Sephardic Haskalah

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One manifestation of the confrontation with modernity among the Jews of Europe was known as the Haskalah, or Enlightenment. Proponents of the Haskalah held that Jews should study Judaism and its classic texts in a modern, scientific fashion. They argued for a modernization of education for Jews to include secular subjects. The Haskalah witnessed a rebirth of literary creativity among Jews. Generally, Haskalah figures were critical of the traditional, talmudic/rabbinic structure of Jewish life.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) was the guiding light of early Haskalah thought. He attempted to harmonize Jewish teachings with modern philosophy. He felt that if Jews presented their religious ideas to the non-Jewish world in a sophisticated manner, the non-Jews would come to respect Judaism and appreciate the Jews. Realizing that increasing numbers of young Jews were seeking and receiving a secular education, Mendelssohn wanted to demonstrate that Judaism could be respectable even to those who studied philosophy and other academic subjects.

Within the Ashkenazic world, there was considerable controversy between the proponents of Haskalah and the traditionalists who opposed it. The Jews in

Europe were facing a serious dilemma: How could they adapt and survive in a Christian society that was giving them more freedom than they had ever had before? When they had been restricted to ghettos and had few civil rights, they had lived according to their traditions and found satisfaction in them. But now that they had been given the possibility of participating in the larger society around them, they had to make critical decisions. Jews who entered the non-Jewish world very often came to abandon their religious heritage. They adopted the customs and ideas of the non-Jews. After all, they wanted to be like the dominant majority, not old-fashioned or identifiably different.

Traditionalists, seeing how quickly Jews assimilated into the non-Jewish culture, were alarmed that the Jews were so willing to abandon their distinct religious identity. They therefore strenuously resisted any tendency that they felt would weaken the hold of biblical and rabbinic tradition. They saw the Haskalah as a negative force, a direct threat to traditional authority.

Although the Haskalah movement itself called for modernization rather than assimilation, it did shake the foundations of traditional religious authority. In this sense, it contributed to the tendency of Jews to give up Orthodox beliefs and practices.

The Haskalah was a phenomenon primarily among Ashkenazic Jews. Nevertheless, it did have an impact on the Sephardic communities of Western Europe. As European cultural influence in Muslim lands increased, Sephardim in Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, and other countries also came into contact with the teachings of the Haskalah.

The ideology and impact of the Haskalah, however, were generally not the same among Sephardim as among Ashkenazim. For the Ashkenazim, Enlightenment represented a way to enter mainstream European culture in a respectable fashion. In a sense, Haskalah thought was an apologetic for Judaism, an attempt to present it scientifically, universally. It wanted to shake off the non-modern aspects of traditional Judaism. An underlying hope was that enlightened Jews would be able to function successfully in non-Jewish society, accepted as equals.

The Sephardim of Western Europe, though, already felt relatively comfortable in their non-Jewish milieu. They had a tradition of adaptability. They spoke the languages of the lands in which they lived; some had risen to prominence in various professional fields. Their synagogues were prestigious; their services were elegant and dignified. Western Sephardim maintained their institutions according to their ancient traditions and were not inclined to

“modernize.” Haskalah issues were not central to their concerns.

This was even truer for the vast majority of Sephardim who lived in Muslim lands. They did not feel that the Jewish culture was in any way inferior to the culture of the Muslims among whom they lived. They had no compelling reason to abandon traditional religious patterns as a means of adapting to the non-Jewish society around them. Indeed, they functioned as autonomous communities within the broader Muslim world, and were not motivated to strive for emancipation and legal equality.1

At the same time, the ideas and tendencies of the Haskalah movement did manifest themselves among Sephardim. From the second half of the nineteenth century, Haskalah ideas filtered into the Sephardic communities in Muslim lands, especially through the efforts of the schools of the Alliance Israelite Universelle—bastions of French culture. The influence of European colonial powers in North Africa and the Middle East was also an important factor in Sephardic intellectual life. The impact of the Haskalah could not be altogether ignored.

Grace Aguilar: Jewish Spirituality

Grace Aguilar (1816–1847) belonged to the Sephardic community of London. Although her life was cut short by an untimely death, she left a remarkable literary legacy. Aside from a number of novels, she also wrote several works relating to Jewish religious teachings.

She was concerned that the wave of modernism was undermining the foundations of traditional religious life. Jews were seeking success in the secular world; the bond of religion was weakening. She was particularly aware of the spiritual turmoil among Jewish youth, and she sought to address their religious questions to thereby strengthen their faith.

Grace Aguilar corresponded with Isaac Leeser, spiritual leader of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, and he was of much help to her. Indeed, he edited several of her works for publication, including *The Spirit of Judaism.* This work reflected Aguilar’s deep concern that Jewish youth were not receiving a proper spiritual education in Judaism. She feared that they would be attracted to Christianity, which was popularly portrayed as a religion of the spirit. In contrast, Judaism was described as a religion of numerous detailed

observances. Presented as an elaborate commentary on the first paragraph of the *Shema* (which she transliterated in the Spanish and Portuguese style as *Shemang*), the book dealt with a wide range of religious topics, emphasizing the profound spirituality inherent in Judaism.

Grace Aguilar argued that if Jews understood the true power and beauty of their religion, they would proudly assert their Jewishness instead of trying to conceal it. The repetition of the *Shema* itself is a source of holy comfort. If recited regularly “we shall go forth, no longer striving to conceal our religion through *shame* (for it can only be such a base emotion prompting us to conceal it in free and happy England); but strengthened, sanctified by its blessed spirit, we shall feel the soul elevated within us”2

Aguilar stressed the need for Jews to devote themselves to the study of the Bible, the foundation of Judaism. In so doing, she made some pejorative remarks about “tradition,” apparently referring to the traditional stress on fulfilling the details of the law. (Isaac Leeser, in his notes to the book, took her to task on several occasions for her detraction of “tradition.”)3 However, Aguilar can hardly be accused of being unorthodox and opposed to the observance of mitzvoth. She consistently called for the faithful observance of the commandments in their details:

> Instead then of seeking to find excuses for their non-performance, should we not rather glory in the minutest observance which would stamp us as so peculiarly the Lord’s own, and deem it a glorious privilege to be thus marked out not only in feature and in faith, but in our civil and religious code, as the chosen of God?4

It may be argued that Grace Aguilar’s stress on the Bible and seeming deprecation of “tradition” was her way of trying to appeal to the religious needs of her audience. She perceived her readers as being under the influence of Christian notions of what a religion should be. By asking Jews to read the Bible, she was asking them to do something that was desirable even for Christians, who also venerated the Bible. By emphasizing the spirit of Judaism, she wished to convey to Jews seeking spirituality that they had no need whatsoever to turn to Christianity. But in the process of stressing the Jewish spirit, she found it necessary at times to downplay the details of the laws of Judaism as transmitted by tradition. These details themselves had to be framed within a context of

spirituality and not be seen as ends in themselves.5

In *The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance, and Immortal Hope,* completed shortly before her death, Grace Aguilar presented her arguments in the form of a series of letters from a knowledgeable Jewish woman to her beloved young friend, an orphan with little Jewish education. Aguilar felt that this style of presentation would be more interesting for her readers, especially younger readers whom she hoped to influence.

In the introduction to the book, she emphasized the need to present sophisticated religious educational materials to young people. Youth were easily influenced by outside sources; unless they had a proper understanding of Judaism, they would be tempted to abandon it. Indeed, the orphan to whom the letters in the book were addressed had been considering the possibility of converting to Christianity, believing that Christianity offered more spirituality than Judaism. The author, of course, forcefully refuted this claim; in the end, the orphan did not convert, but rather became a more devoted Jew.

Grace Aguilar expressed the conviction that it was necessary to provide Jewish education for girls as well as boys. She lamented the fact that the education of Jewish girls had not been given adequate attention. She described her book as “an humble help in supplying the painful want of Anglo-Jewish literature, to elucidate for our female youth the tenets of their own, and so remove all danger from the perusal of abler and better works by spiritual Christians.”6

Arguing that the new knowledge and ideas brought about by the advances in science did not contradict the truth of the divinely revealed Torah, Aguilar wrote: “So simple, so easy appears to me the union of Revelation and all science, that how any mind can reject the one as contradicting the other is as utterly incomprehensible as it is fearful.”7 Scoffers who scorned the truth of religion were guilty of arrogance; they did not have a proper understanding of religion. Aguilar was obviously troubled by the increase in skepticism among Jews and by their intellectual surrender to the antireligious proponents of modern science and philosophy. If Jews received an enlightened Jewish education, they would hold fast to their own religious traditions.

Moreover, Jews were not learning the spiritual aspects of Judaism. They were taught laws and customs, but often had no insight into the deeper meanings and ideas of Jewish tradition. Aguilar noted that the Spanish and Portuguese Jews tended to stress the external forms of religious ceremony, giving the impression that these forms were the essence of Judaism. While she recognized the reasons

for the emphasis on form, she argued for the necessity of emphasizing the spiritual aspects of Jewish teachings. She warned, however, that people should not abandon religious observance, thinking that spirituality was of higher value. On the contrary, the observances gave expression to the spiritual feelings of love of God. She wrote that

> every spiritual Hebrew, instead of disregarding the outward ceremonies, will delight in obeying them for the love he bears his God, welcoming them as immediate instructions from Him, even as a child obeys with joy and gladness the slightest bidding of those he loves.8

Grace Aguilar was troubled by the phenomenon of Jews who achieved success in general society but in the process moved away from Jewish commitment.

> Many, indeed, have lately distinguished themselves in the law, and in the fine arts of the English world; but why will not these gifted spirits do something for Judaism as well as England? There is no need to neglect the interests of the latter, in attending to the need of the former. We want Jewish writers, Jewish books.9

Aguilar was convinced that if the best and most enlightened Jewish minds devoted themselves to presenting Judaism at its best, the non-Jewish world would be duly impressed. Hatred of Jews would diminish as non-Jews came to learn about and respect Judaism and Jews.

Grace Aguilar’s writings reflected major issues of modernism: the education of women, the need for spirituality, the renewed interest in the Bible, the critique of blind obedience to details of the law without understanding its deeper meanings. They also shed light on the religiosity of her reading audience: relatively unversed in Jewish learning, skeptical about the mitzvoth, susceptible to the spiritual charm of Christianity. (Leeser challenged the latter point, believing that it was very rare for a Jew to convert to Christianity. As he saw the problem, Jews were simply becoming apathetic to their own spiritual heritage.)10 Grace Aguilar’s essential goal was to demonstrate that loyalty to traditional Judaism was

not antipathetic to success in the modern world. By studying the classic sources of their religion and maintaining observance of the commandments, Jews would be secure in their own faith and could function more confidently in the general non-Jewish society.

Eliyahu Benamozegh: Jewish Ethics

The impact of the Haskalah thought was also evidenced in the writings of Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh (1822–1900). Born in Livorno, Italy, to a family of Moroccan Sephardic background, Benamozegh was a major figure in Jewish intellectual life during the nineteenth century. He served as rabbi in Livorno and was a professor of theology in the rabbinical school there. He published works in Hebrew, French, and Italian.

Rabbi Benamozegh was well steeped in rabbinic learning, including the kabbalah. He also was educated in general academic disciplines; his writings reflect his knowledge of archaeological research, philology, history, Christianity, and philosophy.

Like Aguilar, R. Benamozegh was concerned with the relationship of the Jews to the larger Christian society in Europe. In his book, *In Ethical Paths,* he attempted to clarify Jewish teachings on ethics and demonstrate their superiority to the seemingly more spiritual ethics of Christianity. He, too, felt that Jews needed to have a better grounding in the moral teachings of their own religion in order to withstand the influence of Christian society. He argued that it was unfair of Christians to insist that their system of ethics was superior to Jewish ethics. After all, Christianity was based on Judaism, and many of its main teachings were of Jewish origin. Moreover, the Christian claim to have superseded Judaism was not sound. Why would God—who chose Israel and gave them the Torah—suddenly change His mind and establish a new religion to replace Judaism? Since God was omniscient, such a change in plans would seem absurd. But even using Christian logic, there was no reason to believe that Christianity had become the ultimate expression of God’s will. If, as Christians claimed, God had changed His mind once, then what would preclude Him from doing so again, choosing another religion to replace Christianity? In short, Christianity’s argument on this issue was untenable.[i]

In describing Jewish ethics, R. Benamozegh noted that Judaism encompassed two factors: the national *(mediniyut)* and the ethical *(mussar).* Thus, Jewish ethics is grounded in practical reality. It is not ethereal or over-

idealized but is based on the real considerations of a real nation. In contrast, Christian ethics is not applicable to national life in the same way. Christians speak of humility, suffering, compassion, and other such concepts in unrealistic ways. Which nation on earth would allow itself to be attacked and not defend itself or strike back? Which nation would forgive debts or ignore insults and cruelties committed against its people? Christianity cannot adequately satisfy the natural human need and attachment for a homeland. On the other hand, Judaism is realistic in linking ethical teachings to national and practical concerns. Religion and nationality cannot be separated.[ii]

In his elaboration of the Jewish ethical tradition, Rabbi Benamozegh stressed the universalism of Judaism. The Torah described humanity as deriving from common ancestors, Adam and Eve. Humanity has a common destiny—the messianic time.[iii] Jewish ethics shows respect for non-Jews and does not preclude them from God's love and salvation. Judaism's goal is not to punish the wicked but to bring them back to righteousness. Since Jewish faith is necessarily contingent on the performance of practical works, it provides the most realistic framework for the creation of an ethical society.[iv]

R. Benamozegh published this work in French, intending it for both Jewish and Christian readers. For the Jews, he hoped this work would strengthen their commitment to their own tradition. For the Christians, he hoped that they would gain a new understanding of Judaism and would come to appreciate it better. He recognized the growing influence of Christianity over the emancipated and enlightened Jews; he offered his book as an anodyne to that influence. As a man of broad Jewish and general culture, he was eminently qualified for the task he had set himself.

Rabbi Israel Moshe Hazan

One of the most influential Sephardic thinkers of the nineteenth century was Rabbi Israel Moshe Hazan (1808–1863).[v] Born in Izmir, Turkey, his family moved to Jerusalem when he was still a small child. He studied there in the yeshiva of his grandfather, Rabbi Yosef Refael Hazan. In 1842 he was appointed to the rabbinical court in Jerusalem, a testimony to his scholarship and stature in the community. In 1844 he traveled as an emissary to London. He subsequently held rabbinic positions in Rome, Corfu, and Alexandria.

Rabbi Hazan was deeply committed to maintaining Judaism in its traditional form. During his stay in London, he wrote a pamphlet attacking the recently established Reform movement in England. He also joined a group of

traditionalists who were opposed to the teachings of Reform.

Rabbi Hazan argued that the Jewish people should conduct themselves according to their own laws and traditions. They should not abandon their religious and national autonomy by succumbing to the temptations of emancipation and enlightenment. He complained that European Jews tended to polarize, either assimilating readily into non-Jewish culture or fiercely isolating themselves against its influence. He represented the classic Sephardic model—maintaining traditional religious autonomy while at the same time being open to the best teachings of the non-Jewish world.

In his *Nahalah leYisrael,* Rabbi Hazan contended that Jews should adhere to their own laws, including the laws of inheritance. The non-Jewish governments did not require Jews to abandon their own legal system; why then should they do so voluntarily? Anyone who studied Jewish history would quickly realize that

> from the time of the exile of Judah from his land, [the Jews] followed the laws of the Torah of Moses their teacher! Even when they lived in foreign lands, some here and some there, they sacrificed themselves in order to fulfill all that was written in the book of the Torah.[vi]

This was true when Jews lived among pagans; so much more should it be true when they lived among those who believed in God and in the divinity of the Torah. Indeed, Christianity and Islam had both acknowledged the basic principles of Judaism and the sacred nature of the Jewish Bible. Judaism had taught the world vital social values, love of fellow human beings. The non-Jewish world had not asked Jews to forfeit their autonomous religious life. Therefore, the Jews should certainly maintain their own laws and traditions in all areas, including inheritance, marriage, and divorce.

Rabbi Hazan expressed rage at those who followed non-Jewish civil laws of inheritance instead of relying on the rules of Judaism. “Those Jews who seek inheritance contrary to the Torah of Moses are adjudged as heretics, Sadducees, uprooters of Torah, notorious thieves. If you investigate them, you will find that they violate other commandments arrogantly.”[vii]

Calling on his fellow rabbis to fight against those who advocated following the civil law in matters of inheritance, Rabbi Hazan warned that if this section of Jewish law were forfeited, it would only lead to further undermining of the Torah

and its legal authority.

> Know truly that if at this time we are silent, the laws of inheritance will be completely uprooted, as though the Torah had never been written. Woe unto us! Woe unto us, what will be our end! It is as though we were almost dead, almost lost; it is as though a Torah scroll had been burnt. . . in which case all Jews in all places should rend their garments never to be resewn. [viii]

Considering the gravity of the threat to Jewish religious hegemony, Rabbi Hazan called on rabbis to struggle courageously against those who were willing to compromise Jewish law. He received approbation for his position from leading Sephardic rabbis in Izmir, Salonika, Istanbul, Vienna, and other communities.

Rabbi Yehudah Yaacov Nehama: Defending Tradition

The tide of modernism and Europeanization made itself felt in the domains of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. The Turkish authorities instituted a number of reforms *(tanzimat),* indicating their desire to shake off past stagnation and become a modern society. European culture, especially in its French form, seemed particularly attractive to the Ottoman rulers. [ix]

The wave of Europeanization also had an effect on the Jews of the Empire. Sephardic intellectuals were receptive to French influence. Schools operated by the Alliance Israelite Universelle sprang up throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, and North Africa. They eagerly promoted the glories of French language and culture. They also introduced modern educational techniques. In short, an intellectual transformation was occurring among the Sephardim, bringing them into contact with European modernism.

Rabbi Yehudah Yaacov Nehama (1825–1899) was an influential figure in Salonika. His life and works are a reflection of the impact of Haskalah thought on Sephardic thinkers. He wrote three major works that were destroyed in a fire and thus never published. One of these was a history of the Jewish people, one was a

volume of rabbinic Responsa, and one was a history of the Jews of Salonika. The scope of these works reflects Nehama's wide-ranging interests and knowledge. He was not only deeply learned in classic rabbinic literature, but was also a historian of Jewry in general and of his own community in particular. Historical research was an important feature of the Jewish Haskalah.

Two volumes of Rabbi Nehama's letters were published. They reflect his knowledge in many fields. He corresponded with leading Jewish intellectuals of his time, Sephardic and Ashkenazic. His interest in books and bibliographic information was formidable.

Like Aguilar, Benamozegh, and Hazan, Nehama was well versed in contemporary culture and was also committed to maintaining the traditional structure of religious observance. In a letter written in the year 5614 (1854), he responded to Rabbi Mordecai Halevi Mortara and Rabbi Shelomo Nissim of Mantua, who had written to inform him that some members of their community were agitating to abolish the observance of the second day of festivals. (According to rabbinic law, communities outside the land of Israel are obligated to observe two festival days, whereas the communities in Israel observe one day.) Rabbi Nehama was infuriated by this suggestion, since it undermined age-old Jewish practice. He condemned those who called for reforms in Judaism, referring to the spirit of reform as a leprous plague. Such recommendations were divisive and would lead to factionalism. "My brothers and my people, beware of heeding the words of those who love reform and heresy; take heed of the custom of your ancestors and do not turn from it."[x]

Rabbi Henry Pereira Mendes

A leading religious and communal figure in American Jewish life during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes (1852–1937).[xi] Born in Birmingham, England, he was the son of Abraham Mendes, who was minister of the Sephardic congregation there. On both his father's and his mother's side, he was the product of a long line of religious leaders.

Rabbi Mendes served as minister of the historic Congregation Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York City, the oldest Jewish congregation in North America (founded in 1654). His service began in 1877, and he was associated with the congregation until his death 60 years later. Aside from

his training in Jewish studies, he received the degree of medical doctor from New York University in 1884.

Dr. Mendes was tireless in his work on behalf of Jewish tradition. He was a founder of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, believing it necessary for the Orthodox community to be united. He also was a co-founder, together with his colleague Rabbi Sabato Morais of Philadelphia, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He and Morais envisioned the institution as a training ground for American-bred traditional rabbis who could serve Jewish communities in the United States. When the Seminary later identified itself with the Conservative movement, Dr. Mendes dropped his association with it. His goal had been to strengthen Orthodoxy and to combat reform.

An energetic communal leader and humanitarian, Dr. Mendes was also involved in the establishment of such institutions as the Young Women's Hebrew Association in New York, Montefiore Hospital, and the Lexington School for the Deaf. He was a leader in such organizations as the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the New York Board of Jewish Ministers, the Federation of American Zionists, and the World Zionist Organization. He also was a prolific author of religious textbooks for children, dramatic works, poetry, books on Jewish history and ethics, and more.

Dr. Bernard Drachman, a colleague of Dr. Mendes, described him as "an ideal representative of Orthodox Judaism." He praised Dr. Mendes' "absolute freedom. . . from anything approaching narrowness of sectarian bias within the Jewish community."[xii]

Indeed, Dr. Mendes was a universally respected figure, whether among the Sephardim of America, the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, the non-Orthodox community, or the non-Jewish community. He was urbane, highly educated, principled, hard-working. His sermons and literary works demonstrate his devotion to the Bible. He did not consider himself a scholar of Talmud and halakha, although he certainly was comfortable studying the classic rabbinic texts.

Dr. Mendes viewed himself as a spokesman for the Sephardic outlook on Judaism. In a guest sermon which he delivered in the Sephardic synagogue on Lauderdale Road in London (July 27, 1901), he was effusive in his praise of the Sephardic religious tradition, which was able to blend loyalty to the past with an openness to new thinking. He called for "a revival of Sephardic activity, a renewal of Sephardic energy, an earnest demonstration of fidelity to God and Torah, a continued proof by our own lives that culture and fidelity can go hand in hand."

[xiii]

Stressing that faithfulness to tradition could go hand-in-hand with modern culture, Dr. Mendes strenuously opposed Reform Judaism, believing that it was an incorrect diagnosis for the spiritual malaise of the Jewish people. Instead of breaking with tradition, Jews actually needed to come closer to it, to find peace and contentment in the age-old laws and customs of the Jewish people. Reform led to a weakening of the hold of tradition. It engendered more apathy and irreligion among Jews. If each individual did as s/he chose without taking the claims of Jewish law and tradition into consideration, then the structure of Jewish life would be seriously weakened. Dr. Mendes criticized this “everyone-doing-as-he-pleases-religion” as the source of ignorance, apathy, and disregard of religious restrictions.[xiv]

In 1891 some suggestions for ritual changes were made in his own Congregation Shearith Israel. Dr. Mendes reacted with characteristic eloquence.

> I say it is a very solemn thing for this Congregation with its centuries of proud adherence to historic Judaism to approach the subject of change at all. . . . Are those who have enlisted under the banner of change distinguished for a better observance of the Sabbath? Are they in any way improved religiously? Are their homes more Jewish? Are their children more devoted to Judaism and better exponents of its teachings? .. . No new virtues have been created in the heart of the Reform Jew which are not found in the heart of the Orthodox Jew. Nor is the cultured Reformer more respected than is the cultured Orthodox brother.[xv]

Dr. Mendes prevailed and the changes were averted.

Traditional Communal Framework

Religious leaders and intellectuals throughout the Sephardic Diaspora advocated loyalty to Jewish tradition. Although they were well aware of the spirit of modernism and of the challenges to religious patterns, they felt that the Jewish people could best be served by remaining faithful to its own distinctive way of life.

Reform was not acceptable. It was a surrender to the whims of European modernity, and it could only lead to a breakdown in Jewish religious life, to assimilation.

Whereas the issues of emancipation and enlightenment led to the formation of religious movements within Ashkenazic Jewry, Sephardic Jewry did not fragment itself into Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, or other movements. Ashkenazic Jewry was torn apart by feuding among the ideological movements. It established separate communities, institutions, even cemeteries. Sephardic Jewry was spared this internecine religious struggle.

Certainly, not all Sephardic Jews adhered to all the details of traditional halakha. Laxity in observance was growing. A lessening of reverence for rabbinic authority was also apparent in many communities. Yet the general Sephardic attitude was respectful to tradition. The religious intellectuals, as well as the masses, were desirous of maintaining a traditional religious framework for their communities. The Sephardim found a modus vivendi characterized by respect for tradition and tolerance for those whose observance of halakha fell short. Whereas some individuals might not be personally observant, the synagogue and community structure were to operate according to halakha.

The Haskalah movement, then, did have an impact on the Sephardic world. But the Sephardic communities generally remained loyal to the traditional halakhic communal framework. This was not a small accomplishment.

Notes

1. See David Benveniste, “Rabbi Yehudah Yaacov Nehama: *Mevaser Tekufat haHaskalah beSaloniki*,” in *The Sephardic and Oriental Jewish Heritage*, ed. Issachar Ben-Ami (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 30. See also Jose Faur, *Harav Yisrael Moseh Hazan: haIsh uMishnato* (Jerusalem, 5738), esp. pp. 3–17.
2. Grace Aguilar, *The Spirit of Judaism* (Philadelphia, 5602), p. 9.
3. See for example, Leeser’s comments on pp. vii, 21, 100, and 104.
4. *Ibid*., pp. 225-26.
5. See the discussion of Grace Aguilar’s thought in Philip M. Weinberger, *The Social and Religious Thought of Grace Aguilar* (New York, 1970); see also Beth-Zion Lask Abrahams, “Grace Aguilar: a Centenary Tribute,” *Jewish Historical Society of England Transactions* 16(1952): 137—48.
6. Grace Aguilar, *The Jewish Faith: Its Spiritual Consolation, Moral Guidance and Immortal Hope* (Philadelphia, 1864), p. 10.

7. *Ibid*., p. 124.
8. *Ibid*., p. 221.
9. *Ibid*., p. 264.
10. *Spirit of Judaism,* pp. viii, 165.
11. Eliyahu Benamozegh *BiShvilei* Musar (Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 21–27.

12. *Ibid*., pp. 28-30, 33.

13. *Ibid*., pp. 120–121.
14. *Ibid*., pp. 124–125, 132–133, 148, 166. See also R. Benamozegh's book, Israel and Humanity, trans. and ed. Maxwell Luria. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.
15. See Faur, *Harav Yisrael Moshe Hazan.*
16. I. M. Hazan, *Nahalah leYisrael* (Alexandria, 1862), pp. 53–54.
17. *Ibid*., p. 55.
18. *Ibid*., p. 61.
19. The changes in the taxation system are reflected in Rabbi Michael Yaacov Israel, *Yad* Yemin (Izmir, 5619), *Hoshen Mishpat*, no. 25; and Hayyim Palache, *Hikekei Lev* (Izmir, 5609), Hoshen Mishpat, no. 6.
20. Yehudah Yaacov Nehama, *Mikhtevei Dodim miYayin,* vol. 1, (Salonika, 5653) pp. 48–49.
21. For information on Dr. Mendes, see David de Sola Pool, *H. Pereira Mendes: A Biography* (New York, 1938); and David and Tamar de Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World* (New York, 1955), pp. 192–201. See also Eugene Markovits, *Henry Pereira Mendes: Builder of Traditional Judaism in America,* doctoral dissertation, Yeshiva University, 1961; and Eugene Markovits, "Henry Pereira Mendes: Architect of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 3, pp. 364–84.
22. B. Drachman, "Forty Years of Loyal Service,**"** *Orthodox Union* 7, no. 6.
23. See Markovits, **"**Henry Pereira Mendes Builder of Traditional Judaism," p. 250.
24. *Ibid*., p. 86.
25. Dr. Mendes' remarks are found in the archives of Congregation Shearith Israel, and are quoted in M. D. Angel, "Thoughts about Early American Jewry," *Tradition,* 16 (1976), p. 21.