They dealt with production, the supply of and trade in raw materials, sale and barter patterns, and more. Social scientists enriched our knowledge of consumption with insights from their own discipline. For instance, since it had already been demonstrated that every social class maintains a different life style reflected in behavior patterns and the consumption of food, drink, clothing, and recreational activities, they pointed to a tendency of the upper classes to maintain and openly flaunt a hedonistic life style. They also indicated that members of the middle classes, due to competition with their peers, tended to imitate, to the best of their ability, the consumption patterns of their “betters,” this in order to acquire a self-conceived image of respectability and appearance of climbing the social ladder (*i.e.*, wealth equals a high status). French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who has devoted many of his studies to social status, has shown that consumption and recreation patterns—and social and cultural patterns in general—are in reality a means of differentiating between existing status groups, and not only an instrument to express existing differences resulting from economic factors. At times this is a case of delineating the dissimilitude between groups having the same economic status, but differing in other aspects.

With the move from economic and social history to cultural history, research topics and issues have changed as well. Since the beginning of

the 1990s, efforts have been made to place consumption within a cultural framework. Instead of a single explanation for consumption, scholars look for a group of factors, or even processes, without attempting to rank them hierarchically in accordance with their contribution to the overall change in consumption patterns¹.

Modern consumption is no longer restricted to satisfying basic, real human needs; it is intimately bound up with the absorption of icons, implications, ideas, and ideals, some of which are transmitted by commercial advertising. Study of the post-modern consumer civilization of the West has revealed the ideas, visual imagery, and symbolic implications that exert their influence upon consumers. Consumption is now considered as an economic, social, and cultural process controlled by symbols and meanings; it is motivated by widespread practices and an all-encompassing social and cultural atmosphere, rather than by biologically dictated needs. Buying is an act that causes the buyer excitement and happiness, and therefore has become a value in itself, a symbolic act, a motivation, and at times even the major purpose of the consumer. Consumer products are not always necessities, not always services or belongings with a clearly defined objective (such as furniture, for example); they sometimes turn out to have an 'added value' and meaning recognized by all members of the consumer society. They promote symbols and meanings, and their consumption aids the individual to shape his identity (in addition to other factors, such as profession, economic ability, or social status). In other words, shopping and buying are much more than an attempt to engage in social imitation and advancement. Since today cultural symbols and values play an important and central role in the consumption process, contemporary research tends toward analysis and comprehension of consumption (both in the present and the past) as a complex, multi-faceted act, and therefore also devotes attention to its cultural context.

A few consumption-related research topics in the history of the Ottoman Empire have been studied recently, particularly those relating to the Imperial court and the population of Istanbul, the empire's capital and center of its political and economic life. In an article she wrote in the mid-1990s, Suraiya Faroqhi attempts to outline the path which research should follow and to explain why European-oriented studies are relevant

¹ Woodruff D. SMITH, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600–1800*, New York and London, 2002. I am grateful to my friends Dr. Moshe Sluhovsky and Dr. Michal Held for their enlightening comments.

to Ottoman history. She complains about the absence of supportive research in the disciplines of archaeology and art, and calls for attention to be paid specifically to the social context of production and consumption. Donald Quataert maintains that the nineteenth century is an important, fertile area for studies of consumption in the Ottoman Empire, particularly interesting because it was characterized by changes in all areas of daily life and greater accessibility by the common people to a wide variety of imported goods believed to be prestigious². Comparison of what we know about consumption patterns in an imperial capital city such as Istanbul and its many markets and consumers, with what the documentation reveals about a provincial city such as Jerusalem may be quite instructive, for instance concerning the relationship between local production of consumer goods and their import.

Though much has been written about the Sephardic Jewish community of Jerusalem, we actually know very little about its daily life and its religious and cultural character. The present article tackles the issue of consumption from two standpoints—that of a minority group and that of a distant and poor province—and through this subject enhances our understanding of the Jewish community in Palestine during the last century of Ottoman rule.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF JERUSALEM DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A new era began for the Jews of Palestine during the short period of Egyptian rule (1831–1840)³. Alongside positive changes, which ben-

² For an important collection of articles on this subject, especially the introduction of editor Donald Quataert and the article by Suraiya Faroqhi, see Donald QUATAERT (ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922: An Introduction*, Albany, 2000, p. 1–13; Suraiya FAROQHI, “Research on the History of Ottoman Consumption: A Preliminary Exploration of Sources and Models”, in *ibid.*, p. 15–44. See also Linda CARROLL, “Toward an Archaeology of Non-Elite Consumption in Late Ottoman Anatolia”, in Uzi BARAM and Linda CARROLL (eds.), *A Historical Archaeology of the Ottoman Empire*, New York, 2000, p. 161–179.

³ For general background see: Israel BARTAL, “Community and Society: New Tendencies during the Period of Egyptian Conquest”, in Yehoshua BEN-ARIEH and Israel BARTAL (eds.), *The Last Phase of Ottoman Rule (1799–1917)*, The History of Eretz Israel, vol. 8, Jerusalem, 1983, p. 201–204 (Hebrew); Mordechai ELIAV, *Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv in the 19th Century, 1777–1917*, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 42–47 (Hebrew), Svi KARAGILA, *The Jewish Community in Palestine (“Yishuv”) during the Egyptian Rule (1831–1840)*, Tel Aviv, 1990 (Hebrew); Sherman LIEBER, *Mystics and Missionaries:*

efited mostly those under foreign consular protection (generally themselves of European origin), there were also less positive ones. For good or bad, Jews continued to live as *dhimmi*s under a Muslim regime. The testimony of European travelers indicates that the Jews of Palestine, like their brethren in other provinces of the Empire, continued to be the object of incessant extortion, degradation, and harassment on the part of both the local authorities and hostile elements among the local population. The political changes aroused the hostility of local Muslims against Europeans and the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, leading to deterioration in the social standing of the latter.

The number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine grew considerably during this period, so that the composition of the Jewish community in the country became more variegated. Particularly evident was the growth in the number of Jews originally from Turkey and the Balkans, as well as that of Ashkenazim from eastern Europe. In the past, the number of elderly men and women predominated among Jerusalem's Jews. While the Jerusalem community was the largest and most important in Palestine, numerically it could be counted among the medium-sized ones in the Ottoman Empire. In the late 1830s, population growth took a turn for the worse: the Peasants' [Felahin] Revolt and its brutal suppression, as well as a greater Egyptian military presence in the country, led to a shortage of basic food products and rising prices. These and other difficulties, not to mention recurring plagues, greatly reduced the Jewish population of Jerusalem, the number of newcomers barely making up for those who died or left the city. The 1839 Montefiore census listed about 3,000 Jews, while estimates by European travelers of the time were slightly higher—about 5,000⁴.

Formally, leadership of the Jewish community in Jerusalem was entrusted to the chief rabbi, who bore the title 'Rishon Lezion' (and from

The Jews in Palestine 1799–1840, Salt Lake City, 1992, p. 202–223; Yitzhak HOFMAN, "The Administration of Syria and Palestine under Egyptian Rule (1831–1840)", in Moshe MA'UZ (ed.), *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period*, Jerusalem, 1975, p. 311–333.

⁴ On the demography of the Jewish community of Jerusalem see: Hadassah ASSOULINE (ed.), *A Census of the Jews in Eretz Israel (1839) (MS. Montefiore 528)*, Jerusalem, 1987), p. 19 (Hebrew). According to this census, in 1839 Jerusalem's Jewish population numbered about 3000 souls, of which 2527 were Sephardim. Among the Sephardim there were many widows (615) and orphans (192). For the number of Jews in Jerusalem at the beginning of the nineteenth century see: Yehoshua BEN-ARIEH, *Jerusalem in the 19th Century: The Old City*, Jerusalem and New York, 1984, p. 268–271; Ben-Zion GAT, *The Jewish Community in Eretz Israel 1840–1881*, Jerusalem, 1963, p. 19 (Hebrew).

1841 : 'Hakham Başı). Practically, however, the daily affairs of the community were run by the trustees [*parnassim*] of the Sephardi community [*kollel*] who bore responsibility for collecting taxes, providing various services to the community's members, and managing its many properties⁵. Only the Sephardi leadership formally represented the Jewish community vis-à-vis the authorities, and it was solely responsible for the collection and payment of all its taxes. The rabbinical elite was endowed with much power and influence, though it was not homogeneous and its members were often at loggerheads. The recent immigrants, particularly the Ashkenazim, maintained organizational frameworks which enjoyed various levels of independence from the general framework; they also vigilantly maintained ties and relationships with their cities and countries of origin, the source of their financial support. The struggle to free themselves from the patronage and control of the Sephardim intensified during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and was finally successful.

Since 1810, the Committee of Clerks and Managers on Behalf of the Holy Land [Va'ad Ha-pekidim ve-Amarkalim, known by its Hebrew acronym Pakuam], based in Amsterdam and led by Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Lehren, a religious Orthodox banker, played a significant role in the life of the Jewish community in Palestine. It carried out its activities simultaneously with the older Committee of Clerks which had been established in Istanbul in 1726, but was slowly losing ground as a central organization for the collection and transfer of funds. The Pakuam coordinated the collection of funds for the Jews of Palestine in most Jewish communities throughout the world, and was also responsible for their transfer and distribution. This provided its leaders with much influence on the shaping of the community in Palestine, particularly the everyday life of its Ashkenazi members who were greatly dependent upon *halukkah*⁶. The situation was different among the Sephardim: only those whose profession was study of the Holy Law and the poor received public funds; the majority of Sephardim earned a bare living from a variety of crafts, trades, and the provision of diverse services.

Jewish society was a subject (*dhimmi*) traditional society that attached great importance to social standing, honor, ceremony, and relations

⁵ For the leadership of the Sephardi community see: BEN-ARIEH, *Jerusalem...The Old City*, *op. cit.*, p. 280–294; KARAGILA, *Jewish Community*, *op. cit.*, p. 38–53.

⁶ Literally: 'distribution', *i.e.*, the funds that were collected abroad and distributed in the Holy Land among the needy, among scholars and others.

within the extended family. Most of its members were of the lower, poorer classes; property owners and persons with large incomes were in the minority⁷. Living on the fringes of poverty was no easy matter, and it was enough for a drought, a particularly stormy winter, a loss of the capacity to earn an income, or a sudden rise in prices to topple individuals and whole families into deep poverty. This meant harsh living conditions, insufficient nutrition, and tattered clothing. The communal leadership helped the poor by means of partial or complete exemption from taxes, while philanthropic societies provided aid for the sick and needy. An increase in the number of the poor, particularly after refugees from Tiberias and Safed reached Jerusalem in the wake of the earthquake of 1837, added to the burden of the Sephardi leadership. As in earlier decades, rates of death and illness rose as the natural outcome of harsh living conditions within the walls of the Old City. The overpopulated Jewish courtyards and quarters had a bad reputation in this respect, their under-nourished residents drank water from polluted wells. The sights and smells shocked and disgusted foreign travelers who left us their written impressions, though these should be weighed carefully. Throughout the entire Ottoman period, perceptive European visitors noted the tendency of residents in Oriental countries, particularly Jewish and Christian *dhimmi* populations, to conceal their wealth behind as poor a façade as possible—tattered clothing, crumbling outer walls of their homes, and so forth. This they did in order to ward off the evil eye, but also out of fear that the authorities would increase the taxes and imposts levied upon them. Wealth was exhibited internally, within the community, in various and diverse manners.

Western travelers have left us with insightful, at times rather critical, descriptions of the Jews of Palestine; their impressions are an important primary source for the period in question. Two American scholars, Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, who spent a few months in Palestine in 1838, wrote:

“Of the Jews now resident in Palestine, the greater number are such as have come up to the land of their fathers, in order to spend the remainder of their lives and die in one of the four holy places, Jerusalem, Hebron,

⁷ On poverty, the difficulty of earning a living, and the dependence of the Jews as a whole (almost 90 percent in the 1860s!) on outside help see: GAT, *Jewish Community*, *op. cit.*, p. 34–39. KARAGILA, *Jewish Community*, *op. cit.*, p. 52 maintains that despite the great number of philanthropic organizations, the Jewish community was unable to meet the basic needs of many of its poor.

Tiberias, or Safed.... They come hither from all parts of the Levant, and especially from Smyrna, Constantinople, and Salonika.... But subsequently, as the high prices of provisions and of living in general increased, this circumstance prevented the coming of more, and compelled the return of many; so that the number of Jews in Jerusalem had been much diminished. They live here, for the most part, in poverty and filth. A considerable amount of money is collected for them by their emissaries in different countries; but as it comes into the hands of the Rabbins, and is managed by them without responsibility, it is understood to be administered without much regard to honesty; and serves chiefly as a means of increasing their own influence and control over the conduct and consciences of their poorer brethren⁸.”

One year later, two Scottish missionaries, Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray McCheyne, toured the country and wrote an insightful and extensive description:

“The Jews are unwilling to give their true numbers, and they are reduced from time to time by the ravages of the plague. Add to this, that few young men come to the land; so that it is not reckoning accurately to take the usual average of individuals in a family. People who come here are generally elderly, and do not leave families behind them to increase the population or supply its vacancies. There is, without doubt, a constant influx of Jews into this country, yet not so great as to do more than supply the annual deaths. Their poverty is great. The contributions from Europe of late have been smaller than usual; and when they arrive, instead of doing good, are the occasion of heart-burnings and strife. There is no such thing as ‘brethren dwelling together in unity’ in Jerusalem; no Jew trusts his brother. They are always quarrelling, and frequently apply to the Consuls to settle their disputes. The expectation of support from the annual European contributions leads many to live in idleness. Hence there are in Jerusalem 500 acknowledged paupers, and 500 more who receive charity in a quiet way. Many are so poor that, if not relieved, they could not stand out the winter season. A few are shopkeepers; a few more are hawkers; and a very few are operatives. None of them are agriculturists. Among other peculiar causes of poverty they are obliged to pay more rent than other people for their houses; and their rabbis frequently oppress and overreach those under their care.... Still the common people hate them, and they are exposed to continual wrongs.... There is always an influx, but then the mortality is great.... This diminution in the numbers of Jews returning to their own land, seems to be caused by the ravages which the plague has been making for the two years past; by the rise in the price of provisions; by the embarrassed finances of the Jewish community and by the oppression which they suffer from the rabbis.... Generally speaking, they are all sup-

⁸ Edward ROBINSON and Eli SMITH, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and in the Adjacent Regions: A Journal of Travels in the Year 1838*, vol. 1, Boston, 1868, p. 422.

ported by a yearly contribution made by their brethren in other lands.... The sum received by each individual is very small; much is swallowed up by their differences and quarrels, and much is required to pay the interest of their debt⁹.”

THE ORDINANCES

As is well known, an orderly record book of the Jerusalem community has not survived, or never existed. Moreover, not all the ordinances, whether printed or in manuscript, have yet been published. The ordinances to which I shall refer are but two of the many that still await study by students of Palestine and its Jewish community.

The first, from 1807, deals with inheritances. A copy is included in a manuscript volume of ordinances now in the collection of Professor Meir Benayahu, in Jerusalem¹⁰. It begins with a short introduction dealing with exorbitant expenditures on festive occasions (weddings, circumcisions, etc.), noting that this phenomenon has led to much criticism from abroad. Then follow twelve sections, summarized as follows:

1. Refreshments for guests invited by the host are to be limited to one portion of sweets and one cup of coffee.
2. Refreshments served to ordinary visitors who are not immediate members of the host's family are to be limited to one cup of coffee only.
3. Only female relatives are permitted to accompany the bride to the ritual bath (*mikveh*), and only her mother or sister may immerse themselves with her. No refreshments may be served and no presents given at this ceremony.
4. Only immediate relatives may engage in games of chance during the seven days of feasting following a wedding, and even this will be done with strict separation between the sexes.
5. When the bride and her companions return from the bath [*mikveh*], neither she nor her companions may be offered *sharopee* (a delicacy produced from whipped sugar syrup).

⁹ [Andrew BONAR and Robert M. MCCHEYNE], *Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839* (Philadelphia, 1845), p. 148-49, 164-65.

¹⁰ MS Benayahu A221, fols. 12a-17a, Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, film 71962. I thank Prof. Meir Benayahu for permission to publish the ordinances.

6. Those permitted to be present in the home at the time of the wedding ceremony are limited to relatives, neighbors, and friends of the groom or the bride. It is forbidden to invite more than two or three strangers to the wedding feast.
7. Limitations are placed on the number of companions who may accompany the groom when he leaves the house to invite persons to participate in the 'seven benedictions' (*sheva berakhot*), on the number of persons invited to partake of the feast held for the groom when he returns, and to a dinner at a circumcision ceremony; inviting women to these events is prohibited, except for those most closely related to the bride and groom or the [boys'] parents.
8. Renewal of the regulation prohibiting the sending of trays of sweets to a woman who has given birth to a son or daughter, and prohibition of the sending of such trays by the parents of the newborn child.
9. Limitations on the number of dishes that may be served at feasts during the seven days following a wedding, or at feasts celebrating a circumcision.
10. Restrictions concerning the wearing of jewels by women. The restrictions do not apply to the bride during the seven days of her wedding festivities.
11. It is prohibited to sing Arabic songs [this might be interpreted as songs in Arabic, and songs set to Arab melodies] on festive occasions, and certainly not on an ordinary day.
12. A sweeping prohibition against card games, and strict limitations on games of dice. Transgressors of this ordinance will pay a fine to the officers of the community and to the city authorities.

Whoever does not abide by these regulations is considered a transgressor, and 'the rabbis look upon him with dis[ap]proval'.

The second set of ordinances was promulgated in late 1842 and contains eleven regulations. They were printed at the end of a book entitled *Tuv Yerushalem* (1842–1843)¹¹ together with another group as ordi-

¹¹ *Tuv Yerushalem*, fols. 21[25r]–22[26v]. The author of *Tuv Yerushalem* was R. Yitzhak Farhi, who was born in Safed in 1779 and passed away in Jerusalem in 1853. From 1828 to 1830 he was an emissary on behalf of the Jerusalem community in Anatolia and the Balkans, and upon his return was appointed to serve on the religious court of R. Gagin. In addition to being a prolific author, he was renowned as a preacher and moralist. He also served as a cantor in the Istanbuli synagogue. He participated in the communal leadership, being very active in the area of help to the needy. Many of his books and

nances that were omitted from *Takanot ve-haskamot u-minhagei ...Yerushalem* (Regulation, Ordinances, and Customs of Jerusalem) which had been published in the previous year by Rabbi Hayyim Avraham Gagin. *Tuv Yerushalem* includes matters dealing with the virtues of Eretz Israel, a listing of the needs and expenditures of the Jerusalem community, an outline of religious study and prayer practices in the city, and information about charitable activities. The book was meant to help Jerusalem find favor with Jews in the diaspora and to encourage them to donate towards the needs of the community. The cited ordinance certainly fits in.

This second group of regulations has evaded the attention of researchers, even though it was set in print and its existence has been noted in bibliographic descriptions of this small volume. The reasons for this oversight may be lack of interest in the subject and the difficult language in which they were written, a corrupt Judeo-Spanish¹². Add to this the rarity of the book, that the printing was not well executed, and that in a few copies two pages are missing, precisely those containing most of the ordinances. They are signed by seven rabbis of the Sephardic community, first and foremost among them the Hakham Başı Rabbi Gagin¹³.

Except for a few sentences in Hebrew, the ordinances are written in Judeo-Spanish, the language of the immigrants from the various provinces of the Ottoman Empire and also that spoken by the majority of the Sephardim in Jerusalem. The style is not very literary; we may have before us an attempt to provide a written text in colloquial speech. A close examination of the text reveals the presence of words and forms originating in Turkish, and an absence of Arabic elements. This might be some indication that a Jerusalem Ladino dialect had not yet developed by the mid-nineteenth century, and that the one spoken in the city had been 'imported' by immigrants from Anatolia and the Balkans.

The following is an outline description of the 1842 ordinance, including eleven sections. It begins with a lengthy preface dealing with the obligation to mourn and act decorously in Jerusalem. In view of the

writings were published during his lifetime, some of which were very popular. On Rabbi Yitzhak Farhi see: Aryeh L. FRUMKIN and Eliezer RIVLIN, *Lives of the Sages of Jerusalem*, vol. 3, Jerusalem, 1929, p. 287–289 (Hebrew); Moshe D. GAON, *Oriental Jews in Eretz Israel*, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1938, p. 574 (Hebrew).

¹² I thank my friends Dr. Michal Held, Mr. David Angel, and Mr. Dov Hacohen for their help in deciphering the text.

¹³ For information about Rabbi Gagin see: FRUMKIN and RIVLIN, *Lives of the Sages*, *op. cit.*; GAON, *Oriental Jews*, *op. cit.*

great poverty in the city, one must be modest, and not spend money in a manner that will lead to indebtedness.

- 1 It is prohibited to frequent any coffee house on a regular basis. Games [of chance] are forbidden. The transgressor is liable to pay a fine.
- 2 Men may not congregate in order to sing, play music, dance, or act.
- 3 When women visit, the refreshments may not exceed a spoonful of jam, a cup of coffee, and another sweetened cup of coffee.
- 4 Women may not celebrate on the evening when an engagement is announced, during the display of the bride's dowry, and on the evening when she goes to the ritual bath. Only members of the family may participate in such celebrations, which are to last no longer than two hours.
- 5 Restriction of the number of women allowed to participate in the immersion before the wedding and the bride's immersion after the first night. Only the bride's mother, her sisters, a close relative, and a servant are allowed to participate in the ceremony, at which it is forbidden to give presents and sweets to those participating or present. Those accompanying the bride to the ritual bath are forbidden to don jewels or wear fine clothing.
- 6 It is forbidden to hold a nocturnal party on the occasion of the bride's immersion in the ritual bath.
- 7 Restrictions as to who is permitted to participate in the ceremonies connected with the seven days following the wedding; the participation of women is particularly restricted.
- 8 Restrictions as to who is invited to attend the feast after the wedding. Women are forbidden to participate.
- 9 Limitations on the number of courses which may be served at the feast after the wedding, and perhaps also at other ritual feasts.
- 10 Only relatives shall be invited to such feasts. If the person invited is unable to come, it is permitted to send his portion to him.
- 11 Limitation of the number of trays of refreshments which may be sent on various occasions.

The authors of the regulations end with salutations to those who abide by them. As in the former regulation, the transgressor is warned that 'the rabbis look upon him with disapproval', and he may be the subject of excommunication and a ban.

DISCUSSION

Examination of the body of surviving ordinances of communities in the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century onwards reveals that the number of them dealing with limitations on luxuries is very small in comparison with the impression one gets about the quantity of similar ordinances in European Jewish communities (especially in Italy and Poland)¹⁴. It is as yet uncertain whether fewer such ordinances were promulgated (and if this be the case, the question is why this was so), or whether they were not preserved. The two sets of ordinances described above are the most detailed ones (which deal with restrictions on consumption) known to date, whose provenance is the Ottoman Empire. The novelty of these two is not only their great detail, but the fact that they place restrictions on social behavior in the home, and not only on the clothing and jewelry one should wear outdoors, as was the case with earlier ordinances.

Though it is not explicitly stated for whom these ordinances were intended, it is reasonable to assume that the target population were all the members of the Sephardic community of Jerusalem, or at least the Ladino-speaking Jews who originated from Turkey and the Balkans and still accounted for the vast majority of the Jewish community of Jerusalem. The ordinances which are the basis of this paper did not distinguish between social classes, as did those from eastern Europe, where it was quite obvious that their promulgators intended to place restrictions precisely upon the poor, to limit their expenditures on festive dinners, clothes, and other luxuries, and to prevent them from engaging in games of chance. On the face of it, this is surprising, for Ottoman Jewish society was hierarchic, with a large percentage of indigent people¹⁵. It may

¹⁴ For studies on ordinances dealing with luxuries in various Jewish communities in the Middle Ages and the modern period, their social background and halakhic foundations, see: E. BASHAN, "Ordinances Limiting Luxuries: Social and Halakhic Background", *Hagut*, IV, 1980, p. 41–68 (Hebrew); more recently, in-depth surveys for western Europe: Jay R. BERKOWITZ, "Social and Religious Controls in Pre-Revolutionary France: Rethinking the Beginnings of Modernity", *Jewish History*, XV/1, 2001, p. 1–40; Edward FRAMM, "Control of Luxuries in the Jewish Community of Cracow in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries", *Gal-Ed on the History of the Jews in Poland*, XVIII, 2002, p. 11–23 (Hebrew), who also provides many references. For a collection of ordinances on this topic see: Israel SCHEPANSKY, *The Takkanot of Israel*, vol. 4, part 3: *Regulations of the Communities*, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 478–485 (Hebrew).

¹⁵ For the extent of poverty and the life of the poor see: Yaron BEN-NAEH, "Poverty, Paupers and Poor Relief in Ottoman Jewish Society", *Revue des Études Juives*, CLXIII, 2004, p. 151–192.

be that the difference between the Jerusalem and eastern European ordinances hints at the primary objective of these ordinances in the East—to prevent jealousy and hostility on the part of the non-Jewish population, as we shall see further on. As with other matters, we find no trace of hesitation on the part of the communal leadership to intervene so grossly in the private lives of individuals, even though such involvement lacks any legal [halakhic] basis or precedence. The right to intervene was inherent in the fact that people were prepared to accept a communal social organization holding coercive powers, one whose leadership openly maintained that concern for the general good was its guiding principle.

An analysis of the prefaces to the ordinances and their regulations seems to point to the intentions—at times manifest and at other times concealed—of those who drafted them.

The major formal objective of the ordinances is of a political nature, one which lies in the sphere of the relations of the Sephardi community, basically a poor and weak minority group, with the two large entities with which it must deal and maintain a diverse system of relationships: the local Muslim society on the one hand, and diaspora Jews on the other. The Jews wish to avoid unwanted attention and fear to create an impression of wealth and prosperity that might awaken the jealousy and hatred of their neighbors and encourage rapacity, extortion, and the levying of higher taxes by the local authorities. This notion probably became stronger in face of the crisis years in the late 1830s. To some extent, the ordinances were also motivated by concern for the reputation of Jewish women, and the image and collective honor of the entire community (a topic to which we shall return).

The ordinances also served as a propaganda tool vis-à-vis diaspora Jewry. The community had been conscious of its image for hundreds of years, and these and other regulations are a clear reflection of a desire to present the Jewish residents of the Holy Land to outsiders as holy communities characterized by high ethical standards and a life of poverty and asceticism. The Jerusalem community resides in a holy city in which the signs of its Destruction are still easily discernable. Since living in Jerusalem entails many more obligations than in any other city in Palestine, it is incumbent upon the members of its community to display the insignias of mourning and gloom that are called for. This image stood Jerusalem's Jews in good stead when they entreated their brethren in the diaspora for donations; proper behavior was most important for a community whose survival depended on external contributions. The ordi-

nances may also have been a masked attempt to counter charges of corruption and wastefulness, which were heard abroad, especially at a time in which the justification for such financial support was being questioned.

The rabbis who initiated these regulations did not state what their intentions were in relation to Jerusalem's Jewish society, but we may assume them to be prevention of competition and of unnecessary expenditures which might lead to financial complications and impoverishment; indirectly, they probably also intended to reduce social tensions within the community. In these aspects the Jerusalem ordinances controlling luxuries do not differ from those of other communities within and without the Ottoman Empire.

Another hidden motivation touches upon the status of the communal leadership in relation to the Jewish public. In view of the deterioration of communal bodies and the declining authority of the leadership, it was most important to emphasize and demonstrate its ability to act, correct, and mete out punishment. By promulgating ordinances that placed restrictions upon the action of individuals, the leadership shored up its own authority, while presenting itself as being concerned with the general good through maintenance of social order and class distinctions, outwardly expressed in the consumption of luxuries. This conservative attitude was even more important at a time when the community was growing due to immigrants from diverse lands, and when the old world order was being undermined by modern winds of change.

From the motivations we have listed, one that is characteristic of ordinances concerning luxuries enacted in Christian Europe is absent: The religious and moral criticism which condemns dissipation and sees in ostentatious showing off an expression of haughtiness, and calls for simplicity, asceticism, and Puritanism, particularly in public. This major difference is probably the outcome of Islam's more lenient attitude towards the acquisition and exploitation of wealth.

The ability to enforce these ordinances, as with many earlier ones, depended on the identity of their signers and the punishment which could be expected by those who transgressed them. The signatories openly admit they even lack 'the power to protest'. Examination of the formulations reveals that in effect we are faced with a new order, quite different from that encountered in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and even eighteenth centuries: actual sanctions are almost completely absent, and we may see in most of the regulations recommendations rather than ob-

ligatory instructions whose violation calls for actual punishment. Obviously, we are on the threshold of a new era in Jewish history.

True, the transgressors are threatened with the traditional ban, but this threat is couched in less emphatic language: 'the transgressor...not only do rabbis look upon him with disfavor but he also violates their instructions and shall be punished'. On the other hand, those who abide by the ordinances are praised and encouraged: 'And anyone who fulfills our instructions, the blessings of the Torah shall be upon him [lit.: upon his head], and he will be privileged to witness the rebuilding [lit.: consolation] of Zion and Jerusalem'. As for frequenting Muslim coffee houses, the ordinances permitted those who were accustomed to it to continue their habit, thus in effect emptying this regulation of any practical effect. The future infringement of these ordinances, therefore, was to be expected. At any rate, that would be the only way open to members of the subjugated class, bereft of any source of power, to express their disagreement and dissatisfaction with the restrictions, which they most probably believed to be detrimental to the customs and life style that they had been following for ages.

The signing of the regulations by the rabbis, and perhaps even their initiative in drafting them, is indicative of the high status of the rabbis in the Sephardic community of Jerusalem during the first half of the nineteenth century, and also seems to point to the relative weakness of the elected lay leadership, whose non-involvement in the *takanot* clearly meets the eye.

DAILY LIFE IN LIGHT OF THE ORDINANCES

The regulations described above shed light on various aspects of the social and cultural characteristics of the Sephardic community in Jerusalem during the late Ottoman period. The very fact that it was necessary to issue such ordinances points to the existence of a social stratum that could afford to expend the sums needed to acquire luxury items such as clothing, jewelry, and sumptuous food and refreshments. But it is also evidence of the fact that there was another social group—probably much larger—that, even though it lacked the immediate means to finance ostentatious consumption, was able to borrow sums for this purpose, mortgaging property or other items which could serve as secure collateral for the moneylenders. Thus, the ordinances contradict the uniform image

that they were trying to present of a poor and dwindling community, up to its neck in debt and dependent upon outside financial help.

Different standards of living among Jerusalem's Jews were indeed evident in their homes, clothing, and food consumption, as is attested by other sources. The ceremonies and arrangements connected with weddings were an opportunity par excellence to flaunt wealth—or, in other words, social status—for they included exhibiting the bride's dowry, the exchange of presents, and the wedding ceremony itself, at which the participants made every effort to show magnanimity in proper gestures dictated by the status of the bestower and the receiver. The outstanding means for creating such an impression on these occasions were splendid clothes, magnificent jewels, and an abundance of refreshments, especially expensive food.

As I intend to concentrate on the role of consumption and ostentation in the various spheres with which the regulations concern themselves, I shall first present a brief primary survey of the social customs practiced at family celebrations and on festivals, of recreation patterns, and of the clothing that were characteristic of the Sephardic community in Jerusalem, and to a large degree of Ottoman urban Jews at large, during the period under discussion.

FAMILY CELEBRATIONS, THE SABBATH, AND RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

From the documents at our disposal we can list family celebrations that were considered social events: the birth of a baby, the eve of a male baby's circumcision and the circumcision ceremony itself; the prospective bride's immersion in the ritual bath, the going of the bride to the groom's house, the groom's going out to invite guests for the 'seven blessings' ceremony, the wedding, and the seven days of celebration following a wedding. On these occasions, the celebrants held dinners in their homes, trays of sweets were sent and received, and private visits were conducted. Festive dinners, particularly wedding feasts, included many courses—some of them of expensive and unique ingredients—accompanied by the consumption of wine and raki, and ending with fruit, coffee, and sweets such as candy, marzipan, and very sweet pastry, often prepared long beforehand.

Differences in the economic ability of the hosts were evident in the sums they invested in the celebrations—the number of guests and the refreshments and food that were served. Much ceremony accompanied

the feasting— greetings, blessings, gestures, and signs of respect compatible with the social standing of those present and reflecting social relationships. Amusements at these affairs included games of chance, and some hosts took pains to entertain their guests with music and singing.

Wedding ceremonies are those most often documented, both in Hebrew sources and in the descriptions written by ‘Western’ travelers. Thus for example, R. Yehosef Schwartz, who left us an exhaustive study of the Holy Land, described in a letter he wrote in 1837 the seven days of feasting following a wedding which the Jerusalem Sephardim used to celebrate most joyously in family circles¹⁶. During these days the bride and groom were seated under a canopy in one room of the house to receive the guests. Very detailed descriptions are included in *Nach Jerusalem* by the Viennese Jew Ludwig August Frankl, who spent a few months in Jerusalem (1856), making arrangements for the establishment of a modern school. Among his experiences were two weddings he attended. Of interest in the context of the present study are the separate seating arrangements for women and men and some of the entertainment provided: the women, just like the men, sat together drinking coffee and smoking a *narghile*. The guests were later entertained by dancing girls¹⁷.

Over and above filling a natural physical need, eating and drinking in company was an established social custom; meals in which many persons partook were an important element in the social life of Jews and non-Jews in the Ottoman Empire. In addition to being a social occasion, this provided the host with a good opportunity to flaunt his wealth by means of the food, the tableware, and the skills of the male and female servants of his household¹⁸. The guests ranged from close relatives to

¹⁶ Avraham YA’ARI, *Letters from Eretz Israel*, Tel Aviv, 1943, p. 373 (Hebrew). For descriptions of wedding ceremonies of Jerusalem’s Sephardi Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see: Ya’akov YEHOShUA, *Childhood in Old Jerusalem*, part 2, Jerusalem, 1966, p. 59–78 (Hebrew). For wedding ceremonies and their significance among Jews living in other parts of the Ottoman Empire see: Moshe ATTIAS, “Marriage Customs in Salonika”, *Edoth: A Quarterly for Folklore and Ethnology*, I, 1945–46, p. 28–32 (Hebrew); David BENVENISTI, *The Jews of Salonika in the Last Few Decades*, Jerusalem, 1973, p. 50–59 (Hebrew); Esther JUHASZ, “Marriage”, in Esther Juhasz (ed.), *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire: Aspects of Material Culture*, Jerusalem, 1990, p. 196–217; Moshe KLEIN, *Wedding Traditions of the Various Jewish Communities*, Tel Aviv, 1994, p. 49–59, 69–70, 78–80 (Hebrew); Abraham GALANTÉ, *Histoire des juifs de Turquie*, I–IX, vol. 3, p. 105–108.

¹⁷ Ludwig A. FRANKL, *Nach Jerusalem*, Leipzig, 1858, vol. 2, p. 127–129.

¹⁸ Suraiya FAROQHI, *Subjects to the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, London, 2000, p. 218–221.

distant relatives, neighbors, protégées, strangers, and people who filled functions at the ceremonies.

A Hebrew letter written in the sixteenth century describes how the Sabbath and festivals are celebrated in Jerusalem. No doubt such customs continued to be practiced in later centuries as well:

“It is customary with the Jerusalemites that at weddings and circumcisions all the relatives and neighbors, the friends and acquaintances go to eat with them. And particularly with the mourners, the consolers bring their food to the mourners’ house in the evening and morning.... And a person to whom a son has been born on a weekday, on the Saturday prior to the circumcision he is treated like a trustee [*parnass*] and is able to call anyone he wishes to read from the Scroll of the Law and all [those that are called] make contributions [to the synagogue, with blessings] for his life and the life of his child... and it is customary to dine with the father on the Sabbath that falls within the eight days after the circumcision. And they do the same to whomever moves himself, his home, his furniture, and utensils from one house to another; on the first Sabbath they dine at his table and bring their own food with them and all eat together joyously, accompanied by singing...¹⁹”

A dinner attended by many was the prime indicator of festive celebrations. Naturally, by means of numerous participants and abundant food the host did his best to display his economic and social standing. This opened the way to exaggerated ostentation for which the hosts had to lay out sums of money beyond their ability to pay. R. Raphael Mordekhai Malki, a sharp critic of his contemporaries in Jerusalem during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, proposed limiting the number of persons attending a festive meal, suggesting that only ten poor people be invited:

“Furthermore, it is fitting to instruct the groom that there be only ten poor people at those meals...that the seven days of the wedding [celebrations] be like the eight days of the circumcision. And the reason for this regulation is that most of the residents of the city are poor...and if we allow the rich to spend a fortune on their celebration, the poor too will want to do so, but lacking the ability they borrow money with interest and lose themselves and the upkeep of their households...²⁰”

We have evidence of formal attempts to restrict these gatherings. A regulation issued in Istanbul in December 1788 decreed ‘not to invite

¹⁹ David KAUFMANN, “A Written Document Sent from the Holy City to Carpi in 1625”, *Yerushalayim*, V (1898), p. 82–83 (Hebrew).

²⁰ Eliezer RIVLIN (ed.), *Selections from the Commentary on the Pentateuch, a Manuscript by Rabbi Raphael Mordekhai Malki*, part 1, Jerusalem, 1923, p. 34 (Hebrew).

anyone to a meal on the Holy Sabbath, with the exception that one is permitted to set up one table for relatives and is allowed to provide a meal to needy people who come of their own initiative²¹.

In addition to limiting the number of persons invited to a festive meal, there were also attempts to restrict the practices connected with the feast and the type of food which may be served. A regulation issued in Istanbul in December 1725 significantly limited the exchange of gifts between the families of the future bride and groom, including even the exchange of sweetmeats²². An 1831 ordinance from Larissa (in Greece), that has survived in manuscript, applies restrictions on the sweetmeats, food, and drinks which may be served at family celebrations, with the exception of those connected with weddings²³.

Other severe restrictions are included in regulations promulgated during the second half of the nineteenth century in the San'a community and in Ottoman Baghdad, particularly around the turn of the twentieth century²⁴. The Baghdad regulations, translated from the Arabic by Yitzhak Avishur, are even more detailed than those of Jerusalem, and include important information about the ceremonies and celebrations in the life of a young couple from their engagement until the birth of their first son. Among those mentioned in all the regulations are: the engagement ceremony, holidays that fall in the period between the engagement and the wedding, the day on which the bride is made ready, the ceremony of the henna, the bride's ritual immersion, the wedding day, the following morning, the Sabbath following the wedding, birth and circumcision. In all these ceremonies much importance was attached to the exchange of presents between the families of the bride and groom, to dinners to which relatives and other guests were invited, and to the refreshments served to the entire congregation in the synagogue. Among the presents exchanged were food, sugar cones, items of clothing, tableware, henna, candles, and more. It would seem that all these regulations

²¹ Leah BORNSTEIN-MAKOVETSKY (ed.), *The Istanbul Court Record in Matters of Ritual and Ethics, 1710–1903*, Lod, 1999, doc. 61, p. 209 (Hebrew).

²² David FRÄNKEL, "On the History of the Jews in the City of Constantinople", *'Alim*, I, 1935, p. 110–112 (Hebrew).

²³ I intend to publish it in the near future.

²⁴ For mention of the ordinance promulgated in San'a, most likely in 1877 or 1878, after Yemen was retaken by the Sultan's forces (1872), by the Chief Rabbi who arrived from Istanbul see: Yosef TOBI, *The Jews of Yemen in the 19th Century*, Tel Aviv, 1976, p. 112 (Hebrew); for Baghdad see: Yitzhak AVISHUR, *The Jewish Wedding in Baghdad and Its Filialties*, vol. 1: *Customs, Ceremonies and Documents*, Haifa, 1990, p. 158–178 (Hebrew).

attest to similar social customs and to a certain cultural unity that prevailed in medium and large Ottoman Jewish communities in the nineteenth century.

A unique regulation from 1807 (*supra*, p. 164, no. 11) prohibits singing Arabic songs. Though its authors refer to similar previous regulations ‘in the cities of “Arabistan”’ this is the only such regulation that has come to my notice. The singing of (generally Hebrew) liturgical or para-liturgical works of leading Jewish Iberian poets and of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century local poets sung to Ottoman melodies often accompanied prayer services in the synagogue, gatherings of charity associations, and study groups. Other types of songs, generally in Judeo-Spanish, were part of mundane daily life—children’s songs, lullabies, and songs for all events, expressing a wide range of emotions. From this regulation we learn that it had become customary in Jerusalem to perform songs set to Arab melodies or in Arabic. The rabbis did not explain why this was forbidden. Should this be connected to the mourning called for by Jerusalem’s condition and its holy status? Or perhaps they feared Muslim influences on Jewish culture? We cannot know. What we can say, however, is that this is evidence of a cultural shift in the Sephardic community of Jerusalem as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century: instead of melodies originating in Ottoman imperial court circles, which were in use ever since the sixteenth century, the public now preferred local Arab music²⁵. It may very well be that the conservative leadership whose hegemony was threatened was also attempting to put a stop to any deviation from tradition.

A. RECREATION PATTERNS

While wedding ceremonies among Ottoman Jews have at least been described, though they have hardly been the subject of modern scholarly research, leisure and recreation patterns are absolutely a *tabula rasa* for us. This lends added importance to the Jerusalem regulations (and its equivalents), which provide us with more than a glimpse of how the nineteenth-century Jewish urban population spent its leisure time. Moreover, the following description and analysis contributes to an understanding of the life style of women during this period and to refuta-

²⁵ On this change in preference see: Edwin SEROUSSI, “On the Origin of Chanting Baqqashot in Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century”, *Pe’amim*, 56, Summer 1993, p. 106–124 (Hebrew).

tion of the commonly held opinion that they lived under a regime of male despotism, their place being limited to their husband's bed, the kitchen stove, and the laundry tub. The information gleaned from the ordinances, when added to other sources, indicates that even though women were subject to stricter limitations than men, they did enjoy a rich social life within a separate, feminine, social framework. In Jerusalem and other cities in Islamic countries, Jewish women did spend time together in homes and courtyards, went in groups to the bath house, and mourned their dead together in cemeteries²⁶.

Mutual Visits

Family visits were restricted to Saturdays, holidays, and familial events. Otherwise, mutual home visits were customary only among women, since they did not have a public meeting place such as a coffeehouse. From the sources at our disposal, we gain the impression that women were less punctilious about social barriers, and were prepared, more than men, to host persons of a lower social status than themselves. We have already seen that eating and drinking together had a social role and that the food and refreshments served were indicators of the host's economic status. Hosting in middle- and upper-class homes included serving coffee (sometimes brought from a nearby coffeehouse), sherbet (sweetened fruit juice, to which at times rosewater was added), fruit, various sweetmeats, and smoking the *narghile*²⁷. Poor people could only afford coffee and biscuits. There is no indication that there was any difference in the refreshments offered to men or women.

A few comments concerning the refreshments served on such visits are called for. Coffee drinking had become increasingly popular since the late sixteenth century. Scholars were especially fond of this beverage because it 'kept sleep away' and enabled them to learn all through the night²⁸. Coffee became such an integral element in hosting that not ser-

²⁶ Only recently have these feminine pastimes become a subject of scholarly inquiry; see: FAROQHI, *Subjects, op. cit.*, p. 106–107.

²⁷ Foreign visitors who were guests of Jews in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tiberias during this period attest to these customs, common to middle- and upper-class Muslims and Jews. See, e.g., Lady Francis EGERTON, *Journal of a Tour in the Holy Land in May and June 1840*, London, 1841, p. 20; William J. WOODCOCK, *Scripture Lands, being a Visit to the Scenes of the Bible*, London, 1849, p. 46. On the consumption of beverages and sweets see FAROQHI, *Subjects, op. cit.*, p. 213–218.

²⁸ Elliott S. HOROWITZ, "Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry", *AJS Review*, XIV, 1989, p. 17–46.

ving it was interpreted as an insult to the guests and a clear sign that they were not welcome. Tülay Artan claims that one of the outstanding changes in food consumption in eighteenth-century Istanbul was the growing importance attached to the dessert served after the meal, and hints to its sociological implications. Coffee and sweetmeats were prominent elements in this context²⁹.

Smoking tobacco by means of a *narghile* became common practice in the seventeenth century. From the phrasing of a question sent to R. Mordekhai Halevy (d. 1685), one of the leading rabbis of Egypt, about the halakhic rules concerning smoking on a holiday we may assume that widespread smoking was a relatively new phenomenon at this time³⁰. Many believed in the medicinal virtues of smoking, and there were some who even composed poems in praise of tobacco³¹. It was not a strictly male pastime; smoking was enthusiastically adopted by women, a habit that bewildered the Europeans. In the late eighteenth century, a Karaite in Istanbul wrote the following during a dispute within the community: ‘...for you will see that there is not even one woman in your congregation who does not smoke on holidays, and even your wife smokes on the holiday...’³². Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings depict women in household clothes smoking ornamented pipes. Smoking became part of any gathering, even in the bath house, as can be understood from the regulation included in one of the ordinances described earlier forbidding women to bring pipes and *narghiles* to the ritual bath.

Special dishes, particularly types of sweets and sweet pastry, were not consumed on a daily basis and were generally reserved for special occasions. Serving a guest jam and sweetmeats was considered a sign of honor. The regular means of sweetening food during the Ottoman period was honey, or a sort of syrup produced by slowly cooking grape juice (*dibes* in Arabic)³³. White cube sugar was an expensive import item, and we often find it mentioned as one form of tax which Jews paid to local

²⁹ Tülay ARTAN, “Aspects of the Ottoman Elite’s Food Consumption”, in *Consumption Studies*, p. 164–165.

³⁰ Mordekhai HALEVY, *Darkhei No’am* (Pleasant Ways), section Orah Hayyim, Venice, 1697, responsum 9, fol. 8d (Hebrew).

³¹ See, e.g.: *Ruah Hayyim* (The Spirit of Life), section Orah Hayyim, Izmir, 1876, par. 231b, fol. 39b (Hebrew).

³² Simkha HAKOSDINI, *Iggeret tokhahat musar* (An Epistle of Moral Rebuke), ed. Yosef ALGAMIL, Ramla, 1991, p. 261 (Hebrew).

³³ Shmuel AVITSUR, *Daily Life in Eretz Israel in the Nineteenth Century*, Tel Aviv, 1972, p. 202 (Hebrew).

authorities and dignitaries³⁴. The importance and prestige of sugar is evident from the fact that it was exhibited in festive processions, during which huge decorated cones of sugar were borne and were an impressive attraction; miniatures depicting such processions in the capital city document these items, which were later divided up and eaten³⁵. Blocks of sugar became a central item in the gifts exchanged between wealthy families on joyous occasions, and later even by lower class families who wished to adopt this (former) status symbol. This became possible in the nineteenth century, when the price of imported sugar dropped and it could be acquired by the public at large. The ordinances which are the subject of this paper were promulgated during the first half of that century, when the price of sugar was still relatively high. They limit the weight of the sugar blocks which may be exchanged as presents, in order to prevent wasteful ostentatious behavior.

The Bath House

The bath house (*hamam*), which city dwellers used to frequent once or twice a week, provided diverse services and also served as a social center³⁶. This last attribute was especially important for women, and I shall concentrate on that aspect.

In Ottoman cities, the bath house was the only place other than the home which, during specific hours or on certain days, could serve as a securely segregated area for women. Urban women of all classes and social groupings looked upon bathing as an opportunity for leisure and social recreation. They used to come in groups of female family members and neighbors. In addition to bathing and cosmetic treatments (dyeing the hair, painting fingernails and toenails, removal of hair from their bodies, etc.), they would also partake of light dishes and drinks, and enjoy singing and music. Since there were many restrictions upon the manner in which women could appear in public in Muslim cities, they could display their fine clothes and jewels either at home, particularly on holi-

³⁴ Amnon COHEN with Elisheva SIMON-PIKALI and Ovadia SALAMA, *Jews in the Moslem Religious Court: Society, Economy and Communal Organization in the XVIII Century*, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 138–148 (Hebrew); Amnon Cohen in collaboration with Elisheva BEN-SHIMON-PIKALI and Eyal GINIO, *Jews in the Moslem Religious Court: Society, Economy and Communal Organization in the XIX Century*, Jerusalem, 2003, p. 58, n. 8 (Hebrew).

³⁵ For these miniatures see e.g. the works of Metin AND on ceremonies.

³⁶ See, in short, FAROQHI, *Subjects*, p. 106.

days and festivals, or at the bath house, which was an even better place to exhibit wealth and success before a wide and diverse public by means of clothing and jewels, embroidered towels and fine bath slippers, expensive pipe mouthpieces, a beautiful and skilful handmaiden, generous refreshments, and the like.

Already in previous centuries, steps had been taken to place restrictions upon Jewish women even in this intimate territory inaccessible to men, primarily out of fear to arouse Muslim envy. An eighteenth-century ordinance from Salonica, for example, prohibited bringing wine or *boza* (a sort of beer) to the *hamam*³⁷. The bath house was the scene of one of the most important ceremonies connected with marriage—the ritual immersion of the bride. It took place one or two days before the wedding, and was performed in the presence of her female relatives and friends, accompanied by the singing of romances and other folk songs (*cantigas*) reserved for this ceremony. The Jerusalem rabbis tried to limit the number of participants and the extent of the ceremony, most likely in order to reduce expenses.

Coffeeshouses

The most important social institution for men was the coffeeshouse³⁸. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, coffeeshouses became a permanent fixture in the landscape of Ottoman cities, as is evident by their being frequently mentioned in the travel book (*seyahatname*) of Evliya Çelebi. Even the upper classes did not consider frequenting them as impinging upon their respectability.

Ceremonial drinking of black, boiling hot coffee became an inseparable part of social recreation, which also included listening to a tale or music, playing games, and so forth. In the eighteenth century, smoking a *narghile* or a pipe was added to these pastimes. Some added opium to the *narghile* water. The Jerusalem ordinances refer to games such as *taula* and *manqal*, and to cases in which boys danced, sang, and played musical instruments. These may refer to gatherings in coffeeshouses, rather than private homes. Why frequent sitting in coffeeshouses was pro-

³⁷ Yitzhak MOLKHO, *Orhot Yosher*, Salonica, 1769, fol. 148b–149a.

³⁸ On coffeeshouses and their social milieu see: Samuel R. HATTOX, *Coffee and Coffeeshouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*, London and Seattle, 1985, p. 65–71. For Jerusalem see: Amnon COHEN, *The Guilds of Ottoman Jerusalem*, Leiden, Boston, and Köln, 2001, p. 50–59. I make no mention of the tavern, because it does not appear in our regulations and since taverns, even if they existed, apparently played no great role in Jerusalem.

hibited is unclear; it is unreasonable to assume that it stemmed from a fear that too close relationships would develop with Muslims, for such apprehension was never expressed in the sources. Even when frequenting coffeehouses was the subject of halakhic works, what aroused the ire of the decisors was frequenting them on the Sabbath and drinking coffee that was prepared for Jewish clients on the Sabbath.

Games of Chance

A pleasant and popular manner of spending one's free time—whether in the home or the coffeehouse—was to engage in various sorts of card and dice games. Rabbis prohibited this practice again and again since the sixteenth century, but allowed such games in the intermediary days of the Passover and Sukkoth festivals, on Purim, and during the seven days of festivities following a wedding, particularly for the groom and bride. It is significant that most of the ordinances relating to recreation which have been printed specifically prohibit games of chance and do not relate to other forms of amusements and recreation. The ordinances were supplemented by books of ethics and guidance which warned the readers against these games and their destructive results. Apparently, games of chance were also forbidden by Ottoman law; this would account for the warning, included in the Jerusalem ordinance, that those engaging in them would be turned over to the authorities³⁹.

Similar ordinances were promulgated in various Jewish communities in western Anatolia (among them Manissa, Bergama, Tire, and Izmir) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, threatening transgressors with bans and fines⁴⁰.

B. CLOTHING AND JEWELRY

Clothes were the most important means of flaunting social status in the larger and medium-sized cities of the Ottoman Empire⁴¹. Expensive

³⁹ An edict issued by the sultan in 1081 (=1670) sent to Izmir which forbade drinking and possessing wine and playing with dice, lotto, and cards, and sanctions them with severe punishments for which the edict contained severe punishments. In addition, taverns were ordered destroyed. See Paul RYCAUT and Richard KNOLLES, *The Turkish History*, vol. 2, London, [1700?], fol. 224b–227a. An English traveler in the early seventeenth century noted that playing with dice and cards is not acceptable among the Ottoman Turks; see: George SANDYS, *A Relation of a Journey Begun on An. Dom. 1610*, London, 1621, p. 64.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., R. Hayyim PALACHI, *Sefer Masa Hayyim*, Izmir, 1874, par. 112–113, fol. 24b–24d (Hebrew).

⁴¹ See Madeline C. ZILFI, “Goods in the Mahalle: Distributional Encounters in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul”, in *Consumption Studies*, p. 289–311, esp. 297–308.

clothing and jewelry were also a type of secure investment—valued property that was also passed on as an inheritance and could be easily turned into cash in times of need. The religion, trade, and rank of a person—in fact his social standing in general—could be ascertained from the quality, decoration, cut, and color of his clothes. State edicts concerning clothing were issued particularly for (the more visible) men. Their purpose was to enable visual differentiation between groups which were hierarchically ranked in accordance with their socio-political status in Ottoman society. This was in addition to restrictions placed by Islam on the apparel and residences of *dhimmi*s with the purpose of differentiating between them and Muslims and of degrading them. Additional restrictions relating to clothing and jewelry were applied to Jewish women by their own community. We have a little information about such restrictions dating from the sixteenth century. For instance, the Patras community prohibited the wearing of colorful silk clothes, while an ordinance from Istanbul at the end of that century forbade women to wear expensive clothes and certain gold jewels outdoors⁴². Slightly better known is the Salonican ‘Ordinance relating to playing musical instruments, the belongings, and taking the bride out at night’ of 1544. It condemns the women’s going out wearing all sorts of silver and gold jewels which arouse the envy of the non-Jews, and commands all women that they

“... shall not wear outside the doors of their houses, in the markets and the streets, silver and gold ornaments, nose-rings and chains, gems or pearls, and any [valuable] ornament except for one ring on their hands, and the rest the woman may don within her home as much as she pleases, as long as she shall remain within the house⁴³.”

The next surviving ordinance on the same topic is the one promulgated in 1748 by the Va’ad Pekidei Yerushalayim (Committee of Clerks for Jerusalem) in Istanbul prohibiting Jerusalem’s Jews, men and women alike, to wear expensive clothes made of a wide variety of woven cloths, furs, and flashy or numerous jewels. The committee claimed that ostentatious behavior in a provincial city such as Jerusalem would arouse the hostility and envy of non-Jews and lead to false charges and higher taxes being levied. This ordinance, which specifically mentions cloth embroidered with gold and silver threads, furs of various types, gold jewelry,

⁴² Shmuel DE MEDINA, *Responsa*, part 1, Salonica, 1596, section Yoreh De’ah, responsum 149, fol. 96c–97a (Hebrew).

⁴³ Abraham DANON, “La communauté juive de Salonique au XVI^e siècle”, *REJ*, XLI, 1900, ordinance no. 13, p. 253–255.

pearls, and gems, is very instructive regarding how middle- and upper-class Jews dressed at the time in imitation of the Ottoman elite, and about the great wealth possessed by not a few individuals in the supposedly poor Jerusalem community⁴⁴.

The nineteenth-century ordinances do not refer at all to what men may or may not wear, and only place restrictions on women's jewels. The first ordinance of the two discussed specifically mentions certain types of jewels (*taraha, ilal*) and limits the number of rings a woman may wear in public. Any attempt to explain this situation as reflecting the disappearance of fine clothes is unreasonable, for we have information (for example in inventory lists) that they continued to be worn. Another possible explanation for the rabbis' strategy is that since they themselves were aware of their inability to enforce many regulations, they limited themselves to jewels worn on the head, around the neck, or on fingers, items which would be easily noticed by passers-by.

Apparently, this and similar ordinances were not very effective. Many visitors described Jerusalem's Jews in their diaries and memoirs; not only were they impressed by the beauty of the women, they also took pains to note their penchant to dress in expensive clothes and don many jewels⁴⁵. Furthermore, to this date no evidence has been found of transgressors having been punished; the only reaction to violation of the regulations was public castigation by moralists and preachers. It should be borne in mind that condemnation by such persons of women's taste for ostentatious appearances was not new; it had been a motif in religious moral literature since the expulsion from Spain in the late fifteenth century⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ David MARCUS, "From Ancient Manuscripts", *Hamevasser*, II, no. 18, 1911, p. 211 (Hebrew). For another description of clothing and jewels as a status symbol and attempt to explain the lack of any ordinances restricting their use in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Palestine by a lack of financial means and the strictness of the authorities, see: Ruth LAMDAN, *A Separate People: Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt in the 16th Century*, Leiden-Boston-Koeln, 2000, p. 106-109.

⁴⁵ See, for example: Marie J. DE GÉRAMB, *Pèlerinage à Jérusalem et au Mont Sinaï en 1831, 1832 et 1833*, Paris, [183-], vol. 2, p. 89; Robert CURZON, *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*, Ithaca, NY, 1955, p. 173 (originally published in 1849); John L. STEPHENS, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, New York, 1970, p. 434 (originally published in 1835); BONAR and McCHEYNE, *Narrative*, p. 184; WOODCOCK, *Scripture*, p. 46; William F. LYNCH, *Narrative of the United States' Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea*, Philadelphia, 1849, p. 159.

⁴⁶ See, for example: MOLKHO, *Orhot Yosher*, *op. cit.*, fol. 148b (Hebrew).

I conclude the discussion of the life style of Jerusalem's Jews during the first half of the nineteenth century by devoting a few thoughts to the status of women. A dominant theme runs through the regulations, as well as other Jerusalem ordinances promulgated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that is the differentiation between genders made by the promulgators—the patronizing male establishment. Almost all the regulations refer separately to men and women, a practice that clearly illustrates that the rabbis had a clear idea about the proper place and role in society of the two genders: men initiate, work, do things, walk about the streets, and frequent coffeehouses, while the actions and the movement of women are limited to their domiciles. In fact it is preferable that they remain within the confines of their households. When they do exit their homes, women must cover themselves so as not to attract the attention of males, for that would surely lead to sin. Though women are the subject of many of the ordinances, these are not addressed directly to them because they were illiterate, hardly attended the synagogue, and were not considered independent beings. The men under whose patronage women live—whether fathers, husbands, or brothers—bear responsibility for their behavior, and are the principal addressees of the written regulations. Those men are instructed to ensure that the regulations be observed: to supervise the women and their dress when they go out, to prevent their being invited to certain family celebrations, to keep them away from male nocturnal parties (*'nochada'* in Judeo-Spanish), and more.

Though this is not explicitly stated, it is obvious that what lay behind these regulations was not simply a desire to restrict the consumption of luxuries but rather an attempt to protect the modesty and thus the honor of women, and that of the community at large. This explains the prohibition, in the second ordinance, of holding a nocturnal celebration in honor of the bride's ritual immersion, even though it would be attended only by women, explained by the need to safeguard Jewish respectability. R. Yitzhak Farhi, one of Jerusalem's leading rabbis in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, maintained that not only did women go about in public with their faces uncovered, wearing jewels and ornaments causing sinful thoughts, but they also aroused ridicule among Muslims and brought dishonor upon the entire Jewish population of Jerusalem⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Yitzhak FARHI, *Shevet Mishor*, Belgrad, 1838, fol. 31a–b (Hebrew).

We may sum up and say that the requirement of feminine modesty and keeping women out of public sight does not stem from the “respectability” which became a significant social value in Europe from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. In the Muslim Orient, at least in the Ottoman Empire, this requirement was an integral element in the conception of the role of women, as it still is today among conservative Islamic societies.

Yaron BEN-NAEH, *'One Cup of Coffee': Ordinances Concerning Luxuries and Recreation: A Chapter in the Cultural and Social History of the Jewish Sephardi Community of Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century.*

This article deals with ordinances restricting the consumption of luxury items as well as social costumes and pastime among the Sephardim of late Ottoman Jerusalem. They were promulgated by the leadership of the community of Jerusalem during the first half of the nineteenth century, a period of transition. The author analyzes the declared and the hidden motives for these restrictions. The main discussion concerns the reality that is represented in these ordinances. We may learn about everyday life in an Ottoman community, about norms of social behaviour, typical mentality and values. Among the most dominant themes is the patronizing treatment of women, the individual's care for his honor, and the community's concern for its image and its reputation.

Yaron BEN-NAEH, *'Une tasse de café': les ordonnances concernant les objets de luxe et les divertissements. Un chapitre de l'histoire culturelle et sociale de la communauté juive sépharade de Jérusalem au XIX^e siècle.*

Cet article traite des ordonnances limitant la consommation des articles de luxe de même que les parures et les loisirs parmi les Sépharades de Jérusalem à la fin de l'époque ottomane. Elles ont été promulguées par les chefs de la communauté de Jérusalem pendant la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, qui représente une période de transition. L'auteur analyse les motivations déclarées ou cachées de ces restrictions. Il s'est surtout attaché aux réalités reflétées dans ces ordonnances. Nous pouvons en tirer des enseignements sur la vie quotidienne dans une communauté juive ottomane, sur les normes de comportement social, les mentalités et les valeurs caractéristiques. Parmi les thèmes dominants figurent le traitement condescendant réservé aux femmes, le souci de chacun de préserver son honneur et l'importance attachée par la communauté à son image et à sa réputation.