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Reconstructing Jewish Identity on the Foundations of Hellenistic History:
Azariah de' Rossi's *Me'or 'Enayim* in Late 16th Century Northern Italy

by

David Michael Rosenberg-Wohl

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Joint Doctor of Philosophy

with the Graduate Theological Union

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Erich S. Gruen, Chair

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Professor Christopher Ocker

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Abstract

Reconstructing Jewish Identity on the Foundations of Hellenistic History:
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Me'or 'Enayim is conventionally considered to be early modern Jewish history. Recent scholarship tends to consider the work Renaissance historiography, Counter-Reformation apology or some combination of the two. The approach to date has focused primarily upon the third and most sizeable part of *Me'or 'Enayim*, the sixty-chapter “Words of Understanding”.

In this dissertation, I seek to state a claim to the purpose for the work, a chimerical task. I argue that Azariah de' Rossi wrote *Me'or 'Enayim* neither as history nor as apology but rather to articulate his vision of a new Jewish identity for the Jews of his time and place – late 16th century northern Italy. Recognizing the dominant Christian cultural embrace of the Roman empire and the concomitant Jewish opposition to Rome, de' Rossi felt that the pressure of the Counter-Reformation left Jews with no viable way to be relevant to contemporary Italian culture while remaining Jewish. He proposed abandoning the account of the Jewish interaction with Rome, an account long contested by Christianity, and replacing it with the honor accorded Judaism by Greece, specifically the Hellenistic empire. Key to that enterprise was emphasizing the role in Jewish history of Alexander the Great, Ptolemy Philadelphus and even Gaius Caligula (a Hellenistic monarch by virtue of the fact that he reigned before the destruction of the Second Temple and the advent of the Roman empire).

This purpose accounts for much that is puzzling about *Me'or 'Enayim*. It explains why the book focuses upon Hellenistic history in general and upon the sources Aristeas, Philo and Josephus in particular. It explains why Roman history is either dismissed, in the case of Livy, or discounted, in the case of the Rabbinic midrashim accounting for the death of Titus by a divinely dispatched gnat. It explains why the work is comprised of three parts, for political identity is composed of a past, a present and a future.

Most of all, I believe, my approach explains how both strains of current scholarship – the historians and the apologists – are right, but only in part. It is true that de' Rossi is interested in what actually happened: he takes the time to establish the Hellenistic respect for Jews, their priests and their Temple. And it is true that de' Rossi is eager to discard Rabbinic *midrashim* dressed up as history that can be debunked: for de' Rossi, Rabbinic midrashim are vital as ethical lessons, lessons of hope. But de' Rossi's interest in history is selective, and not simply because as a religious Jew he is incapable of removing God as a causal agent. De' Rossi privileges

Hellenistic history over Roman history because while the latter is useless to Jews of his age, the former is revitalizing.

De' Rossi's *Me'or 'Enayim* is about the usefulness of history – namely, history in support of identity. In that, it is fruitful to think of *Me'or 'Enayim* not simply as a Renaissance work of humanism or of a Counter-Reformation work of apology. It is also, and perhaps primarily, a Jewish work in the spirit of the Protestant Reformation's rearticulation of the religious past.

I dedicate this work to my wife, Kathy.
You are the Light of my Eyes.

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About ten years ago, I had the privilege of hearing Joanna Weinberg speak at the Center for Jewish Studies in New York; in the audience was Deena Aranoff, who later became my teacher and adviser and guide as I developed my approach to Azariah de' Rossi's *Me'or 'Enayim*, the book that is the focus of this dissertation. I owe a debt of gratitude to Tom Dandeleit, one of my committee members, for his writing and teaching about historiography in general and the world of Spanish Italy in particular, and I likewise am indebted to my committee member Chris Ocker for his efforts in helping me make my way through the effects of the Protestant Reformation in Counter-Reformation Italy. I never would have been able to complete this dissertation without the endless patience and guidance of my dissertation adviser, Erich Gruen. I appreciate his careful criticism and advice. I came to Erich as a lawyer with a background in Greek and Latin; he stayed with me while I developed my competence in Hebrew. To his great credit, he gave me all the rope I could handle, while making sure I did not manage to strangle myself. I think he would agree that I came close to doing so often.

I would be remiss in not including among my teachers those scholars whose work has been so influential to me. Chief among these is Joanna Weinberg. I have been privileged to rely not just upon her edition of *Me'or 'Enayim* but upon her various articles exploring de' Rossi's work. Robert Bonfil is the other primary scholar upon whose work I have depended, not just for his comprehensive knowledge of Jewish life in 16th century Italy but also for his approach to clarifying the notion of identity. These are my giants, but there are others who have been greatly helpful. David Ruderman kindly offered me early advice on my trajectory, as did Talya Fishman and Fabrizio Lelli. My facility with legend was much enhanced by the important chance I had to study with Galit Hasan-Rokem and with Eleazar Gutwirth, and the frequent chance afforded by Anthony Bulloch to teach Classical Mythology with him as a graduate student. Paul Hamburg provided invaluable assistance in searching for Hebrew resources in particular.

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the background for my approach to the material in this dissertation. I am grateful for the encouragement of my rabbis at San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El. Stephen Pearce kindly introduced me to David Ruderman and Peretz Wolf-Prusan shared not only his contagious enthusiasm as a Jewish educator but introduced me to the Talmud. It is with him I first studied the Rabbinic encounter with Alexander the Great, who features prominently in this work.

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A note on editions, languages and translations.

Each of us as visitors to a garden must pick and choose that which is of particular interest; it is neither respectful nor productive to replant an entire garden. My argument about de' Rossi's purpose in constructing *Me'or 'Enayim* depends upon the thematic material that he deploys (and that which he leaves behind). It is an argument about historiography, not language. Consequently, while I am quite familiar with the original texts cited herein, I have been content to rely upon the translations of others. These translations (some perfectly competent, and some -- notably Weinberg's *Me'or 'Enayim* itself -- exemplary) are readily available and identified in the notes. The exceptions, where I have found it necessary to reference the original language, involve de' Rossi's [Hebrew] characterizations of the history discipline and of his principal Hellenistic sources (Aristeas, Philo and Josephus), as well as Sebastian Munster's [Latin] foreword to his 1541 edition of the *Josippon*. This material is largely in Chapters III and IV.

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PREFACE

*Look not upon truth directly, for she will stare right back.
You will be incapable of action,
Immovable as stone.*

*Rather avert your gaze, and apprehend her through a mirror.
For in reflected light alone may you perceive her,
And not lose your way.*

Athena to Perseus, on encountering the Gorgon Medusa

INTRODUCTION

Me'or 'Enayim, or The Light of the Eyes, is a book first published in Hebrew in Mantua, northern Italy, in 1573.¹ Although its purpose is perplexing -- as is the question of its structural unity -- the book is without question a prodigious work of scholarship. Since the 19th century, it has often been considered to be the pre-eminent work of a Jewish historical writer, not just of the 16th century in which it was written, but of the entire 1500 years that separated de' Rossi from his fellow Jew Josephus. For Leopold Zunz, de' Rossi introduced modern historical thinking — he “was the first to teach Israel the science of scholarship which is the basis of learning”.² Salo Baron noted de' Rossi's role as the ““founder of historical criticism.””³ So also Michael Meyer: de' Rossi was “the first truly critical Jewish scholar of the modern period.”⁴

Even more nuanced scholars who are interested in seeing de' Rossi's work within his context and less as a singular work of genius nonetheless recognize *Me'or 'Enayim* as a particularly important work. Yosef Yerushalmi called it “the most audacious Jewish historical work of the sixteenth century.”⁵ For Joanna Weinberg, *Me'or 'Enayim* is a veritable “innovation in Hebrew literature.”⁶ According to Robert Bonfil, de' Rossi's book presents “one of the most revolutionary views of what Jewish history should be”.⁷

And yet, the “light” that de' Rossi sheds upon Jewish history is particularly hard on modern “eyes”. Joanna Weinberg apologizes for the dense prose of her translation of the book, blaming de' Rossi's writing style: his language “is often convoluted and obscure, with lengthy sentences” — indeed the Hebrew of the “[t]he text does not lend itself easily to the English language.”⁸ Robert Bonfil is more forgiving of the author's choice of language and more critical of the antiquarian arcana that interested late 16th century historiographers with their dry, logical manner of presentation: *Me'or 'Enayim*, he declares, is “practically unreadable for pleasure”.⁹

1 Robert Bonfil, “Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah De Rossi's *Meor Enayim* in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry,” in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 25; Joanna Weinberg, “Azariah De' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 252. For printing details, see *ibid.*, 269 n. 2; Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), 727.

2 Leopold Zunz, “*Toledoth Le-R Azariah Min Ha-Adummim*,” *Kerem Hemed* 5 (1841): 139.

3 Salo W. Baron, “Azariah De' Rossi's Historical Method,” in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg, Leon A. Feldman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 206.

4 Michael A. Meyer, ed., *Ideas of Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 20.

5 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989), 69; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 211.

6 Weinberg, “Azariah De' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo,” 253.

7 Robert Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 241.

8 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xlv.

9 Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 243.

A. The Odd Structure of *Me'or 'Enayim*

It is difficult to discern unity in *Me'or 'Enayim* due, in significant part, to the fact that the work consists of three very different parts. The first part, entitled *Kol Elohim*, or “Voice of God,” is de’ Rossi’s account of the earthquake of Ferrara in 1570, an earthquake that de’ Rossi himself experienced. In this part, we learn a few details of de’ Rossi’s situation in Ferrara and of his family, in addition to the circumstances of the earthquake itself. There is considerable citation by de’ Rossi of Greek and Roman sources regarding earthquakes, along with some references to the Bible and to Josephus, and Christian scholarship too — all devoted to exploring the cause of earthquakes, what they might portend, and the proper religious attitude to have regarding these events. This, the first part of *Me'or 'Enayim*, is relatively short.¹⁰

The second part, entitled *Hadrat Zeqenim*, or “Splendor of the Elders,” is only slightly longer, but here de’ Rossi’s voice is almost entirely absent.¹¹ In this part, de’ Rossi sets forth his translation of the Letter of Aristeas from Latin (he professes not to be able to read Greek) into Hebrew.¹² De’ Rossi’s translation is, by and large, faithful to the texts, although he does “draw[] out the latent Jewish elements in the text” by re-titling the work, making free use of information from Josephus’s *Antiquities* to supplement the account and replacing the Greek proverbs spoken by King Ptolemy to each of the seventy scribes with quotations from the Bible.¹³

The third part, *Imrei Binah*, or “Words of Understanding,” comprises the bulk of the work; it is the heart of the book, taking the lion’s share of the text, and it commands an entirely different shape from the two parts that preceded it. Here we have sixty chapters, some of considerable length, each addressing certain aspects of Jewish history that took place almost exclusively following the close of the Biblical text yet before the destruction of the Second Temple.¹⁴

Despite the differences in focus and genre of parts one, two and three — and despite the variegated chapters in part three itself — de’ Rossi does have unity in mind. In the brief introduction to his work, de’ Rossi makes clear that he is introducing his work as a whole: “this entire book,” he claims, consisting of its three parts, “is the light of my eyes and the joy of my heart.”¹⁵ Some sense of unity is, in fact, easy to see. There is a narrative structure linking the first and second parts biographically and with temporal specificity: de’ Rossi explains that he had been discussing the Letter of Aristeas with a Christian neighbor before the earthquake and that while they conversed outside the city following the earthquake, that neighbor convinced de’ Rossi to translate the Letter into Hebrew for the glory of his people.¹⁶ That explanation comes at the end of the first part, “The Voice of God,” and, naturally, the very next part, “The Splendor of the Elders,” is de’ Rossi’s translation of that text.

At the beginning of Part Three, “Words of Understanding,” however, there is no transition; indeed de’ Rossi specifically asserts the *lack* of evident connection and order, namely “that the discourses do not follow one line of thought” and that while some of these chapters will relate to the previous section (“The Splendor of the Elders”), others will not.¹⁷ And yet at the end

10 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 7-32.

11 Ibid., 33-77.

12 Ibid., 5.

13 Ibid., 33 n.1; Ibid., 33; 77.

14 Ibid., 79-721.

15 Ibid., 6.

16 Ibid., 31-32.

17 Ibid., 81.

of Part Three (the last part of the book), de' Rossi's concluding chapter does more than reference the Letter of Aristeas — he references the earthquake of Ferrara itself — the subject of the first part of the work (and the prompt for the second part). Apparently, if it had not been otherwise clear to us, the impetus for this third part was *also* the earthquake.¹⁸ It is a point that de' Rossi echoes with a closing poem, a poem that references all three parts: first, “The Voice of God” (i.e., “Let them curse but the Almighty God will bless” in connection with “earthquakes”); second, “The Splendor of the Elders” (i.e., regarding the book just completed, “Elders basked in its splendor”); and third, “Words of Understanding” (“wise old men [have basked] in its ‘Words of Understanding’”).¹⁹ Indeed, de' Rossi's entire book is an intended whole, The Light of the Eyes, for it “irradiates light to me in this world and merits my soul to join celestial beings”.²⁰

Consider Part Three specifically, and order begins to appear out of chaos. While unwieldy and swollen with detailed descriptions of a whole host of topics, Part Three appears to have its own internal order focused upon a program of justifying de' Rossi's critique of Rabbinic chronology based upon non-traditionally Jewish sources. There are four sections to Part Three, each approximately the same size. In Section One (thirteen chapters), de' Rossi justifies his reliance upon sources that come from outside the Jewish tradition, specifically justifying the use of Greek Jewish sources and the historical experience of Jews in Alexandria. De' Rossi evaluates the place of Philo in the Jewish tradition, considers Aristeas in the context of evaluating the varying Jewish and Christian accounts of the Septuagint and introduces the testimony of Josephus on the Septuagint and Alexandria.²¹ Section Two (fifteen chapters) emphasizes de' Rossi's challenge to Rabbinic historical statements, particularly in light of their hostility to Rome. De' Rossi focuses upon those statements that have a bearing upon the progression of empires and the age of the world at the time of the coming of the Messiah. Here are discussions that seek to clarify the amount of time that passed during certain empires, specifically regarding the rulers of Persia, the length and timing of Alexander's empire, and the number of priests officiating during Second Temple times.²² In this section is chapter sixteen, the much-noted chapter in which de' Rossi — by reference to ten non-Jewish sources — demolishes the Rabbinic account that the emperor Titus died from a gnat sent by God because he had destroyed the Second Temple and explains the Rabbinic story not as history but rather as a parable.²³

Section Three (sixteen chapters) must be of particular importance within Part Three because it bears its own title, *Yemei Olam*, or “Days of the World,” a title indicating that the focus of Part Three has been to critique Jewish messianism that considered the end of history to be imminent. This section deals exclusively with an investigation of the Jewish calendar. It explores in detail the question of the chronology of the Persian kings and of the Second Temple priests and concludes that the traditional Jewish chronology is in error. First, non-Jewish sources demonstrate that the Persian empire lasted much longer than the thirty-four years accorded it by the Rabbis. Second and related -- but far more important -- any interpretation of the Book of Daniel under which the Messiah's arrival is imminent is wrong.²⁴ The penultimate chapter of Part Three (chapter forty-three) is the culmination not just of Part Three but of Section Three: it

18 Ibid., 720.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 81-264.

22 Ibid., 267-401.

23 Ibid., 296-304.

24 Ibid., 405-568.

is here that de' Rossi rejects the commonly held belief among Jews that the Messianic age was due not just imminently but specifically in four years' time — 1575, to be exact.²⁵

At this point, the structural integrity of *Me'or 'Enayim* is apparent. What the Voice of God, Splendor of the Elders and Words of Understanding all have in common is an interest in the Jewish Hellenistic past. The principal distinction of each part is its temporal emphasis: Voice of God speaks to the present circumstances of de' Rossi's Jewish community, while Splendor of the Elders evokes the past glory of the Jews and Words of Understanding addresses the future of the Jewish community. As we will see below, in Chapter I, pride in one's past, hope for one's future and a meaningful role in the present are essential components of a community's political identity. De' Rossi evidently uses Hellenistic history to bolster his community's sense of itself. Why he does this is explored in Chapter II, and how he does so is the focus of Chapters III-V.

But Section Three of Words of Understanding does not conclude *Me'or 'Enayim*: there is also appended a Section Four (the final sixteen chapters of Part Three). How does this material relate to the past/present/future thematic content of the work as a whole? The answer is that the material in Section Four transcends time; it is timeless. To some extent, this section deals with issues that were raised in Voice of God, Splendor of the Elders and Words of Understanding, the resolution of which was not required in order to achieve the time-specific focus of those books.²⁶ De' Rossi alluded to this material at the time but considered it out of place and promised to present it in detail later.²⁷ In “The Voice of God,” the very first part of his work, de' Rossi promises to treat of the connection between portents and impending disaster in a specific chapter that is one of the very last chapters of his work, chapter fifty-four.²⁸ The chapter on the splendor of the Second Temple, chapter fifty-one, explicitly takes as its referent the great gift presented by Ptolemy to the Temple as recounted in “The Splendor of the Elders”.²⁹ Indeed, near the very close of Section Three, in chapter 42, de' Rossi mentioned that he would be providing a chapter on Onqelos and Akylas;³⁰ that very chapter appears near the very beginning of Section Four, in chapter 45.³¹ A chapter on the peaceful conversion of Helena of Adiabene to Judaism comes from a passage in Josephus that immediately precedes and contrasts significantly with a passage previously treated (in Section One) in which de' Rossi recounts the destruction of Jewish sects who urged revolt against Rome.³² We might be tempted to consider de' Rossi's interest in this material “knowledge for the sake of knowledge” but that would be a mistake: it is a pursuit of knowledge that has been put into play as a result of de' Rossi's use of it for his own specific purposes -- more housekeeping than housebuilding.

De' Rossi also deals in Section Four with material that was presented earlier throughout the chapters of his book but is now summarized thematically. There are five chapters gleaning

25 Ibid., 562-568. De' Rossi says he began his work in 1571 and completed it eighteen months later, in 1572. Ibid., 720 & n. 61.

26 Ibid., 571-721. Compare Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 239 (referring to “some marginal chapters, basically academic excursus regarding problems discussed earlier” [e.g., chapters 53, 54]).

27 Joanna Weinberg notes generally that de' Rossi “often states that he will treat a certain topic in a forthcoming chapter and invariably fulfills his promise.” Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiv n. 82.

28 Ibid., 22; 657-60.

29 Ibid., 42-43; 621-42.

30 Ibid., 526-527.

31 Ibid., 571-585.

32 Ibid., 103 & Weinberg, n.18 (citing Josephus, *Antiquities* XX:102); *ibid.*, 643-53, and *ibid.*, 643 & Weinberg, n.1 (citing Josephus, *Antiquities* XX:17-99).

information on the priestly vestments.³³ These bring together the testimony of the Rabbis, Aristeas, Philo, Josephus and Christian sages. There is a chapter excerpting from Josephus the full list of the high priests in Second Temple times.³⁴ There is a chapter emphasizing how Jews pray for the welfare of local rulers, collecting testimony from each of the empires under which Jews have lived — Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.³⁵ This material is likewise supportive of the tripartite temporal emphasis of de' Rossi's work, but it supports the entire temporal continuum of the Jewish political narrative. Jewish knowledge has been transmitted intact from generation to generation. Jews live among the nations respectful of their successive temporal authority. And when the time of empire is over, Jews have preserved the knowledge necessary to clothe the high priest for service in messianic times.³⁶

Finally Section Four treats some new material: as de' Rossi states, "For as we approach the end of this book, we shall introduce some real novelty."³⁷ Chapters fifty-six through sixty, which complete the text of "Words of Understanding" following the messianic material, does in fact appear to concern topics of purely academic interest: the antiquity of the Hebrew script and finally, a chapter on the structure of Hebrew poetry.³⁸ One could be forgiven for thinking that it is here, specifically, that de' Rossi has located his unique contribution to scholarship, precisely the sort of "novelty" that he both valued and shied away from in his introduction to the work as a whole. After all, he said there: "It is well known that anything which smacks of novelty reverberates loudly and is praised to excess."³⁹ (He might also have said that anything presented as new risks rejection by tradition.) With that in mind, we would consider apologetic de' Rossi's assertion that his novelties "will also have bearing on certain issues raised [previously] in these chapters..."⁴⁰ It was the fact that his consideration of new material arose necessarily out of the practical inquiries that justified his work as a whole.

But de' Rossi's emphasis upon the new here is misleading, for while he does in fact present his concluding chapters as novelty -- albeit a novelty justified by practical utility -- novelty dominates de' Rossi's sense of his work as a whole. Indeed, the concept of bringing something new into the world would appear to unify the disparate books of *Me'or 'Enayim*, not simply appear as a fillip at the end. The introduction to *Me'or 'Enayim* announces de' Rossi's choice of "The Splendor of the Elders" as a title for his translation of the Letter of Aristeas, a choice to rename that de' Rossi specifically links to the renaming of "a recently converted proselyte or ... a new born babe."⁴¹ De' Rossi presents his entire work, *Me'or 'Enayim*, in terms of birth as well. His closing poem states: "I began it in the spring, the first of the months, the year of the tamarisk, made famous by earthquakes / and finished it in the month of God's

33 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 586-620.

34 Ibid., 654-56.

35 Ibid., 661-65.

36. In keeping with this is de' Rossi's emphasis upon the value of the Hebrew language -- not just its antiquity but perhaps the connection between the resurgent Christian interest in the tongue and imminent salvation. See Deena Aranoff, "In Pursuit of the Holy Tongue: Jewish Conceptions of Hebrew in the Sixteenth Century" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2006), 156 ("For de' Rossi, the humanist esteem for Hebrew may be a harbinger of redemption").

37 Ibid., 666.

38 Ibid., 666-721.

39 Ibid., 5.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 6.

appointed times, at the end of twice nine months. / I consider it my firstborn, for a double length of time I've carried it within me long the brimming days of gestation."⁴²

De' Rossi's *Me'or Enayim*, therefore, is a unified whole, and de' Rossi hopes to say something new through it. But what? Why write in three separate parts of such disparate tone and content? What is the significance to de' Rossi of the earthquake of Ferrara in 1570? If his neighbor indeed encouraged him to translate the Letter of Aristeas, why did de' Rossi nonetheless write an account of the earthquake, much less his weighty sixty-chapter inquiry into aspects of Jewish history? Parts One, Two and Three must relate to each other, although it is particularly clear only that parts one and two are related. And within the considerable third part, even if the sequence of chapters within that part are structured to support a challenge to messianic chronology, what does that material have to do with the earthquake of Ferrara or the Letter of Aristeas?

In this dissertation, I argue that de' Rossi has designed *Me'or 'Enayim* to address the need for a new Jewish identity in 16th century Italy. Specifically, de' Rossi used the Jewish community's survival of the earthquake of Ferrara to show, through the vehicle of his Christian neighbor's sense of a Jewish glory that could be trumpeted through the The Letter of Aristeas, that Jews could shake off the identity of opposition to Rome that no longer sufficed to provide a strong and viable sense of distinction within the contemporary world and adopt instead an identity of pride in the Hellenistic past. My goal in this dissertation is to demonstrate that this "political" purpose underlies and unifies Azariah de' Rossi's *Me'or 'Enayim*, and that by looking at the work through the lens of identity we can begin to see this disparate work as a whole.⁴³

Attempts to grapple with de' Rossi's purpose in writing *Me'or 'Enayim* have not been particularly helpful to date. To begin, scholars have not devoted much time to exploring the work as a unified whole. To date, Weinberg is the only scholar to try,⁴⁴ but she does not seek to explain how the parts work together or why. Weinberg notes the framing of the entire work with a reference to the earthquake of Ferrara, but in no detail.⁴⁵ She notes how the earthquake narrative (Part One) justifies the translation effort (Part Two).⁴⁶ But she offers no opinion on why the earthquake formed a particularly useful framing device for de' Rossi. Specifically regarding Part Three, Weinberg recognizes a "tenuous but natural sequence" between chapters and sections,⁴⁷ but these comments are focused on procedure, not substance. Each section in Part

42 Ibid., 720.

43 Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is my belief that each component part of *Me'or 'Enayim* emphasizes a different temporal aspect of Jewish identity: past, present and future, all linked through a devotion to recovering the importance of the Jewish Hellenistic past. "The Voice of God," recounting the earthquake of Ferrara in 1570, demonstrates that this past has continuing significance. "The Splendor of the Elders" shows, as de' Rossi's Christian neighbor suggested, the glory of the Jewish past. And "Words of Understanding," while detailing numerous issues of that past, is clearly directed toward providing confidence in the Jewish future, a Messianic age soon to come in which Jews will no longer live under the empire of Rome.

44 Baron claims the parts are related but makes no attempt to say how. He says that "The Voice of God" was merely a prefatory appendage to the "essays" of "Words of Understanding": "this little tract was written as a sort of introduction explaining his subsequent literary activity." Baron, "Azariah De' Rossi's Historical Method," 207. He acknowledges that the link between "The Voice of God" and "The Splendor of the Elders" is "somewhat blurred," Ibid., 215, but he minimizes that text anyway as something divorced from de' Rossi's major project: the translation is "placed outside the main work" — something of a separate "dissertation" if not an "extensive digression[]." Ibid., 211.

45 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiv.

46 Ibid., xvii.

47 Ibid., xxiv. In this respect, she is in accord with Baron, who asserts the presence of a "natural sequence, following with a certain continuity the subjects, or groups of subjects, treated in them." Baron, "Azariah De' Rossi's

Three, Weinberg properly notes, begins with “a preparatory general discussion in which de’ Rossi defends his method of scholarship and alerts his reader as to the purpose of his inquiry;” within the sections, she adds, one chapter will end with details that lead to the following chapter.⁴⁸ Perhaps we can build upon this work and attempt a reconstruction of de’ Rossi’s edifice.

B. Obfuscation Desired, Not Eschewed

We should not be puzzled by the fact that the unity, or meaning, of *Me’or ‘Enayim* is hard to make out, for de’ Rossi intended it that way. Consider de’ Rossi’s introduction: he deliberately introduces Part Two and excludes Parts One and Three. De’ Rossi’s ostensible purpose is explicit: “to translate the precious book of Aristeas, the courtier of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, from Latin into our holy tongue.”⁴⁹ Yet, what follows the introduction is not anything about Aristeas but rather his account of the earthquake of Ferrara in 1570 -- the first part of his book, “The Voice of God”. Only after he has presented that part does de’ Rossi provide his translation of the Letter of Aristeas, “The Splendor of the Elders”, in the second part. And the existence of the third part, “Words of Understanding,” is not adumbrated at all until the very end of the introduction. From its introduction alone, we would be right to believe that de’ Rossi’s work is all about the importance of the Letter of Aristeas; not only “The Voice of God” but even “Words of Understanding” appear subsidiary.

That said, it is easy enough to perceive a link between Parts One and Two, “The Voice of God” with “The Splendor of the Elders,” and that is because the former supplies the narrative context for the latter. The earthquake, de’ Rossi says, permitted him to reconnect with his Christian neighbor who had been studying the Letter of Aristeas with him. That neighbor gave de’ Rossi the idea to translate the Letter of Aristeas into Hebrew.⁵⁰ So far so good, but the explanation is not sufficient. If de’ Rossi wanted to explore the narrative context of his motivation for “The Splendor of the Elders,” he could have appended an introductory paragraph to his translation — no need for a separate chapter. Because of its separate status, “The Voice of God” is clearly important as a constituent part of *Me’or ‘Enayim* and yet de’ Rossi conceals just how that is so. “It might appear,” de’ Rossi announces to his readers, “that the beginning of my tale is irrelevant to the subject matter of this book and bears no relation to it. Nevertheless, even before I have completed my discourse, the discerning person will realize that this new experience gave the impetus for my work; it formed and consolidated it. Whosoever desires, let him incline his ear and listen.”⁵¹ De’ Rossi recognizes the narrative link — hence “the beginning of my tale” — and yet he is telling us that we are going to have to work to make meaning not just of that pleasant narrative “Voice of God” but of its connection to “The Splendor of the Elders”.

It will necessarily be harder, de’ Rossi knows, to tie these two narratively connected parts to the sizable “Words of Understanding” that constitutes the bulk of the book. The challenge will

Historical Method,” 215. Beyond Baron, however, Weinberg claims, with much merit, that “[c]learly de’ Rossi had designed a scheme for all the chapters” -- based on the fact that he often states that he will resume a topic at a specific chapter and regularly does so. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiv n. 82.

48 Ibid., xxiv. For example, de’ Rossi’s Philo chapters [chapters 3-6, pp. 101-59] “in one sense” are “continuation of his argument in defense of the use of alien wisdom” [chapters 1-2, pp. 81-100]. Ibid., xxxii. This is certainly true, but it proves too much. Why move to Philo then and there? The rest of the chapters *also* deal with “alien wisdom”.

49 De Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 1.

50 Ibid., 31.

51 Ibid., 9.

be considerable, for despite acknowledging that there are some chapters in that Part Three that relate to “The Splendor of the Elders,” de’ Rossi delights in announcing the wonderfully apparent disorder of the garden he is planting: “Thus we shall speak about an assortment of subjects which will bear no relation to each other.”⁵² Indeed, de’ Rossi’s name for Part Three, “Words of Understanding,” suggests that for the garden visitor to discern de’ Rossi’s purpose, that person will need to pick through that garden’s bewildering arrangements of flowers and fruits.⁵³

To pick wisely, de’ Rossi wants the visitor to his garden to keep the importance of “The Splendor of the Elders” before his eyes. As stated above, the introduction clearly focuses upon the importance of the Letter of Aristeas, the translation of which is “The Splendor of the Elders”. Within that introduction, de’ Rossi himself points out that “The Splendor of the Elders” will be important to the forthcoming “Words of Understanding”. De’ Rossi provides two reasons that his translation will be useful, the first of which he states clearly while the second (more important) he conceals: “The first regards the reasons for some of the biblical precepts as put forward to Ptolemy’s envoys by Eleazar the high priest. The second point is more fundamental. Consequently, I decided to use it for the clarification of certain problematic statements about the priestly vestments made by our later sages of blessed memory. If God so wills, the matter will be clarified in the relevant chapters.”⁵⁴ While we can defer a discussion of the meaning of the priestly vestments, what is clear from the start is that there is something about “The Splendor of the Elders” that will shed light upon this issue. Coming toward the end of “Words of Understanding,” the five chapters on priestly vestments⁵⁵ now appear to be central, not ancillary, to de’ Rossi’s purpose in *Me’or ‘Enayim*. Beyond that, it is not *what* de’ Rossi will say about those vestments themselves that is of ultimate importance, but rather *how* it is that “The Splendor of the Elders” allows him to do it.

The variegated garden is plainly a distraction for the casual visitor— there is such a wealth of information and opinion that only the wise can determine what is to be selected and what to be left alone. Even if the style of presenting apparently disconnected essays is common to historical scholarship employed by Christian scholars of the day,⁵⁶ de’ Rossi’s *use* of that format must be for a specific purpose. Why? As we will see in detail below, whatever de’ Rossi’s specific relationship with Christian scholars,⁵⁷ the political and social situation of the Jews in Counter-Reformation Italy was becoming increasingly fraught with danger. De’ Rossi wrote in a time of censorship; he states that he even served his own community as a censor of Jewish works.⁵⁸ In a time such as this, it is not uncommon for writers to write in a way to conceal their true message. In *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Leo Strauss some time ago set forth the motivation and the technique: “Persecution, then, gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and therewith to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to

52 Ibid., 81.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 5. Note as well the emphasis upon “novel information”.

55 Ibid., 586-620.

56 Weinberg makes this claim. See below.

57 Weinberg’s thought inclines in this direction, for while she recognizes the apologetic tendency in de’ Rossi’s work, she emphasizes a common Christian and Jewish scholarly community — if not literally, then at least shared in the imagination. See Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

58 De Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 707.

trustworthy and intelligent readers only.”⁵⁹

But how are the wise to pick the fruit in de’ Rossi’s garden?

C. Approach and Thesis

Assuming that de’ Rossi seeks to communicate a hidden purpose and that his text is written in Hebrew, it is logical that de’ Rossi’s message would be for his fellow Jews and is likewise a message that he would consider problematic for Christian eyes.⁶⁰ It is my belief that de’ Rossi has a political message relevant to the Jews of Counter-Reformation Italy.⁶¹ Specifically, my thesis is that de’ Rossi, through the structure and content of *Me’or ‘Enayim*, sought to use both the history of and legends regarding Jewish interaction with Hellenistic Greece to renew a sense of Jewish identity that both built upon the Classical culture that Jews shared with Christians and at the same time allowed a Jewish sense of triumph over their Christian oppressors. This is why de’ Rossi relies heavily upon Philo, Aristeas and Josephus in particular, for they are authors who recounted the Jewish past in Hellenistic times.

The structure of my argument is as follows:

In Chapter One, I demonstrate that while modern scholars -- notably Salo Baron, Yosef Yerushalmi, Arthur Siegel, Robert Bonfil and Joanna Weinberg -- all presuppose a political dimension to de’ Rossi’s work, they do not sufficiently explore the consequences. They characterize de’ Rossi either primarily as a Renaissance historian or as a Counter-Reformation apologist — the former interested in objective truth, the latter interested in the Jewish faith. He is both of these. He is interested in truth and he is conscious of the need to defend his faith, in particular against the inconsistencies between certain Rabbinic narratives and Classical history. And yet de’ Rossi was also influenced by the Protestant Reformation’s application of humanist scholarship to reshape religious tradition, an important point noted by Joanna Weinberg and Deena Aranoff in particular but not explored in much detail. I believe that de’ Rossi sought to renew the faith of his fellow Jews through renewing their connection to and appreciation for a past that could be useful.

In advancing my argument, I use three analytical propositions to help demonstrate the existence of de’ Rossi’s sense of a renewed Jewish political identity and establish its importance for an understanding of the work as a whole.

First, I assume that Jews considered themselves politically distinct from Christians in late 16th century Italy. We may take this as a given today, but earlier scholarship (such as that of Baron, described in Chapter One), assumed there was such a thing as a supra-sectarian Renaissance in which Christian participation merely preceded that of the Jews. My assumption of the continuing importance of religious difference is necessary, for if I am to posit that de’ Rossi sought to create a notion of a distinct Jewish political identity at that time and place, I must presuppose that religious differences between Christians and Jews were significant enough to

59 Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 25.

60 To date, scholarship has focused upon the diffident reception accorded the publication of *Me’or ‘Enayim* among Jews. See generally, Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xlii-xliv; Bonfil, “Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah De Rossi’s *Meor Enayim* in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry,” 25-31; and Meir Benayahu, “The Polemic Regarding the *Me’Or ‘Enayim* of Azariah De’ Rossi (Hebrew),” *Asufot* 5 (1991): 213-265.

61 By “political” I mean a sense of distinctly Jewish participation in Christian dominated culture; if “religious” is a term oriented toward faith and the practices dictated by that faith, and if “culture” is a term that describes the way in which people find common ground across religions in distinction to other groups, then “political” is the way in which one “religious” group views its participation in a common “culture”.

justify (if not require) Jews to see their own political community in terms distinct from those of the Christian majority.

The assumption of any sort of difference vis-à-vis others is important as a place to stand, as it were, from which one can evaluate one's place in the world in relation to others. By definition, religious identity is evaluated and configured in the mirror of the religion (or religions) of those that surround one's group. Robert Bonfil states the perspective as such: "A history 'seen from the inside' is obviously not a history of isolation. Rather, it is the history of a coming to awareness of the Self in the act of specular reflection in the Other, by which I mean a reflection of oneself in the Other as in a mirror."⁶² In 16th century Italy, the dominant religion was Christianity, and any Jew who thought of himself as distinct on account of his religion necessarily constructed that identity by comparing and contrasting himself with what he saw in neighboring Christian culture. (I say culture, not faith, in that a Jew could not maintain a separate Jewish faith upon identifying with the Christian faith because they are exclusive, but a Jew could, while maintaining faith in Judaism, observe and imitate, to a great extent, how those of the Christian faith made manifest their connection to Rome, an external point of reference. That sort of non-exclusive form of identification I shall call culture.)⁶³ The particular mentality of religious difference and its process of continuing construction I take from Robert Bonfil; the notion that an external referent is essential for the purposes of *cultural* comparison is my own.

Second, I assume that political identity is the way in which a group (here, a religious group, namely Jews) that sees itself as distinct from others gives itself narrative coherence in time. In our modern culture (which I assume to be close enough to that of the 16th century to be helpful), a notion of political identity requires a culture that is distinct in the past, has a distinct and meaningful role in the present and has a future filled with hope. This idea that a group, to be distinct, requires an account of that distinctiveness in the past, present and future, is well attested in notions of historical, mythological and narrative theory — most notably in recent years by Benedict Anderson. Anderson, most well-known for positing that the "nation" is an "imagined community" has likewise noted the importance of temporal distinctiveness in what he posits as the predecessor of the nation state, namely the religious community.

Third, I assume that political identity develops over a long period of time in the presence of circumstances that remain more or less constant. This emphasis upon the importance of long-term structures (such as the political, or self-defined unit) is most identified with the historian Fernand Braudel and through him is known as the *longue duree*.

Thus, Chapter I will not only show that my interest in de' Rossi's political viewpoint is closely related to the investigations of current scholars, but that through approaches that are available in current scholarship I am able to test my thesis that de' Rossi is advancing a particular Jewish identity — one based not just upon history but also upon legend — that would allow Jews both to participate and thrive in the culture of de' Rossi's time and place.

Chapter II provides the substantive analysis of the Roman political identity of northern Italy of the late 16th century, based upon the propositions for clarifying political identity within texts that were introduced in Chapter One. Specifically, Chapter Two explores the Roman identity of de' Rossi's Christian society, as well as how the Jews of late 16th century northern Italy could neither share that Roman identity nor, given the Christian oppression of the time, retain any identity of their own.

62. See Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xi.

63. See note 60.

Chapter III explores the counter-identity (or “counter-history,” to use Amos Funkenstein’s term) developed by Jews in response to the Christian appropriation of Roman imperial power. It was an identity based both upon claimed equality with and superiority to Rome, and it was increasingly untenable in the later part of the 16th century: the Counter-Reformation increasingly narrowed the geographical space in which Jews could live to northern Italy while redoubling its efforts to convert those contained. De’ Rossi perceived, I believe, the need for a new identity that would permit Jews both to participate in Italian culture and to retain a distinctive sense of religious superiority.

Chapters IV and V demonstrate how de’ Rossi seeks to use the history and legends of Jews in Hellenistic times to replace the Jewish focus upon Roman-Jewish history and construct a newly strengthened political identity. My view of de’ Rossi’s reconstruction of Jewish identity is informed both by Funkenstein’s notion of “counter-history” and by Erich Gruen’s explication of Jewish Hellenism. With Funkenstein, I show that de’ Rossi constructed a Jewish identity upon the Christian identity that surrounded the Jews and that de’ Rossi sought to turn aspects of that Christian narrative against the Christians and in favor of the Jews. And yet I believe that de’ Rossi’s specific approach to Jewish identity is more consonant with Gruen’s approach — interestingly enough, an approach developed also in interaction with Hellenistic Jewish texts. The identity that I believe de’ Rossi constructs is not overtly anti-Christian and triumphant. De’ Rossi does not repurpose Christian polemic about inheriting Rome to the exclusion of Jews -- indeed de’ Rossi will note that Jewish tradition had already tried this -- but rather, de’ Rossi refashions a Hellenistic past in which non-Jews themselves accorded Jews pride of place. De’ Rossi’s reconstruction of Jewish identity takes the Roman imperial framework of the Christian culture that surrounded and excluded the Jewish community and converts that framework in light of the Jewish experience reflected in earlier Hellenistic Jewish sources, so that Jews have a history in which they both participate in the surrounding culture and can claim pride of place within it.

Chapter IV shows how de’ Rossi advocated that a Hellenistic identity was an alternative source of identity vouchsafed by tradition and argues that *Me’or ‘Enayim* is a statement about the usefulness of history in constructing a new identity based upon that tradition. Hellenistic history can, de’ Rossi argues, provide Jews with a proud past, a meaningful role for the present, and hope for ultimate triumph in the future. This is the testimony de’ Rossi adduces from his three primary Hellenistic authors: Aristeas, Philo and Josephus. Indeed, the three separate parts of *Me’or ‘Enayim* -- *Qol Elohim* (The Voice of God), *Hadrat Zeqenim* (Splendor of the Elders) and *Imre Binah* (Words of Understanding) -- each address primarily one of these temporal foci of identity.

Chapter V illustrates the principal way by which de’ Rossi deploys Hellenistic history to inspire his fellow Jews with an identity that was meaningful for the age: one based upon respectful interaction with empire. It is an identity based upon the history of Alexander the Great and his encounter with the Jewish high priest, Ptolemy and his commissioning of the translation of the Septuagint, and Gaius (Caligula) and his reaction to the embassy of Philo. The Hellenistic history de’ Rossi brings forth from Aristeas, from Philo and from Josephus does not supplant but rather complements the Rabbinic legendary appreciation for Hellenistic times. Together, the history and legend recreate a notion of past, present and future that, de’ Rossi believed, could sustain the Jews of his age.

I conclude by arguing that, once we have viewed *Me’or ‘Enayim* through the lens of de’ Rossi’s political agenda, we can see that *Me’or ‘Enayim* is not properly thought of as a work of

Renaissance history, and nor is it sufficient to consider it a work of Counter-Reformation apology. Indeed, given the constructive and optimistic nature of de' Rossi's project of reinvigorating his Jewish faith with the tools of his age, while there are aspects of the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation about it, *Me'or 'Enayim* may be most fruitfully considered as primarily arising out of the influence of the Protestant Reformation. The work may not be history, but it is a work by a Jewish historiographer. But his interest was not the Jewish past per se; rather, he investigated the Jewish past in order to render the Jewish faith relevant to the Jews of his day.

CHAPTER I: DE' ROSSI'S PURPOSE AND THE QUESTION OF JEWISH POLITICAL IDENTITY

The critical evaluation of *Me'or 'Enayim* began in late 18th century Germany and considered the work to be one of history — the first Jewish work of the modern era.¹ Recently emancipated, Jews emerged from the ghetto and had begun to evaluate their past and their historical relationship with the surrounding, dominant culture.² The intellectual movement devoted to this understanding of Judaism in a secular world was called the “*Haskalah*” and a sense of “history” — how to understand the Jewish experience over the years in the context of its surrounding culture — was key.³ The importance to Jews was two-fold: on the one hand, a new understanding of what had happened to them was in order — a descriptive notion.⁴ And on the other hand, it became important, among those who served at the forefront of this intellectual movement, to determine what of the Jewish identity was worth preserving and what was worth abandoning. This was a prescriptive notion that presupposed a degree of political independence - i.e., a sense that Jews could participate in the culture of the Christian dominated polity while remaining Jews.⁵

The importance of Jewish history transcended that of the Jews themselves. Jewish history was a valuable subject for non-Jews; the Jewish experience was part of the human experience. One of the leading advocates for the study of Jewish history — and one of the individuals responsible for the journal bearing the name of this new intellectual movement, “*Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*” (Society for Culture and the Scientific Study of the Jews) — was Leopold Zunz, who advocated as early as 1817 that the historical study of Jewish civilization was an essential part of the education of any civilized person.⁶

1 The publication of *Me'or 'Enayim* created a stir, although there remains considerable disagreement as to just how controversial the work, or even parts of the work, were at the time. This is discussed in some detail, below. Suffice it to say for the present that, regardless of the controversy upon publication, citation to the work was sporadic at best among succeeding generations until the republication of the work in the 18th century. Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), xlii-xliv; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 215; Robert Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 243-44.

2 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989), 85: “Modern Jewish historiography began precipitously out of that assimilation from without and collapse from within which characterized the sudden emergency of Jews out of the ghetto. It originated, not as scholarly curiosity, but as ideology, one of a gamut of responses to the crisis of Jewish emancipation and the struggle to attain it.”

3 Ibid., 82: “With the spread of *Haskalah*, the movement for secular enlightenment among the vanguard of German Jewry in the second half of the eighteenth century, we find a vague consensus among its leading proponents that a knowledge of history is somehow desirable for Jews.”

4 Ibid., citing Naftali Zvi Weisel's *Dibreiy Shalom ve-'Emet* (“Words of Peace and Truth”), 1782: This understanding of what had happened to the Jews served Jewish self-understanding, as in why God chose them as opposed to other nations, as well as providing examples of “good counsel” and “bad counsel” that had led to the rise and fall of the “great kingdoms” that had preceded the Jews.

5 Ibid., 84 and 141 n. 10, quoting Immanuel Wolf, *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 1822: “Scientific knowledge of Judaism must decide on the merits and demerits of the Jews, their fitness or unfitness to be given the same status and respect as other citizens. This alone will make known the inner character of Judaism and separate the essential from the accidental, the original from the late addition.”

6 Ibid., 83.

It should come as no surprise that, in the context of this intellectual struggle for ideological respectability, Jewish scholars affiliated with the *Haskalah*, the “*maskilim*,” sought a standard-bearer who had preceded them *in history* and to whom they could turn to explain that the Jewish interest in historical inquiry was itself Jewish and not simply a modern affect or cultural borrowing. That person was Azariah de’ Rossi, a modern-day Moses who had lead the Israelites out of the intellectual bondage of unquestioned authority to the Rabbis of the Middle Ages and into the light and freedom of modernity.

A. Creating History for Jews: de’ Rossi and the Emancipation of Jews from the Ghettoes of Europe

It was Leopold Zunz himself, one of the founders of the study of Judaism, who plucked de’ Rossi off a bookshelf, dusted him off and proclaimed his singular significance to the newly emancipated Jewish community of 18th century Germany. According to Zunz, de’ Rossi embodied the very historian needed by the Jewish community of his day. Why? Because de’ Rossi, like no one before him, had overtly and systematically challenged the historical accuracy of Rabbinic tales, or *midrashim*, subjecting them to critical analysis. De’ Rossi, according to Zunz, was “the first to teach Israel the science of scholarship which is the basis of learning—for by means of it, truth is distinguished from falsehood.”⁷ Indeed, the “truth” sought by de’ Rossi’s objective inquiry could inspire and justify the political equality that the Jews sought among their Christian neighbors: the fact that de’ Rossi’s “soul longed for truth” was not merely an academic pursuit; nothing short of “[j]ustice was his aim.”⁸

It should not be underestimated just how difficult it was for Jewish scholars interested in exploring Jewish history in the greater non-Jewish culture to convince non-Jews of the importance of their task. There were no established libraries of Jewish material, no courses of study in the universities and no academic careers possible to pursue.⁹ Indeed, it was appreciably later in the century that Heinrich Graetz published his multi-volume history on Jewish civilization, printed between 1853 and 1870.¹⁰ By then, de’ Rossi had become more a symbol of the beginnings of Jewish modernism than its sole exemplar. To Graetz, de’ Rossi had initiated the Jewish conversation with the non-Jewish world, subjecting the Jewish tradition to the evaluation of Greco-Roman and Christian sources: de’ Rossi “was the first to bring into contact and connection with one another two provinces of literature which were far apart — the Talmud and its offshoots, with Philo, Josephus, and the works of the Church Fathers, proving the truth of historical narratives from the mouths of many witnesses.”¹¹

The Wissenschaft image of de’ Rossi had been of a singular Jew fighting with the elements, a heroic Jonah of sorts, a proto-modern prophet who had thrown himself ““into the ocean of investigation,”” subjecting himself to ““the waves of reason”” that ““rolled about

7 Joanna Weinberg, “Azariah de’ Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 252 and n. 1, p. 269; Leopold Zunz, “*Toledoth le-R Azariah min Ha-Adumim*,” *Kerem Hemed* 5 (1841), 131-158: 139. The article included S. Rappoport’s additional notes and was continued in ‘*Kerem Hemed*’ 7 (1843), 119-124.

8 Lector I.H. Weiss, “Leopold Zunz,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* VII, no. 27 (April, 1895): 380.

9 Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 87.

10 Ibid.

11 Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), 614.

him.”¹² In a shift of metaphors to land, de’ Rossi was an explorer of the recesses of the earth itself, one who ““heeded not the fluttering of the bats.””¹³ Graetz updated the metaphor, with no small measure of 18th century Romanticism, making de’ Rossi an heroic Jew who single-mindedly devoted himself to the truth, at great personal cost and sacrifice. There is a sense of rebirth here, a notion that would later transpose de’ Rossi back to that period that, to modern readers, epitomizes rebirth, the Renaissance itself. The depths from which de’ Rossi emerged was not the dark bat-filled cave but rather from a Jewish tomb — an intellectual triumph over death. De’ Rossi “had buried himself so deeply in books, that his body bore traces of severe suffering from over-study. Feeble, yellow, withered, and afflicted with fever, he crept about like a dying man. Yet in this living corpse a powerful and healthy mind worked with great activity. . . He did not allow the treasures of his knowledge to lie dead within him, but let them grow and spread luxuriantly.”¹⁴

What Graetz and Zunz shared, aside from the affinity to grandiose metaphor, were two important notions that have continued to shape the scholarly reception of de’ Rossi specifically, and the role of Jews in modern European history generally. First, and most evident from their writings, is the idea that the modern account of the past, what we have come to think of as “history,” has as its aim a vision of truth that all can recognize. Both the “scientific” investigation of de’ Rossi for Zunz and de’ Rossi’s “historical investigation” for Graetz have the same purpose: Truth. This notion of Truth is what Zunz distinguishes from “falsehood;” it is what Graetz says necessarily arises from honest and rigorous conversation between texts and scholars of different religious traditions. This is a focus upon the objective *what*, as in “what happened”, if not why.

But the belief in objective truth about the past is only the most explicit similarity between the scholars. Implicit, and barely concealed beneath the praise for truth is a second and equally important notion: for Jews, the development of a historical mindset is a hallmark, if not *the* hallmark, of a modernity in which Jews join the culture of non-Jews and thrive. For Zunz, de’ Rossi’s fellow Jews were afraid of drowning in the ocean’s waves of reason. For Graetz, Jewish thought to the time of de’ Rossi was a useless accretion of story uncritically received and transmitted, a waste of ink, “the dross of centuries of hardship” that de’ Rossi was the first “to purify”.¹⁵ Both scholars viewed Jewish culture prior to de’ Rossi as isolated in ignorance, and both blamed the oppression of the dominant Christian society. Zunz stated the matter indirectly in opining that it would be through the deployment of reason that Jews could now finally hope for political “Justice”. Graetz personified the Jewish physical constraints through the sickness of de’ Rossi’s body, a “living corpse”. For both, de’ Rossi was the guide who taught Jews the scientific method, the “science of scholarship” that was the hallmark of a modern, critically thinking human being.

Such praise for de’ Rossi came at a necessary cost regarding the Jewish culture out of which de’ Rossi came, for if de’ Rossi was so important to a Jewish sense of a valuable modern, political identity, then much if not all Jewish history that had preceded de’ Rossi was less worthy of study and possibly valueless to modern Jews. If de’ Rossi had (re)introduced historical inquiry to Jews, then much of prior Jewish culture had been without a sense of history. If a sense of history — a critical approach to the past — was what made a human being a thriving, modern

12 Weiss, “Leopold Zunz,” 380.

13 Ibid.

14 Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 614.

15 Ibid., 613-614.

creature, then Jews before de' Rossi had no identity that was valuable in a modern age, and inquiring into it was not worth the pursuit.

B. Renaissance Historian or Counter-Reformation Apologist?

While the *Wissenschaft* heralded the political import of *Me'or 'Enayim*, recent scholars are more circumspect, speaking mostly about the form of the work (e.g., history; apology) and its corresponding purpose (e.g., truth; faith). And yet these scholars also have a notion, albeit implicit, that the message of *Me'or 'Enayim* is political, for their characterization of de' Rossi as either an historian or an apologist betrays not just the social period into which they put de' Rossi but the nature of Jewish participation in that society. As will be shown below, those who emphasize de' Rossi's purpose as seeking the truth of the past — i.e., as an historian — situate him most easily in the Renaissance. This is not because there are no historians who wrote in the Counter-Reformation. Rather, it is because it is in the context of Renaissance humanism that scholars perceive de' Rossi to have been engaged in his historical reconstruction, and they have been willing to forgive the fact that de' Rossi wrote appreciably after what most people would characterize as the “Renaissance”. The supposition is of a humanism that was open to or included Jews; de' Rossi's work is proof of Jewish active membership and participation in Renaissance culture. By contrast, to the extent that de' Rossi is seen primarily as someone who writes in defense of the Jewish faith — i.e., an apologist — he is most easily situated in the Counter-Reformation. For just as the notion of Renaissance humanism presupposes a community of scholars and suggests a period of Christian/Jewish harmony, so too the defense of Judaism is seen to arise in a completely different context, one in which the Jewish faith needs to be defended from the pressures of the Counter-Reformation. The actual social situation of the Jews in late 16th century Italy will be discussed below, in Chapter Three. For present purposes, I wish to point out merely that even without explicitly saying so, scholars have been ascribing to de' Rossi a political goal: either one of a Jewish identity that has much in common with his surrounding Christian culture or, alternatively, a Jewish identity under siege and in need of shoring up under the assault of Christian oppression.¹⁶

By far, the predominant position taken by recent scholars is that the best way to think of the sixty chapters of “Words of Understanding” is as history proper or historiography (historical “essays”, as some have called them).¹⁷ Of the scholars regularly quoted today for their insights

¹⁶ Missing to a large degree is a view of de' Rossi as influenced by the significant religious and political movement that took place chronologically between the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation, namely the Protestant Reformation. As described in more detail below, de' Rossi lived in northern Italy in the decades immediately following the Lutheran movement and wrote shortly after the Council of Trent. He relied significantly upon Protestant scholars in *Me'or 'Enayim*, even while respecting Trent's prohibition on citing their names. Surely it is possible that in the fulcrum of Jewish society increasingly concentrated in northern Italy in the late 16th century, de' Rossi sought to transform his Jewish tradition?

¹⁷ Compare Salo W. Baron, “Azariah de' Rossi's Historical Method,” in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg, Leon A. Feldman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 210 (“essays”) with Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiii (“Baron described de' Rossi's chapters as essays, and this term has been adopted by most scholars.” See, e.g., Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 239; Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” 211. Weinberg claims that the term inadequately captures the “mode of composition” of each chapter and appears to hold that “miscellanea” is the appropriate form -- one that it is characterized by “variegated

into *Me'or 'Enayim*, the first to engage with de' Rossi was Salo Baron, and Baron confidently asserted that de' Rossi was as much an historian of the Italian Renaissance as were the most illustrious practitioners of that craft, Machiavelli and Guicciardini (albeit not quite as good at it), and that he was definitely the best Jewish practitioner since Josephus, some fifteen hundred years before.¹⁸ More specifically, Baron identifies Panvinio, Sigonio and Robortello as de' Rossi's contemporaries, all historians whose outlook was formed less by Livy than by Machiavelli himself and Blondus.¹⁹ Other scholars who have focused more upon the history of Jews in Italy have been content to name him "the greatest Jewish historian in Italy in the Renaissance period" without comparing his style with others.²⁰ De' Rossi, according to Baron, sought the truth employing "rational principles" and identifying "the purely fictitious character in some narratives."²¹ And yet, unlike the focus of much of Renaissance historiography on the development of Italian republics and governments, de' Rossi focused on ancient history, Baron recognized; he was no "statesman" driven to recount lessons from the immediate past for present use.²² Rather, Baron thought de' Rossi eschewed "practical insight" from the past, using historical inquiry as a "theoretical science"²³ that could simply illuminate the Jewish past and its traditions.²⁴ Baron conceded, as well, that de' Rossi's search for truth was necessarily limited by de' Rossi's own religious strictures. In this important sense, therefore, Baron considered de' Rossi to be an apologist as well an historian. As Baron had it, de' Rossi's positions were articulated so that he could "save the honor of all documents sanctified by tradition" and "defend the Jewish tradition before the Gentile world at all costs."²⁵

Yosef Yerushalmi sharpened Baron's approach by emphasizing de' Rossi as an Italian Renaissance historian. With Baron, Yerushalmi focused upon the Italian Renaissance context of his work. De' Rossi's *Me'or 'Enayim*, Yerushalmi declared, was "the fruit of a creative encounter, in the mind of an Italian Rabbi, between Jewish tradition and Italian Renaissance culture. Unlike so many other books written by Italian Jews which display a veneer of humanistic learning, here the humanist spirit has penetrated the very vitals of the work, and only

studies" that are both "entertaining" and informative of recent scholarship. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiii (noting that in his Italian work on the Gospels, de' Rossi referred to *Me'or 'Enayim* as "*libro di varie lettioni*" a title that recalls Pedro Mexia's popular *Silva de varia lecion*. Because the word "chapters" connotes a logical progression within a single work, I will use that term.

18 Salo W. Baron, "Azariah de' Rossi's Attitude to Life," in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg, Leon A. Feldman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 174.

19 Baron, "Azariah de' Rossi's Historical Method," 209.

20 See Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher Ltd., 1977), 634. See also Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 304 ("He was the greatest scholar among the sixteenth century Jewish historians and was very erudite in the entire realm of Jewish literature").

21 Baron, "Azariah de' Rossi's Historical Method," 230-231.

22 *Ibid.*, 208.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, 207. It was his "critical examination of sources" along with his judgment in evaluating them that Baron featured. *Ibid.*, 216; 234-35. In seeking to distinguish de' Rossi's interest in ancient history from that of history that might have practical utility, Baron saw de' Rossi principally interested in reconstructing "ancient institutions."

Baron, "Azariah de' Rossi's Historical Method," 209 (albeit comparing de' Rossi to fellow "historians" Panvinio, Sigonio and Robortello in this regard). See generally Lester Segal: the fact that "the substance of classical Jewish culture" was de' Rossi's subject made him an antiquarian. Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'or 'Einayim* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 6.

25 *Ibid.*, 212.

here do we find the real beginnings of historical criticism.”²⁶ As with Baron before him, Yerushalmi pointed to de’ Rossi’s critical faculty but while Baron’s evaluation was nuanced²⁷ Yerushalmi imagined the Renaissance with the same euphoric idealized pursuit of truth that characterized the Wissenschaft scholars’ view of the political freedom that came with intellectual inquiry. “Its essential daring,” Yerushalmi exulted of *Me’or ‘Enayim*, “lies in Azariah’s reluctance to set up predetermined boundaries between his general and Jewish knowledge, in his readiness to allow a genuine confrontation between the two spheres, and in his acceptance of the conclusions that seemed to flow out of it.”²⁸ For Baron, de’ Rossi may well have aimed for objectivity — “Azariah may constantly affirm his objective quest for truth above everything else — and he possibly believes it,”²⁹ but the real mental constraints of his religious identity imposed real limits recognized or not.³⁰ There were no such limits for Yerushalmi.³¹

This view of de’ Rossi as primarily a Renaissance historian, largely identified with Yerushalmi (and to a degree Baron), has been criticized most thoroughly by Bonfil.³² To Bonfil, de’ Rossi was far less a Renaissance historian than a Counter-Reformation apologist, for whatever the form of writing that de’ Rossi chose to adopt (and as stated above, Bonfil accepted Baron’s notion of “essays” for the chapters of “Words of Understanding”), the dominant purpose of de’ Rossi was to defend the truth of Jewish faith, not the discovery of any objective truth.³³ Bonfil noted that while Baron himself had identified an “apologetic thread” — a “dogmatic restraint” upon de’ Rossi’s search for truth from which he could not free himself — Bonfil’s own belief was by contrast that apology was in fact “the principal and essential force” behind de’ Rossi’s work.³⁴ Indeed, the topics of Jewish antiquity that were treated by de’ Rossi, according to Bonfil, were topics of relevance to the contemporary Counter-Reformation attack on Jewish

26 Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” 211-212.

27 I.e., Baron noted “a certain feeling of insecurity which frequently betrays itself in his study of sources” Baron, “Azariah de’ Rossi’s Historical Method,” 231, and which supports Baron’s noticing of apologetic brakes applied to de’ Rossi’s search.

28 Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” 211-212.

29 Baron, “Azariah de’ Rossi’s Historical Method,” 212.

30 Ibid.

31 Other modern scholars appear to be in accord, likewise without much investigation. Amos Funkenstein’s language is as panegyric and ecumenical as the language of Baron and Yerushalmi and therefore suggestive of the Renaissance context: “The novelty of Azaria de Rossi’s *Meor Enayim* was the nonpolemical use he made of the classical literature within the very sanctum of Jewish scholarship: he employed his vast classical erudition mainly for critical purposes — the reexamination of chronology, of aggadic-historical materials, of traditional views of natural matters.” Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 215. In accord, but with less effusive praise, is Giuseppe Veltri. Veltri sees de’ Rossi “to inquire into the historical roots of truth in the past”. Giuseppe Veltri, “Conceptions of History: Azariah de’ Rossi,” in *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb: Foundations and Challenges in Judaism on the Eve of Modernity* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 79; Giuseppe Veltri, “The Humanist Sense of History and the Jewish Idea of Tradition: Azariah de’ Rossi’s Critique of Philo Alexandrinus,” *JSQ* 2, no. 4 (1996): 380-381 (emphasizing that de’ Rossi avoids the use of literature that is polemical).

32 Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 219-224.

33 “A more balanced evaluation of the book, sine ira et studio,” Bonfil declares, “in its proper context,” reveals *Me’or ‘Enayim* “as one type of Jewish response to the intellectual challenges and existential struggles of the Counter-Reformation climate”. Robert Bonfil, “Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah de Rossi’s *Meor Enayim* in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry,” in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 32.

34 Ibid., 38. Segal appears to share the view that de’ Rossi’s interest in truth is limited by tradition, but without Baron’s notion of religion as an unfortunate limit. Segal, *A Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de’ Rossi’s Me’or ‘Enayim*, 164.

belief and practice,³⁵ chiefly the Jewish belief in imminent messianic deliverance. De' Rossi aimed to demonstrate that "all messianic speculations based on chronology were no value" — those chapters, Bonfil has stated, constitute the "bulk of the book".³⁶ Indeed, Bonfil has seen the purpose driving de' Rossi's work to be the defense of the Jewish faith, a defense required by the tremendous persecution and conversionary pressure of the Counter Reformation. "[D]e Rossi," Bonfil has stated, "sought to marshal every testimony from the past that would bring honor to Judaism."³⁷ Any "history" adduced by de' Rossi is not in support of the truth, regardless of faith, but rather is introduced specifically because it supports Jewish religious truth. Joining Yerushalmi in battle, Bonfil has declared that de' Rossi is not an historian, at least in the conventional 16th century sense of "*narratio rerum gestarum*" with its focus upon the political achievements of great men.³⁸ It was "genuine history" only in its method, namely that in his essays de' Rossi had presented, here and there, "the results of thorough and meticulous research on specific themes."³⁹

Joanna Weinberg is the scholar who has devoted more of her professional career to de' Rossi than anyone else, and she largely has chosen to avoid the controversy of "historian or apologist" and focus instead upon de' Rossi's sources and the nature of the humanistic environment that made his use of such a wide range of sources possible. Weinberg is primarily in accord with Yerushalmi, however, principally because she shares Yerushalmi's observation that de' Rossi's aim was truth, not religious dogma. Weinberg has recognized, with Baron, that de' Rossi's religious identity gave him a particular perspective on the past (and, therefore, on the truth). But the concession is oblique: "In the sixteenth century," she writes, "both Catholics and Protestants scanned the ancient sources in the hope of recovering the requisite information to support their case."⁴⁰ By definition, de' Rossi's "mode of assembling a wide variety of sources to establish one point"⁴¹ was necessarily predicated upon a religious perspective. And yet, Weinberg has expressed an enthusiasm consonant with Yerushalmi that de' Rossi's investigations demonstrated objectivity. "De' Rossi's quest for truth thus brought him to mediate between the two worlds of Jewish and Christian scholarship," she has written. "Rabbinic texts were elucidated by means of non-Jewish sources divested of all ideological or religious bias, while Jewish sources could be brought to bear on some of the fashionable debates of the day."⁴²

35 Ibid., 242.

36 Ibid., 40-41 (citing chapters 40-44).

37 Ibid., 38. For Marcus, "The *Meor Eynayim*, first printed at Mantua between 1573 and 1575, may be described as a treatise on various aspects of Jewish history and religious tradition, designed to vindicate the claim of Judaism to be a revealed religion". Ralph Marcus, "A 16th Century Hebrew Critique of Philo (Azariah dei Rossi's *Meor Eynayim*, Pt. I, Cc. 3-6)," *Hebrew Union College Annual XXI* (1948): 32.

38 Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?," 239.

39 Ibid. In this respect, Bonfil would appear to be in agreement with Baron in discerning historical method, while in disagreement concerning primary purpose. The debate over whether "Words of Understanding" itself (or *Me'or Eynayim* generally) should be considered "history" as the form was understood in the sixteenth century, has been engaged most directly between Yerushalmi and Bonfil. Compare Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century," and Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* to Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?," and Robert Bonfil, "Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times," *Jewish History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 7-40. My interest is with the possible political purpose of the work, without prejudging its form. In fact, there is no inherent reason why something that is not presented in the conventional form of "history" (whatever that might be at a given time) could not, nonetheless, be an inquiry into the truth of what actually happened.

40 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxxi.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid. (These debates, per Weinberg, are not definitely catalogued, but they are said to include a number of the

Weinberg appears content to assume that de' Rossi is an historian,⁴³ largely because that title goes well with her belief that no ideological agenda drives de' Rossi's choice or presentation of topics. In essence, to Weinberg, de' Rossi's interest is history and his environment presented certain historical challenges to resolve: "If a large part of his investigations relates to the history of the second Temple period, that is because the Rabbinic sources throw up historical problems which he felt bound to address."⁴⁴

There is an important distinction between Weinberg and Yerushalmi, though, in the time period in which de' Rossi is placed — for while Yerushalmi followed Baron in placing de' Rossi in the Renaissance due to his "humanist" tendencies, Weinberg has moved him more sensibly to the Counter-Reformation, and in so doing has taken a position in line with Bonfil.⁴⁵ The "key" to the work, she has stated, is "to acknowledge the Christian scholarly world in which de' Rossi was so obviously immersed" and at the same time to recognize that "humanism" was itself a Counter-Reformation feature. Put otherwise, a social environment in which a Jewish scholar such as de' Rossi could participate in the same intellectual inquiries that occupied Christians did not have to be characterized as Renaissance as it "was itself a characteristic of the Counter-Reformation."⁴⁶

It is hard to divine Weinberg's attitude toward the notion of apology, however. On the one hand, she emphasizes the importance of "apology" — it is what, she has said, links the sixty chapters of *Words of Understanding* to each other: "The apologetic strain which runs throughout the book unifies the disparate chapters...."⁴⁷ She, as Bonfil, has in mind de' Rossi's critique of Jewish messianic calculation.⁴⁸ And yet she has minimized the apologetic tendency in the work. Weinberg has been dismissive of Bonfil's characterization of the work as "reductive," suggesting that apology does not in fact define *Me'or 'Enayim*. De' Rossi's eager engagement with a "wide range of subject militates against any facile interpretation"⁴⁹ and is evident of a participation in humanist culture that is fundamentally inconsistent with a predominant apologetic purpose. Not that there isn't some apology in de' Rossi, she has written, but "one should not allow the polemical dimension of de' Rossi's arguments to obscure one's assessment of his real contribution to critical scholarship,"⁵⁰ for he was aware "of the issues of contemporary Christian

topics addressed by de' Rossi, including the origin of the Septuagint, and the antiquity of Hebrew vowels). Nor does either Weinberg, for her part, or Bonfil, for his, compare the topics which the former considers "fashionable debates" and the latter to be problematic topics of Counter-Reformation focus upon Jews of the day.

43 Weinberg refers to him as "the sixteenth century Italian Jewish historiographer". Weinberg, "Azariah de' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo," 252.

44 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxxi. By contrast, Weinberg is definitive that de' Rossi is not an "antiquarian," something suggested by Baron. Ibid. Apparently, this is because de' Rossi's work was more critical than reconstructive: he did not "attempt to reconstruct one particular period of ancient Jewish history." Ibid.

45 In so doing, Weinberg does not, it seems, mean to exclude the importance of the Protestant Reformation, at least to the extent that certain Biblical studies that occupied scholars of the Counter-Reformation began in the Reformation of Northern Europe. She mentions in this regard Cratander, Muenster and Postel in particular. Ibid., 321-322. More on this below.

46 Weinberg, "Azariah de' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo," 254. In her dissertation, Deena Aranoff built upon Weinberg's view that de' Rossi's humanism was evidence of his participation in 16th century Christian and Jewish scholarly debates. Deena Aranoff, "In Pursuit of the Holy Tongue: Jewish Conceptions of Hebrew in the Sixteenth Century" (Phd diss., Columbia University, 2006), 130-72.

47 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiv.

48 Ibid., xxiv-xxxv.

49 Ibid., xxix.

50 Ibid.

scholarship”⁵¹ and shared, with his Christian compatriots, “general features” of 16th century scholarship.⁵²

Weinberg seems to think of “apologetics” in a creative, not defensive fashion, namely that he sought to change the Jewish tradition from within and was exceedingly careful to present those changes as consistent with the Jewish tradition. Weinberg has emphasized as false de’ Rossi’s protestations that his investigation into the facts of the past are of no value. “He ‘doth protest too much, methinks,’” Weinberg concluded — de’ Rossi was “fully aware that he was treading a new path” searching not for facts that would support the Jewish faith but for the truth, the “seal of true God, the characteristic of beautiful soul.”⁵³ This is a position consistent with her effort to make clear that humanism, at least defined as the scholarly interaction of Christians and Jews regarding texts and issues of common interest -- was a Counter-Reformation feature, and that position inherently de-emphasizes the posture of Jewish scholars as apologetic. Indeed, Weinberg specifically has introduced into scholarship the notion that de’ Rossi’s “humanism” took place in the context of the Protestant Reformation, not the Renaissance. This particularly is an illuminating path.

Conceptually, seeing de’ Rossi as a reformer of his own tradition, responding to internal (or at least not exclusively to anti-Jewish) pressure would allow for a intermediate position, one between that of Renaissance truth-seeker and Counter-Reformation apologist, namely one of Reformation transformer of tradition. Such a scholar would be interested in history but in the service of faith. Having raised the possibility, however, Weinberg has not to date pursued it. Instead, she evidently values the claim to objectivity that can result from de’ Rossi’s association with humanism (whether of the Renaissance or Counter-Reformation sort) and distinguishes him from Protestant thinkers such as Sebastian Munster who use history to bolster faith.⁵⁴ Aranoff has followed in Weinberg’s footsteps pursuing in some detail de’ Rossi’s connections to Protestant humanists of Germany.⁵⁵

Accordingly, we are left at an impasse. Baron, Yerushalmi and Weinberg see de’ Rossi as primarily interested in truth, while Bonfil sees him primarily interested in defending his Jewish faith. Baron and Yerushalmi see him as a Renaissance historian, while Weinberg and Bonfil put him in the Counter-Reformation. Aranoff (and, to some extent, Weinberg) begin to consider de’ Rossi in the context of the Protestant Reformation — but neither scholar presses to link that time period with de’ Rossi’s specific goals. Present scholarship, by embracing all possibilities to one degree or another, seems unable to grapple with articulating a position as to de’ Rossi’s specific goals in writing his work — and yet the supposition of those goals seems to hang over and prejudge the characterizations that all scholars have of de’ Rossi’s text.

51 Ibid., xlii.

52 Ibid., xxxvi. Recently, Weinberg has articulated her position differently, suggesting that she may see the anti-messianic apology as a subset of the pro-historical truth apology: “Thus the search for truth (in his case, not philosophical, but historical or scientific truth) is central to all de’ Rossi’s investigations.” Joanna Weinberg, “The Beautiful Soul: Azariah de’ Rossi’s Search for Truth,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 113.

53 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxv-xvi.

54 Ibid., 325 (“He shares with Munster the same quest for knowledge and enlightenment. But unlike Munster (in regard to the New Testament) he is not prepared to defend his own tradition and provide forced solutions to intractable issues”).

55 Deena Aranoff, “Elijah Levita: A Jewish Hebraist,” *Jewish History* 23 (2009): 206-208.

C. Attempted Solutions

There have been two attempts in recent years to bridge the divide between history and apology — and neither has shown itself to be successful. One scholar has proposed a solution which attempts to eliminate any conflict between the two approaches by positing that for Jews they are one and the same. Giuseppe Veltri defines the traditional Jewish historical message as one of apology.⁵⁶ Apologetics, according to Veltri, is no evidence of the absence of Jewish historiography but rather proof of its actual presence: “Since the days of Josephus, Jewish historiography had been closely associated with apology. This is what constitutes its political commitment.”⁵⁷ This position is troublesome, for it would seem to obfuscate rather than clarify the question of whether a Jewish writer could ever aim for a truth beyond sectarian use.

By contrast to Veltri’s approach at merging history and apology, Bonfil has argued that de’ Rossi may be a progenitor of a modern form of history that privileges the interests of a particular political group, something that he calls “cultural history.” Bonfil’s argument is that de’ Rossi wanted “to present history as principally a search for truth for its own sake,” which was a notion of history specific to the Jews of his time. His work “was affirming the relevance of history to the definition of the cultural identity of the self” and as such did not need to look like the histories produced by other peoples of the time. A history specifically relevant to the Jews of de’ Rossi’s time “might include only what was really important to them.”⁵⁸ In this notion of Bonfil’s, *Me’or ‘Enayim* is an articulation of minority empowerment ahead of its time -- a greatest hits, as it were, of Jewish Hellenistic history. “Any Renaissance Jew,” Bonfil argues (here building upon an earlier article in which he joined in the enthusiastic participation of de’ Rossi in his Renaissance, not his Counter-Reformation environment) “would certainly have been grateful to de’ Rossi for having made known Ptolemy’s testimony in the letter of Aristeas concerning the superior political achievements of the Jews.”⁵⁹

56 Veltri, “Conceptions of History: Azariah de’ Rossi,” 79.

57 Ibid. The argument is perhaps overly broad, however, in that Veltri’s view of apologetics incorporates Eusebius’ *Preparatio Evangelica* along with Josephus’ *Contra Apionem*, raising the question of not just the difference between history and apology but between Jewish and Christian apologetics. But see Abraham Melamed, *The Perception of Jewish History in Italian Jewish Thought of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Re-Examination*, Italia Judaica: “Gli Ebrei in Italia Tra Rinascimento De Eta Barocca” (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1986), 170 (when Luzzato takes on Tacitus’ libels — using “[t]he new methodology of Renaissance historiography, and its definitions of the ultimate goal of the study of history, that is the better understanding of the human past,” it “served as a starting point of modern Jewish Apologetics”).

58 Bonfil elsewhere appears to struggle with these notions, suggesting that a Jewish focus upon “truth for its own sake” was a universal — one could say timeless — objective that was inherently at odds with history per se, “which by its very nature is confined to narrative concerned with the relative and the particular”. Bonfil, “Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times,” 10-11. But see Chazan’s view that Jewish history is comprised equally of the timebound and the timeless. Robert Chazan, *God, Humanity and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). For the view that Jewish history has always been “cultural history” to the extent it is focused on events of interest to Jews only, see Raphael Patai, “Ethnohistory and Inner History: The Jewish Case,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 67, no. 1 (July 1976): 1-15 (“inner history”). Patai dismisses even the Biblical period, almost exclusively the subject of “historical” knowledge as “ethnohistory,” in contrast to the position taken by Yerushalmi in *Zakhor*, that sees Jewish history (albeit factually flawed) as being written during Biblical times and through Josephus. See Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 13-16.

59 Bonfil, “Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah de Rossi’s *Meor Enayim* in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry,” 38.

But problems arise immediately. If *Splendor of the Elders* highlights a great moment of the Jewish past, why is that not the focus either of *Voice of God* or of *Words of Understanding*? Why is the climax of that third section the disproof of messianic calculation, a distinctly future-oriented inquiry? These questions need to be answered if we are to disentangle history from apology, and the notion of “cultural history” does not seem to be a sharp enough tool to assist us. Bonfil himself does not define what he means by cultural history.⁶⁰ Without any operative bounds, the argument risks becoming circular, as by definition, any ideas that de’ Rossi thought of as important to the Jews of his time could become, per se, history. That cannot be.

Nor can we rescue the term by seeking to impose a limit suggested by Bonfil in his writing, namely that which had a bearing upon political identity.⁶¹ De’ Rossi, according to Bonfil, “had confidence in erudite historical research as a means of fostering, as objectively as possible, his nationalistic perception of Jewish identity.”⁶² Here, rather than focusing upon the pride that could come from Jewish Hellenistic history, Bonfil seems to be arguing that for de’ Rossi, what unified Jews to a great extent was their belief in free inquiry into the past (however it might be subjectively limited in practice). It would be a shared inquiry, a polity of historical inquiry. The notion is redolent of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community” — a religious “nation” without land but nonetheless unified by its dedication to the truth of what had happened to them.⁶³ But such an approach would lack meaning — the *why* that makes *what happened* important to who we were, who we are and will be. Furthermore, the term “cultural history” does not ordinarily connote the political history of the oppressed (nor, specifically, of the colonized, in which context Anderson’s theory of nationalism developed). As is made clear in the best example of Jewish “cultural history” published recently, David Biale’s *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, cultural history more often than not suggests the historical treatment of the mundane, the everyday, in a way that illuminates culture to a different extent than does a more conventional history of states, leaders or even of political self-conception.⁶⁴

None of the foregoing is of much help when it comes time to articulating de’ Rossi’s *purpose* in writing *Me’or Einayim*. The approaches of various scholars, because they emphasize history or apology without excluding the other, and because they fail to explore in any detail de’ Rossi’s political context and its connection to the issues he addresses, describe a text without

60 Bonfil, e-mail message to author, June 23, 2010 (“cultural history, however conceived . . . is not *narratio* . . .”).

61 Bonfil does not define political identity. For me, “political” means a sense of Jewish distinct participation in Christian dominated culture.

62 Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 244. In apparent accord (but not necessarily with regard to Bonfil’s position on nationalism) is the view of Segal, who believes that de’ Rossi’s position is that objective, not “Judeo-centric”, inquiry into Jewish culture establishes “the total adequacy of Jewish religious tradition for purposes of moral edification, independent of any outside sources.” Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de’ Rossi’s Me’or Einayim*, 30.

63 Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 224.

64 David Biale, ed., *Preface: Toward a Cultural History of the Jews*, *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002). See Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 16: “The culturalist approach aims at cutting across the traditional subdivisions of the discipline of history (political, economic, military, and so on). Its nature and scope are . . . History from the viewpoint of the motives and meanings that individual and collective historical agents from the past gave to whatever they were doing, and to the contexts in which they operated.” Included within such an approach, of course, is how history itself is chosen to be practiced. *Ibid.*, 27. See generally Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) (significance of selection of facts; structure superimposed thereon). It is worth noting that Bonfil is not employing cultural history in its other incarnation, namely a history of culture. Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction*, 2-3.

urgency, lacking living significance. Indeed, previous scholarship has made little attempt to link the three parts of de' Rossi's work, a common lack that underscores the limited inquiry into de' Rossi's purpose in writing his work. It is easy enough to see the narrative connection between Part One, dealing with the earthquake, and Part Two, the work translated during that earthquake. It is likewise readily apparent that Aristeas, as a source, and certain issues such as the nature of the Septuagint, play a role in a number of the sixty chapters of Part Three. But what about thematic integrity? How does de' Rossi's detailed description of Jewish survival of the earthquake in Ferrara have anything to do with the Letter of Aristeas? And if the Septuagint is central to de' Rossi's purpose, what accounts for the bulk of Part Three that does not deal with that issue?⁶⁵

Work to date has focused upon attempting to find a unifying thread to Part Three alone, but the analysis has not proved very satisfactory. Weinberg and Bonfil both agree that the topics under consideration in the chapters of Part Three, "Words of Understanding," are loosely related but that messianism, while it may serve as the culmination of the section, does not dominate (much less unify) "Words of Understanding". Weinberg instead emphasizes the lack of clear connection between topics, describing these chapters as "variegated studies" that de' Rossi thought "were entertaining and broadened the reader's scholarly perspective,"⁶⁶ also, as stated above, they were his contribution to "fashionable of the day."⁶⁷ In this regard, Bonfil too has noted the "dilettantism of his essays."⁶⁸ Both Weinberg and Bonfil appear to be offspring of Baron. Baron thought the topics of "Words of Understanding" were presented "in the form of disparate studies on more or less important questions of detail"⁶⁹ and noted the "intrinsic connection linking these detached studies consists in their clearly apologetic aim."⁷⁰ Bonfil, more than Weinberg, is willing to unify the disparate topics of "Words of Understanding" with an apologetic purpose: de' Rossi had to combat "attacks on Rabbinic literature" and "discredit" the

65 Consistent with the lack of any proposed solution integrating the three parts into one whole is the lack of any scholarship aimed at presenting "Words of Understanding" itself (much less *Me'or 'Einayim* as a whole) as literature. By "literature" I mean no more than narrative shape and coherence; as explained below, my proposed solution is that de' Rossi presents a philosophy of Jewish history, making use of Hellenistic Jewish experience for the Jewish past, present and future. This despite the fact that the framing of the work as arising out of camaraderie in the aftermath of the natural disaster striking Ferrara in 1570 is suggestive of a well-known work of many disparate chapters, namely Boccaccio's Decameron, set in the hills of plague-infested Florence. Weinberg may well be alluding to this when she says, specifically regarding de' Rossi's account in "The Voice of God" of his encounter outside of Ferrara with the Christian neighbor with whom he had been discussing the Letter of Aristeas: "The whole story has a something of a literary flourish about it". *Ibid.*, 31 n. 116. As literature, of course, as opposed to history certainly, details provided by de' Rossi need not be taken literally true. On the assumption that de' Rossi's statement of his age of 60 is accurate, see *Ibid.*, xiii.; Daniel Bornstein, "Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy, By Robert Bonfil; Anthony Oldcorn," *Speculum* 70 (4), no. 4 (Oct., 1995): 884-885, but it is equally clear that his reference is literary, see Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 85 n. 34; 721 & 721 n. 63 and matches the number of chapters in "Words of Understanding".

66 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxiii.

67 *Ibid.*, xxxi.

68 Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?," 240. Indeed, Bonfil specifically rejects the importance of messianism even though de' Rossi himself, as we will see below, emphasizes this issue. *Ibid.*, 241.

69 Baron, "Azariah de' Rossi's Historical Method," 210.

70 *Ibid.*, 212. Note that Baron speaks not of apologetics as "the intrinsic connection" but rather "another intrinsic connection". Nowhere earlier in the essay, however, does Baron posit an alternative connection. In apparent accord is Segal, who says no more about the linkage of these chapters than that they "elucidate certain well-known but nonetheless perplexing aspects of the classical tradition." Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'or 'Einayim*, 6.

popular Jewish opinions of immanent messianic arrival — all while showing that Scripture could be interpreted reasonably through a Jewish lens and trying to rebuild a notion of Jewish national identity under siege.⁷¹

And yet, even if we take Bonfil's notion of apology as a unifying theme (and ignore the fact that it applies to only one of three parts of de' Rossi's work), there is clearly a tension that needs resolution. In light of the importance of de' Rossi's apologetic goals, just how much sense does it make for him to try to achieve those goals using loosely connected essays that smack of "dilettantism"?⁷² And even if we concede that "apologetics" extends to give meaning to a search for truth at the expense of religious faith, as Weinberg has defined it, wouldn't de' Rossi's concern with truth be far more serious than merely contributing to "fashionable debates"?⁷³ Wouldn't the account of the Ferraran earthquake and the Letter of Aristeas itself have to play some sort of significant role? These questions suggest that we need to dig a bit deeper to analyze the meaning of "Words of Understanding" and that to do so we may benefit from considering *Me'or Enayim* as a whole.

D. Proposed Method and Thesis

How then to explore the political issues that underlie the historical material in *Me'or Enayim*? I propose to probe for ideas of Jewish national identity in the text by seeking to distinguish that which is Jewish from that which would be characteristic of de' Rossi's surrounding Christian community. To do so, I make three assumptions — the justification for which I hope to prove by way of showing how de' Rossi's material comes together to support a notion of revitalized Jewish political identity. I will assume (1) that any Jewish political identity in the 16th century would be formed in response to the Christian environment (an assumption that I share with Bonfil, albeit that I see de' Rossi responding to Christian identity affirmatively and not defensively),⁷⁴ (2) that any such political identity would be framed temporally in terms of past, present and future (with Anderson, as community identity requires a narrative in time), and finally (3) that such a political identity would build upon structures of the political environment that have remained more or less constant over the long term (with Braudel, who has used such an approach constructively in considering the relationship between Hapsburg Spain and the Ottoman Turks in the Mediterranean region in the 16th century).

(1) Bonfil and the Construction of Jewish Identity in a Christian Mirror

Bonfil posits that Jewish identity was formed alongside of and in opposition to Christian identity, and that both forces comprise the Italian Renaissance.⁷⁵ The result, he suggests, is that

71 Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?," 242.

72 Ibid., 240.

73 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxxi.

74 Interestingly, I will be applying Bonfil's analysis of Jews in the Renaissance to de' Rossi, a figure who, as we have seen, he has situated more specifically in the Counter-Reformation.

75 Bonfil resists a notion of Jewish identity that opposes Italian Renaissance culture with that of a separate and distinct Jewish culture, for it presupposes, he contends, a history in which Jewish identity is entirely subordinate to a more powerful Italian culture that influences it to one degree or another. Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 145. Specifically, by characterizing the Italian Renaissance as Italian and not Christian, any Jewish culture that emerges will be seen as a subset of the Italian period and judged only by that which Jews share with the culture in which they are subsumed; in that sense, it

features of Jewish culture that do not align perfectly with Christian interests can nonetheless be seen as important aspects of Italian Renaissance culture.⁷⁶

The image used by Bonfil is that of a mirror. He posits that Jewish culture, in order to maintain both contemporary relevance and distinction, formed itself by looking at Christian culture. “The course of Italian Jewish culture was determined by the need to define Jewish identity in opposition to that of the Christians, as the result of a specular reflection on the latter.”⁷⁷ Some of Christian culture was adopted, while some was not. “The characteristic features of the culture elaborated by the Jews of Italy can at this point be summed up in a few specific traits: the sensitivity of Jewish culture to some of the forms and contents of Christian culture; the existence of a cultural relationship between Jews and Christians on the personal level as well as on the level of the learning they shared; and the selective adoption of forms and contents important from outside as integral expressions of Jewish identity. The latter were perceived in a context of emulation, at times of genuine opposition to Christian society, as devices capable of expressing the cultural, and therefore human, superiority of the Jews.”

A note about an implicit connection between the sharing of culture and the equality of power: it is apparent from the foregoing quotation that Bonfil believes that there was an environment shared by both Christian and Jew, and that this environment was not just situational but communal and even personal. This degree of interaction necessarily assumes that Jews had enough power to perceive Christian cultural traits in operation and to value them positively such that it was considered attractive to seek to translate them to Jewish culture for the latter’s advantage. But Bonfil’s notion of power affords Christian power not just the controlling hand but one that continues to wield power despite the reflection. For while the concept of the “mirror” suggests that both cultures can transform themselves in the reflection of the Other, Bonfil’s interest remains exclusively upon the Jews.⁷⁸

I will build upon Bonfil’s notion of Jewish identity constructed in opposition to the

is, as he terms it, “colonial” Renaissance history, namely history that privileges the interests and perspectives of Christians who maintained political power over the Jewish minority. Ibid.

76; Ibid., 145-146. What is at stake here is Jewish participation in the “Renaissance,” a cultural movement — however precisely defined — that is a prized period in European, particularly Italian history. It is important to Bonfil that Jews not just participate in the Renaissance but participate on their own terms, not simply those of the Christian majority. It is a “post-colonial” approach in that it insists that those who are not Jews incorporate Jewish culture into their understanding of the time period *as the Jews themselves saw themselves*, and not see the Jews only through their own colored lenses. It is important to note that Bonfil’s notion *presupposes* a Jewish identity distinct from that of the surrounding Christian culture. It is an assumption that I accept — and test — for this analysis. See also David Biale, who, in his preface to the recently produced cultural history of the Jews, *The Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, frames Bonfil’s cautious distinction positively: “Here [Renaissance Italy] was a traditional community intent on drawing boundaries between itself and its Christian neighbors but also able to adopt and adapt motifs from the surrounding culture for its own purposes. Indeed, the Jews should not be seen as outsiders who borrowed from Italian culture but rather as full participants in the shaping of that culture, albeit with their own concerns and mores. The Jews were not so much ‘influenced’ by the Italians as they were one organ in a larger cultural organism, a subculture that established its identity in a complex process of adaptation and resistance. Jewish ‘difference’ was an integral part of the larger mosaic of Renaissance Italy”. David Biale, ed. *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books 2002), “Preface: Toward a Cultural History of the Jews,” xix.

77 Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 176-177.

78 Bonfil is not greatly concerned with Christian identity. He recognizes that “[t]he cultural identity of the Christian humanists of the Renaissance ... was formed as a result of their specular reflection on a single Other culture -- that of the preceding period of classical antiquity” but perceives Christian religion to fall away in favor of “secularization”. Ibid., 157. He could, for example -- but does not -- see Christian adaptation of *kabbalah* as an example of Christian identity formation. Ibid., 172-175.

Christian “Other”. More than that, and as a result of my focus upon identity and not just culture, I will include as an important component of Jewish culture what the surrounding Christian culture thinks not just of itself but of its relationship to the Jews. In this sense, I treat (albeit indirectly) the importance of a Jewish identity to a Christian identity and therefore the two distinct culture’s views of each other. This process of mutual self-reflection has the potential to become a veritable hall of mirrors of repeated reflection obstructing rather than clarifying identity. Consequently, I propose to change slightly the notion that Bonfil has of a direct specular reflection upon the other and approach Christian identity indirectly, much as that which allowed Perseus to gaze upon the Gorgon Medusa: I hold up the Roman imperial past as a common “spectral” referent, allowing Rome to serve, as it were, as an objective mirror of sorts that permits us to see how Christian and Jewish culture view their respective cultural inheritance.

(2) Anderson and the Articulation of Jewish Identity in Time

Benedict Anderson writes about the advent of nationalism and, in particular, the manner by which it is constructed. His approach is anthropological, not ideological; his interest is in describing how and why it is that people who think of themselves as part of a nation need not have experienced the intense social bonds of family, on the one hand, or religion, on the other. His solution, which bears the name of his most important work and has in recent years become increasingly popular, is that national identity is formed out of “an imagined political community”.⁷⁹ In and of itself, of course, simply naming something as “imagined” does little but highlight the lack of reality; the importance of the notion is Anderson’s explanation of *why* it is that people are willing to commit to an imagined community. To Anderson, people commit to the nation because the two compelling forms of political order that preceded it, namely the religious community and the dynastic realm, ceased to be seen as “plausible” forms of political identity and the need for political order in their absence invented the nation.⁸⁰

For my purposes, I am not so much interested in the nation as an imagined community as I am in Anderson’s understanding of a religious community as a proto-national one. Political identity, for Anderson, requires longevity beyond that of the individuals who comprise the polity. Religious community can do that, because religion provides a way to link “fatality into continuity,” a way of making meaningful “links between the dead and the yet unborn.” Yes, we die, but we live on as something greater.⁸¹ The religious community, according to Anderson, exudes an absolute confidence as to the cosmic centrality of the particular religious group, articulated exclusively through a sacred language.⁸² Adhere to the strictures of the group and its wisdom, religion tells us, and we have an identity of “*unselfconscious coherence*”⁸³ — an identity that provides security not just to the here and now but to the past and the future as well. For that is the inheritance of the nations — political identities that “loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future.”⁸⁴ There were simply no “radical separations” between the past and the future; within Anderson’s religious community, the

79 Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 6.

80 *Ibid.*, 11-12.

81 *Ibid.*, 11.

82 *Ibid.*, 10-13.

83 *Ibid.*, 16.

84 *Ibid.*, 11-12. For Anderson, the religious community declined when it became increasingly clear that these communities did not have exclusive claims on the truth. One reason was the encounter with the non-European world; another was the supplanting of Latin with the vernacular. *Ibid.*, 16-18.

present was lived in close proximity to both.⁸⁵

Anderson is by no means the first to identify the importance of an identity in time to a religious community; he has simply done more to develop the reasons for its importance in the absence of either religion or dynasty. Anthropologists, themselves the source of Anderson's theory, have long noted the importance of a past, whether real or fictive, as necessary to provide meaning for the present and the future of a culture. "Regardless of whether the past is real or mythical, individuals believe that it existed, as if it were an object, and that their thoughts and actions are based on a continuity in form or meaning which constitutes building blocks for the future."⁸⁶

Indeed, what for Anderson has been a topic of identity has for Jewish scholars been the meaning of Jewish history. The historian most identified with the notion of Jewish time in the Middle Ages is Robert Chazan, and his characterization is not out of place concerning Jewish thought in the late 16th century. "Medieval Jews," he says, "saw themselves as links in an unending chain of Jewish experience that began with the divine call to Abraham; stretched through the great moments of exodus from Egypt, conquest of the Land of Israel, First and Second Commonwealth achievement; included the difficult circumstances of dispersion and subjugation; and would culminate in the splendor of redemption."⁸⁷ Just as their medieval counterparts viewed their existence as a competitive struggle with the rival faiths of Christianity and Islam, so too Jews of late 16th century Italy "viewed themselves as the direct and incontestable heirs — on every level and in every sense — of the legacy of Israel's past and the hopes of Israel's future."⁸⁸ Indeed, Yerushalmi's notion of a Rabbinic Jewish community infused with history — a notion he takes pains to state by and large was preserved to the 18th century — echoes Chazan's explicit statement about Jewish identity *in* history: "In the interval between destruction and redemption the primary Jewish task was to respond finally and fully to the biblical challenge of becoming a holy people. And for them that meant the study and fulfillment of the written and oral law, the establishment of a Jewish society based fully on its precepts and ideals, and, where the future was concerned, trust, patience, and prayer."⁸⁹

Jews, like any community, need a usable past, a past that provides them with confidence in the present and the future. And if the community is in need of recreating its identity, it will "recreate identity with whatever a people can take from their past experiences."⁹⁰ This, I will

85 Ibid., 23.

86 John H. Hamer, "Identity, Process, and Reinterpretation: The Past Made Present and the Present Made Past," *Anthropos* 89, no. H. 1/3 (1994): 184.

87 Robert Chazan, "Representation of Events in the Middle Ages," *History and Theory* 27, no. 4 (Dec., 1988): 40.

88 Ibid. Cf. Warren Zev Harvey, "La Clepsydre: Essai Sur La Pluralite Des Temps Dans Le Judaisme" By Sylvie Anne Goldberg; Time Matters: Time, Creation, and Cosmology in Medieval Jewish Philosophy By Tamar M. Rudavsky," *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 92 (3/4), no. 3/4 (Jan. - Apr., 2002): 599. See, e.g., Louis Jonker, "Reforming History: The Hermeneutical Significance of the Books of Chronicles," *Vetus Testamentum* 57, no. 1 (2007): 26 (Jewish self-reflection is a conflation of past, present and future: "one perpetual narrative").

89 Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 24.

90 Hamer, "Identity, Process, and Reinterpretation: The Past Made Present and the Present Made Past," 184; Gail Landsman and Sara Ciborski, "Representation and Politics: Contesting Histories of the Iroquois," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1992): 425-47, 441 ("the analytic task is not to strip away the invented portion of a culture as inauthentic, but to understand the process by which they acquire authenticity", citing Hanson); e.g., Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (Oct., 2004): 755 (noting that fixing upon "a particularized event or trauma becomes mythologized and intertwined with a group's sense of self" such that "hate becomes the link among the present, the future, and a re-created past").

argue, is what de' Rossi has done with Jewish Hellenistic history in *Me'or 'Enayim*.

But I get ahead of myself, for what is important at this stage is that we assume that Christian identity is *likewise* dominated by a notion of identity in time. Nor should this be surprising, for Christianity, like Judaism, is a revealed religion equally interested in where a people has been as where it is headed. "Both the prophets and Jesus stress the present moment in which destiny is being determined, the moment in which man decides for or against God. The memory of previous events may stretch back to the beginnings of creation; the hope for the future may envisage the ultimate end of all history; but both memory and anticipation are focused upon the present moment. Historians tell stories of past events; seers predict the coming of judgment and redemption; but both historians and prophets are concerned with the Word of the Lord for *us, now, here*. . . .*History is the continual impact of past and future upon the present.*"⁹¹ Indeed, the Christian world view necessarily considers the role of the Jews in the past and future, as well as the present.⁹²

It is my contention that de' Rossi lived among Christians and Jews who had identities shaped by their respective religions and that each such identity necessarily posited a role for its culture in the past and the future, as well as the present. In this sense, both Jew and Christian shared a religious "mentality" — a structure of thought analogous to Braudel's *longue duree*: "a natural communality of mental structures shared by people living in the same historical context."⁹³

(3) Braudel and Long-Term Duration of Structures of Identity

Fernand Braudel has made popular the notion of the "*longue duree*." This is the focus upon the importance of factors that occur over the long term as opposed to simply upon those that erupt at a given time and place and appear to cause change. It is a focus upon "structure", a word that connotes stability over the long-term, as opposed to "conjuncture," which to Braudel suggests the contingent, or variable. While the latter is "conspicuous history which holds our attention by its continual and dramatic changes," the *longue duree* is another "submerged, history, almost silent and always discreet, virtually unsuspected either by its observers or its participants, which is little touched by the obstinate erosion of time".⁹⁴ I will employ Braudel's notion in two ways. The first is by emphasizing the importance of geography. The area in which I will be discussing Christian and Jewish identity is northern Italy, a geographically distinct part

91 Paul Minear, "The Conception of History in the Prophets and Jesus," *Journal of the Bible and Religion* 11, no. 3 (Aug., 1943): 157 (emphasis added). See Lewis W. Spitz, "History: Sacred and Secular," *Church History* 47, no. 1 (Mar., 1978): 7 ("All that the church historian can do is present as well as he can what this redemption through Christ in history has meant in the past and to indicate, if possible, what significance this redemption in the past has for redemption now and in the future. He is to show the historical character of redemption in Christ" (view of Leonard J. Trinterud); John Kyle, "John Knox and Apocalyptic Thought," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 4 (Winter, 1984): 456 ("For the Protestant apocalyptic tradition prophecies served either as a guide on moral or doctrinal issues, particularly in identifying the antichrist, or assumed a chronological importance for both the past and future events").

92 See Jeremy Cohen, "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation: Romans 11:25-26 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis," *The Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 3 (Jul., 2005): 249: "At any stage in the annals of Christianity, such disparity [in the Christian understanding of terms in Romans 9-11] has characterized perceptions of Jews of the past, present, and future, and the Christian sense of continuity and discontinuity in the history of Israel".

93 Bornstein, "Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy, By Robert Bonfil; Anthony Oldcorn," 884.

94 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, vol. I (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), 16.

of the peninsula. Specifically, the area is the plain of Lombardy, a relatively flat and fertile area that contains the cities of Mantua and Ferrara, extends not just to Venice at the coast⁹⁵ but abuts the plateau of Emilia on its south which contains Bologna.⁹⁶ This is where de' Rossi lived, and as we will see, it was the place of the highest concentration of Jews in Europe in the later part of the 16th century. This Lombard region is surrounded by mountains — the Alps to the north and the Apennines extending on a slashing diagonal across the peninsula from the northwest to southeast.⁹⁷ It is a veritable “continental island”⁹⁸ albeit with constant communication to German lands to the north⁹⁹ and across the Apennines to Florence.¹⁰⁰

With Braudel, I note the distinctive nature of events that transpire in this geography. For him, geography is a useful approach to help understand what happens where,¹⁰¹ but while he chooses to emphasize the distinctive (and oppositional) development of Italy to the north and south of the Apennines,¹⁰² I will emphasize the territory as a land of continuous contention between the powers over the mountains on either side. This sort of push and pull is directly related to the “history . . . of man in his relationship to the environment, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles.”¹⁰³

But Braudel evaluates more than simply the structure of mountain ranges and surrounded valleys; he considers as structural the “*social history*”, or “the history of groups and groupings.” Here the historical focus for Braudel has “slow but perceptible rhythms.”¹⁰⁴ While certain land may be the subject of continual competition, the ebb and flow, as it were, of the tide of political pressure from south and north is indeed perceptible. For me, along with Braudel, the interest is in Empire. But while Braudel’s scope is directed to the Mediterranean as a whole and therefore clearly upon the competition between Hapsburg Spain and Ottoman Turkey,¹⁰⁵ my focus is specifically upon northern Italy and the contest between The Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps, and the Papal States, supported by Hapsburg Spain, to the south of the Apennines.¹⁰⁶ I hope to show that the people of northern Italy, especially in the late 16th century, were subject to a regular competition of claims for the Roman imperial legacy, now from the south and now from the north. It was a Roman identity clothed with Christianity, and it was an identity that was increasingly intolerable for the Jews living in the area.

95 Ibid., 26.; 31 n.26; 34 n. 49; 72-5 (plain of Lombardy lies between Alps and the Apennines); 280-81; see 161 (Lombardy a “continental island”); 203-205 and 205 fig. 16 (map showing same; area incorporates “linked plains of Piedmont, Lombardy and Venezia, with easy access to their seaports”)

96 Ibid., 280-81; see also 44.

97 The road that traverses the peninsula from Milan to Rimini (through Bologna and Modena and Parma) follows the old Roman Via Aemilia along eastern edge of Apennines. Ibid., 280 & fig. 24.

98 Ibid., 161.

99 Ibid., 212-223; 204 fig. 15

100 Ibid., 341-342.

101 Ibid., 23.

102 See, e.g., Ibid., 133 (Florence and Rome get Renaissance before Ferrara, Parma, Bologna and Venice on east); Ibid., 387 (the economic center of the Mediterranean shifts from Venice on the East in 1500 to Genoa on the West by 1575).

103 Ibid., 20.

104 Ibid., 20-21.

105 Ibid., 657-703.

106 Naturally, I will treat as well the specific events within this context — history that Braudel calls the history of individuals, or “the history of events” — a history that, using his maritime image, focuses upon “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs”. Ibid., 21.

By using these three analytical propositions — those of Bonfil, of Anderson and of Braudel — we will be able to observe a theme, a purpose, that dominates *Me'or 'Enayim* and offers an explanation for the structure and content of the work. In the following chapters I hope to develop the idea that in *Me'or 'Enayim*, de' Rossi seeks to create a distinctive Jewish identity that is based upon the Classical past that he thought was a common heritage of Jew and Christian but that by turning to Hellenistic Greece he could recover the historical basis of a powerful political identity that would allow the Jews of his day to break free from the historical captivity of Rome and transcend Christianity's adoption of that empire's garb. It is my belief that the way in which de' Rossi's material supports my argument will, in turn, justify the propositions that I have employed and thus help advance our understanding of de' Rossi and his *Me'or 'Enayim*.

CHAPTER II: ROMAN IDENTITY AND THE CHRISTIAN EXCLUSION OF THE JEWS

The identity of the Christian communities that lived in the Lombard plain of northern Italy in the late 16th century was dominated by Rome. The push and pull of imperial and papal claimants for the authority of ancient Rome shaped how these people saw their own lives and informed their identity.

In describing the lands surrounding the Mediterranean sea in the 16th century, Fernand Braudel employed a perspective that focused upon developments that took place slowly, the *longue duree*.¹ Braudel distinguished two types of “structural” history: one focused upon the landscape and how it determined what happened, and a second focused upon the people who inhabited that landscape and interacted with each other. While the former did not so much “change” as manifest regular repetitions of the same,² the latter, “the history of groups and groupings” did change, with “slow but perceptible rhythms.” He called this “social history.”³

Here too, the theme is Empire as “social history”. But while Braudel focused upon the imperial contest between Hapsburg Spain and the Ottoman Turks as it played out across the Mediterranean, this analysis is more domestic -- it focuses on the struggle for the legacy of imperial Rome as it played out among Christian political groups in northern Italy,⁴ and in particular on the effect of this structural dynamic upon the region’s Jewish population.⁵

For the purposes of this analysis, the contest for Rome was a “structural” feature of 16th century Italian history in general and the Christian-Jewish relationship in particular. For the Christians who inhabited the northern Lombard plain at that time, the image of imperial Rome thoroughly dominated their sense of themselves — how they fit their individual lives into a story that transcended their individual lifetimes and granted their lives greater significance.⁶ A political identity — how a people thinks of itself — requires an attitude that encompasses not just its past, but its present and future as well. This is true whether one focuses upon “nation”⁷ or “culture”,⁸ myth⁹ or history.¹⁰ A notion of political identity requires a narrative that orients a

1 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, vol. I (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), 23 & n. 1.

2 Ibid., 20.

3 Ibid., 20-21. This is to be distinguished from a more modern notion of the history of ordinary people or under-represented groups.

4 I will often employ the term Italy, as I will that of other nations such as Germany and Spain, for convenience, despite the fact that for much if not all of the time under consideration, such national designations are anachronistic. Gregory Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), 62.

5 Braudel tracks the development of empire from city state at the close of the 14th century through the stage of territorial state and ultimately that of empire in the 16th, while I explore more how the intellectual history of Christian Italy in that period (but starting appreciably earlier) shared a common connection with the Roman empire. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 657-660.

6 I do not mean to argue that Christians of northern Italy themselves expressed their notion of identity in this fashion, however.

7 Duncan S.A. Bell, “Mythsapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity,” *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (March, 2003): 66.

8 Marc Howard Ross, “The Relevance of Culture for the Study of Political Psychology and Ethnic Conflict,” *Political Psychology* 18 (2), no. 2 (Jun., 1997): 302; Nira Wickramasinghe, “History Outside the Nation,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 26 (Jul. 1, 1995): 1571.

9 Bell, “Mythsapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity,” 66.

10 Ibid.; Wickramasinghe, “History Outside the Nation,” 1571.

people in time and place: where it has come from, where it is headed, and what its role is along that path.

For the Christians of northern Italy, and specifically for those who lived in the later part of the 16th century, political identity was informed by three powerful intellectual streams of thought that had begun to flow strongly in the 14th century, continually irrigating the landscape with the significance of Roman imperial power: (A) an interest in the events of the Roman past and how Roman history could support political aspirations, (B) a reliance upon the Latin language as a vehicle of unity and as a medium of truth, and (C) a fear of cultural annihilation by the foes of the Roman Catholic church. By the later part of the 16th century, northern Italy was awash in currents of identity informed largely by Rome.

A. The Importance of the Roman Imperial Past

By common convention, Rome collapsed in the later part of the 5th century of the common era,¹¹ but the memory, institutions and hopes encapsulated in notions of Roman empire remained. “Rome’s hold over the imagination of all the inhabitants of Christian Europe” continued to inform notions of political identity.¹² For much of the period between the close of the 5th century and the middle of the 13th century, the political contest for northern Italy had been waged by the Pope from his base in the Papal States to the south and the Holy Roman Emperor across the Alps to the north. Now, as the 13th century drew to a close, the northern Italian city states were free of empire. Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor perhaps most singularly focused upon Italy, coming as he did from Sicily,¹³ died in 1250 — and his German successors ceased to expend as much effort and time on Italian possessions.¹⁴ And within a generation, the papacy departed Rome for Avignon where the imperial pressure was imposed by the French, not the Germans.¹⁵ The so-called “Babylonian Captivity” would last the bulk of the 14th century (from 1309 to 1378), leaving Italy without any legitimate representative of the Roman empire for almost a century.¹⁶ The result was nothing less than “[a] juridical vacuum” in which the “mantle of the Romans” was up for grabs.¹⁷ Reshaping political society by reclaiming the authority of Rome was in order.

11 *Routledge History of the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, 1995), 48-80; Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1971), 11; Richard Jenkyns, ed., “The Legacy of Rome,” *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3. The last Western emperor was unseated in 476. The Roman empire continued, of course, in the East. The Byzantine Empire had its foundations under Constantine, its capital, Constantinople, originally constructed in 324 to rule in the East as Rome did in the West. Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages: A History of Europe from 400-1000* (New York: Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2009), 23. See also Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750*, 19; Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe After Rome: A New Cultural History 500-1000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28-50 (on the interrelated nature of the language and religion).

12 *Ibid.*, 255.

13 James Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, 3d ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1871), 207-209.

14 *Ibid.*, 210. The Hohenstaufen line would continue briefly through the reign of his son and then be extinguished; after a period of time, the Hapsburgs would claim control (1273).

15 Thomas J. Dandellet, *Spanish Rome 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 239 n.171; Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, 219 and n. 1.

16 Indeed, the period would extend into the following century, as the church was under schism, with two sets of popes, until resolution of the issue by the Council of Constance in 1417.

17 John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700 (Christianity and Society in the Modern World)* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 76-77.

Petrarch and his friend Cardinal Giovanni Colonna spent a good deal of time in Rome in 1337. Each found bittersweet satisfaction in noting the yawning void between the great events that had taken place in Rome of the past and the derelict congregation of ruins they encountered on their walks. For Petrarch, the loss was the great secular power that was Rome,¹⁸ while for Cardinal Colonna, what was remarkable was the former glory of the Christian faith.¹⁹ The absence of a living, authoritative bearer of the Roman imperial tradition was felt deeply, and not just in Rome itself. For Dante, the absence of Roman imperial power in Italy was akin to the absence of God on earth.²⁰ Both Petrarch and Dante looked for a renewal of the Rome that had been: “a *renovatio* of mankind, not in the spiritual rebirth of an otherworldly existence, but on the temporal plane . . . to restore Rome to its old status as *caput mundi*, to compose the endemic disorders of Italy, and to impose the beneficent yoke of the imperium on all mankind.”²¹ What was sought was the reintegration of empire and church, and to lead the restored imperium, nothing less than an “Emperor-Messiah”.²²

This political vacuum permitted and encouraged the formation of powerful city-states, each claiming the mantle of Rome, especially in the now-abandoned contested plain.²³ The first cities to claim the mantle of Rome were those of the Italian north, long split — as many such northern cities were — along Ghibelline/Guelf lines.²⁴ This identification of newly powerful city-states with the authority of republican and imperial Rome is most closely identified with Renaissance humanism — a movement that can be characterized politically as emphasizing the independence of Italian city-states due to their Roman imperial pedigree.²⁵

Notably sensitive to a newfound ability to claim an independence based upon the authority of the Roman past were Ferrara and Mantua, principalities on the contested plain. Ferrara was nominally papal territory,²⁶ but Ferraran dukes linked themselves to an antiquity that predated Roman power. One common theme was to establish a connection with the Trojan War related by Vergil’s *Aeneid*.²⁷ The Estes had long been interested in genealogy; an account

18 David Thompson, ed., *The Idea of Rome: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 170-172.

19 *Ibid.*, 173.

20 *Ibid.*, 199 (letter to Florentines from exile).

21 C.C. Bayley, “Petrarch, Charles IV, and the ‘*Renovatio Imperii*,’” *Speculum* XVII, no. 3 (July, 1942): 324.

22 *Ibid.*

23 For the articulation of a view that privileges the German presence in northern Italy, see Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 46.

24 John Watts, *The Making of Politics: Europe, 1300-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 108-109.

25 Renaissance humanism has many components. The most well-known political interpretation is associated with the “civic humanism” of Hans Baron, in which Florence is seen to adopt Roman republicanism in response to a Milanese authoritarian threat. Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). My emphasis here is different in two major respects. First, I will be focusing upon the imperial, not republican, aspirations of those cities identifying with Rome. Second, I will be focusing upon the cities of northern Italy and what they share vis-a-vis their attitudes to the Roman imperial past, even if they also have important differences.

26 Ferrara, a papal Guelf city, imposed the Este family in 1264. Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 54; Alessandro Marcigliano, *Chivalric Festivals At the Ferrarese Court of Alfonso II D’Este* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 59. But see Michael J. Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 89; Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 55 (technically, the Holy Roman Emperor had feudal rights over Ferrara).

27 Linda Carroll, “Fools of the Dukes of Ferrara”: Dosso, Ruzante, and Changing Este Alliances,” *MLN* 118, no. 1 (Jan. 2003): 60-84.

traceable as far back as the Middle Ages posited the descent of the family from a Trojan prince, Martus, who had attacked Milan.²⁸ In the middle part of the 16th century, the ducal secretary to Ercole II referenced the family's progenitor, the Trojan Antenor.²⁹ The traditional linkage to Noah's family, too, was asserted by Ercole II's secretary.³⁰

The asserted connection between Mantua and Roman authority was particularly well known in humanist circles. On the one hand, Mantua had a long history of being held by the Holy Roman Emperor. As of 1328, the Gonzaga held Mantua in fief to the Holy Roman Emperor.³¹ But it was not forgotten that Vergil himself had written that the city was named after Manto, daughter of Tiresias, who had wandered there from Thebes. Dante had adopted this story as "true" in his Divine Comedy.³² This account was as well-known as its critique by Leonardo Bruni. Bruni wrote a letter, *De origine Mantuae*, to Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, in 1418 at his request.³³ Bruni said the Marquis' ancestors were Etruscans and pre-dated the Romans by some 300 years. The manuscript was enormously popular,³⁴ undoubtedly not simply because of its analysis of Mantuan origins but of the method that could be used for other cities in the north.

The struggle for the mantle of imperial Rome in northern Italy was acute in 1573, the year in which de' Rossi published *Me'or 'Enayim*. Just four years before, in 1569, Cosimo de' Medici of Florence had sought the title of "Grand Duke" of Tuscany. At issue was far more than the title -- it was a question of who had the authority to grant it -- Emperor or Pope?³⁵ The historical power in the north was Germany; indeed it was Charles V who had elevated Cosimo to the rulership of Florence.³⁶ Cosimo's chief rivals were the princes of the neighboring principalities in northern Italy, who objected to Cosimo's aspirations because each resented the claim of Florence to priority. Of the major northern principalities in contention, Mantua claimed strongest German connections, separated from German (Austrian) lands only by the Republic of Venice.³⁷ Most likely, Mantua was concerned but not panicked about Cosimo's request and recognized that Maximilian would never grant Florence priority over it.³⁸

28 David R. Coffin, "Pirro Ligorio and Decoration of the Late Sixteenth Century At Ferrara," *The Art Bulletin* 37, no. 3 (September, 1955): 171.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid. The Estes also bound themselves to France, the great power to their west. Giraldi linked the family to Hercules, a mythic figure identified with Gaul (among other places). This was a sacred lineage in opposition to Rome, since Hercules had been deified, *Ibid.*, 171-172 (analogizing to authority of Livy for history of Rome), much as Roman emperors and their papal successors had claimed legitimacy from God. Hercules was a frequent artistic motif utilized by the family. *Ibid.*, 172 n. 30.

31 Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 55; Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 89.

32 Angelo Mazzocco, "Dante, Bruni and the Issue of the Origin of Mantua," *MLN* 127 Supplement (2012): S257 n. 1 (citing *Inferno* 20.52-99).

33 *Ibid.*, S257.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Michael and Christine Shaw Mallett, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2012), 234-235 and 257-64; Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 173.

36 Mallett, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 221.

37 Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 89; Marcigliano, *Chivalric Festivals At the Ferrarese Court of Alfonso II D' Este*, 135.

38 Charles V had made Frederico II Gonzaga the first Duke of Mantua in 1530, almost ten years before he had elevated Cosimo to the head of the Florentine state. Mallett, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 221. And there were deep family connections between the family of Guglielmo II, Duke of

But Alfonso II, who, as Duke of Ferrara, ruled territory further south and closer to the Pope, was frantic. Ferrara was already in danger of succumbing to papal imperial claims: just a few years earlier, in 1567, Pius V had declared fiefs to devolve to papal domain when lineage was extinguished; conspicuous among such fiefs was Ferrara, where Alfonso had not produced a legitimate heir.³⁹ Ferrara appealed directly to the emperor,⁴⁰ asserting Alfonso's pedigree not just as a Roman but as a German. Pigna, the secretary of Alfonso II, emphasized the historical connection between Alfonso and a specific Roman individual, one Caius Atius,⁴¹ as well as "those families of German princes, and the other nobles which there have been from the Roman republic until now"⁴².

Ferrara won the battle but lost the war. Maximilian refused to disinherit his children and rebuffed Cosimo,⁴³ but the Pope closed in on Ferrara. Cosimo was granted the title in 1569 by Pius V⁴⁴ and crowned in Rome 1570.⁴⁵ The move infuriated not just Maximilian II, who nominally possessed the feudal right of his progenitor Charles to Florence -- but Philip II as well, in that the papal decision was made without his consultation and approval.⁴⁶

Mantua as of 1570, Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 56, and Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor from 1564 to 1576. Jonathan Dewald, ed., *Europe 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 64 ("Maximilian II"); Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 56; Lisa Sampson, "The Mantuan Performance of Guarini's "Pastor Fido" and Representations of Courtly Identity," *The Modern Language Review* 98, no. 1 (January 2003): 65-83; David B. Ruderman, "A Jewish Apologetic Treatise From Sixteenth Century Bologna," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 50 (1979): 253-275; Joseph F. Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice: Archduchess Elizabeth, Empress Maria, the Hapsburgs, and the Holy Roman Empire, 1554-1569* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 151; David Kaufmann, "Meir B. Ephraim of Padua, Scroll-Writer and Printer in Mantua," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 11, no. 2 (Jan., 1899): 266-290. The Gonzaga position in Mantua had recently been strengthened after 1559 with additional territory for cadet branches, now including Monferrato. Mallett, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 296. As recently as 1566, Guglielmo had visited Maximilian in Vienna to confirm his rights over Mantua. Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice: Archduchess Elizabeth, Empress Maria, the Hapsburgs, and the Holy Roman Empire, 1554-1569*, 327.

Indeed, Mantua "had always been the emperor's most loyal associate in Italy." Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 81.

39 Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 54-55.

40 Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 90.

41 Such was the popularity of the asserted link that many participated in the rush to collect any inscription that could be found that mentioned that name. Coffin, "Pirro Ligorio and Decoration of the Late Sixteenth Century At Ferrara," 172. It is worth noting in this context the close connection between history and artful historical fiction. In his epic poem *Gerusalemme Liberata* (set in the time of the Crusades), published a decade after the controversy, Tasso represented the link between the Ferrarese and the Roman Caius Atius, *ibid.*, 171, and in the same poem put the German familial details upon a shield wielded in war. Tasso evidently considered his historical bona fides beyond question, however; upon the death of the secretary Pigna in 1575, Tasso himself had sought the post. *Ibid.*, 174.

42 *Ibid.*

43 Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 89; Marcigliano, *Chivalric Festivals at the Ferrarese Court of Alfonso II D' Este*, 135.

44 Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, 173.

45 Marion Leathers Kuntz, *The Anointment of Dionisio* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 73; Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 89; Marcigliano, *Chivalric Festivals at the Ferrarese Court of Alfonso II D' Este*, 135.

46 For the view that the Spanish king controlled Florence at this time, see Thomas J. Dandeleit, "Politics and the State System After the Hapsburg-Valois Wars," in *Early Modern Italy*, ed. John A. Marino (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13; Daniela Frigo, "'Small States' and Diplomacy: Mantua and Modena," *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, ed. Daniela Frigo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 147-148.

For as events were making plain, the real heir to Roman power in Italy, even in the north, belonged to a new claimant, and that was Spain. In 1516, Charles had inherited from his grandfather Ferdinand II Castile (and the Spanish Indies) along with Aragon; the latter kingdom provided control over southern Italy, in that Aragon possessed not just Naples but Sicily and Sardinia.⁴⁷ Just three years later, in 1519, Charles had inherited the Hapsburg possessions from his grandfather Maximilian I: these included the German fiefs of Lombardy.⁴⁸ “His crowns combined the greatest collection of territories since the Roman Empire.”⁴⁹ To put it simply, the Papal States were surrounded. Spain dominated the papacy in terms of money and soldiers. Its presence in the north was far from symbolic, as Spain ruled Milan.⁵⁰ And Spain itself sought to legitimize its authority on the basis of an asserted Roman imperial past. Philip “took as the chief tenet of his monarchy his right to restore the universal rule of the Roman Empire from East to West.”⁵¹ Not surprisingly, Philip identified more particularly with the Spanish Roman emperor Trajan.⁵² Spain dominated Mantua in particular. Vespasiano Gonzaga in particular served Philip II: both in founding the duchy of Sabbioneta and in his portrait imagery, the Gonzaga duke imitated his Hapsburg patron.⁵³

The papacy adjusted its ambitions accordingly; the ideal Roman emperor was now Constantine, who had delegated spiritual power to the pontiffs but was content to exercise political rule from abroad. While a pope named Julius had returned to Rome in 1507 and, having conquered Perugia and having subjected both Bologna and Ravenna to Papal control,⁵⁴ permitted himself a Roman triumph drawn by four white horses,⁵⁵ Paul III moved from the Lateran to the Capitoline the bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (thought to be a representation of the Emperor Constantine).⁵⁶ Agostino Steuco rejoined the fight on the side of the papacy’s

47 Dandeleet, *Spanish Rome 1500-1700*, 41; Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 63.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Spanish domination of Italy in particular has been well documented and evaluated. See, e.g., Dandeleet, *Spanish Rome 1500-1700*, 42; Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome 1500-1559: A Portrait of a Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 44. Braudel phrased it as an “alliance”. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 942-943.

51 Marie Tanner, “The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor,” (1993): 143; see also Dandeleet, *Spanish Rome 1500-1700*, 79-81 (noting the work undertaken by Ambrosio Morales, in completing the *Cronica* of Florian de’ Ocampo, to link the glory of Rome to the present power of Spain, and that of the Dominican Alfonso Chacon in Rome interpreting Trajan’s Column).

52 Ibid.

53 Michael P. Mezzatesta, “Marcus Aurelius, Fray Antonio De Guevara, and the Ideal of the Perfect Prince in the Sixteenth Century,” *The Art Bulletin* 66, no. 4 (Dec., 1984): 632; see also Paul V. Murphy, “A Worldly Reform: Honor and Pastoral Practice in the Career of Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga (1505-63),” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 403 (close political ties to Spain); Thomas James Dandeleet, *Spanish Rome 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 84 and 42 (including not just Mantua but Ferrara).

54 Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 235-236; Gregg and Kevin L. Osterloh Gardner, ed., “The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple At Rome and Constantinople: Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire,” *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Past in the Greco-Roman World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Mallett, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 76-77.

55 Nicholas Ostler, *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin* (New York: Walker and Company, 2007), 239. Under Paul II, Sixtus IV and Alexander VI, processions formed a Roman triumph as part of Carnival celebrations. Thompson, “The Idea of Rome: From Antiquity to the Renaissance,” 188. Flavio Biondo, in *Roma instaurata*, merged the images of Caesar and the popes with Jesus himself. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 241-243.

56 Ronald Delph, “From Venetian Visitor to Curial Humanist: The Development of Agostino Steucho’s “Counter” -

inheritance of Rome, attacking the scholarship of Lorenzo Valla's critique of the "Donation of Constantine".⁵⁷ More than twenty years later, the Donation was depicted in the Galleria delle Carte Geografiche in the Vatican Palace.⁵⁸ For his part, the Spanish pope inaugurating the era of foreign domination in the 16th century eschewed the power of a Julian name for that symbolizing a power now from the east -- Alexander.

Interest in Alexander was undoubtedly quickened in late 16th century Italy due to the effort of the Gonzagas of Mantua to connect themselves to the power of Spain. Alexander was a role model for the Gonzagas.⁵⁹ Indeed, to the extent that the Gonzaga plow was hitched to the Hapsburg wagon, Alexander came to be seen as the model of a foreign ruler in Italian peninsula.⁶⁰

Alexander was not simply the focus of Spanish (and Gonzagan) claims to legitimacy but the incarnation of Italian fears of foreign control. The Spanish pope, Alexander VI, was tarred with the suspicion that as a Spaniard, he was in reality a *converso*.⁶¹ There was a double edge to this attack: the politically foreign Spaniard and the religiously foreign Jew. Perhaps lurking within the slander was an oft-cited humanist insecurity, albeit originally derived from early Christian apology, that Greek thought owed its flowers to Jewish seeds.⁶²

Furthermore, the exogenous Ottomans sought to capitalize on the imagery of Alexander, especially when appealing to Westerners for the Islamic claim to Rome. Suleyman commissioned a helmet fashioned upon Alexander the Great from Venetians in seeking to establish his claim to Italy.⁶³ The Ottoman interest in Alexander was perhaps even thought to be greater by Italians in the mid-late 16th century than it may have been in Istanbul. Giovio reported that Salim I had the histories of Alexander translated into Turkish. Bodin quoted this story to show the value of studying history itself. Both Giovio and Sansovino (1560) reported that Bayezid I and Mehmet II had venerated Alexander.⁶⁴ To be sure, the Ottomans claimed all of the

Reformation Thought," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1994): 129-130.

57 *Ibid.*, 105.

58 Pauline Moffitt Watts, "The Donation of Constantine, Cartography, and the Papal "*Plenitudo Potestatis*" in the Sixteenth Century: A Paper for Salvatore Comporeale," *MLN* 119, no. 1 (2004): S89, S93 (planned 1572-85, executed 1578-81).

59 Julio Berzunza, "Preliminary Notes on the Three Italian Versions of Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Historiae Alexandri Magni*," *Italice* 18, no. 3 (1941): 135.

60 Marie Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 190-98 (Both Max I and Charles V and Philip II); Mezzatesta, "Marcus Aurelius, Fray Antonio De Guevara, and the Ideal of the Perfect Prince in the Sixteenth Century," 630 (Marcus Aurelius and Charles V and Philip II and Gonzaga). The claim was by no means a new one. See Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 205-206 (Frederick II, a Sicilian). See generally Mezzatesta, "Marcus Aurelius, Fray Antonio De Guevara, and the Ideal of the Perfect Prince in the Sixteenth Century," 628 & n. 59 ("the new and favorable image of Alexander as a wise, just, and continent ruler that had develop in the 16th century").

61 J.N. Hillgarth, "The Image of Alexander VI and Cesare Borgia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 59 (1966): 120-121; Paul Botley, "Giannozzo Manetti, Alfonso of Aragon and Pompey the Great: A Crusading Document of 1455," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 67 (2004): 129-156.

62 N.G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 131 (Renaissance familiarity with concept that Greek wisdom comes from Jews).

63 Gulru Necipoglu, "Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 3 (Sept. 1989): 405- 411.

64 David Cowling, ed., *Conceptions of Europe in Renaissance France: Essays in Honour of Keith Cameron* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 163-164. See also Richard Yeomans, *The Art and Architecture of Ottoman Istanbul*

Roman pedigree as well: Sansovino had also reported that Suleyman, Selim's successor, thought himself not only to have Trojan ancestors and to be Constantine's successor but to fashion himself emperor of Rome.⁶⁵ But it would be the foreign image of Alexander that generated the most fear.

History has a long arm, and the symbolism of the Roman imperial past was embraced assiduously by the claimants to Rome's authority in de' Rossi's time. To a great degree, the respective claims to Roman authority were no more than the ageless ebb and flow of papal and imperial tides. But the 16th century had brought a new contestant into the game -- that of the imperial outsider. Spanish power could not rest as securely on Roman legitimacy as could the pope or holy Roman emperor. Spanish claimants to Italian lands looked both to the authority of Rome's Spanish emperor, Trajan, as well as to that of Alexander of Macedon, a power identified with nothing less than sovereignty over the entire known world. City states facing east would have seen an Ottoman empire asserting the same symbolic claim to imperial legitimacy. From the perspective of the northern Italian city states, the question was increasingly this: to what empire did they belong?

B. The Importance of Latin as a Unifier of Empire and Medium of Truth

If the Roman empire dominated the 16th century Italian city states' sense of their political past but led to division concerning the identity of the imperial leader, the common Roman language served to unify the peoples of this time and place. Even before the rediscovery of Classical texts, it was self-evident that a primary way in which the peoples of northern Italy remained "Romans" was the common use of Latin as a written language. Four hundred years after the Gothic invasions, Latin was the only written language in western Europe; written Gothic had been sidelined with suppression of the Arian churches in first two of these centuries.⁶⁶ Latin was what was meant when the subject taught was *grammatica*. Latin was the only language for business and law.⁶⁷ From the time of Charlemagne through the 16th century, Latin remained the preeminent language of culture.⁶⁸ Latin was learned because it was universal and considered equally applicable to any career; it was likewise a class marker for leisure.⁶⁹ Latin was needed for university studies, civil service, church, high ranks; the vernacular, by contrast, focused on commercial skills.⁷⁰ The Ciceronian Latin of the late 14th and 15th centuries expressed the diplomacy of the states throughout the north — Florence, Milan, Padua, Verona, Ferrara and Mantua; correspondence featured Cicero's language, vocabulary and word order, as

(Reading, Berkshire: Garnet, 2012), 13.; Simon and Peter Thonemann Price, *The Birth of Classical Europe: A History from Troy to Augustine* (New York: Allen Lane, 2010), 146.

65 David Cowling, ed. *Conceptions of Europe in Renaissance France: Essays in Honour of Keith Cameron*, 163-164.

66 Ostler, *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin*, 166-167.

67 Ibid., 167. At the same time as Charlemagne aspired to the office of Holy Roman Emperor, his adviser Alcuin, appointed director of Charlemagne's Palace School, was entrusted with regularizing Latin and returning the form of that language to its classic roots. Ibid., 168.

68 Compare *ibid.*, 174. to *ibid.*, 233. (citing Marc-Antoine Muret, 1526-85, French professor in Rome, *Oratio* 1583).

69 Craig W. Kallendorf, "Renaissance," in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Craig W. Kallendorf (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 41.

70 Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 409.

well as the cadences of Cicero's speech.⁷¹ Indeed, "the classical tradition provided Europeans . . . [w]ith a common language, Latin, and [thereby] an overriding sense of cultural continuity".⁷²

That said, Italians had always felt that the Latin language belonged to them particularly. Latin was even a synonym for Italian: Dante used the words interchangeably, Petrarch said Romans are Latins, and Augustine declaimed that "We are not Greeks, not barbarians, but Italians and Latins."⁷³ Florentine historian Ricordano Malespini noted (1281) that Frederick II "knew our Latin tongue and our vernacular".⁷⁴ It was only natural, then, that the newly discovered texts written in Latin reified the autochthonous connection between the texts and the readers, and that discovery become not just an academic hunt but an exploration of one's own culture. Princes such as Medici and humanist popes sent out agents to collect and consolidate this culture.⁷⁵ Textbooks in Italy presented to students original passages from Roman writers and on all aspects of student life.⁷⁶ Latin was to be expressed as it was in ancient Rome;⁷⁷ Rome lived again.

The papacy too embraced Ciceronian Latin as a means to express its cultural legitimacy.⁷⁸ In prefaces to six books of style, Valla developed idea of Latin as a tool of empire in general, and of papal power in particular. The Latin language had been inherited from the Roman Empire and was a thing of awe: "the great sacrament of the Latin language, and its great inspiration, that it has been maintained throughout the centuries sacredly and devoutly among foreigners, barbarians, and enemies...by this more splendid dominion we still reign in much of the world. Ours in France, Spain, Germany, Hungary, Dalmatia, Illyricum, and many other nations."⁷⁹ This text was enormously popular and widely distributed: there were no less than 59 editions in 65 years.⁸⁰ Indeed, Valla's notion was not simply a present claim to the historical empire of Rome but a pronouncement, if not a prophecy: "For there is the Roman Empire, wherever the Roman language reigns."⁸¹

71 Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 324; Stephen J. Milner, "Communication, Consensus, and Conflict: Rhetorical Precepts, the *Ars Concionandi*, and Social Ordering in Late Medieval Italy," *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, eds. Virginia Cox and John O. Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 395. Also Italian. See E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 170 n. 20 (noting the occasional use of German in documents sent by the Emperor).

72 Ingrid D. Rowland, "Baroque," in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Craig W. Kallendorf (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 45; Ostler, *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin*, 233-234.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., 234.

75 Ibid., 252.

76 Ibid., 252-254.

77 Ibid., 246.

78 Ibid., 237-238. Latin was not just written as it had been in ancient Rome; it was spoken that way too. Biondo's *De verbis Romanae locutionis* of 1435 regarded his discussion with Bruni concerning the language the ancient Romans actually spoke: Bruni said Cicero would have spoken a form of vernacular and that his Latin was the written form of the language; Biondo argued Cicero spoke Latin in the manner that he wrote it. Ibid., 237. Lorenzo Valla's grammar on Latin in 1440 was his most influential work. Ibid., 244. It also formed the basis of cultural creativity. Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494), while a professor at Florence, wrote verse introductions to his courses called *Silvae* in reference to Statius' work — i.e., Poliziano self-deprecatingly styled these preliminary thoughts "untreated timber". Ibid., 243.

79 Ibid., 244-245.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., 238. It should come as no surprise that for those chronicling the rise of Spain, Castilian was the imperial language of the future. Ibid., 256-57.

If the language of imperial Rome served to unify the temporal reach of Italian people, the Vulgate so served the spiritual connection of past to future. It makes sense that while criticism of the Vulgate had indeed begun in Italy, it was never pursued there with any great passion. Valla had argued for the revision of the Vulgate: Jerome was not its author, he claimed, but if so, there had been considerable corruption in the intervening centuries and a need for a new translation; his notes pointed out the importance of philology.⁸² Yet, it took over fifty years, and a scholar north of the Alps, for Valla's observations to gain traction: Erasmus published Valla's notes in 1505.⁸³

To the Counter-Reformation, editing of the text — especially on the basis of the source languages — threatened the legitimacy of the Vulgate's Latin. Counter-Reformation Catholics "saw attempts to revise or correct the biblical text as tampering with the Word of God, or as a challenge to the principle of inspiration."⁸⁴ The Catholics argued that Jerome's translation was inspired⁸⁵ and specifically upheld the Vulgate against the Septuagint on this basis.⁸⁶ By contrast, the versions of Scripture in Hebrew and Greek were not to be trusted.⁸⁷ The Council called for a new translation, but only from the best *Latin* manuscripts.⁸⁸

Indeed, one interesting corollary of Italian identification with the Latin of the Roman empire was a resistance to great familiarity with Greek. Greek texts, too, after all, became

82 Erika Rummel, "The Renaissance Humanists," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Alan J. and Duane F. Watson Hauser (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 289-290.

83 *Ibid.*, 289.

84 *Ibid.*, 281.

85 Allan K. Jenkins and Patrick Preston, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church: A Sixteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (New York: Ashgate, 2007), 26.

86 *Ibid.*, 228. Previously, when Gianozzo Manetti, from Florence, then secretary to Nicholas V and ultimately at court of King Alfonso of Naples, made a new Latin translation of the Septuagint and of the Hebrew psalter, he faced the charge of showing disrespect to Jerome (reputed author of Vulgate, commissioned by Pope Damasus and composed under divine guidance). Rummel, "The Renaissance Humanists," 287-288. Subsequently, there was the Latin translation (1527/28) of both the Old and New Testaments by the Italian Dominican Santes Pagninus, an independent scholar — his translations were used extensively by Agostino Steuco and Michael Servetus and in the second half of 16th century. *Ibid.*, 286; Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent, Vol. II: The First Sessions at Trent 1545-47*, trans. Dom Ernest Graf (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961), 67; Christopher Ocker, "Scholastic Interpretation of the Bible," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 2, eds. Alan J. and Duane F. Watson Hauser (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 257. Pagninus' efforts were incorporated (as separate volume) into the Royal Polyglot (Antwerp 1569-72). Rummel, "The Renaissance Humanists," 286-287.

87 "'A new language,' said a monk from the pulpit, 'has been discovered, which is called the Greek. It must be carefully avoided. This language is the mother of all heresies. I see in the hands of many a book written in that tongue; it is called the New Testament. It is a book full of briars and vipers. As for Hebrew, those who learn it immediately become Jews.'" John McClintock, ed., *History of the Council of Trent* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), 88. Compare Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 243 ("The Hebrew original was not regarded as reliable, but the Vulgate, as representing an authoritative version of that Hebrew original, was regarded as God's own word and the Greek translation of the Septuagint was also thus deliberately excluded").

88 The Sisto-Clementine edition (Sixtus V and Clement VIII) came out in 1592, the Septuagint based essentially on *Codex Vaticanus Graecus*, 1587. Guy Bedouelle, "Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation: Vol. 2: The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, eds. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 432-433. Only in 1590 was a full revision of the Vulgate published. *Ibid.*, 266. The preface to 1592 Vulgate, recognized, as had Jerome, that the time of his translation there were many versions, Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*, 244, but its revision worked backwards from troublesome text rather than forwards from any originals. *Ibid.*, 245-246.

increasingly printed in the Renaissance but unlike Latin, Greek was studied if at all dispassionately -- not like Latin, for daily use.⁸⁹ There are two important historical factors to consider in this regard. First, it was Latin, not Greek, which was autochthonous. Those who wrote the texts in Latin lived where the readers lived, breathed the same air and negotiated the same geography. Greeks were alien.⁹⁰ Second, it is important to recall that in addition to the natural distance from the Greek language there was a stronger and more immediate resistance to it as the language of the competing Byzantine Church. In the first half of the 15th century, a time period of growing interest in Latin texts, there was a contempt for the political and cultural pretensions of the Byzantine kingdom.⁹¹ By and large, therefore, the children of Latin simply domesticated the Greek texts they encountered, converting them into their own language.⁹² Knowledge of Greek in Italy was the province of a handful of scholars.⁹³ It was the ideal scholar was learned in both, said Castiglione in his *Book of the Courtier*, published in 1528,⁹⁴ but an ideal it remained. “Greek failed to find a secure place in the curriculum, because it only served the needs of Latin culture”.⁹⁵

That said, to the extent that Greek texts were popular in Italy it was due to the fact that scholars from the East had brought these texts with them into the port of Venice. Eastern residents in Venice created the demand for these works; Venice led the printing of these texts in the 16th century,⁹⁶ and Bologna, Padua and Ferrara were all centers of Greek learning.⁹⁷ And much as a Latin education would have involved familiarity with Caesar and other emperors so too Greek texts brought to prominence the preeminent character of the Hellenistic world,

89 R.R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 332-33. After Greek texts had been translated into Latin, Greek texts were themselves printed. The historians Herodotus and Thucydides were printed by the Aldine Press as early as 1502; others took until much later. Arrian’s history of Alexander, translated by Vergerio in 1440, was not printed in the Greek until 1535; Appian’s Roman History had been printed in Decembrio’s Latin in 1477 but did not appear in Greek until 1551; Diodorus Siculus had been translated by Poggio Bracciolini in 1472, but the Greek edition had to wait until as late as 1559. Paul Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 166-167.

90 Cicero himself could provide ammunition in this regard. Cicero had noted that the activity of Latin translation reduced any awkward dependence on Greek originals. Cicero was a “linguistic patriot” — he had great “pride at what had already been written in Latin,” and whether through translation or creation, he was boldly optimistic “at what the language might yet achieve”. Ibid., 165. And yet Cicero also had a great respect for Greek, the style of which he was often accused of relying upon. Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1949), 323.

91 Ibid., 166. See also Anthony Cutler, “The Pathos of Distance: Byzantium in the Gaze of Renaissance Europe and Modern Scholarship,” in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650*, ed. Claire Farago (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995), 26-29. But see Robert S. Nelson, “Byzantium and the Rebirth of Art and Learning in Italy and France,” in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Yale University Press, 2004), 517 (noting humanist interest in the first half of the 15th century).

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid., 166-167. R.R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 458 (“the interest of a small minority”).

94 N.G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 157. So too, Erasmus in 1508; Thomas More echoed the notion in his *Utopia*. Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus*, 174-175.

95 Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600*, 268.

96 Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 127.

97 Ibid., 114-123.

Alexander the Great. Alexander's life had long loomed large in legend, as the notion of a character conquering all the known world readily gave rise to the theme of the meaning of human desire and accomplishment.⁹⁸ Throughout the Middle Ages, the Alexander Romance was the most translated work aside from the Gospels.⁹⁹

Alexander's life was detailed, and set in comparison to that of Julius Caesar, by Plutarch -- probably the work that most served to introduce Hellenistic history into the Latin West.¹⁰⁰ Plutarch's Lives was translated into Latin as early as the 15th century¹⁰¹ and only the works of Josephus surpassed it as a Greek historical work.¹⁰² A new, complete, translation of Plutarch's Lives by Crusierius was published in 1561 followed in quick succession by no less than two other Latin versions.¹⁰³ Tommaso Poracchi's *Fatti de' Alessandro Magno* was published around 1560. This work reflected the "tremendous interest and stimulus to research" Alexander's life in the northern Italian environment, an interest which arose from the perceived power of Federigo Gonzaga, to whom the work was dedicated, and his perceived interest in addressing and resolving "the incompleteness of the numerous Latin MS texts and the lack of any facts whatever concerning Quintus Curtius".¹⁰⁴ The Gonzaga's household had long been a focus of humanist scholarship; perhaps its most famous scion was Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga himself, president of the Council of Trent until 1563.¹⁰⁵ Importantly, however, the interest was evidently in the Italian and Latin texts, not upon the Greek.

Latin was the cultural language of Italy -- certainly the language in which the imperial patrimony was set down and edited. This was the language of republican Rome, made Italian -- and even European -- by Roman imperial conquest. Likewise, the Latin of the Vulgate was that of the papal spiritual empire, a truth more dependent upon the Latin with which it was written than any original language in which it may have been composed. The soil for Greek texts was thin; claims for authority over the Italian peninsula from abroad were still clothed in the Roman imperial mantle -- and even where there was some political capital to be gained by the Gonzagas by identifying with Alexander, the emphasis was upon translation, the texts Latin, not Greek.

C. The Fear of Cultural Collapse

The lack of any serious identification with Greek texts highlighted contemporary anxiety about the westward advance of the Ottoman Turks. Common cause with the Byzantine culture as of 1453 might have brought the fight back to the Turks, investing the Latins in reclaiming the

98 Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 2-3.

99 Ibid., 19-20. Italian retellings include *I nobili fatti di Alessandro Magno* (prose) and *Alessandria in Rima* (1444) (verse). Ibid., 213. The Alexander Romance was incorporated into Dutch and German History Bibles "to fill the gap between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the Book of Maccabees." Ibid.

100 Joseph Geiger, "Plutarch's Parallel Lives: The Choice of Heroes," *Hermes* 109 Bd., H1 (1981): 85-104.

101 Katherine M. MacDonald and K.M. McDonald, "The Presence of Plutarch in the Preface to the Reader of Crusierius' Latin Translation of the Lives (1561)," *Bibliothèque d' Humanisme et Renaissance* 62, no. 1 (2000): 129-134.

102 Peter Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700," *History and Theory* 5, no. 2 (1966): 136.

103 Katherine M. MacDonald and K.M. McDonald, "The Presence of Plutarch in the Preface to the Reader of Crusierius' Latin Translation of the Lives, 129-134.

104 Berzunza, "Preliminary Notes on the Three Italian Versions of Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Historiae Alexandri Magni*," 135.

105 Murphy, "A Worldly Reform: Honor and Pastoral Practice in the Career of Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga (1505-63)," 400-402.

Greek outpost of their common empire. But division between Latin and Orthodox church meant that the Latins were content to let their Roman rivals fall, simply picking from the detritus of that civilization's fall the Greek wisdom that they liked, rendering it into Latin. They then hunkered down, entrusting the survival of the Roman Catholic church to its divinely favored rites of worship and strategic territorial and commercial concessions. The 16th century saw the Ottoman armies and navies advance westward while Italian states, divided by imperial and local rivalries, waited nervously, hoping for a divine miracle.

And then the Latin west divided and turned against itself. This disaster was more immediate, more local. In northern Italy in particular, the fear of territorial conquest by the Ottoman Turks¹⁰⁶ was now combined with a fear for the future of the Roman Church due to the continuing growth of the Protestant Reformation right across the Alps.¹⁰⁷ Both events combined to presage the end of the Roman Christian empire.¹⁰⁸ Like a shared past in Roman imperial glory and a shared cultural expression through the Latin tongue, here too was a shared outlook -- but this outlook was towards the future of Roman Christianity in Italy and it was bleak.

The single greatest reason for a sense of pessimism about the future had to be the threat to Christian unity posed by the growing Lutheran movement. The person who most made the Lutheran threat clear to Italy was not Luther himself but Charles V. Evidently not the intention of Charles, it was his troops underpaid in the emperor's conflict with the French that conducted the Sack of Rome;¹⁰⁹ on May 6, 1526, a force of Spanish and Germans attacked the walls and for one week, soldiers rampaged through Rome taking their payment informally.¹¹⁰

The great significance of the Sack of Rome was not the *translatio imperii* to the Holy Roman Empire — Charles' succession of titles had made that a fact -- but that the most visible of the soldiers sacking Rome were Lutherans, highlighting the foundation challenge to Roman Catholicism posed by the Hapsburgs. It was “a kind of inverse pilgrimage,”¹¹¹ a reclaiming of papal riches for the Northerner, if not the individual, that symbolized the evisceration of Papal spiritual power over his flock. Papal documents were shredded; in the Vatican palace, Raphael's *stanze* were defaced with Lutheran graffiti, and right in front of Clement, “Several German soldiers, affected by Lutheran anti-papal tracts, donned clerical garments, and led by one dressed in pontifical robes and the triple tiara paraded before Castel Sant'Angelo in a parody of papal

106 I think that it is advantageous to consider the theme by the “threat” posed by the Turks as opposed to simply focusing upon the conflict with the Ottoman enemy. First, there was no fighting in Italy itself in the second half of the 16th century and second, the fear of what the Turk signified was far more important than the realities of military defeat. In modern scholarship, this Christian-Muslim conflict has famously been considered a “clash of civilizations” — or of cultures — to use the timely phrase of Samuel Huntington. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). I prefer not to call it such, particularly since I am emphasizing the fear of Ottoman destruction of the West, not merely the substitution of one set of values for another. Indeed, the term “clash of civilizations” may be anachronistic in the 16th century.

107 The connection between the religious changes and political interests is well-trod ground. It may be helpful here, however, to note that my use of the term “Protestant Reformation”, herein, is specifically made to emphasize the German origin of the movement and the degree to which the struggle took place in northern (Germanic) Italy.

108 As humanism focused upon the future, not simply the past, so too the Protestant Reformation had a focus upon the past, not just the future. The Protestants' criticism of the legitimacy of Christian tradition discussed below, of course, is in this spirit too, as was the inquiry into the historical and prophetic significance of Daniel, such as the genealogical place of Turks among the nations of the world. In my view, however, by far the greatest contribution of the Protestant Reformation to a 16th century sense of Roman identity derived from the fear of the future that accompanied and was in part brought about by its revolutionary development.

109 Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 321-322.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid., 322.

procession. Some of this was not simply anti-Papal but pro-Lutheran. German soldiers demanded the pope hand over the sails and oars of Peter's bark to Luther, and the mob hailed 'Vivat Lutherus pontifex!'"¹¹²

The Sack of Rome had to be explained in a way that was meaningful to members of the Church. The Sack of Rome therefore helped resurrect an aspect of the centuries-old struggle for the inheritance of the Roman empire that had long lain comparatively dormant — an eschatological one.¹¹³ The fact of Roman destruction — and with it pontifical claims to imperial succession — necessarily called to mind the ultimate destruction of Rome suggested by the end of history adumbrated by the Book of Daniel. Ever since Jerome's commentary on the Book of Daniel, Christians had identified the Roman empire — and their Church — with the fourth and final empire. The Sack of Rome made thinking about the end immediate.

Daniel's four empires were the Babylonian, Median, Persian and Greek empires, each mentioned explicitly (much of Daniel was set in the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; Daniel 6 and 9 spoke of Darius the Mede and Daniel 10 of Cyrus; the Greek advent was mentioned by Gabriel in Daniel 10:20). By the advent of the common era, however, the Fourth Empire came to be associated with Rome (see, e.g., Josephus Ant 10.276; 4 Ezra 12).¹¹⁴ The schema of divine history persisted through the Middle Ages and into the 16th century. Both Catholics and Protestants recognized themselves as living in the empire of Rome, but while the faiths shared a common referent, and a common hope for the church, the Catholics and Protestants increasingly diverged upon the likeliness of reform, the longevity of the Church itself, and the imminence of the End.

Catholics saw the event as requiring the need for reform and envisioned reform in the traditional way that cemented the authority of the Pope over all people. Giles of Viterbo saw Charles as an emperor favored by God to chastise the Church — the 'new Cyrus'.¹¹⁵ Here we can see an example of the use of a past tradition regarding the future of Rome applied to the present. For Giles, the glory of the Roman Church has been merged into that of the Roman empire itself, but it is an empire that at the same time has been chastised by that of an empire that preceded it - Persia. In effect, Giles has translated Rome backwards in time, equating it with the first empire of Babylon (an identification made more prominently by Protestants, as shown below).¹¹⁶ Persian replacement of Rome/Babylon is therefore in keeping with God's historical plan.¹¹⁷

While Giles had historicized the Roman debacle, eliminating its significance for the future, the dominant Protestant attitude toward the future was negative, for it reflected the challenges and very real dangers associated with the Protestant-Catholic conflict. Apocalyptic preaching and expectation "was fairly common among sixteenth-century Lutherans."¹¹⁸ This was

112 Ibid.

113 The emphasis may be one of degree. Modern scholarship tends to emphasize the continuity of eschatological thinking and the multifaceted nature of its causes. See Heiko Oberman, "Teufelsdreck: Eschatology and Scatology in the 'Old' Luther," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (3), Autumn, 1988, 440 (noting as catalyst Luther's reading of Valla's thoughts about the Donation of Constantine).

114 Michael Lieb, Emma Mason and Jonathan Roberts, eds., "Daniel," *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 84.

115 Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 324.

116 The identification was made earlier in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts. See Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), 280 n. 145.

117 See John W. O'Malley, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform: A Study in Renaissance Thought* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1968), 104.

118 Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, "Introduction and Overview," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, Volume 2, *The Medieval Through Reformation Periods*, eds. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids,

especially true in the decades after Luther's death (1546),¹¹⁹ as historical events continued to thwart any comprehensive Lutheran success. This challenge heightened the desire to see obstacles as signs of the impending end — as the greater the challenges, the more likely the sign that deliverance was at hand. With this in mind, “Lutheranism looked to immediate transformation and liberation from history.”¹²⁰ Such fervor continued well into third quarter of the 16th century.¹²¹

The Pope's continuing refusal to reform was amplified by the evident threat to Christianity from the Turks. Luther in general believed that the Turks would not conquer Germany, but a long tradition of medieval prophecy based on Ezekiel 38:9 foresaw that Gog and Magog would overrun the people of God — and identification of Gog and Magog with the Turks had great influence among Lutherans. Turkish doom was prevalent throughout the 15th and 16th centuries.¹²² Caspar Fuger penned a popular poem, *A Prophecy of the Future Destruction of the German Land by the Turkish Emperor* in 1568.¹²³ The Turkish threat, like that of the Protestant, was a challenge to religious and cultural identity, but it also posed a qualitatively different danger due to the alien religion and culture of the Turk.¹²⁴

The immediacy of Protestant eschatology infused traumatic events, whether man-made or naturally caused, with heightened significance into the 1560s.¹²⁵ The Sack of Rome inspired a reliance upon prophecy.¹²⁶ So too did the more prevalent natural warnings such as earthquakes or other signs of nature.¹²⁷ Protestants recognized they could not distinguish God's warnings from those of Satan; it was necessary to consider such events as warnings regarding behavior and an impetus to change.¹²⁸

Protestants plumbed the depths of Biblical books for evidence that supported their notion of the imminent End. Luther and Melancthon both relied heavily upon Daniel's visions of the

MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 55.

119 Robin Barnes, “Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: Ca. 1500-1800,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Vol. 2: Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Group Inc., 2000), 154.

120 Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 266.

121 Barnes, “Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: Ca. 1500-1800,” 155.

122 Brinda Charr, “Turkish Futures: Prophecy and the Other,” in *The Uses of the Future in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrea Brady and Emily Butterworth (New York: Routledge, 2010), 73-74.

123 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, 85-6 and 286 n. 69.

124 Charr, “Turkish Futures: Prophecy and the Other,” 74. But compare Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 237; Joseph Davis, “The Reception of the “*Shulhan 'Arukh*” and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity,” *AJS Review* 26, no. 2 (Nov., 2002): 251-276 (noting that at times, especially between 1555 and 1565, there was significant political collaboration between Protestant and Catholic against the Turk that served to minimize their religious rivalries).

125 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, 31-32; Alexander Altmann, “Ars Rhetorica as Reflected in Some Jewish Figures of the Italian Renaissance,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Elaine Fulton, *Catholic Belief and Survival in Late Sixteenth-Century Vienna: The Case of Georg Eder (1523-87)* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007); Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 134.

126 *Ibid.*, 175.

127 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, 84; Fulton, *Catholic Belief and Survival in Late Sixteenth-Century Vienna: The Case of Georg Eder (1523-87)* (noting “obsession” with same); Barnes, “Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: Ca. 1500-1800,” 160. (noting Nostradamus' prediction of the Second Coming from a planetary conjunction in 1565).

128 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, 45.

four empires in that prophet's eponymous book to explain the events of the day. Luther started with Daniel 2 (the explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream: four monarchies, the last of which was Rome).¹²⁹ For Luther, the kingdoms of his own day corresponded with the ten horns of fourth beast in Daniel 7. The little horn was the Turk, and it was to subdue three horns before judgment (identified as the kingdoms of Egypt, Greece, and Asia Minor).¹³⁰

Melanchthon interpreted Daniel's visions as predictions of history from that prophet's time to 1542, when the last monarchy, he contended, was that of the Turks with its attendant cruelty.¹³¹ Melanchthon's work on Daniel was particularly influential; it was requested by Calvin.¹³² And Luther and Melanchthon were not atypical: their pessimistic apocalyptic expectation "was fairly common among sixteenth-century Lutherans."¹³³ As the century wore on, Lutherans became keen on precise calculation, for the date of the end of the Roman era would bring the end to Catholic inequity. "To inquire about future things out of these motives, and in the measure that God has revealed them, is right and pleasing to God," Melanchthon wrote.¹³⁴

Prophecies concerning the imminent End were subject to "exceptionally open circulation and exchange" in the 16th century¹³⁵ and well known throughout Europe.¹³⁶ This was particularly true in northern Italy, both because this was where the greatest connection to Lutheran thought lay but also because Venice itself was a magnet of sorts for prophetic thinkers. Venice hosted a number of prophetic preachers in the 16th century.¹³⁷ There was a prophetic origin to Venice (as well as to Mantua) that made such cities receptive to renewed prophetic notions; Venice in particular possessed numerous churches to Old Testament saints and prophets.¹³⁸ Indeed, it was hugely popular to listen to prophecy in Venice in the 1560s.¹³⁹

Evidence of awareness of ideas circulating in the Protestant Reformation, if not of sympathy to these ideas in late 16th northern Italy is clear, but it is often indirect. Consider the location of the Council of Trent. Trent was selected in 1545 as a compromise between pope and emperor: it was located in the Empire but it was an ecclesiastical principality and ethnically

129 Ibid., 40.

130 Ibid., 41.

131 Hauser and Watson, "Introduction and Overview," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, 55.

132 Timothy Wengert, "Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Philip Melanchthon," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation: Vol. 2: The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, eds. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 331.

133 Hauser and Watson, "Introduction and Overview," 55. The Book of Daniel was not the only source of historical prophecy among Lutherans. There was also the 6,000 year period of Elias, "an old cabalistic tradition or saying with the Jews, adorned with the name of Elias, that the world shall stand six thousand years: two thousand years without law, two thousand years with the Law, two thousand years shall the Messianic reign; but for the sake of the chosen the days will be shortened." Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation*, 78. Melanchthon preferred using this six thousand year scheme over both the four empire scheme of Daniel. Ibid., 104. Luther had referred to it as well, perhaps deriving the notion from the *Chronica* of Johann Carion, edited by Melanchthon. Ibid., 51.

134 Ibid., 97-98.; 111-12.

135 Charry, "Turkish Futures: Prophecy and the Other," 76.

136 Ibid., 81.

137 Kuntz, *The Anointment of Dionisio*, 100-101.

138 Ibid., 250.

139 Ibid., 246. Even in the late 16th century, we have evidence of historical prophecy not just in Venice, in the sect of Benedetto Corzaro in Venice, but with the nuns of the convent of San Lorenzo in Bologna. Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, 196.

Italian.¹⁴⁰ Trent was not simply at the border of Latin and Germanic territories, it was a liminal place between Lutherans and Catholics.¹⁴¹ However, while Protestantism was officially eradicated from Italy by 1560,¹⁴² even in the north,¹⁴³ Protestant sympathies undoubtedly persisted, if underground. In northern cities there was little investigation of Protestants.¹⁴⁴ The close connection of the Ferraran court with the French, plus the long period of wars that came to a close with the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis in 1559 must have permitted the continuation, if not the growth, of Protestant thought.”¹⁴⁵ French and Swiss publishers continued to translate Calvin into Italian well into the 1560s, despite the Church’s Index forbidding such books.¹⁴⁶ Dionisio would not likely have received the attention that he did from Duke of Savoy, Emanuele Filiberto, or from the Gonzaga of Mantua and the Medici of Florence, had there truly been no receptive ground for Protestant thought in northern Italy of the late 1560s.¹⁴⁷ Finally, there were evidently Protestant teachers still in Italy in the late 1560s, since in 1567-68 Venice ordered its instructors to profess the Catholic faith according to the bull of Pius IV.¹⁴⁸ Brocardo, for example, a French humanist, admitted to the Venetian Inquisition in the late 1560s that he had read and had in his possession a number of Protestant texts.¹⁴⁹ Even if Protestantism was ultimately eradicated from northern Italy, it certainly remained present until 1570.¹⁵⁰

Imperial Rome dominated the identity of the Christian population of northern Italy in the late 16th century. Rome’s imperial past justified the jockeying for power of the principalities and imperial contenders on the peninsula. The language of empire and the means to access religious truth was expressed in the Latin language. And the end of Roman history, tied hand in hand to the Roman Catholic Church, appeared imminent — its future dim in light of the Protestant Reformation and the Ottoman Turkish threat.

D. Jewish Alienation in Late 16th Century Italy

The Jews of 16th century Italy simply had no place in the Roman sweep of history as it had been incorporated into the Christian world view. This Christian exclusion of Jews from a

140 The location of Trent was part of the continuing Papal effort to secure Protestant buy-in to its efforts at Church reform. See Stephan Kuttner, “Papal Efforts Toward Protestant Representation at Trent,” *The Review of Politics* 10 (4), October, 1948.

141 Bedouelle, “Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation,” 430.

142 As late as the 1540s there were Protestant groups in Lucca, then Ferrara and Modena and Siena, all states with close links to France. The combined efforts of the Pope and Charles V made them flee these cities, at least officially. Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 120.

143 Hercule I of Ferrara sent his Protestant sympathizing wife back to France and expelled Protestants. Anne Laurence, “The Spread of Reform,” in *The Renaissance in Europe: A Cultural Enquiry: Challenges to Authority*, ed. Peter Elmer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 95.

144 *Ibid.*, 93-94.

145 John Jeffries Martin, “Religion, Renewal and Reform in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Early Modern Italy 1550-1796*, ed. John A. Marino, *The Short Oxford History of Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 32.

146 Laurence, “The Spread of Reform,” 95.

147 Kuntz, *The Anointment of Dionisio*, 46-47.

148 Craig Kallendorf, “The Virgilian Title Page as Interpretative Frame; Or, Through the Looking Glass,” in *Virgil and the Myth of Venice: Books and Readers in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 24.

149 Kuntz, *The Anointment of Dionisio*, 122-123.

150 Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*, 121. Part of the reason for the persistence may well have been the continuing Turkish threat, Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, 132-134; Volker Riedel, “Germany and German-Speaking Europe,” in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Craig W. Kallendorf (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), relieved only in the early 1570s.

common identification with a Roman past, present and future is the argument that dominates the remainder of this chapter. We will see that Christians viewed Jews as a people whose end had come with Rome; they no longer had a history that was meaningful. They were sidelined, tools merely to be used by one contestant for Roman power against the other during the flow of history. As the 16th century began, Jews could be tolerated because their continued existence served not just to help Christian against Christian but to remind Christians of the truth of their own historical trajectory: present-day Jews simply served the truth of Christian history and of Christian prophecy. But as the century progressed, the increasingly wealthy Jewish presence was seen to pose an existential threat to Christianity in light of the Protestant Reformation and the Ottoman Turkish threat. A new and singularly powerful effort was undertaken to expel Jews and to convert the remnant. The Christian identification with Rome now changed: it wasn't just that Jewish history had to end with the advent of Rome, but that Jews themselves had to disappear from the historical stage.

1. Christianity Excluded Jewish Identification with a Common Roman Past

Roman law was the foundation for the tension between a distinct Jewish identity and that of the polity. From the perspective of early Roman law, it was possible for Jews to remain Jews while nonetheless being citizens, *cives*, who “live according to the Roman law”; that principle applied on the Italian peninsula even in 10th-11th centuries when Byzantine rule departed Italy.¹⁵¹ The tension became harder to resolve with the increased power of the Church in political life. Italian legal scholars affirmed both that Jews were *de populo romano* and that they were *fideles*, “accepting at least the temporal authority of the Roman Church Militant.”¹⁵² Roman law did not protect Judaism as a religion or Jews as a culture, but it did preserve the category of Jews within Christian Roman society and as such permitted Jewish continuity within, but distinct, from Rome.¹⁵³

The struggle over northern Italian lands in particular introduced into Roman civic law a Germanic tribal notion of personal jurisdiction. As the powers of the Holy Roman Emperor developed, Jews were conceived of as a personal source of tax revenue -- a prize to be claimed, as in days of old. “The medieval legalists pointed out that Vespasian and Titus had imposed a special tax on the conquered Jews, which was soon extended to diaspora Jews as well.”¹⁵⁴ Given that Roman law had preserved, not resolved, the tension inherent in Jewish political identity, Jews easily became thought of as tools to be used by one contestant for imperial power against another.

The term associated with this new status of Jewish subjugation came from Frederick II, who called Jews “*servi camere nostre*”.¹⁵⁵ Jews were the personal property of the emperor. This notion of personal jurisdiction supported the imperial claims of the Holy Roman Emperor, himself German. Furthermore, the Emperor considered the Jews who lived in Papal lands to be

151 Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 65-66.

152 Ibid.

153 Solomon Grayzel, “The Jews and Roman Law,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series 59, no. 2 (Oct., 1968): 116-117.

154 Ibid., 115.

155 Friedrich Lotter, “The Scope and Effectiveness of Imperial Jewry Law in the High Middle Ages,” *Jewish History* 4, no. 1 (Spring, 1989): 33.

living in the same circumstances vis-a-vis the Church.¹⁵⁶ In the “juridical vacuum” of northern Italy, the princes of newly independent cities themselves asserted personal jurisdiction over the Jews in their territories.¹⁵⁷

A different notion of Jewish subservience, but one that equally excluded Jews from the polity, came from the Church. If the concept of *servi camere nostre* made Jews serve at the pleasure of the emperor, the Church policy toward Jews had long been established by the thought of Augustine. According to Augustine, the Jews were thought to exist not because of their own merit or because of a common civic enterprise but instead simply to serve the new Christian community of Rome. Their evident poverty and lack of grace ratified the value of Christian belief.¹⁵⁸ The consequences of Augustine’s position led the Church to consider the Jews as a distinct political group, necessarily subservient. Vis-a-vis the Christian Roman community, Jews were a “*ceterarum gentium communione discreti*,” a community set apart from other nations.¹⁵⁹

Christianity identity, then, as shaped by the princes and churchmen seeking to rebuild the Roman imperium was not just based upon embracing the Roman past but also and equally importantly upon its exclusion of Jews from any shared participation in that Roman past upon which they too could build. Christianity inherited the pride in Roman power, the Roman means of expressing culture and the articulation of messianic hope that had been common to Judaism and to Rome. In its most conventionally phrased format, history was now exclusively Christian. Jews were no longer participants in history but outsiders to it, Jewish existence serving, in the term of Augustine, merely to “witness” the historicity of the Christian narrative.¹⁶⁰

Jews had, of course, begun to develop an identity that took into account the undisputed victory of Rome over Jerusalem; that was the account of Josephus in his *Jewish War*, described below. But consistent with the Augustinian historical framework, Christian scholars simply could not accept that the version of Josephus they were reading did not make clear the Christian nature of the Roman victory. Josephus’ *Jewish War* -- with some theologically important emendations -- became a Christian text. And scholarship regarding Josephus was nonexistent, Josephus serving as textual witness to the Christian march through history. Now the 16th century brought support from Classical texts.

There was but one extensive account of the Jews’ interaction with Rome and that was Josephus’ *Jewish War*, and there was much about that work with which Jew and Christian could agree. Both faiths recognized that the meaning of the destruction of the Second Temple was that God was now at home in Rome.¹⁶¹ But Josephus had identified Rome with the Jewish God. It

156 Ibid., 33-34.

157 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 76-77.

158 Grayzel, “The Jews and Roman Law,” 115; Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 64 (“Like sex in the aftermath of the fall, the Jew exemplifies the imperfection of the contemporary Christian world, but somehow he retains a place within that world. He and his observance serve as living testimony — to God’s original intentions for human life and to his future plans; to the Jews’ own error and, by contrast, to the truth of the Christian faith”).

159 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 365.

160 Kenneth R. Stow, “The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond,” *Jewish History* 6, no. 1-20 (1992): 265-266; Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), xii.

161 The original version was likely in Aramaic. Eva Matthews Sanford, “Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 66 (1935): 129. Its original title as converted by Josephus into Greek was apparently ‘Peri Haloseos’, Franz Blatt, ed., *The Latin Josephus I: Introduction and Text, the Antiquities: Books I-V* (Copenhagen: Aarhus, 1958), 10, while its extant

was the Jews themselves who have brought about their own destruction. The responsible parties were revolutionaries; they were Jewish tyrants who had oppressed their fellow Jews, the result of which was that they “drew down upon the holy temple the unwilling hands of the Romans and the conflagration”.¹⁶² Josephus presented the Romans as understanding truly what it would mean to respect the Jewish God and His Temple. Josephus had Titus exclaim: “I call the gods of my fathers to witness and any deity that once watched over this place—for now I believe that there is none—I call my army, the Jews within my lines, and you yourselves to witness that it is not I who force you to pollute these precincts; nay, I will preserve the temple for you, even against your will.”¹⁶³

Indeed, Josephus exonerated Titus from destroying the Temple,¹⁶⁴ specifically blaming the Jews themselves: “The flames, however, owed their origin and cause to God’s own people.”¹⁶⁵ The immediate cause was, of course, Roman, but here too Josephus distanced Titus from the decision: “Titus, however, declare that even were the Jews to mount it and fight therefrom, he would not wreak vengeance on inanimate objects instead of men, nor under any circumstances burn down so magnificent a work; for the loss would affect the Romans, inasmuch as it would be an ornament to the empire if it stood.”¹⁶⁶ Rather, the Temple fell because “one of the soldiers, awaiting no orders and with no horror of so dread a deed” set fire to the structure.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Titus had tried in vain to stop it.¹⁶⁸

The Christian understanding of the Roman victory differed from that presented by Josephus, for to early Christian writers Josephus had clearly failed to realize that it was the Jewish rejection of Jesus that had resulted in the destruction of the Temple and exile. An early Christian solution was simply to amend Josephus to reflect what Christians thought Josephus must originally have written.¹⁶⁹ Josephus actually had written that Jesus was wrongly thought by his followers to be the Messiah and to have risen from the dead.¹⁷⁰ Origen, who wrote late in the 3d century CE, was quite clear about what Josephus had written in the text that he had read: “Flavius Josephus, who wrote the Antiquities of the Jews in twenty books . . . did not accept Jesus as Christ.”¹⁷¹ And yet Eusebius, who wrote about fifty years later, either edited (or else

Greek title is *Peri tou Ioudaikou polemon*, “Concerning the Jewish War”. H. St. J. Thackeray, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), vii. Within a few hundred years, the increasing separation of the culture of the Latin West and the Greek East required a Latin translation of this, the most popular of Josephus’ works. That translation, likely rendered by Rufinus (d. circa 410) much preceded the translation of the less necessary retelling of the Jewish Bible, the Antiquities. *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, eds. Heinz Schreckenberg and Kurt Schuberteds (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 76. Bearing the title *De bello Iudaico*, the work, it is notable, was referred to by Cassiodorus as *Captivitas Judaica*. Ibid.

162 Josephus, *The Jewish War, Books I-III*, I(2), p.5 and I(4), p.7

163 H. St. J. Thackeray, ed., *The Jewish War, Books IV-VII* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 413 VI:ii(5).

164 See ibn Daud, actually splitting the difference: “He was a great sage and forced to destroy the Temple.” Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes*, 298 n. 16 (*Zikhron Divre Romi*).

165 Josephus, *The Jewish War, Books IV-VII*, 449 VI:iv.5.

166 Ibid., 445 VI:iv.3.

167 Ibid., 449 VI:iv.5.

168 Ibid., 449 VI:iv.6.

169 Such emendation need not be fraudulent; the facts reported by Josephus — and especially their cause — were of interest to Jew and Christian alike and it would be an easy matter for a Christian scribe to believe he was restoring a passage that had been intentionally removed by a Jewish hand.

170 Louis H. Feldman, ed., *Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII-XIX* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), 48 n. a. (setting forth Eisler’s suggested reconstruction of the original text).

171 Origen, *Commentary On The Gospel Of Matthew*, Book X, ch. XVII, www.sacred-

transmitted) a significantly different version, in which Josephus did in fact recognize the significance of Jesus: ““At this time appeared Jesus, a very gifted man -- if indeed it is right to call him a man; for he was a worker of miracles, a teacher of such men as listened with pleasure to the truth, and he won over many of the Jews and many of Gentile origin as well. This was the Christ; and when at the instigation of our leading men he had been condemned to the cross by Pilate, those who had loved him at the first did not cease to do so; for on the third day he appeared to them alive again, the inspired prophets having foretold this and countless other wonderful things about him. Even now the group of people called Christians after him has not died out.””¹⁷²

This so-called testimony of Josephus Flavius to the divinity of Jesus (i.e., the “*Testimonium Flavianum*”) is what the Church preserved in all the manuscripts (both Greek and Latin) of Josephus,¹⁷³ and it was accepted as what Josephus had actually written well into the 16th century.¹⁷⁴ More than that, Josephus’ testimony was framed by Eusebius in a way to link the Jewish people’s refusal to believe Josephus’ testimony with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, despite Josephus’ own understanding: “[Josephus], although he did not believe in Jesus as Christ, sought for the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. He ought to have said that the plot against Jesus was the reason why these catastrophes came upon the people, because they had killed the prophesied Christ; however, although unconscious of it, he is not far from the truth when he says that these disasters befell the Jews to avenge James the just, who was a brother of ‘Jesus the so-called Christ’, since they had killed him who was a very righteous man.”¹⁷⁵

Josephus’ *Jewish War* served to cement the New Testament to the Old Testament. It served as a type of historical commentary on the Christian Bible, justifying the Christian faith based upon Jewish history.¹⁷⁶ A Latin translation of Josephus’ *Jewish War* was put into the Bible by Chateillon in 1550.¹⁷⁷ The Greek edition itself was published just a few years later, in 1544 (Froben).¹⁷⁸ Josephus also justified the continuous imperium of Rome. Despite the religious significance to Christianity of Josephus’ text, the most commonly quoted portion of the history by Latin and Byzantine historians was that supporting the Roman imperial claim on power — not just over the Jews but over the entire world. Agrippa’s speech on destiny of Roman power¹⁷⁹ could easily support not just the interests of the Pope but any monarch invested in the success of

texts.com/chr/ecf/009/0090368.htm. See also Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick, (Cambridge, University Press 1953), 43 (“although he did not believe in Jesus as Christ”).

172 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, iii. 9, trans. G.A. Williamson (New York: Dorset Press, 1965)), 63-64.

173 *The Latin Josephus I: Introduction and Text, the Antiquities: Books I-V*, 14.; Josephus, “Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII-XIX,” 49-51 (JA 18.iii.3).

174 French scholar Joseph Scaliger is credited as the first to doubt, albeit not publicly, the *Testimonium Flavianum* in the late 16th century. H.J. de Jonge, “Joseph Scaliger’s Historical Criticism of the New Testament,” *Novum Testamentum* 38, no. 2 (April, 1996): 190; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII-XIX*, 49 n.b..

175 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1:47 -- see above, at 43.

176 Schreckenberg and Schubert, “Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity,” 84-85. Just eclipsing the *Jewish War* in popularity was Josephus’ *Antiquities*.

177 Sanford, “Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus,” 144.

178 *Ibid.*, 145.

179 Josephus, *The Jewish War, Books I-III*, II.xvi.4, pp. 457-81.

Rome itself.¹⁸⁰ The *Jewish War* (along with his *Antiquities*) were the most popular Greek works in the Renaissance (albeit translated into Latin), and particularly so in last half of 16th century.¹⁸¹

De' Rossi was certainly aware of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, and for perhaps the same reasons considered by Scaliger later in the century, thought it to be a Christian interpolation. "Certain passages in Josephus are fabrications," de' Rossi declares.¹⁸² Again, "there is no doubt that for whatever reason, a significant part was tampered with."¹⁸³ De' Rossi does not identify the passage — nor is it all likely he would do so in the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation, but its likely target is the *Testimonium Flavianum*.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, this passage is the only one in Josephus that merited questioning; de' Rossi would have been well aware that it was quoted by Eusebius, but it was not present in Origen.¹⁸⁵

For Christians like Eusebius, it was not enough that Josephus had ratified the significance of Jesus. Even with the *Testimonium Flavianum*, Josephus had failed to recognize that the troubles of the Jews flowed from their denial of Christ. That issue had been addressed not by editing Josephus but by rewriting his narrative, at least with regard to the destruction of the Second Temple. Within a few centuries of the events, there was a Christian history, largely based upon Josephus's account in the *Jewish War*, that emphasized the imperial power of Rome and converted, as it were, God's disappointment in Jews' treatment of Jesus to God's abandonment of Jews for their treatment of Jesus. That text is the (*Pseudo*-)Hegesippus.¹⁸⁶

Hegesippus included the *Testimonium Flavianum* but embraced the issue of Josephus' lack of theological understanding and redressed it by supplying Christian causation to replace Josephus' Jewish understanding of events: "Excellent narrator Josephus (covers) with his historical pen, would that he had been attentive to religion and truth as to tracking down events and the staidness of speeches...but he did not understand the cause of this hardship."¹⁸⁷ The causes, according to the *Hegesippus*, were divine: generally, in accord with "[t]he miracle of divine destiny,"¹⁸⁸ and specifically, because "[t]hey indeed paid the punishments of their crimes, who after they had crucified Jesus the judge of divine matters, afterwards even persecuted his disciples."¹⁸⁹

180 Sanford, "Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus," 130.

181 Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700," 136-137.

182 Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes*, 331-32 (see also chapter 7).

183 *Ibid.*, 654.

184 *Ibid.*, 654 & n.2: "De' Rossi may be implying that there are Christian interpolations in the text. It may also be an oblique reference to the famous *Testimonium Flavianum*."

185 See also Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, I, chapter 11 (paras. 7-8). Also suggestive of Christian bias was de' Rossi's charge that the Jewish version of Josephus, the *Josippon*, was likewise rife with inaccuracies of benefit to the Jews. See Chapter IV, below. "As I wrote in chapter 19," he states, "this is also what happened to his extant Hebrew text [*Josippon*]." *Ibid.*, 654.

186 *Pseudo-Hegesippus* was written about 370 (making use of 1 Macc, Lucanus, Suetonius Tacitus) preserved among writings of Ambrose. Schreckenberg and Schubert, "Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity," 71; Sanford, "Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus," 134. Christian reworking of the early Rufinus Latin translation of Josephus' *Jewish War*. The author nonetheless adds Classical sources, too: Sallust, Ammianus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Livy, Vergil, Horace, Seneca, Lucan, Terence and Ovid, Cicero, Solinus Quintilian. The name Hegesippus, through association with the second century writer of that name mentioned by Eusebius, affords a proximity to the apostles and the truth of their witness. *Ibid.*, 1.

187 "Hegesippus, Translated from Latin into English," The Tertullian Project, accessed 5 February 2014, www.tertullian.org/fathers/hegesippus_01_book1.htm; www.tertullian.org/fathers/hegesippus_02_book2.htm, Prologue.

188 *Ibid.*

189 *Ibid.*, Book II, chapter XII.

Hegesippus was quite a popular text; numerous manuscripts preserved this account, there were other texts that quoted from it and metrical/rhymed versions.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, the textual reception of the *Hegesippus* and Rufinus' Latin translation of Josephus' *Jewish War* became intertwined. The *Hegesippus* ending could be appended to the Latin Josephus. Agrippa's speech in Josephus could likewise appear in the *Hegesippus*.¹⁹¹ Both Rufinus and *Hegesippus* were used almost interchangeably throughout the Middle Ages;¹⁹² whether the source of a given text is Rufinus or *Hegesippus* (which itself can also be called Josephus) can be hard to tell.¹⁹³ The combination of the *Testimonium Flavianum* and the *Hegesippus* was evidently sufficient to render Josephus a Christian authority. Not just Eusebius but Jerome frequently cited Josephus; Jerome even referred to him as "the Greek Livy".¹⁹⁴

In the 16th century, the text of Tacitus on Second Temple destruction came to bear upon the issue of the Temple's destruction, likewise supporting the Christian reworking of Josephus' account.¹⁹⁵ De' Rossi cites Tacitus' *Histories*, Book V, in his discussion of Pompey. De' Rossi says he learned about Tacitus from reading about "the troubles that befell the Jews in Temple times".¹⁹⁶ Given the intense interest in the meaning of this period, it is impossible that he was alone in his interest, whether among Jews or Christians. Tacitus had declared that the Jews were a "race detested by the gods".¹⁹⁷ More than that, Tacitus had combined his hatred by God with supernatural prodigies that pointed to Roman domination of the Jews.¹⁹⁸ To Christian humanists inclined to interpret pagan prophecies in keeping with the advent of Jesus, Tacitus' "pagan" account of divine intervention would likely support the Christian account of the Second Temple's destruction — whether through the *Testimonium Flavianum* or through the *Hegesippus*.

190 Sanford, "Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus," 136; Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, eds., *Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus, Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 349-361.

191 Sanford, "Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus," 141; David Flusser, "Josippon, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, eds., Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 393 (noting a combination of the Jewish Antiquities and the *Hegesippus*).

192 Sanford, "Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus," 139-140.

193 *Ibid.*, 1.

194 Jerome, *Epistula ad Eustochium 22*, in *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. F.A. Wright, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), 142-43.

195 Tacitus was increasingly popular in late 16th century Italy. Wendy Heller, "Tacitus Incognito: Opera as History in 'L'incoronazione di Poppea,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52 (1) (Spring 1999): 39-54 (noting increase in importance of Tacitus with increasingly imperial Italy in the 16th century); Peter Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700," *History and Theory*, 5 (2), 1966, 137; J.H.M. Salmon, "Cicero and Tacitus in Sixteenth-Century France," *The American Historical Review* 85 (2) (April 1980): 317, 322-23 (emphasizing his importance in Jean Bodin's *Methodus ad vacilem cognitionem historiarum* of 1566). See generally Roger Aikin, "Christian Soldiers in the *Sala dei Capitani*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (2) (Summer, 1985): 214 (importance of Classical historians toward cementing special place of Rome in history).

196 de Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, 378. His reference is to Book V of Tacitus' *Histories*, cited in Ludovico Vives' commentary on Augustine's *City of God*.

197 Tacitus, *Histories*: Books 4-5. *Annals*: Books 1-3., trans. John & Clifford H. Moore Jackson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), Book V.

198 *Ibid.*, Book V. There is increasing reason to believe that Roman accounts of Jews, most notably that of Tacitus, were meant to be taken in more of a curiously dismissive or ironic nature, see Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), but regardless they were hardly in keeping with the *Josippon*'s construction of a Rome founded upon Jewish glory.

And yet for those interested, Tacitus' *Histories* frustratingly dropped off just before the Temple was sacked. How fortunate it was that a portion of the missing section, in particular, that portion covering Titus' decision to burn the Temple, had in fact been "preserved" in Sulpicius Severus. Sulpicius may well have taken Tacitus' now missing account of the destruction of the Temple and merged it with Christian causation, much as Eusebius had altered the text of Josephus. As presented by Sulpicius, "Titus himself thought that the temple ought specially to be overthrown, in order that the religion of the Jews and of the Christians might more thoroughly be subverted" ¹⁹⁹ While Sulpicius may well have tarred Christianity with the Jewish brush, such an edition was certainly credible (if anachronistic) in a Roman empire now turned Christian, and the incorporation of Christianity did nothing to detract from the specifically Christian message of Jewish guilt: "And this last overthrow of the temple, and final captivity of the Jews, by which, being exiles from their native land, they are beheld scattered through the whole world, furnish a daily demonstration to the world, that they have been punished on no other account than for the impious hands which they laid upon Christ." ²⁰⁰

Sulpicius percolated in manuscript, but the first edition of his work was published in Basel, 1556. ²⁰¹ Sulpicius was used as a textbook thereafter, all throughout Europe in the mid-late 16th century. ²⁰² Those who were critical would have recognized the likely Christian interpolation into the Tacitean passage. First, Sulpicius' account of Tacitus differs from that of Orosius, who says merely that the Temple destruction was due to the growth of Christianity and the uselessness of Judaism. ²⁰³ Second, Tacitus' anti-Jewishness notwithstanding, Christianity itself was not likely to have been a factor, as it had played no role whatsoever in Josephus, even accepting his reference to Jesus as legitimate. ²⁰⁴

2. Christianity Excluded Jews from Participating in the Renewal of the Roman Polity

The Christian Roman conception that Jews were shorn from a common Roman root meant that when the city states of northern Italy began to develop, Jews participated only as outsiders assisting one player against another. The *condotta*, or agreement, put Jews on contractual footing with the local lord who sought to develop his economic base in order to

199 Sulpicius Severus, "*Sacred History*," Book II, ch. XXX www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf211.ii.vi.ii.xxx.html.

200 Ibid. Compare Tommaso Leoni, "Against Caesar's Wishes: Josephus as a Source for the Burning of the Temple," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58, no. 1 (2007): 39-51 (supporting Josephus' account over that of Sulpicius Severus) with Paul Spillsbury, "Josephus on the Burning of the Temple, the Flavian Triumph and the Fall of Rome," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 41 (2002): 306-327 (inclined to the notion that Josephus whitewashed Titus' actions).

201 Edward Harwood, *A View of the Various Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics*, 4th ed. (London: G. & J. Robinson, 1790), 173.

202 Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia: Jesuit Educational Strategy, 1553-1622* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 19.

203 Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, VII (9), trans. A.T. Fear (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 338-39: "He was for some time undecided whether he should burn it since its survival would encourage the enemy or whether he should preserve it as a memorial of his victory. But now that the Church of God had already blossomed forth richly throughout the world, it was His will that this building should be removed as an empty shell that had outlasted its usefulness. Therefore, Titus, after being acclaimed imperator by the army, set on fire and destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem . . ." But see (4) "From the time of the passion of our Lord to this day, the Jews, who had persecuted Him to the extent of their power, have complained incessantly of an unbroken succession of disasters, until finally their nation, drained of its lifeblood and scattered abroad, disappeared from history."

204 See T.D. Barnes, "The Fragments of Tacitus' *Histories*," *Classical Philology* 72, no. 3 (July, 1977): 228.

compete with his neighbors,²⁰⁵ but nonetheless, the relationship was one of dependence upon the lord, not the community.²⁰⁶ For the Christian ruler, the purpose of the *condotta* was to purchase assets; in essence, the Jewish community was a bank. Christians could not, pursuant to Church law, lend money at interest, and the large sums needed for investment were significant risks that required compensation for the long use, or *usus* (as well as the possible loss) of the money — hence “usury”, a practice that was a sin for Christians.²⁰⁷ For the Jews, the opportunity was not simply economic but social as well, for the Jewish business required a Jewish community to support it and the Jewish community now had a secure place in which to live.²⁰⁸ Accordingly, under the *condotta*, Jews exercised a degree of power in the new communities into which they moved,²⁰⁹ but they were tools to develop new visions of Rome,²¹⁰ not participants in the vision. “In the course of the fifteenth century all Italian cities except Genoa and Venice acquired at least one Jewish lending establishment.”²¹¹ And by the time the pope rejoined the contest for the renewed Roman empire, the papal court, like those of northern cities, exercised jurisdiction over Jews that was special, *ad personam*, and not due to any notion of the Jews as a political body.²¹²

Restricting Jews to usury served Christian religious interests, while at the same time emphasizing that Jews were outsiders in the culture in which they happened to live.²¹³ Every Sunday, Christians attending church were reminded of the Jewish betrayal of Jesus to the Romans. The Christians had converted the Romans, and as the spiritual conquerors of Rome, Christians adopted and appropriated the identity of their former adversary. The Jews, on the other hand, had no continuing significance, much less one that could build an identity upon

205 David S. Chambers, “A Condottiere and His Books: Gianfrancesco Gonzaga (1446-96),” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 70 (2007): 55 (noting *condotta* as the form of agreement between different northern Italian cities). Also, the term was used in bargaining for soldiers, or mercenaries. See Andrew and Gordon Griffiths Gow, “Pope Eugenius IV and Jewish Money-Lending in Florence: The Case of Salomone Di Bonaventura During the Chancellorship of Leonardo Bruni,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 2, 295 (i.e., condottiere).

206 See Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 76-77. (Rights as *servi camerae* “were normally enshrined in legal agreements, or *condotte* which, by the fifteenth century, had become largely standardized”). The respective rights of local lords over Jews could also be part and parcel of the larger contest of authority between rulers who sought to consolidate authority and those resisting it. See William Chester Jordan, “Jews, Regalian Rights, and the Constitution of Medieval France,” *AJS Review*, 23 (1), 1998, 15.

207 Raphael Straus, “The Jews in the Economic Evolution of Central Europe,” *Jewish Social Studies* 3, no. 1 (Jan., 1941): 22.

208 Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 122.

209 Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, “Jews and Judaism in the Rhetoric of Popular Preachers: The Florentine Sermons of Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419) and Bernardino Da Siena (1380-1444),” *Jewish History* 14, no. 2 (2000): 180; Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, 123-124. For a difference in emphasis, see Diane Owen Hughes, “Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City,” *Past & Present* 112 (Aug., 1986): 12-13 (emphasizing Jewish exclusion from established maritime cities such as Genoa and Venice and the relegation of Jewish settlement to smaller towns).

210 Maristella Botticini, “A Tale of ‘Benevolent’ Governments: Private Credit Markets, Public Finance, and the Role of Jewish Lenders in Medieval and Renaissance Italy,” *The Journal of Economic History* 60, no. 1 (Mar., 2000): 167.

211 Gow, “Pope Eugenius IV and Jewish Money-Lending in Florence: The Case of Salomone Di Bonaventura During the Chancellorship of Leonardo Bruni,” 295.

212 Bernard D. Cooperman, “Ethnicity and Institution Building Among Jews in Early Modern Rome,” *AJS Review* 30, no. 1 (Apr. 2006): 136.

213 Anti-Semitism is not, of course, the only factor here. The development of competition naturally led to the privileging of exclusivity. See Gavin I. Langmuir, “The Jews and the Archives of Angevin England: Reflections on Medieval Anti-Semitism,” *Traditio*, 19 (1963), 240.

ancient Rome. “Postbiblical history,” or Christian history, “had begun with Rome’s destruction of the Second Temple; it would end only with the Second Coming of Christ”.²¹⁴ Much as the German notion of personal jurisdiction solidified Jewish control by local princes as of the 14th century, so did the Augustinian idea of “witness” bolster the ease with which the Church itself, as a local ruler, came to use the Jews.

The developing economy of the 14th century and the growing role of Jews — specifically, the apparent growth in Jewish wealth and importance — made the Augustinian status quo no longer convincing. Quite simply put, it was evident that Jews “no longer fulfilled the role that Augustine had given to him” — Jews had begun to move in history.²¹⁵ By the mid-15th century, it was extremely difficult to distinguish Jew from Christian;²¹⁶ indeed, with the possibility for social mixing, Jews now posed a threat to a visible Christian identity that was distinct from that of Jews.

The Pope’s solution was to mark Jews as different by requiring them to wear distinctive clothing or indicia. The process began during the commercial development of the 13th century, somewhat earlier than the conditions that created the political vacuum in northern Italy. In 1215 Fourth Lateran Council, citing that fundamental threat to identity, offspring from forbidden sex,²¹⁷ ordered that henceforth Jews were to be distinguishable by their clothing.²¹⁸

There were now increased restrictions on living arrangements. 15th century friars promoted not just signs but segregation and even expulsion — anything to restore the sanctity of Christian distinction.²¹⁹ In the Venice of 1394, Jews had not only to wear the yellow badge but were limited to a 15 day residence.²²⁰ Friars could and did take advantage of and even provoke social unrest in order to expel Jews, as in Milan.²²¹ Charles V wanted to expel the Jews from Naples before he ordered them to wear a badge.²²²

The increasing wealth of Jews and the concomitant loss of social and political privilege to Christians (to say nothing of Christian indebtedness to Jews) contributed to the popular release of resentment during festivals that celebrated the Holy Roman Empire, as it was in those principalities that religious restrictions on Jews or their economic or social activity were most likely to be lax.²²³ There was anti-Jewish violence in Bologna upon the coronation of Charles V in 1520; in Mantua in 1550 there was violence upon the Duchess of Mantua’s son’s marriage

214 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, 365.

215 Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, 394-396. For a contrary view, see Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 66 (the acceptance of Jewish communities in Italy following the Spanish Expulsion was an indication of the continuing vitality of the Augustinian idea).

216 Hughes, “Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City,” 16.

217 Jewish women bearing a Christian child produced Jews, not Christians. Benjamin Ravid, “From Yellow to Red: On the Distinguishing Head-Covering of the Jews of Venice,” *Jewish History* 6, no. 1/2, 183.

218 *Ibid.*, 179. It is telling that in the economic race of those times, and largely throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, this decree was not enforced. Hughes, “Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City,” 17-18. Often this took the form of distinguishing signs such as wearing an “O” or earrings. *Ibid.*, 21-24.

219 *Ibid.*, 18-20.

220 Ravid, “From Yellow to Red: On the Distinguishing Head-Covering of the Jews of Venice,” 182.

221 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 81.

222 Marianna D. Birnbaum, “Jewish Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara,” *Mediterranean Studies* 7 (1998): 139 n. 15.

223 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 75.

attendant upon the principality's presentation of the city's Jewish cemetery to monastery, and again in 1562 upon the birth of an heir.²²⁴

The situation of Jews in Mantua in these years in particular is ambiguous. On the one hand, Mantua served as the largest community of Ashkenazi Jews at the time and undoubtedly as a center of "traditional" Jewish life as compared with the hybrid identity of Spanish and Portuguese *conversos* in Ferrara and Venice. There was no conversion to Christianity to speak of in the community in the 15th and first half of the 16th century amidst the learned²²⁵ -- something that speaks to the ability of Jews to maintain some cultural contact with Christian scholars without having to compromise their identity. Duke Vespasiano Gonzaga set up "little Athens" in Sabionetta — printed Hebrew books: 26 from 1551-59.²²⁶ Some moved to Mantua at that time; the Provenzali brothers mentioned by de' Rossi in *Me'or 'Enayim* worded in the printing houses as proofers.²²⁷ *Me'or 'Enayim* itself was published by Meir ben Efraim at press of Giacomo Rufinelli in the clocktower of Mantua,²²⁸ albeit by Christian printers.²²⁹ All of this bespeaks a great degree of toleration by the Gonzaga princes. Indeed, the most notable Jewish playwright of the time, Judah de' Sommi, was patronized by the Gonzaga family and by 1580 by Guglielmo himself.²³⁰

It is likely a mistake to read too much into the evident toleration of the Gonzaga family and in particular Guglielmo. Jews may have been a fashionable indulgence but one that required moderation. When Hacoen says that the papal expulsions of 1569 were hateful to rulers of Mantua, Florence, Ferrara²³¹ we should see in this more hostility to outside interference than we should to cultural affinity. Indeed, while it was possible to conceive of a plan in which Mantua would take in some 4000 of those expelled from Papal States in 1469, that never took effect.²³² This suggests that the Duke had a careful line to walk between his acceptance of a large, even vibrant Jewish community within his borders -- and significant risk of popular outrage, which was expressed with regularity against the Jews who lived there. It was the case that the Duke himself did not encourage the riots; indeed he sent soldiers to defend Jews and issued proclamations of protection.²³³ And yet, ducal family celebrations had a history of serving as occasions for violence and destruction of property,²³⁴ suggesting a toleration of anti-Jewish violence equal to any toleration of Jews themselves. Even while Judah de' Sommi was under the patronage of the Gonzaga, he was required to wear the Jewish badge.²³⁵

The caution with which the duke treated de' Rossi's Jewish community is perhaps evident in a specific change that de' Rossi himself introduced into his work. In his original edition, de' Rossi made so bold as to state his desire that Duke Guglielmo of Mantua be convinced by him to commission a translation into Latin (or Italian, possibly) of a Greek

224 Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), 182. Noting as well violence in Modena on the election of Clement VIII, 523.

225 Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher Ltd., 1977), 524.

226 *Ibid.*, 681-683.

227 *Ibid.*

228 Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes*, xlii & n. 149.

229 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 682.

230 *Ibid.*, 660.

231 *Ibid.*, 26.

232 *Ibid.*, 28.

233 *Ibid.*, 25-26 (noting his lack of encouragement of the riots, sending soldiers to protect Jews and proclamations of protection).

234 *Ibid.*, 25 & n. 92. See n. 179 *supra*.

235 *Ibid.*, 660 (n.b., the dating of the evidence follows the publication of *Me'or 'Enayim*).

historical work of Aristobulus that de' Rossi believed to be in the Medici library in Florence: "Then God would accept that I should procure the agreement of his majesty the duke to sanction a translation of the text as though legislated from time immemorial for the purpose of the greater glory of the Torah."²³⁶ Implied in this statement, of course, was not just that de' Rossi's scholarship was the sort that could be recognized by the duke but that the duke might be persuaded, as had Ptolemy before him, to translate a Jewish work in order to glorify the Jewish law. By his second draft, however, de' Rossi had appreciably distanced himself from the duke: "Then God might prompt a scholar to translate it into Latin or Italian, which honor and prestige was bestowed on the works of Josephus and Yedidyah."²³⁷ The distancing was religious, for not only does de' Rossi no longer put himself forward (the translator needn't even be Jewish) but the prestige mentioned was that of the Hellenistic writers Josephus and Philo, not the Torah.

There appears to have been less hostility within Ferrara, but also less "Judaism", and the latter was possibly the reason for the former. Early in the 16th century, Ferrara welcomed the Portuguese *conversos* to join some Jews but cautiously — there was a small German Jewish presence already present, and the Spanish community joined the Italian Jewish community in the 1520s. There was little if any distinction between the Jews and the *conversos* from the perspective of the state, and no evident interest in conversion.²³⁸ In 1538 Ercole II made clear he welcomed Jews from all parts; in 1550 he reiterated his guarantee of protection.²³⁹ Importantly, the 1550 decree offered Jews residence even if they had previously identified as Christian — in other words, relapsed Jews.²⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the character of the city remained *converso*, or to some degree cosmopolitan. Ferrara welcomed the printing of texts in Spanish type; the 1550s was a period in which the city published Jewish texts in Spanish for the burgeoning *converso* population.²⁴¹ At the time the Pope expelled the *conversos* from Ancona, Ferrara contained the second largest *converso* population. Following the expulsion, Ferrara was the foremost *converso* city in Italy.²⁴²

Ferraran *conversos*, however, would likely have experienced a kind of distancing that was relatively new to Italy in the 16th century, and that was the fear that the *conversos* were Ottoman spies. This fear was particularly acute in Venice, the city that had the most to lose from naval Ottoman advances, but the tension in Venice would have been plainly evident in Ferrara, home of a considerable *converso* community, many with ties to Venetian trade. In 1565 the Este's ambassador noticed a reluctance among the Venetian patriciate to renew the Jews' charter and a propensity to seek their expulsion, be they 'old', Levantine, or 'those few Portuguese'. This attitude was due (he felt) to a desire on the part of 'many of the nobles' — the more

236 Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes*, 189 n. 42.

237 De Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, 189.

238 Segre, "Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey," in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World After 1492*, ed. Alisa Meyuhus Ginio (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1992), 124-125.

239 Benjamin Ravid, "A Tale of Three Cities and Their Raison D'Etat: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century," in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World After 1492*, ed. Alisa Meyuhus Ginio (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1992), 141-142.

240 Segre, "Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey," 124-125. Again, in 1551. Ravid, "A Tale of Three Cities and Their Raison D'Etat: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century," 144-145.

241 Segre, "Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey," 136.

242 von Greyerz, "Portuguese Conversos on the Upper Rhine and the Converso Community of Sixteenth-Century Europe," 62.

enterprising, that is — ‘to encroach stealthily on their trade’.²⁴³ Such competition could naturally lead to suspicions of opposing loyalty, as well as generating it.

Christians were aware that Jews had achieved prosperity in Ottoman lands and had moved into the international trade one dominated by Venice; because of the increasing tension between the Christian West and the Ottoman East in the 16th century, therefore, Jews were thought of as liminal third parties — useful as spies or dangerous as enemies.²⁴⁴ Part of this potency was precisely the freedom of movement that Jews possessed in Ottoman lands and therefore as a medium of exchange between the cultures.²⁴⁵ Part was the degree to which the Turks recognized and utilized the skills of the Jews who had left the Iberian peninsula. Suleyman himself had interceded for Dona Gracia Mendez in Venice and as close as Poland he had obtained trading rights for Jews.²⁴⁶ Jews entered the Ottoman diplomatic corps too.²⁴⁷ The Jewish connection to Ottoman Turkey was particularly well known in Venice. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, grand vizier (1565-79) used Rabbi Salamon as an intermediary to negotiate and arrange for portraits of the sultan to be made in that city.²⁴⁸ Interestingly, ghetto-originating Venice offered Jews citizenship in that city in exchange for information that they could use against the Turk.²⁴⁹

But the ability of Jews to be of use also permitted the perception (and reality) that Jews could be dangerous. Venice had throughout the 1560’s become increasingly sensitive to and hostile regarding the competition posed by Jewish and *converso* merchants.²⁵⁰ There was considerable feeling in the late 1560s that the Jews were behind recent Venetian military disasters.²⁵¹ In 1568, Venice ordered the destruction or correction of thousands of copies of the recently printed Talmud,²⁵² most likely out of the fear that the Jews were subverting the security of Venice itself.²⁵³ In the years around 1570 in particular, Venetian distrust of Jews as Ottoman spies and saboteurs was high. It was at this time that Venice tried Abram Righetto before the Inquisition — not for religious beliefs but for his connection to Nasi, the Jew widely thought to

243 Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey,” 122.

244 Carina A. Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe: The Ottomans and Mexicans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 176.

245 Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 171-172.

246 Walter E. Weiker, *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity: A History of the Jews of Turkey* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1992), 34.

247 Part was the recognition that the Jews had good reasons to prefer the Ottoman state to Christian Italy. *Ibid.*, 32-33.

248 Necipoglu, “Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry,” 423-424.

249 Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul*, 59.

250 There are a number of names used to characterize former Jews who are now Christians. *Conversos*, *marranos* and New Christians are the most common. There is a considerable debate as to the sincerity of the Christian faith of these people, a debate enhanced — among other reasons — by the varied circumstances in which the conversions took place (e.g., voluntarily or under coercion in Spain; involuntarily in an entire community in Portugal), the degree to which distinctively Jewish customs continued to be observed; and the degree to which some reverted (or converted) to Judaism. I will use the name “*converso*” because it lacks the prejudicial connotation of “*marrano*,” avoids the sincerity associated with “New Christians” and conveys the fluidity of the Jewish/Christian designation, both in the eyes of the *conversos* and in the eyes of their Christian society.

251 Paul F. Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 118.

252 *Ibid.*, 111-112.

253 *Ibid.*, 118.

have provoked the recent Ottoman-Venetian war.²⁵⁴ Indeed the institution of the Inquisition in Venice, while Roman, was particularly Venetian in its focus upon treason (in addition to Lutheranism).²⁵⁵ Specifically, Venetians believed that Jews had sabotaged their fleet at home, as well as engineered the fall of their eastern territory, Cyprus.

The tension came to a head and was released once Venice and the Holy League prevailed at Lepanto; now it was safe to vent frustrations upon the Jewish community, particularly the Levantines. There was a sense of “euphoria”.²⁵⁶ Venetians celebrated by harassing Levantine Jews.²⁵⁷ 1571 was two years before the expiration of the community’s *condotta*, yet Venice voted right away to expel all Levantines and Turks from the city when the term expired.²⁵⁸ Ultimately, with peace (even a peace under which Venice ceded Cyprus to the Turks), business sense prevailed and a new *condotta* was agreed upon.²⁵⁹ But business toleration is not the same thing as inclusion, and if *conversos* were not recognized as members of the polity, how much harder it must have been for self-declared Jews.

3. Christianity Inherently Excluded Jews from a Hopeful Roman Future

The Catholic hostility to Italian Jews in the mid-16th century was unprecedented, as was its emphasis upon the inability to reconcile the continued existence of Jews with hope for Christian Rome. No longer was it sufficient for Jews to be contained; rather, they had to be converted or expelled.

The ratcheting up of anti-Jewish measures began after 1553 with Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa, an Inquisitor soon to become Pope Paul IV in 1555.²⁶⁰ Carafa began a campaign to press Jews to convert largely in response to the fact that Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, had not taken the steps necessary to squash the Lutheran Reformation. Indeed, to the contrary, Charles had determined his empire too large to govern and had severed Germany from Spain, ceding it — and its empty title of Holy Roman Emperor, to his brother. To Carafa, this decision effectively ceded Rome to Germany. Carafa had interpreted the Lutheran rise in accord with the Book of Daniel, studying the meaning of the 70 weeks period in chapter 9; he undertook a personal mission to save the Church of Rome by converting the Jews.²⁶¹

Just weeks after becoming Pope Paul IV, Carafa adopted the approach of “pious lashes” advocated by Quirini and Justiniani. He placed his trust in something the Church lawyers called “predisposing force,” meaning the resort to vigorous pressures just short of outright coercion.²⁶²

254 Brian Pullan, “‘A Ship With Two Rudders’: ‘Righetto Marrano’ and the Inquisition in Venice,” *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 1 (Mar., 1977): 45 (handed over because thought to be relative of Nasi). Compare Renata Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey,” 125.

255 Pullan, “‘A Ship With Two Rudders’: ‘Righetto Marrano’ and the Inquisition in Venice,” 29.

256 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 89.

257 Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” 120.

258 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 89; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 311-312.;

Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” 120.

259 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 89; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 311-312.;

Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” 120; Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-

Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey,” 123 n. 34; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 311-312.;

Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” 120; Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 89.

260 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 67.

261 *Ibid.*, 72-74.

262 Stow, “The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond,” 263-264.

The link between the new pope's application of force to convert the Jews and his view of the eschaton was clearly evident: by seeing their complete desolation, the Jews would realize that the prophecies concerning the transfer of rule and power to Christ had been fulfilled.²⁶³ As the century progressed, other popes supplemented these measures with the remedy of expulsion (from all Papal territories but Rome and Ancona in 1569 and 1593).²⁶⁴ And Paul IV's conversionary program was perceived as such by the Jews.²⁶⁵

It was Paul IV who effectively applied the Inquisition to the Jews themselves, not simply to "New Christians" or *conversos*, who had emigrated from Portugal (or Spain). He ordered the burning of the Talmud in Rome, 1553,²⁶⁶ despite the explicit approval given for its publication by Leo X.²⁶⁷ Other cities followed, notably Venice, Ferrara and Mantua, Florence and Urbino.²⁶⁸ Perhaps hundreds of thousands of books were consigned to the flames.²⁶⁹ The following year, 1544, Carafa issued a bull regulating the Talmud.²⁷⁰ The 1557 Inquisition prohibited possession of Hebrew work except the Bible.²⁷¹ Hebrew publishing moved from Venice to other cities less susceptible to papal pressure such as Mantua and Ferrara.²⁷²

The effect of the Index was designed to extend beyond Italy and into Germany; here the connection between the study of Hebrew and the lapse of Catholic faith was most apparent due to the prolific Christian Hebraists. The pre-Tridentine "liberal" papal support of Hebrew study and the printing of Hebrew books was now replaced by a view of the texts as bearing and spreading a pernicious influence. The Church called Lutherans "Judaizers," their study of Hebrew, the path of the Devil to hell.²⁷³ The Roman Index of Prohibited Books was first printed in 1557, revised in 1559; it banned the entire works of some 550 authors as well as specifically

263 Ibid. The text *De Iudaeis et aliis infidelibus* of the Catholic jurist Marquardus de Susannis, published at Venice in 1558. Also influential was Jesuit scholar Francisco de Torres, in 1555. Kenneth R. Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (1972): 440.

264 Stow, "The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond," 263-264; Ibid., 265-266. Conversion was not first articulated as a goal by Pope Paul IV. The goal of conversion first appeared important to Pope Martin V in 1425: Christians were to receive Jews into their territories "under hope of conversion". Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 69. But Pope Paul IV pursued the goal to a degree and with an intensity that was unprecedented. This goal would lead Pope Gregory XIII in 1584, to make attendance at Christian sermons compulsory for the Jewish ghetto community. Stow, "The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond," 265-266.

265 Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," 439-440; Pullan, "'A Ship With Two Rudders': 'Righetto Marrano' and the Inquisition in Venice," 50-51.

266 The opportunity presented itself, arising from a dispute among two Venetian publishers in which each side characterized the other as supporting a version of the text that insulted the Christian faith. Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," 435-436.

267 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 291-292.

268 Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," 435; Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 24-25; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 292.

269 Grendler, "The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568," 106.

270 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 293; Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 67.

271 Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," 435-436; Ibid., 441. But note that the Talmud itself was listed on the Index only as of 1559. Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud," 441.

272 Grendler, "The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568," 103.

273 Michael T. Walton and Phylis J. Walton, "In Defense of the Church Militant: The Censorship of the Rashi Commentary in the Magna Biblia Rabbinica," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 385.

identified titles.²⁷⁴ The 1564 Tridentine Index featured the importance of censorship as a method to both permit the business of publishing and the goal of the Catholic faith. Now the Talmud was allowed so long as it was expurgated of problematic passages and printed without its title.²⁷⁵ There was a new printing of the text in 1564-68 in Venice.²⁷⁶ Other Jewish books were declared acceptable as well if they did not contain blasphemies.²⁷⁷ Pius V, pope from 1566 to 1572 — like Paul IV, an inquisitor — would renew the ban however in 1566.²⁷⁸ In, 1568 Venice ordered the destruction or correction of thousands of recent copies on the grounds that the texts subverted Catholicism.²⁷⁹

Pope Paul IV burned more than the Talmud. In 1556 he put to the flames twenty-five Jews²⁸⁰ in Ancona who formerly had been *conversos*.²⁸¹ In taking these steps, Paul IV eliminated the first large *converso* community under the Renaissance popes.²⁸² The population shifted to the more tolerant northern cities such as Ferrara.²⁸³ Of the former residents of Ancona, the most notable was the physician Amatus Lusitanus (whom de' Rossi himself was to consult).²⁸⁴

Paul IV founded the ghetto of Rome with the papal bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum* in 1555.²⁸⁵ It was not the first time that Jews had been ordered segregated from the Christian population, and the bull continued -- if enhanced -- other economic or social restrictions.²⁸⁶ What was most important was this ghetto was a tool for conversion of the Jews and hence not just a means of separation but of oppression.²⁸⁷ But while conversion was a regular and increasing feature of the times,²⁸⁸ “there was no rush to the baptismal font”²⁸⁹.

274 Paul F. Grendler, 1988, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 25-54, 45 ff.

275 Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” 109.

276 Ibid., 110.

277 Stow, “The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud,” 443-444.

278 Ibid.

279 Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” 111-112. Venice relented for one publisher, allowing sale of books outside of Venice. Ibid., 113.

280 As Inquisitor, Carafa had burned a Franciscan friar who had converted to Judaism as a result of his studies. Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 67; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 290; Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 151.

281 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 67. Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 300-301 (the memory of their death is recited on 9th of Av to the present day). Ibid. He sentenced other *conversos* to the galleys. Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 67.

282 Kaspar von Greyerz, “Portuguese Conversos on the Upper Rhine and the Converso Community of Sixteenth-Century Europe,” *Social History* 14, no. 1 (Jan., 1989): 62; Peter Earle, “The Commercial Development of Ancona, 1479-1551,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series 22, no. 1 (Apr., 1969): 43. Ancona Jews acted as agents to arrange for the sale of English cloth coming via Ferrara to East. Ibid., 37; importantly, their presence allowed the Papal States to compete effectively against Venice. Ibid., 43.

283 Von Greyerz, “Portuguese Conversos on the Upper Rhine and the Converso Community of Sixteenth-Century Europe,” 62.

284 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 300-01.

285 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 67; Stow, “The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud,” 442.

286 Ibid. Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 310-311; Ravid, “From Yellow to Red: On the Distinguishing Head-Covering of the Jews of Venice,” 179; Benjamin Ravid, “From Geographical Realia to Historiographical Symbol: The Odyssey of the Word Ghetto,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 374-375.

287 One new restriction of the times was the end of Jewish autonomy for civil and criminal cases; in 1550 Julius III asserted direct control over the Jewish community as *servi camerae*. Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 74.

288 Moses A. Shulvass, “The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy,” *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 1 (Jan., 1951):

Because conversion did not work, expulsion followed. Michele Ghiserli (Pius V) was also an inquisitor by training. Having seen that his predecessors' policies for conversion had failed, he issued the bull *Hebraeorum Gens* of 1569, expelling all Jews from the Papal States but for Ancona. 800 Jews were forced from Bologna, as well as other cities such as Orvieto, Viterbo, Forli, Tivoli, Ravenna, and Rimini.²⁹⁰ The Lombard plain into which these Jews fled was no longer the chessboard of independent city states that it had been in the 14th and 15th centuries: Spain controlled all of southern and central Italy up to Bologna and even farther north in the pocket of Milan.²⁹¹ Cities to the north that were willing to receive Jews risked Papal sanction due to the significant power of the imperial papacy; those that resisted the Pope and Spain had significant backing from the Germans of the Holy Roman Empire.

In the Italian north, there were four primary locations of significant size for Jews as of the 1569 expulsion: Bologna, Ferrara, Mantua and Venice. Each of these communities had a different relationship with their Jews that was comprised by a tangle of differing natures of Jewish population, the degree to which the principalities were dependent upon the Pope (and Spain), on the one hand, or the Holy Roman Emperor, on the other, and naked self-interest. Bologna was over ten years under papal control at the time that Jewish books were burned in 1553; it is no surprise that books were burned in that city as well.²⁹² Indeed, at the time that Pope Paul IV instituted the ghetto of Rome, Bologna was the second largest city of Jews in the Papal States — eleven synagogues and silk-weavers' guild and loan bankers (the Jewish population of Ancona was small relative to the *converso* population), and that city adopted the ghetto in 1556.²⁹³ There is no reason to think that Bologna's ghetto was instituted for any purpose other than that of the Roman ghetto the year previous — for the conversion of its Jewish population.

Cities such as Mantua and Ferrara sought to carefully balance their own interests with those public goals of the Church. In Mantua, Guglielmo did take seriously the imposition of at least some additional restrictions in the advent of the Counter-Reformation.²⁹⁴ Nonetheless, Jews of Mantua were unlikely to feel entirely secure in their future. The decree of Julius in 1553 to burn the Talmud had, in fact, been followed in Mantua (even though the Cardinal of Mantua, Ercole Gonzaga, had forewarned the Jews, so that they could take precautionary measures).²⁹⁵ And it was extremely unlikely that any Jew had forgotten that earlier in the 16th century, Charles V had rejected the messianic claims of Molcho and Reubeni, sending Molcho to Mantua — Charles V's strongest keep in Italy — to be burned.²⁹⁶ Hence, despite the fact that Mantua may

9; Stow, "The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond," 266. Indeed, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII — soon to order mandatory attendance at sermons — noted a substantial reduction in tax revenues resulting from the conversion of many wealthy Jews in Rome. Ibid. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History*, 62. 289 Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History*, 62.

290 Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 68. Also, Jews were expelled from French Papal territories.

291 Compare Randolph Starn, *Contrary Commonwealth: The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 120 (noting the decreasing possibility for exile as a viable solution for those who lost political favor due to the loss of independent city states and the expansion of empire).

292 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 292.

293 Ibid., 298.

294 Ibid.

295 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 24-25.; Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 164.

Indeed, in 1577 Mantua would impose the Jewish badge, patches of orange color on jerkin and cloak, in response to papal demands. Ibid., 257-258. By contrast, note that in nearby Spanish Milan, Don Ferrante, Governor of Duchy of Milan, refused to comply with the order to burn the Talmud. Ibid., 164.

296 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 192-193. Reubeni, apparently, was sent to suffer the same fate in Spain. Ibid.

well have been the northern Italian city in which Jews felt the most secure, the risk of danger likely precluded any significant identification with the future of Roman imperial power, whether exercised by the Holy Roman Emperor or the Pope.

Ferrara, of course, was within the papal cross-hairs at the time, so the pressure upon those dukes was severe. Ferrara participated in the burning of Jewish books in 1553.²⁹⁷ Pope Paul IV prevailed on Ercole II to introduce new anti-Jewish laws.²⁹⁸ Even though Ferrara would not expel its *conversos*, the awareness that the encroaching Papal States had done just that in neighboring communities in 1569 must have made both Jew and *converso* concerned about long-term prospects in that city. Indeed, politics permitted the duke in 1571 to hand over a former *converso*, now declaring himself to be a Jew, who had fled the Inquisition in Venice and sought refuge in Ferrara. Alfonso sent Abram Righetto back to Venice at the request of the Spanish because at that time, Ferrara was in the Holy League with Venice and the Papacy against the Ottomans and Righetto was thought to “know something concerning the welfare of our League”. This was a situation in which the interests of Ferrara aligned with the Spanish as well as the Pope.²⁹⁹

None of this should underestimate the power of the local dukes, even those in Ferrara, to push back and protect their own interests. Ercole II told his ambassador at the Curia that the Pope could not treat him as he had the Duke of Urbino regarding the Jews of Ancona.³⁰⁰ And Alfonso II Este assisted Leone Abrabanel in finding a house for sale in Venice in the 1560s,³⁰¹ despite the fact that this was a Jewish, not a *converso* family, and the house evidently not located in the ghetto of the city. Self-interest dictated Ferraran policy toward both Jew and *converso* at this time, not any preference for conversion for eschatological purposes. Also, the Ferraran Jewish community was permitted to advocate for itself. Facing the 1553 burning of the Talmud, the Ferraran Jewish community agreed to edit the text to remove offending materials and petitioned the Council of Trent not to ban the text entirely.³⁰² The Jews succeeded, but only after the death of the inquisitor pope. Pius IV granted the community’s request in 1564 — but only if the book was published without its title.³⁰³

Following the earthquake of Ferrara in 1570, the Pius V wrote to Duke Alfonso II chastising him for his failure to toe the line on Papal policy regarding Jew and *converso* and blaming that failure for the earthquake.³⁰⁴ The dumbfounded Internunzio responded that neither group had anything to do with the earthquake, but that it was an act of nature.³⁰⁵ Alfonso himself responded more politically, praying for the understanding of the Pope.³⁰⁶

And so we have the broad outlines of the challenge faced by de’ Rossi’s Jewish community: on the one hand, the Christian community in which the Jews lived was inspired by

297 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 292.

298 Birnbaum, “Jewish Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara,” 141.

299 Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey,” 125. Compare Pullan, “‘A Ship With Two Rudders’: ‘Righetto Marrano’ and the Inquisition in Venice,” 45.

300 Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey,” 124 and n. 37.

301 *Ibid.*, 133.

302 Edwards, 1988, *Christianity and Society in the Modern World*, 68; Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 293.

303 Edwards, 1988, *Christianity and Society in the Modern World*, 68.

304 Emanuela Guidoboni, “Riti Di Calamita: Terremoti a Ferrara nel 1570-74,” *Quaderni Storici, Nuova Serie* 55 (April, 1984): 117.

305 *Ibid.*

306 *Ibid.* 107-36.

imperial Rome and, on the other hand, that Christian version of Roman identity was one that required the subordination, if not the elimination, of the Jews living among them. While notions of Rome formed the Christian past, present and future in northern Italy of the 16th century, Jews were denied a share in any renewal of Roman imperial glory through political development, excluded from Latin culture and permitted a share in the hopeful Roman future only with terminal irony -- to the extent that they denied their own identity and converted to the Christian faith. As we will see in Chapter III, Jews had developed a "counter-identity" to that of the Christian majority, likewise based upon Rome. The problem was that it no longer worked.

CHAPTER III: THE CRUMBLING EDIFICE OF A JEWISH IDENTITY OPPOSED TO ROME

In Chapter II, we saw that Christianity had developed under the aegis of Rome and that the Christian identity of the late 16th century looked back at a glorious past, lived a meaningful present and awaited a hopeful future, all shaped by the authority of the Roman empire. We saw further that in embracing the arc of a Roman identity, Christians had not just excluded but in fact had subsumed Jews — Christians could see no meaningful Jewish identity in the Christian Roman polity. Here in Chapter III, we turn to the Jews. More specifically, to how de' Rossi saw the situation facing his people.

In the chapter that follows, we see that both the Jewish community of de' Rossi's time and de' Rossi himself thought of Jewish identity in relation to Rome. Jewish exclusion from a polity informed by the authority of Rome did not render the image of Rome irrelevant to Jews. Rather, to the extent that Christians developed a sense of self that excluded Jews from their Roman inheritance, Jews themselves developed a sense of identity that featured their opposition to that Roman past. Rome was the common mirror; the persistence of political exclusion of Christian by Jew made sure that the Christian image was one of similarity and continuity while the Jewish image was one of difference and opposition. In *Me'or 'Enayim*, de' Rossi argued that this Jewish identity in opposition to Rome, an identity “counter” to that of the Christian majority, was no longer viable. Why? The Jewish counter-identity depended upon the artifice of superiority — either the Roman culture was indebted to the Jews or it awaited destruction at the hands of the Jewish God. At some point, under circumstances of economic if not political power, it undoubtedly had been satisfying to posit Jewish foundations to the Roman Christian state and even the ultimate triumph of Jews. But in the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation, the facts on the ground in late 16th century northern Italy made any notion of Jewish superiority impossible to maintain. Jews were marginalized as never before, Jewish identity increasingly inconsistent with remaining relevant in contemporary culture. And yet, at the same time -- ironically, in significant part because of the drive to convert Jews -- the connection between the Christian scholarly world and that of the Jews was strong. And because of the successive waves of expulsion of Jewish communities, the Jewish community in which de' Rossi lived was increasingly concentrated in one geographical area, northern Italy. It was intellectually vibrant, culturally diverse, and especially in Mantua, positioned to serve as the leadership of the Jewish polity. The Jewish community, de' Rossi believed, were both in need of, and well positioned for, a new identity that did not depend upon Rome.

A. Counter-Identity and Jewish Superiority to Rome

Each people needs a narrative — an account of where it came from, where it is going, and its role among the other nations in the meantime. This constructed narrative of past, future and present is what we call identity, and the Jews of northern Italy in the late 16th century lived in a society that saw itself as the inheritor of the Roman empire. Christians, as we saw in Chapter II, had constructed their identity based upon the Roman past, the Roman future and the Roman present. Jews were compelled to respond with an identity of their own.

There was simply no avoiding the long shadow that Rome cast over Jewish history, and this was true for de' Rossi himself. Rome's destruction of the Second Temple oriented de' Rossi's historical focus. Josephus was a valuable witness particularly because he lived at that time.¹ De' Rossi looked backwards from this point toward earlier conflict with Rome that had not been catastrophic. "It would be destroyed for a time and again rebuilt as a result of the vicissitudes it would experience during the wars with several Greek monarchs as well as Romans. For as is well known, even before the battle with Titus, there were hostilities in the time of Pompey their general."² Pompey's attack on Jerusalem came shortly before the destruction of the Temple, as did Agrippa's flight to Rome.³ De' Rossi kept the destruction in front of him when he spoke of later Roman interaction with Jews as well. Hadrian may well have rebuilt Jerusalem, but didn't enter the Temple because "the Temple had already been destroyed in the time of Titus".⁴

De' Rossi was keenly aware that the present Jewish exilic condition was the proximate result of Titus' destruction. Yet, de' Rossi embraces his own connection to Titus' actions. He emphasizes that his family name "de' Rossi" is, "according to family tradition . . . one of the four noble families that were exiled to Rome by Titus."⁵ Despite the charged atmosphere around the Jewish use of the term *Edom*, de' Rossi made clear that he pronounced his family's name, *min ha-Edumim* in Hebrew, as *min ha-Adomim*⁶ — a way that emphasized the family's connection to, not its distance from, *Edom*.

De' Rossi was not alone in his ambivalence towards Rome. Jews had come to grips with their domination by and dependence upon Rome by looking to an earlier time of Roman interaction in which Romans were not just appreciative of but dependent upon Jews. This is the story of the *Josippon*. They had also looked to the future. They constructed an account of the fall of the Temple in which Titus affronted God Himself, assuring his own destruction and that of the Romans. These are the Titus *midrashim*. And between the glorious past and hopeful future was the present. In 16th century Italy, Jews flirted with contemporary Roman culture, both participating in the humanism of the day while staking a claim to have invented it and therefore be superior to Christian imitation.

A useful tool for understanding just how the Jews had constructed their own version of Roman identity has been developed by Amos Funkenstein, a notion that he calls "counter-history". Such a narrative is polemical, a way to "deprive the adversary of his positive identity".⁷ For example, in his article "Counter-History and Jewish Polemics against Christianity: The '*Sefer toldot yeshu*' and the '*Sefer zerubavel*,'" Funkenstein's student David Biale noted that the Jewish authors of the two texts he treated had taken the story of Jesus as Messiah and had transformed the story to suit *Jewish* triumphalist history.⁸ The Jews, de' Rossi recognized, had developed a

1 Azariah De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 408 and n. 20.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 378.

4 Ibid., 249.

5 Ibid., 718.

6 Ibid., 80; Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, xiii n. 2.

7 Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 48.

8 David Biale, "Counter-History and Jewish Polemics Against Christianity: The '*Sefer Toldot Yeshu*' and the '*Sefer Zerubavel*,'" *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn, 1999): 130-145.

counter-history. It too had taken shape in the mirror of Rome, but unlike the Christians whose culture had absorbed that of Rome, the Jews maintained a distance -- whether by claiming ownership over the great Roman past, emphasizing imminent Roman destruction, or crediting themselves with the Roman humanism prevalent in their day.

1. The Glorious Past of the *Josippon*

The *Josippon* was a text that constructed a narrative of Roman dependence upon the Jews. The Romans were a new people, entirely dependent upon the Jews for the greatness of their culture. To modern observers, the claim seems silly, even farcical. It smacks of desperation, suggesting that Jewish political situation of the time was hopeless. Perhaps it seemed that way to contemporary readers — nothing more than escapist fantasy fiction.⁹ And yet the *Josippon* served an important purpose: it was evidence of past greatness that *could* have happened. Whether or not this actually had happened was beside the point. Who knew? But without this narrative, the Jewish past was simply one of defeat, and defeat could not support identity. With this narrative, Jews could hold their heads high and interact with the dominant Christian culture while retaining a sense of superiority. This is the importance of the *Josippon*.

The *Josippon* relates the story of the Jewish people from roughly the time that the Hebrew Bible closes to the destruction of the Second Temple. Throughout the Middle Ages, it was the primary (if not sole) source of post-Biblical narrative available to Jews in Hebrew. It was “generally regarded as a genuine work of Josephus in the sixteenth century,”¹⁰ but it was a Byzantine work by a Jewish writer in southern Italy in the 10th century¹¹ combining disparate materials from different times, including prefatory material that links the Biblical genealogy of nations to Italy, material from Josephus, and other sources as well, including 1 & 2 Maccabees and the *Hegesippus* (discussed in Chapter II).

The attitude toward Rome is positive, the *Josippon*’s author “impressed by the Byzantine culture and civilization in southern Italy;” indeed it appeared that the Byzantine Empire “was the continuation of ancient Rome”.¹² The *Josippon* tells a story of Jewish power over Rome. The Jews were responsible for Roman history in Italy. Rome was a new civilization just getting underway during the kingship of David, and then an ally of the Maccabees against the Syrian Greeks. Even under occupation by the Romans, the Romans were to be praised, kinder to the Jews than the Babylonians had been during the Exile, appreciated through their Macedonian conquests and in possession of an empire that would herald the age of the Messiah.

But rather than simply positing Jewish power over Rome, the text allows the Jews to identify with the power of Rome. The Jewish transformation of the Roman history to emphasize their own importance is akin to that process identified by Gruen in his study of the Jewish

9 The notion is an “extreme specimen of early medieval fantasy” based indirectly upon not just the Hebrew Bible but Roman accounts of their own history. David Flusser, “*Josippon*, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus,” Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity, Louis H Feldman and Gohei Hata, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 391.

10 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 3 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 17.

11 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 386-390.

12 Flusser, “*Josippon*, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus,” 394.

treatment of Hellenistic material (most interestingly, in that context, by Josephus himself).¹³ Roman origins were said to be dependent upon the Jews themselves. The Biblical *Kittim* (a son of Javan, along with Elishah, Tarshish and the *Dodanim*) were said to be the origin of the Romans,¹⁴ while the Sabines came from Tubal.¹⁵ The *Josippon* featured the connection between Esau's line and the Romans, specifically through Tsefo, Esau's grandson.¹⁶ Tsefo was the companion of Aeneas.¹⁷ He was the first king: Janus Tsafo.¹⁸ And he founded the Latin language: his grandson was Latinos.¹⁹ His lineage included the eponymous founder of Rome, Romulus.²⁰

The *Josippon* served to merge the history of the Romans into that of the Jews. Romulus reigned in reference to David, namely during his time and thereafter.²¹ A son of Romulus built Rome's walls because he feared David.²² The *Josippon* speaks of the Tarquins and the republic,²³ of Carthage and Hannibal and Scipio,²⁴ and Julius Caesar.²⁵ By bringing Roman history into the Hebrew language and by and integrating it into Jewish history, the *Josippon* allowed the Jews to imagine that they shared the glory of Rome.

Rome was a helpful Jewish ally. Much like the reference to mutual assistance in the Talmud,²⁶ Rome was said to work against Babylon by way of Greece.²⁷ The Romans helped the Jews against the Greeks too. Here, the Jews and the Romans together effected the collapse of Greece (Daniel's Third Kingdom): "Now in these days, the fourth kingdom of Judah replaced the third kingdom for the Roman kingdom revolted against the Greeks. And the reputation of the Romans increased throughout the kingdom. This was the fourth beast which Daniel that lovely

13 Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

14 Laurence Henry Rubinstein, "The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis" (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1965), 1. See Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, trans. Robyn Frechet (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 23-26 (for a discussion of the identity of the *Kittim*).

15 Rubinstein, "The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis," 2-3, 6. Cf. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, vol. 1., trans. B.O. Foster (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 1.9-13 (Sabines).

16 *Ibid.*, 4.

17 *Ibid.*, 4-5.

18 *Ibid.*, 5-6.

19 *Ibid.*, 6.

20 *Ibid.*, 6-8.

21 Rubinstein, "The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis," 8.

22 *Ibid.*, 8-9. ("They extended the wall 45 miles and called the city Rome, after Romulus. And they were greatly afraid all during the lifetime of David. This increased the reputation of the descendants of *Kittim*. They are called Rome even until now.") *Ibid.*, 9. ("Romulus fought a great war and formulated a peace between David and himself.")

23 *Ibid.*, 9-10.

24 *Ibid.*, 116-119.

25 *Ibid.*, 91.

26 De' Rossi references the "mutual help" noted by the Rabbis (A.AZ. 8b): "[Thirty-two battles did the Romans fight against the Greeks and they could not prevail against them until the Romans made an alliance with the Jews, and these were the conditions]: if the kings are chosen from among us, the princes should be chosen from among you." De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 379 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 1.

27 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 10.

man, saw which devoured and trampled the body of its predecessor with its feet. Thus the nation of Romans was established.”²⁸ And the Romans permitted the Jewish nation to thrive: “When the Elders of Rome heard of the might which the Lord had bestowed upon Judah and his advisors enabling them to unite the People of Judea, the Romans allowed it.” The Romans sent an embassy to Judah son of Mattathias, seeking an alliance against Antiochus.²⁹ More than that, the Romans valued the Jews themselves as military allies.³⁰

The *Josippon* refuses to blame Titus for the destruction of the Temple. God turned from the Jews due to their own iniquities,³¹ specifically how the Jews had treated their own in and near the Temple of God.³² Titus is more properly Jewish than the Jews themselves,³³ specifically regarding observance of Jewish ritual law: “But you are sinners, for you have defiled the Temple of your God and His Sanctuary and His City when you spilled innocent blood in them. For you killed His priests in the Temple of your God. And what right have you to be considered by Him as offerings and sacrifices? You have become abominable in His sight, and every sacrifice in which there is an imperfection is not acceptable to him. And you are full of every imperfection and sin and offense.”³⁴ Titus is respectful of God, even praying to God as a Jew.³⁵ “Eternal God, that which is hidden is revealed to you, so you know the inner recesses of my heart. I have not come to this city for war, but for peace. But they did not want it. . . . Even I have heard of all the wonders which you did for them, as well as causing your presence to rest in their midst, and have also chosen saints from them.”³⁶ When Josephus himself requests of Titus that the general remove the Roman standard from the Temple precinct so he and his priests could worship and lament the Temple’s destruction, Titus is accommodating.³⁷

The *Josippon* offers hope. The Jews have the opportunity to repent and rebuild.³⁸ It is up to God, not Rome, to raise and lower nations,³⁹ and self-determination, if not domination, can once again return to the Jews: “You too can rule over nations”⁴⁰ And yet, the hope offered by the

28 Ibid., 116.

29 Ibid., 119.

30 Ibid., 119-120. The treaty was renewed. Ibid., 136-37.

31 Jacob Reiner, “The Jewish War: Variations in the Historical Narratives in the Texts of Josephus and the *Yosippon*” (The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1972), 208-210 (not national liberation); *ibid.*, 155.

32 Ibid., 195.

33 Ibid., 174.

34 Zoll, “A Critical Translation of Joseph Ben Gorion’s *Josippon* - Part III,” (Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1965), 116.

35 Reiner, “The Jewish War: Variations in the Historical Narratives in the Texts of Josephus and the *Yosippon*,” 175.

36 Zoll, “A Critical Translation of Joseph Ben Gorion’s *Josippon* - Part III,” 127.

37 Reiner, “The Jewish War: Variations in the Historical Narratives in the Texts of Josephus and the *Yosippon*,” 170. Compare ibn Daud, actually splitting the difference: “He was a great sage and forced to destroy the Temple.” Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 298 n. 16. Interestingly, while preserving a positive memory of Titus, the Jews savaged that of Pompey from the initial Roman conflict. Rubinstein, “The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis,” 90; *ibid.*, 141.

38 Reiner, “The Jewish War: Variations in the Historical Narratives in the Texts of Josephus and the *Yosippon*,” 201-202.

39 Ibid., 207.

40 Ibid., 203, see n.8.

Josippon lacks immediacy. The hope is eschatological and will be realized only at the end of history itself. Not so the hope provided by the Titus *midrashim*.

2. The Hopeful Future of the Titus *Midrashim*

There was an alternative account of the past that focused upon a future in which Jews would triumph over Romans. This account turned the Jewish defeat by the Roman general Titus into an affront by Titus against God Himself that God most certainly would redress. Here too, the event *could* have happened. Who but a blasphemer like Titus would have had the temerity to sack the Temple of God? The fact of destruction was undeniable. The strength of the Jewish God all but required that His Temple fall at the hands of someone who opposed God Himself. Did God actually punish Titus? Who knew? But it was certain Titus had died, and God is the master of life and death.

For the Rabbis, Titus had opposed God, and God had punished him. There are five separate versions of Titus' destruction of Jerusalem in the Rabbinic corpus.⁴¹ There are three main aspects to the Titus *midrashim* that appear repeatedly throughout the disparate Rabbinic sources and were gathered in de' Rossi's time in a vast collection of Rabbinic *midrashim* called the *Ein Yaakov*.⁴² There were Titus' actions in the Temple, Titus' interactions with God on the waters sailing to Rome, and the events surrounding Titus' death.

Within the Temple precincts, Titus both challenges God verbally and physically. "Where is God?" he asks — a question that can equally insult a God who has no image as one whose Temple has fallen to the Roman general.⁴³ The physical dimensions of Titus' challenge are manifold. On the one hand, he enters the very inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies.⁴⁴ Just by his presence, Titus is defying the law of God, for this area is reserved for God Himself except on the single day of the year in which the High Priest enters to pray on behalf of the Jewish people. Titus' assault is depicted more graphically too. Titus physically assaults God, drawing his sword⁴⁵ and slashing the curtain.⁴⁶ Titus draws blood, whether from the curtain slash⁴⁷ or from the sword itself.⁴⁸ Upon seeing the blood, Titus thinks he has slain himself,⁴⁹ which is an

41 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 296-304 & nn. 2-5, referencing *Pirke d' Rabbi Eliezer* chapter 49, *Bereshit Rabbah* 10:7, *Vayiqra Rabbah* 22:3, BT tractate *Gittin* 56b, and *Tanhuma*, huqqat 1.

42 Rabbi Yaakov ibn Chaviv, *Ein Yaakov: The Ethical and Inspirational Teachings of the Talmud*, trans. Avraham Yaakov Finkel Finkel (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1999). This 16th century collection did not simply serve to gather in one place Rabbinic *midrashim*, which were easily appreciated and more popular than the intricacies of Talmudic law. Such a collection was advantageous in the environment of the Counter Reformation in which the Talmud was at risk of confiscation and destruction.

43 BT *Gittin* [56b] the former); *Bereshit Rabbah* [10:7] (blasphemed/reviled God), see Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*, vol I, (London: Soncino Press, 1939); *Vayiqra Rabbah* [22:3], see Judah J. Slotki, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus* (London: Soncino Press, 1939); *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* [V. 8f, section 4], see Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Ecclesiastes*, (London: Soncino Press, 1939); PRE [ch. 49] See Gerard Friedlander, trans., *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: The Bloch Publishing Co., 1916), 390 (taunting God).

44 *Bereshit Rabbah* [10:7]; *Vayiqra Rabbah* [22:3]; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* [V. 8f, section 4].

45 *Vayiqra Rabbah* [22:3]; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* [V. 8f, section 4].

46 *Vayiqra Rabbah* [22:3]; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* [V. 8f, section 4].

47 BT *Gittin* [56b].

48 *Vayiqra Rabbah* [22:3]; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* [V. 8f, section 4].

49 BT *Gittin* [56b].

interesting way of suggesting both that Titus thinks he is God and that he has killed God. Titus sexually assaults God too. He penetrates not just the curtain with his sword but a prostitute on the Torah scroll.⁵⁰ One account compounds Titus' perversion by adding a second prostitute and by changing the location to the altar itself,⁵¹ a place in which the force of Titus' act spills blood in a way that is associated with Temple sacrifices.⁵²

The second aspect of the Titus stories has to do with Titus' encounter with God on the waters as he heads to Rome with his booty. Titus may have sacked the Temple and have made off with its possessions,⁵³ but he is at the mercy of God when his boots are no longer treading on the ground and his ship is bobbing in the waves of a Mediterranean gale. Titus chides God for only having power over the water and demands that God fight him on land. But in so doing, Titus recounts the great examples of God's power that did involve water, whether regarding the Generation of Enosh, that of the Flood, Pharaoh or Sisera.⁵⁴ The effect is to reinforce the insignificance of Titus, for even Titus himself recognizes that God can destroy him if He wants.⁵⁵

Titus is not even so great an enemy as to receive God's punishment by flood. God is content to calm the sea and allow his victim his victory, his bath, his wine.⁵⁶ Go fight my gnat, God tells Titus.⁵⁷ The gnat enters Titus' nose and pierces his skull,⁵⁸ a reversal of the physical affronts God suffered from Titus. And God makes sure Titus knows that his suffering comes from God Himself. The pecking in his head increases when he is near a Jewish blacksmith,⁵⁹ as if the very metal forged into the armor of siege now assaults Titus' head, threatening to take it. Titus calls for his own head to be opened — the pain and guilt are so great that he is willing to endure having his head sawn open so he himself can see what God has implanted in his brain.⁶⁰ But Titus cannot achieve even this objective. The physicians pry open Titus' head to find a good sized bird.⁶¹ But Titus won't know, for as the bird is uncovered, it flies out of Titus' head and Titus' soul simultaneously flees his wretched body.⁶² The only wish Titus may be granted is that he be cremated, not buried, so there will be nothing left of him for God to find and torment.⁶³

50 BT Gittin [56b].

51 Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4].

52 Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4].

53 BT Gittin [56b].

54 BT Gittin [56b]; Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4]; or a net: Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4].

⁵⁵ BT Gittin [56b].

55 In *PRE*, it is Israel that challenges God in the Holy of Holies and God sends against Israel "a man, proud like one sifting the sea", Nebuchadnezzar. *PRE* [ch. 49]. See *Ibid*.

56 Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4].

57 BT Gittin [56b].

58 BT Gittin [56b]; Bereshit Rabbah [10:7]; Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4]; *PRE* [ch. 49] See *Ibid*.

59 BT Gittin [56b].

60 Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4].

61 BT Gittin [56b]; Bereshit Rabbah [10:7]; Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4]; *PRE* [ch. 49]. See *Ibid*.

62 Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3]; Ecclesiastes Rabbah [V. 8f, section 4].

63 BT Gittin [56b].

3. The Hopeful Future: Destruction of *Edom*

The Rabbis had called Titus “son of Esau”.⁶⁴ It would be by linking not just Titus himself but his Roman empire to Esau, that the Rabbis would stake their claim to a better future. It wasn’t just that Esau was the stronger brother, a dichotomy that could justify Roman power in Biblical terms.⁶⁵ By the third and fourth centuries, the Roman empire that had destroyed Jerusalem in the first century was associated by the Rabbis with *Edom*, the place of Esau.⁶⁶ Such oppression would not last forever; as indicated in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Obadiah, Israel and *Edom* were to struggle with each other from their mother’s womb until the end of time, at which point *Edom* would lose its power.⁶⁷ The belief that *Edom* had become Rome was pervasive in the *Aggadah*.⁶⁸ In the *Targum*, the Aramaic translation of the Torah, Constantinople was said to have inherited the mantle of Rome and was identified with *Edom*; likewise in Karaite texts.⁶⁹ Rashi asserted that Rome was the major city of “*Edom*” — a traditional enemy of Israel,” that itself “epitomized organized opposition to God’s people and their mission, and during the Talmudic period, had become a codeword for the Roman Empire.”⁷⁰ When Rome adopted Christianity, *Edom* became identified with the power of the Christian state, applied to Rome as well as the adherents of the religion.⁷¹

64 BT Gittin [56b].

65 Jerome Friedman, “The Reformation in Alien Eyes: Jewish Perceptions of Christian Troubles,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1983): 25 (this dichotomy permitted Esau to be used as a tool by God to chastise His chosen people).

66 Hadas-Lebel, “Jerusalem Against Rome,” 155-156 (note that she herself does not categorize the stories of this time as particularly anti-Roman). B. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman & Philosopher*, 5th edition, revised & updated. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 233 (and 323 n. 150) (cf. Yeru. Ta’anit I.1: “That Edom was a synonym of imperial Rome was the opinion of the early sages.”)

67 Ibid., 233 (and 323 n. 149). See Salo W. Baron, “The Historical Outlook of Maimonides,” in *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 109-63, 119.

68 Ibid., 355 n. 34.

69 Steven B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204 -1453* (University: The University of Alabama Press, 1985), 179.

70 Michael T. Walton and Phylis J. Walton, “In Defense of the Church Militant: The Censorship of the Rashi Commentary in the *Magna Biblia Rabbinica*,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 396-397. In Rabbinic thought in general, “Rome’s history is tied up with the history of Israel as a polarity, nourished, so to speak, by each other’s sins. When King Solomon married an Egyptian princess, the angel Gabriel (or Michael) plunged a reed into the sea and around it a sand dune was formed on which Rome was subsequently founded. When King Jeroboam placed two golden calves in the sanctuary of Bethel, Romulus and Remus erected the first two shacks of Rome. When the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, the angel Michael deposited the Messiah in Rome ...”. Abraham Berger, “Captive At the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 44 (1977): 8. The connection of Messianic arrival and the interaction of Jews and Romans also articulated in the story of the Messiah at the Gate of Rome in BT Sanhedrin 98a and introductory part of Sefer Zerubabel, Palestine 7th century apocalyptic work. Ibid., 3. Italian Jewish culture originally identified with the Palestinian Talmud and Palestinian tradition. Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 176, 319 & n. 130.

71 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman & Philosopher*, 233 (and 323 n. 151) (Ibn Ezra, Kimhi). At some point in time, Jesus himself was said to be a descendant of Esau. Baron, 1964, *History and Jewish Historians*, 109-63,142.

The updating of the identification of the ruling empire with Edom justified the fact that the Messianic Age had not yet come to pass and equally assured that it was yet to be. Importantly, when the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, that community's leader, Isaac Abravanel, provided an eschatological interpretation of events, the important conflicts between empires of the day lending credence to the disaster that had befallen the Jews. Part of this required revising the meaning of the *Josippon*. Departing from that text's emphasis upon a shared Jewish-Roman identity, Abravanel emphasized the enmity between Rome and the Jews, noting the genealogical link between Esau (and hence Edomites) and Romans (now Christians).⁷² Jewish expulsion by Rome was not simply historically understandable; the conflict with the Turks presaged the end of the Roman empire. Looking back at the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 in light of the events of 1492, Abravanel believed that the Turks would advance by sea through the Venetian island possessions to the Venetian doorstep of Italy and then by land to destroy Rome itself.⁷³

4. Hope and the Ultimate End of the Fourth Empire

Rome was also identified with the Fourth Empire of Daniel; rule it might, but ultimately Rome would fall and the Messianic Age arrive.⁷⁴ The Book of Daniel itself did not identify Rome as the Fourth Empire; nor could it, as the prophecy was written in Greek times.⁷⁵ Much of the text was set in the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; chapters 6 and 9 in the context of Darius the Mede and 10 in reign of the Persian monarch Cyrus; the Greek advent was mentioned by the angel Gabriel in chapter 10:20.⁷⁶ But in chapters 2 and 4 the Fourth Empire was unnamed, and that created fruitful possibilities.⁷⁷ As early as the time of Josephus (*Ant* 10.276; 4 *Ezra* 12), that Fourth Empire was considered to be Rome. At a later time and different place, the Fourth Empire would be Muslim, or even, specifically, the Ottoman Turks.⁷⁸ In Islamic cultures, it was natural to erase the difference between the empires of Greece and Rome: Rome simply continued the Third Empire of Greece.⁷⁹

72 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman & Philosopher*, 233 (and 323 nn. 152 and 154) (citing *Commentary on Isaiah and Announcer*).

73 *Ibid.*, 233-34 (and 322 nn. 146-48, *Announcer*).

74 Hadas-Lebel, "Jerusalem Against Rome," 512-514.

75 Lawrence M. Wills, "Daniel," in *The Jewish Study Bible, Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation*, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1642. Daniel did mention Rome as the *Kittim*, however (11:30). *Ibid.* at 1664 nn. 29-31. James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 366.

76 Wills, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1640-65.

77 *Ibid.*

78 John J. Collins, "Daniel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, Michael Lieb, Emma Mason and Jonathan Roberts, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 84.

79 Gerson D. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 45-48. Simply put, it was due to the influence of Islam that to those of later years, the Greek empire was Greek whether or not it happened to be ruled by a Roman. *Ibid.*, 48. Such an approach would have ambiguous status in Christian Italy, however, fully aware of the significant power of both empires perceived to be clashing for ultimate control. Abravanel's view, for example, developed in Italy in the aftermath of expulsion from Christian Spain, retained the notion of Christian Rome as Edom because it

For both Christian and Jew of the 15th and 16th centuries, Rome was not just the Fourth and final empire -- there was a good risk that the End was nigh.⁸⁰ With the Ottoman Turks having conquered the Byzantines in 1453,⁸¹ and the Christians having expelled the Muslims (as well as the Jews) in 1492 from Spain, a final conflict between Islam and Christianity was underway. Both Abravanel and Savonarolla predicted disaster for the Roman Catholic Church; both saw Isaiah's sword in the heavens.⁸² The 16th century naval battles that progressed ever westward from the Turkish coast, and the advance of Suleyman across Hungary presaged a fight for Rome and for Christian survival itself. And Italy was weak; Charles VIII had invaded easily at the beginning of the century,⁸³ and Charles V had taken Rome and held the hapless pope captive a quarter of a century later.

Jews often thought of the end of Rome both in terms of God's punishment of Titus, Edom and the ultimate Fourth Empire. In comments upon Deuteronomy 32:37, Rashi had specifically indicated that Titus' taunt, "Where is the God of Israel?" linked the identity of Rome with the eventual overthrow of that kingdom in accord with Daniel.⁸⁴ The conflation was particularly acute in the East-West conflict of the 16th century. In 1529, shortly after Charles V had sacked Rome, Solomon Molcho came ashore in Ancona, stepping onto what he called the land of *Edom*.⁸⁵ And when Elijah Capsali wrote *Seder Elihahu Zuta*, he presented Sultan Mehmet II as a Judeophile, a messianic figure who was an eager student of the Book of Daniel.⁸⁶

The Church took care to remove references that might support the end of Christian Rome in Jewish Biblical commentary. In commenting upon Genesis 14 and 17, Rashi had noted that the monarchies that had enslaved Israel would perish in accord with the book of Daniel. These comments were deleted by Church censors, even though Rashi had not specified the identity of any of these monarchies. Under pressure from Protestant and Turk alike, it was no wonder that Pope Clement and Cardinal Egidio de Viterbo speculated about "manipulating magic time tables" that laid out the path of history to its End.⁸⁷ The challenge for the Church was not simply the dangers of Jewish prophetic claims to undermine Papal legitimacy: such claims could be deployed by Protestant Christians themselves in support of their argument that the Pope himself was the anti-Christ and that his city, and Christian culture, would fall on that account.⁸⁸

was far more satisfying to have that nation punished. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman & Philosopher*, 233.

80 Ibid., 234 (the "prognostication" of an eschatological war between Christianity and Islam was "supported not only by the events, but also by the political opinions of the time").

81 Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204 -1453*, 179-181.

82 Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman & Philosopher*, 245-246.

83 Ibid., 235-236.

84 Walton and Walton, "In Defense of the Church Militant: The Censorship of the Rashi Commentary in the Magna Biblia Rabbinica," 396-397. In censored versions such as Rashi's commentary, Rome often changed to Persia.

Berger, "Captive At the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif," 11.

85 Berger, "Captive At the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif," 15.

86 Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204 -1453*, 182.

87 Berger, "Captive At the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif," 15-16.

88 Walton and Walton, "In Defense of the Church Militant: The Censorship of the Rashi Commentary in the Magna Biblia Rabbinica," 396-397.

5. The Meaningful Present: the Tenuous Jewish Foundations of Humanism

The Jews of northern Italy in the 14th-16th centuries were, by and large, as well educated as their Christian neighbors — conceivably more so — but Jews considered their culture superior and kept Latin knowledge circumscribed. While the most polished of Jewish writers would have known Italian early in the 16th century,⁸⁹ Latin knowledge was weak, in general, in comparison to that of the Christian community. On the one hand, David Messer Leon wrote poems in Latin.⁹⁰ Yet, in his dedication of a little Latin composition on the astrolabe to Pope Alexander, even Bonet (Boneto) Jacob de Lattes, a papal physician, found it necessary to state: “Reader, forgive my errors and grammatical infelicity/By faith I am a Jew, and am deficient in Latinity.”⁹¹ Perhaps most tellingly, as envisioned in, 1564 David Provenzale of Mantua’s Jewish academy was to teach both Latin and Italian composition⁹² — suggesting a need not met in that city but through Christian schools or private tutoring.

The Mantua of de’ Rossi’s day was a center of Jewish intellectuals,⁹³ but Jewish studies were resolutely Judeo-centric.⁹⁴ In *Dor Ha-Pelagah*, David Provenzali, de’ Rossi’s teacher, tried to trace the presence of Hebrew in other languages; de’ Rossi’s friend and mentor Judah Moscato discussed it too.⁹⁵ In 1564 Provenzale tried to set up a Jewish academy to teach Jewish and secular subjects including Latin and Italian composition, logic, mathematics, oratory, astronomy and medicine; the idea was to provide a comprehensive education such as that available to Christians but in a Jewish context, without risking assimilation.⁹⁶ Mantua had a Hebrew press in operation nearly a century by that time (as of 1476),⁹⁷ and that city had hosted the publication of Judah Messer Leon’s *Book of the Honeycomb’s Flow* (*Nofet Zufim*) before 1480.⁹⁸

89 Ibid., 108. (Judah [“Giuda Hebreo”] of Mantua contributed three sonnets in Italian to a volume of poems dedicated to the Duchess of Urbino.) Note, however, that Jewish preachers began to write in Italian only as of the late 16th century. Marc Saperstein, “Italian Jewish Preaching: An Overview,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 91. Nonetheless, it would appear that Italian as a vehicle for communication, at least in drama, was popular in Mantua in the late 16th century. De’ Sommi wrote a dialogue between tragedy and comedy and introduced Virgil to settle dispute; the piece was a prologue to a tragicomedy *L’Irifile* that was produced for the Mantua carnival in 1555 or 56. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 264-265. It is interesting that de’ Sommi began to write Hebrew drama only at the end of the 16th century. Ibid., 267.

90 Ibid., 330.

91 Ibid., 232-233.

92 Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), 214.

93 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 213.

94 Exception: drama, as noted above, which was appreciated in Italian. Mantuan Jews quite interested in drama: in 1564 R. David Provenzali warned the community lest drama gain too strong a hold. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 248. Jews performed works by Ludovico Ariosto and Bernardo Tasso (father of Torquato). Ibid., 249.

95 Joanna Weinberg, “Azariah de’ Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 264-265.

96 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 214.

97 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 312.

98 Ibid., 313.

There was more Jewish-Christian interaction in Ferrara. As Provenzale worked to set up an academy in Mantua, so too in 1565 Solomon Riva sought permission from the Duke for an academy at which Rabbi Jacob Reiner of Ferrara would teach; the Duke's response was favorable, exempting those in it from tolls, given the expected illumination such a program would provide for Jews and non-Jews alike.⁹⁹ The nod to non-Jews is evidence of a greater degree of Christian-Jewish interaction in Ferrara than in Mantua, a fact that is not surprising given the large percentage of *conversos* living there. The "[v]igorous intellectual and social ambience of Ferrara"¹⁰⁰ was well-established. Salomon (Salamone), a 15th century Jewish poet, knew Sallust, Livy, and Valerius Maximus, along with Augustine, Ambrose and Firmianus.¹⁰¹ When the Abravanel's stayed in Ferrara, their home became "the meeting place of Jewish and Christian scholars".¹⁰² Abraham Usque founded a press in Ferrara, his *Consolacao* was printed there.¹⁰³ A medal struck in 1558 of Gracia Mendes' niece, at time of her engagement to Samuel Nasi, featured both Hebrew and Latin letters along with an image of the young woman; the depiction despite the convention forbidding the depiction of human images was not just due to the fact that the family was Marrano but "also to the prestige of their immediate Christian surroundings," the "lively Renaissance cultural life of the city to which they had been given free access," all of which was "further proof of the peaceful symbiosis of Christians and Jews in sixteenth-century Ferrara".¹⁰⁴

And yet Jews never seem to have fully interacted with Christian humanists on an equal footing. There was a degree of truth to the claim that, in court cultures such as Mantua and Ferrara, the common study of antiquity could bridge gaps of religious and cultural understanding among scholars.¹⁰⁵ But vis-à-vis the *meaning* of antiquity, Christian and Jew were simply differently situated. What was important expression of a continuing Roman identity for Christians was, for Jews, simply a cultural trend, a fashion of the times. Jewish figures did not widely embrace the Italian writers who had become canonical. Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio were not widely quoted by Italian Renaissance Rabbis in their sermons.¹⁰⁶ As of the mid-14th century, for Jews, Hebrew was the language of literature, not Latin. "[T]he tongue of the Bible appeared to them to be the proper medium of culture in just the same way as the tongue of Cicero was for their neighbors."¹⁰⁷ If anything, the significance of Hebrew increased among Jews into the 16th century. There is some evidence that some Jews at that time restored the practice of speaking Hebrew. There is evidence that this was true in Padua in the early years of the 16th century,¹⁰⁸ and de' Rossi himself tells of those who speak in the Holy Tongue.¹⁰⁹ Latin

99 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 214.

100 Marianna D. Birnbaum, "Jewish Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara," *Mediterranean Studies* 7 (1998): 139.

101 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 107.

102 Birnbaum, "Jewish Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara," 139.

103 Richard A. Preto-Rodas, "Samuel Usque's *Consolacao* as *Tribulacoes De Israel* as Pastoral Literature Engagee," *Hispania* 73, no. 1 (Mar., 1990): 72.

104 Birnbaum, "Jewish Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara," 139-141.

105 Arthur M. Lesley, "The Place of the Dialoghi D'Amore in Contemporaneous Jewish Thought," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 173-174.

106 Saperstein, "Italian Jewish Preaching: An Overview," 90.

107 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 72-73.

108 *Ibid.*, 309.

works if they were to be read by Jews were read in Latin; there were few translations into Hebrew after 15th century.¹¹⁰ By and large, Jews did not identify with the political spirit of an ever-present Rome that infused their Christian neighbors with delight.

It should come as no surprise that Jews were influenced by their environment, though, and that included creating works reflecting the humanist style that they saw vaunted all about them.¹¹¹ Jews imitated the Classical literature that was the current fashion. Yehudah ben Yehiel, also known as Messer Leon, authored a treatise on rhetoric.¹¹² Leone Ebreo wrote *Dialoghi d' Amore*, a book not just in the dialogic form of Plato but using his allegorical thought. Yohanan Alemanno introduced biography to Jewish literature, namely that of Solomon, patterned on Suetonius' Augustus or Julius, as well as on Xenophon's Cyrus and Ficino's Christ.¹¹³ Indeed, Alemanno's image of the orator corresponds to that previously articulated by Petrarch and Salutati, Bruni and Valla.¹¹⁴ Yehuda Sommo Portaleone (1527-92) of Mantua wrote Hebrew and Italian comedies and dialogues on drama.¹¹⁵ "The renewal of the Hebrew sonnet occurred against the backdrop of intensive Jewish participation in the culture of the Italian Renaissance."¹¹⁶

But the Jews evidently found it necessary to claim to have invented the humanist forms themselves, justifying their interest in something ostensibly foreign to the Jewish tradition. Yehuda ben Yehiel, Messer Leon (approximately 1420-90), wrote in the *Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*, published in the late 15th century in Mantua, that the Bible was the source of the rhetoric of Cicero.¹¹⁷ Similarly, the Jewish playwright Yehuda Sommo Portaleone claimed that the *Book of Job* was the original tragedy.¹¹⁸ Isaac Abravanel wrote that the virtues of the republican form of government were themselves adumbrated in the Hebrew Bible.¹¹⁹ Indeed, to Abravanel, Jewish culture (as made clear in the *Josippon*) introduced the sciences to the

109 Ibid. (in this regard see also Samuel Archevolti, who spends chapter on purity of Hebrew speech and diction in work on prose).

110 Notable exceptions include works authored by Jews — *Dialoghi d' Amore*; R. Abraham Herrera's book *Puerto del Cielo*. Moshe Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 108. Those could even take a while. Ebreo's 1502 *Dialoghi d' amore*, was not printed until 1535. Lesley, "The Place of the Dialoghi D' Amore in Contemporaneous Jewish Thought," 171.

111 Arthur M. Lesley, "Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 45.

112 Ibid., 52; Alexander Altmann, "Ars Rhetorica as Reflected in Some Jewish Figures of the Italian Renaissance," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 67.

113 Lesley, "Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy," 58.

114 Altmann, "Ars Rhetorica as Reflected in Some Jewish Figures of the Italian Renaissance," 72.

115 Lesley, "Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy," 54-55.

116 Dvora Bregman, "The Emergence of the Hebrew Sonnet," *Prooftexts* 11, no. 3 (September, 1991): 234. Samuel Usque (Salusque Lusitano) produced a Spanish edition of Petrarch's sonnets in Venice in 1567 dedicated to Duke of Parma. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 109.

117 Lesley, "Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy," 52. But see Altmann, "Ars Rhetorica as Reflected in Some Jewish Figures of the Italian Renaissance," 70 (arguing that claims of superiority were characteristic of "the syncretistic culture of the period").

118 Lesley, "Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy," 54-55.

119 Miriam Bodian, "Biblical Hebrews and the Rhetoric of Republicanism: Seventeenth-Century Portuguese Jews on the Jewish Community," *AJS Review* 22, no. 2 (1997): 201-202.

Romans.¹²⁰ Even the Jewish language had priority, according to David Provenzali of Mantua.¹²¹ This “apologetic cliché of Jewish superiority . . . pervaded much of Jewish literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.”¹²²

These claims of priority were on the one hand assertions of belonging, of sharing in humanist culture,¹²³ but far more they signified an insecurity that accepted the merits of Latin only to the extent that Jews could profess to have invented the language. To be sure, claims such as these cannot be made in the absence of an environment that permits a degree of Jewish participation in the humanist enterprise with “vigor and self-confidence”.¹²⁴ But the Jews who utilized the new Latin forms did so in a guarded fashion.¹²⁵ Jews might on occasion choose to express themselves through Latin forms but only in Hebrew and only when they could claim superiority by way of priority.

B. For de’ Rossi, the Roman Jewish Counter Identity Was No Longer Viable

1. Past Jewish-Roman Glory Was Now Demonstrably Fanciful

De’ Rossi recognized that the *Josippon*’s version of Jewish history was a fabrication,¹²⁶ and he fully embraced the contemporary criticism of that text by the Protestant scholar and

120 Lesley, “Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy,” 46.

121 *Ibid.*, 51.

122 Bernard Dov Cooperman, ed., *Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah de Rossi’s Meor Enayim in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry*, Center for Jewish Studies Harvard Judaica Texts and Studies, vol. II Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 34.

123 The claim is not specific to the Renaissance. In Dante’s time, Immanuel of Rome stated, “What doth Music say to the Gentiles? ‘Certes, I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews’ (Genesis 40.15)”. Roth, 1959, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 271 (dismissing the claim as “no more than a display of verbal virtuosity”).

124 *Ibid.*, 34. Such confidence is reflected in comments by Judah Moscato, who followed neo-Platonist thinking in speaking of the “son of God” as an emanation of divinity, Altmann, “Ars Rhetorica as Reflected in Some Jewish Figures of the Italian Renaissance,” 81, while Alemanno recognized both that Plato was a prophet, Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 329-330, and that Saturn had supervisory responsibility over the Torah, the Temple and the Hebrew language. Idel, “The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance,” 130. David del Bene, of Mantua, even went so far as to refer to “Holy Diana” — “*Quella Santa Diana*” — in one of his sermons. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 305.

125 Compare, by contrast, the range of creativity displayed by Hellenistic Jews. Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). There is one Jewish writer who does appear to have identified with his immediate surroundings, and that is Judah Abravanel, a son of Isaac Abravanel. *Dialoghi d’ Amore*, written in 1501/02 and published in 1535 in Rome, was a work in which Jewish thought from the Bible, the Talmud and Maimonides was framed as neo-Platonic philosophy in keeping with the humanistic environment of the court of Lorenzo de’ Medici of Florence, a milieu that lionized Plato in particular and likewise produced Ficino’s commentary on Plato’s Symposium (1474-5), Benivieni’s *Conzone d’amore* (on which Pico commented later), Equicola of Ferrara’s *Libro della natura de’ amore* (completed 1525); and Pietro Bembo’s *Gli Asolani* of 1505. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 131-132. *Dialoghi d’ Amore*, written in Italian, was translated into French and Spanish. *Ibid.*, 135. Nonetheless, Abravanel’s publishers made sure that his readership did not lose sight of the fact that he was a Jew, Leone Ebreo. *Ibid.*

126 De’ Rossi does not go so far as to suggest why that is, in comparison to the attitude expressed by de’ Rossi’s later contemporary Lowe that the *Josippon* accounts were invented to conceal true hostility to Rome. Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de’ Rossi’s Me’or ‘Einayim*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 143.

Christian Hebraist Sebastian Munster. De' Rossi specifically references Munster's edition of the text, a Latin translation that omitted as spurious large parts of the Constantinople edition. "[C]ertain scholars who set eyes on any of the printed editions of the Hebrew Josephus which were extant realized that it contains fabrications," de' Rossi states. What de' Rossi mentions is Munster's omission of material that has no bearing upon the Christian-Jewish conflict: Munster's deletion of the derivation of the names of contemporary nations in the opening chapter and an account of Alexander the Great and Nektanebus the Egyptian magician. "In particular," de' Rossi stated, "many people in successive generations had the audacity to tamper with the text either by inserting glosses or by adding stories from another source—this should not be done. Specifically, those scholars realized that the names of the nations in chapter I—the Franks, Goths, Lombards, and Bulgarians—must have been fabricated. After all, in the time of Josephus, those clans had not yet come to be. The entire passage is not in the version of the *Josippon* published in Germany. Similarly, it contains no mention of the episode of Nektanebus and his witchcraft, which is however to be found in the History of Alexander written by the Egyptian magicians."¹²⁷

De' Rossi appears to embrace the deficiencies in the *Josippon* even more aggressively than speaking of those noted by Munster. He does not limit himself to Munster's examples, targeting the *Josippon*'s treatment of the Hellenistic monarchs with the Jews. To be sure, de' Rossi notes as anachronistic the text's account of Vespasian's enthronement in Rome,¹²⁸ but more important for de' Rossi is the *Josippon*'s erroneous material "on the subject of the high priest before whom Alexander prostrated himself,"¹²⁹ while the *Josippon*'s presentation of the

127 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 331. Munster is the particular scholar de' Rossi had in mind. He is not named due to the Counter Reformation prohibition on identifying any Protestant scholar by name. "In the seventh rule of the Tridentine Index of 1564, it was conceded that heretics' books could be cited, but only anonymously." Ibid., 677 n. 38.; xl & n.138. Another hint is de' Rossi's reference to publication in Germany. Munster's work was clearly not published in Germany, but rather Basel (1541). Despite de' Rossi's reference to "certain scholars," no other individual was identified with the 1541 Basel edition of the *Josippon*. More, when de' Rossi refers to Munster's work elsewhere he refers to him in the singular. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 260 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes* n. 57-58 (regarding an edition of Ptolemy's maps). Note, as well, the concluding sentences of Munster's introduction to his edition, which clearly match de' Rossi's observations: "*Caeterum quod quarundam graecarum vocum fit mentio et citantur quaedam gentes quae longe post Iosephi tempora in mundo surrexunt ut sunt: Franci, Gothi, Lombardi, Bulgari, etc. Haec plane arguunt Iosepho quaedam accessisse per posteros Iudaeos expositionis et praefationis gratia. Nos propterea consulto omisimus ea quae ab initio huic auctori sunt adiecta, eo quod pleraque sunt fabulosa.*" Sebastian Munster, *Iosephus Hebraicus div desideratus, et nunc ex Constantinopolitano exemplari iuxta Hebraismum opera*, Basel, 154. Compare the more favorable reception of the *Josippon* in Jean Bodin's influential *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* [1566] published just a few years before *Me'or 'Enayim*, in which the author compared Flavius Josephus and Josippus ben Gorion [reputed author of the *Josippon*], considered them to be different authors but contemporaries, and determined the former to be more truthful while the latter was useful for religion. Eva Matthews Sanford, "Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 66 (1935): 139. De' Rossi did not apparently cite Bodin, Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 800, for there was no publishing requirement to omit Bodin's name as his *Methodus* was not on the IPB (despite the fact that he was Catholic, the work was placed on the list in 1590). William Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter-Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 305.

128 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 332.

129 Ibid. Ordinarily, de' Rossi will specify where, precisely, he will resume an issue. Here, Weinberg notes the location as chapter 22. Ibid., 332 n.88. There, de' Rossi suggests that the name of the high priest, suggested by

Letter of Aristeas account is “most certainly corrupt” as is “evident to anyone who makes an intelligent comparison between the text of the Hebrew and Roman Josephus.”¹³⁰

But what de’ Rossi did not mention is Munster’s glaring omission of the *Josippon*’s material regarding Rome. Munster had not simply deleted sentences accounting for the names of nations: he had omitted the entire first three chapters of the *Josippon*. These are the chapters in which Rome’s dependence upon Jews as well as Jewish friendship with Romans had been emphasized. Munster, with perhaps even greater significance, had deleted the last thirty-four chapters dealing with the Jewish war with Rome.¹³¹ Munster had deleted an amount equal to approximately one-half of the entire *Josippon*. While these omissions did not even merit an introductory comment by Munster — undoubtedly because the “Jewish” material was considered an obvious interpolation in order to counter the Christian accounts of the *Testimonium Flavianum* and the *Hegesippus*,¹³² it is inconceivable that the omissions — and their significance — were unnoticed by de’ Rossi himself.

Rather, the edition of the *Josippon* on de’ Rossi’s desk suggested to de’ Rossi that the narrative of the *Josippon* concerning Jewish interaction with Rome would no longer survive critical scrutiny. Any notion that Roman greatness was dependent upon Jews or that this was a friendship of equals was now clearly fantasy.¹³³ So too the idea that Titus was infused with Jewish religious sensibility. Indeed, even if de’ Rossi were inclined to debate the point, making affirmative historical claims that contradicted a millennium and a half of Christian dominance would have been as dangerous as it would have been useless.

Josippon to be Iddo, was changed from its original Iaddo, the Greek or Latin version of the proper Hebrew, Jaddua, and likewise that the Constantinople text of the *Josippon* mistakenly name the priest Hananiah or Onias. *Ibid.*, 353 & n. 26-353 & n. 28.

130 *Ibid.*, 332. Weinberg notes as curious de’ Rossi’s failure to note the observation of Vives impugning the legitimacy of the Letter of Aristeas in his commentary on Augustine, a text de’ Rossi had read. *Ibid.*, 3 n. 21. As suggested below, de’ Rossi’s interest was not in historical scholarship per se but rather in distancing Jews from historical accounts that clearly were inaccurate and therefore no longer useful. The account of Aristeas in particular was consistent with much Christian scholarship and therefore of continued use.

131 Munster’s text begins with chapter four’s account of Ahasuerus, Moredecai and Esther. Chapters one to three, that deal with the founding of Rome, its dependent relationship upon the Jews, as well as Jewish-Persian history are omitted. Munster’s text ends with the death of Antipater at the end of chapter sixty-three. Munster, *Iosephus Hebraicus div desideratus*, 154.

132 It is generally understood that the author of *Josippon* read the *Hegesippus* or a text much like it. Flusser, “*Josippon*, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus,” 391; Sanford, “Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus,” 137. It nonetheless is possible that the *Josippon*, while last touched by a Byzantine scribe, itself drew from one or more earlier texts, even (here, noting in particular the opening material on Rome that is similar to that of Livy) from Classical times. Certainly, in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple, and as Christianity and Judaism drew apart, each faith would have been motivated to rewrite the account in a way to make the events more useful to their respective cultures. *Ibid.*, 128.

133 Early 15th century forays into the prehistorical past of Rome had done little to shed light on the times recounted by Livy and Vergil except to posit an Etruscan link to Jews that might have served to establish a cultural counterweight to Rome, not to supplement the city’s legacy. Amanda Collins, “The Etruscans in the Renaissance: The Sacred Destiny of Rome and the ‘*Historia Viginti Saeculorum*’ of Giles of Viterbo (C. 1469-1532),” *Historical Reflections / Reflexions Historiques* 27 (1) (2001), 107-37 (discussing Annius of Viterbo), as well as his successors, including Giles of Viterbo, 119-126.

2. Jews Cannot Use Roman History for Scholarship

Just as contemporary scholarship and events undermined Jewish confidence in their encounter with Rome, the political defeat and continuing political marginalization of Jews by Christians meant that Jews could not use that past in a meaningful way to stake a claim to the present. While Jews could argue that rhetoric and drama were originally Jewish knowledge to be found in the Bible, Jews could not make this claim of superiority with the discipline of historiography that was newly practiced in the Renaissance with the development of city states. At first glance, this is surprising — for the Bible certainly contains writing that we think of as historical, whether in Deuteronomy, Kings or Chronicles. The reason has nothing to do with the Bible and everything to do with the meaning of history in the 16th century. History, as noted above by Bonfil in Chapter I, was *narratio rerum gestarum* — and Jews had no great deeds to narrate because they were an exile nation, in the context of contemporary notions of historiography, they were very much a nation living outside of history.¹³⁴ As a nation without political or military autonomy, the Jews simply could not identify with history as written in the 16th century by Machiavelli or Guicciardini. Unlike the princes of Florence, “The Jews had long ceased to have kings and conduct wars. As far as Jewish history was concerned, the humanistic historiographical model was irrelevant.”¹³⁵ And if Jews could not identify with historiography as a discipline, there was no value to claiming priority over it.

There was a second reason Jews could not engage with Christian scholars regarding historiography, and that was closer to home: the question of Josephus discussed above. The obvious candidate for Jewish historiography, and one uniformly lauded by Christians, was Josephus. And yet Jews did not dare rely upon Josephus to illuminate the Classical history of greatest significance to them, namely the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple. Josephus had the power to correct Tacitus and Suplicius to say nothing of Eusebius, *Hegesippus* and the Rabbis, but due to the religious tension of the age, nobody would touch Josephus. Notably, no 16th century history dealt with Roman history during Biblical times or with the Jewish experience under Rome.¹³⁶ Protestant scholars such as Sebastian Munster could evaluate

134 Robert Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 226.

135 *Ibid.*, 231-232. While Yerushalmi, likewise in Chapter I, noted a veritable explosion of ten “important historical works” in the 16th century, Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” 192, Bonfil pared the list down to three; each of those tellingly treats non-Jewish history, Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 227 (Capsali — Turks); ha-Cohen — French and Ottomans); Ganz — Germans and Poles) while conceiving of Jewish history as medieval “ecclesiastical history,” or history framed by “the Jewish scheme of redemption and of sacred time governing chronology.” Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 232.

136 Aside from the *Josippon*, the only Jewish text to reference Roman history was *Sefer ha-kabbalah* of ibn Daud (which included a precis of second commonwealth history and of Roman emperors). Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” 201. It was the *Josippon*, though, from which Jews drew information concerning the destruction of the Second Temple. Judah Mosconi praised the work: “For we can read in it the deeds of our ancestors because of whose sins our city was destroyed...and they ate the sour grapes, but our teeth are set on edge;” and Tam Ibn Yahia introduction to edition of Constantinople 1510: ““And I, in the midst of the exile, wallowing in the blood of the upheavals that are overtaking my people and the nation, was roused by my soul and spirit to be among those who have helped to print this book, for this is the one

the *Josippon*, but it was still early even for Christian scholars to use Josephus to criticize overtly Christian texts such as the Gospels.¹³⁷

What Jews could do was begin where Josephus (or rather the *Josippon*) had left off. That was the approach taken by Joseph ha-Kohen. In opening his *Vale of Tears*, ha-Kohen's history of suffering of the Jews since the fall of the Second Temple, ha-Kohen takes as his starting point the end of the Second Temple: "From the day of Judah's exile from its land of his which was destroyed," is his start. Specifically, he begins with the destruction of Titus: "After Jerusalem had lost all its glory, Titus, the Roman Emperor (79-81 A.D.), left a Jewish remnant in Bethar, Usha and their daughter communities and, as long as he lived, Rabi Yochanan ben Zakkai was their head and guide." The suffering continues, as Romans kill Rabbis.¹³⁸ Even when ha-Kohen writes a history ostensibly of other people, his history of the kings of the Franks and Turks, he describes himself as tracking the development of the suffering that flowed from Titus' destruction: "All my people is aware that no author has arisen in Israel comparable to Yosippon the priest, who wrote of the war of the land of Judea and of Jerusalem. The chroniclers ceased in Israel, they ceased, until I, Joseph, did arise, a chronicler in Israel! And I set my heart to write as a remembrance in a book the bulk of the troubles that have been visited upon us in Gentile lands, from the day that Judah was exiled from its land until the present day."¹³⁹ Samuel Usque's third and final period of his *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel* cover the years following the Second Temple.¹⁴⁰ On the important field of jockeying for political legitimacy therefore, Jews had no horse to ride, their narratives leading from the Second Temple to the present focused necessarily upon the conditions that continued to deprive them of political power.¹⁴¹

that has laid bare the source of the misfortunes of the House of Judah." Ibid., 199. Joseph Ibn Verga, the editor (or perhaps the printer), on the title page of the first edition (Adrianople, 1553), spoke of the generations of Israel and its misfortunes, blood libel, disputation, exilarchs . . . "Finally, it depicts the structure of the Temple and its inner precincts, the service of the High Priest when he came to his chamber before the Day of Atonement, and the order of the Passover sacrifice, which we shall yet see with our own eyes, as we were promised by our Creator, the lord of compassion." Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews," 210.

137 Joseph Scaliger would be the first scholar to so utilize Josephus, early in the 17th century. He would challenge the *Testimonium Flavianum* as well. H.J. de Jonge, "Joseph Scaliger's Historical Criticism of the New Testament," *Novum Testamentum* 38, no. 2 (April, 1996): 181, 189-90. Interestingly, Scaliger is our source of the term Hellenism. Jonge, *Novum Testamentum*, 38, 176-93, 178.

138 Harry S. May, ed., *The Vale of Tears (Emek Habacha)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 1. Ha-Kohen continues with the Jewish revolt against Trajan in Cyrene; Romulus son of bar Kochba against Hadrian in Bethar. Ibid., 2-3. Hadrian took his captives to Spain. Ibid., 3. Italy is mentioned only in passing. Ibid., 6.

139 Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century," 204 (*Dibrey ha-Yamim*).

140 Samuel Usque, *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, trans. Martin A. Cohen (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965), 109-64.

141 None of this is to say that Jews expressed no interest whatsoever in Roman history. Joseph Nasi and Dona Gracia were dedicatees of a translation by Amatus Lusitanus of Eutropius' work on Roman history into a Spanish language. Eleazar Gutwirth, "Amatus Lusitanus and the Location of Sixteenth-Century Cultures," 216-238, *Cultural Intermediaries*; (219). Gutwirth emphasizes the connection between the historiography of the Spanish Jews of the 16th century and a humanistic interest in truth. Ibid. at 234.

3. Jewish Deliverance from Rome Was Not Imminent

And just as Jews could not hold onto a proud account of their connection with Rome and Jews could not use their connection with Rome to position themselves in contemporary culture, so too the late 16th century snuffed any Jewish hope that the conflict between East and West or between Protestant and Catholic would presage the advent of the Messianic Age. By contrast, the Church was newly strong, its program of expulsion and conversion of unprecedented force and effect.

Clearly there was little to be gained from the Rabbinic account of God's punishment of Titus. Historical criticism rendered the account patently erroneous and the facts on the ground merely emphasized the point: deliverance was not imminent, and de' Rossi took great pains to prove that identity based upon deliverance from Rome was pointless. There are many aspects to the Titus *midrashim* — Titus' blasphemy in the Temple, Titus' encounter with God on the waters, and Titus' death. All strain credulity, but De' Rossi focuses only upon the part of the account contradicted by other historical accounts, namely God's responsibility for Titus' death.

De' Rossi presents the version of the story most likely to be true, as if he is interested in the historicity of the account. He quotes Pirque de' Rabbi Eliezer on the grounds of its "greater antiquity".¹⁴² "Titus the wicked entered the Holy of Holies and said, 'There is no adversary or enemy that can get the better of me.' What did the Holy One blessed be He do? He dispatched a gnat against him; it entered his nostril and made its way to his brain; it became as a young pigeon weighing two selahs. This was to make him aware that his power was of no consequence."¹⁴³ While he notes that there are divergent accounts presented by the Rabbis, de' Rossi purports to set out the common elements for critique, saying "this much may be abstracted from both versions".¹⁴⁴ Indeed, de' Rossi states that he values "consistent accounts" as indicia of truth.¹⁴⁵

Chief among the criticisms leveled by de' Rossi, then, is that the account of Titus' death provided by non-Jews was uniformly different. Titus actually died as a result of an illness not visited upon him by God. Eight reported death by fever (Eusebius, Cassiodorus, Contractus, Suetonius, Eutropius, Platina, Mexia, and Petrarch) while two suggested poisoning (Dio Cassius

142 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 296.

143 Ibid. See Friedlander, "Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer," 390. The story of Titus' death (and its cause) are reported in numerous Rabbinic texts: notably, in Palestinian *midrashim* collected on Genesis, Leviticus, Ecclesiastes, in *Pirque de' Rabbi Eliezer*, and in the Babylonian Talmud. Also a version in the Tanhuma [huqqat 1]. The crux of the story is that Titus claims to be superior to God and that God sends the tiniest of insects to kill him. It is a story of hubris that illustrates by the juxtaposition of the physical presence of Titus and the gnat the power of the Jewish God. The simplest version of the story is in *Genesis Rabbah* — a version that contains nothing but the challenge of Titus and the response by God. Pirque de' Rabbi Eliezer's account is similarly terse, except that it quotes the language used by Titus. See discussion above, p. 6-7.

144 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 296. An appreciably longer version exists in identical versions in Leviticus Rabbah and Ecclesiastes Rabbah; in their details, these Palestinian *midrashim* contrast with another long account in the Babylonian Talmud. Bereshit Rabbah [10:7], Vayiqra Rabbah [22:3], and BT tractate Gittin [56b] — along with a different version in the Tanhuma [huqqat I]. See discussion above, p. 6-7. Specifically regarding the Talmud, it is most interesting that de' Rossi claims he does not quote the text "since the books are available". Ibid., 296 & nn. 2-296 & nn. 5. It is likely that de' Rossi drew, in part, from the midrashic compilation of ibn Habib entitled *En Ya'acov*. See also *ibid.*, 18 nn. 54-18 nn. 55.

145 Ibid., 296-297.

and Philostratus).¹⁴⁶ The result was overwhelming: “ten men from nations of every tongue who in their innocence speak wantonly against the account of our blessed Rabbis. It would seem that those who acknowledge the truth will have to admit that they knew the specific details of such stories better than our sages.¹⁴⁷ ... The fact is that all this information makes it quite clear that our Rabbis’ story about Titus never happened neither in its entirety nor in part.”¹⁴⁸

And yet, de’ Rossi is not principally interested in Rabbinic consistency. He supplements Pirque de’ Rabbi Eliezer’s account with accounts not uniformly presented by Rabbis that feature colorful punishment of Titus. While Titus’ blasphemy on the sea was a detail all accounts had in common, only the Palestinian *midrashim* contained the details regarding Titus’ awareness of his punishment, the Rabbinic witness to the creature in his head, and the mutual transformation of creature and Titus, while only the Babylonian Talmud referenced the seven year period, the early Rabbinic text as to the size of the creature, and the characterization of its claws and beak.

And de’ Rossi omitted any reference in these accounts to the conduct of Titus in the Temple itself — even those *shared* by Palestinian and Babylonian accounts. Both the Palestinian and the Babylonian texts stated that Titus had lain with a harlot (or two) in the Temple (whether on the Scrolls or the altar), that Titus slashed the curtain, that blood came from his sword, that Titus taunted God in the sanctuary, and that Titus gathered up the Temple treasures (whether by curtain or by net) and bore them toward Rome in his ship. Despite the fact that these details were shared by all accounts, de’ Rossi omits them; he includes only the details noted above.

De’ Rossi omitted stories that dealt with Roman history or eschatology, focusing simply upon Titus himself. From the Palestinian accounts, de’ Rossi omits elements that lend historicity to Titus’ victory over the Jews: his triumph and his bath. His triumph in particular is a curious omission, especially in combination with the omission his possession of the Temple vessels — all was corroborated in the stone of the Arch of Titus in Rome. From the Babylonian Talmud, de’ Rossi omits elements that emphasize the lesson of God’s eventual but certain punishment of Rome. De’ Rossi omits that in the Babylonian Talmud, Titus is called a descendant of Esau — an identification that pairs the destruction wrought upon Jacob with his ultimate triumph over his brother. De’ Rossi also leaves out the Talmud’s account of Titus’ declaration that his ashes should be scattered so as to avoid the ultimate punishment by God.¹⁴⁹

146 Ibid., 298.

147 Furthermore, ibn Daud supported the non-Jewish accounts, in that he had recounted that Titus came to power only eight years after the destruction of the Second Temple. Ibid., 298 & n.16. Weinberg points out that de’ Rossi is referencing the second section of Rabad’s *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, a section entitled *Zikhron Divrei Romi*, as well as Rabad’s positive description of Titus’ character. She does not identify the other “chronicles of emperors” or the “famous chronicles” that de’ Rossi reviewed.

148 Ibid., 298-299. Indeed, the Rabbinic account was “replete with matters contrary to nature,” such as the manner of the gnat’s entry, the space in the brain for growth of the creature, the metallic composition of the beast’s claws and beak, and the ability of something without a backbone to survive for very long — to say nothing of the fact that given the physical impairment of the brain Titus should not have been able to utter “rational statements” as some Rabbinic accounts maintain. Ibid., 297. De’ Rossi does not doubt God’s power to act “contrary to nature,” but that would constitute a miracle, and “one would have expected some outcome or publicity which would have been appropriate for a miracle of such magnitude.” Ibid.

149 The story that the gnat was silent in the presence of a Jewish blacksmith emphasizes the opposition of Jew and Roman — an opposition that points toward future resolution as opposed to singular historical conflict.

If de' Rossi were, in fact, interested in establishing what really happened regarding Titus, he could have taken the conflicting Rabbinic accounts concerning Titus' actions in the Temple and compared them unfavorably with ibn Daud — whose positive account of Titus de' Rossi notes in passing. That positive account was in fact in accord with the historical sources adduced by de' Rossi in order to establish the ahistoricity of the Rabbinic account of Titus' death. Perhaps because he had lived in a Spain dominated by Islam and not Christianity, ibn Daud and his fellow Jews were no longer invested in God's vengeance upon Rome in general or Titus in particular. Rather, ibn Daud mentioned that Titus was a "great sage",¹⁵⁰ as had Eusebius, Cassiodorus, Contractus, Suetonius, Eutropius, Platina, Mexia and Petrarch. Too Dio and Philostratus.¹⁵¹ To be sure, ibn Daud is forced to deal with Titus' connection with the destruction of the Second Temple, but his account -- that he was "forced to destroy the Temple"¹⁵² -- lacks eschatological import.

It is necessarily evident that the historical agreement that de' Rossi could have shown between ibn Daud and classical sources regarding history's assessment of Titus' sagacity would not provide more value than the Rabbinic accounts of Titus' evil, which were important to retain *despite their lack of agreement with other historical sources*. Indeed, should de' Rossi have proceeded down the historical path, he would have had to deal squarely with ibn Daud's claim Titus destroyed the Temple because he was forced to do so -- a characterization that was consistent with no Classical or Christian source and would have required bringing in the testimony of Josephus (or the *Josippon*) — both of whom had in fact exonerated Titus' actions.¹⁵³ Here is the clearest evidence that de' Rossi does not want to do history.

De' Rossi is only interested in salvaging meaning from the Rabbinic account of Titus' death — an account that was clearly now contradicted by gentile history. By demolishing the historicity of Titus' death (and by ignoring that of Titus' conquest — even the Rabbinic evidence in accord with it), de' Rossi shows himself not exclusively interested in history. By leaving alone the legendary material concerning Titus' deserving of punishment from what he did in the Temple, as well as the legendary material suggesting the ultimate punishment of Rome, de' Rossi likewise makes clear that this material is of continuing use to Jews.¹⁵⁴ The Titus *midrashim* were not about history — what had happened — but about the future — what was to happen. "Thus, with regard to the story of Titus you may, and have the right, to assert that the tale is simply an invention and a way of instruction used by those of perfect knowledge. Their purpose was to ensure that the people were convinced of the greatness of our Lord and His mighty power

150 Ibid., 298 & n. 16. Note, however, that de' Rossi does not quote the passage from *Zikhron Divre Romi*, focusing instead only upon the chronology of Titus. Compare Katja Vehlow, "Abraham bin Daud's Historiography: the History of the Kings of Israel and the Brief History of Rome" (PhD diss., New York University, 2006), 105-6. 151 Ibid., 298.

152 Ibid. Vehlow suggests that ibn Daud "modifies the Rabbinic rejection of Titus". Vehlow, "Abraham bin Daud's Historiography, 106 n. 37. I would suggest that the interests of ibn Daud and the Rabbis were simply different -- the former interested in history and the latter in eschatology.

153 They did so differently, of course, explicitly putting the blame on a rogue soldier.

154 By contrast, even Segal, who argues that de' Rossi values Rabbinic *midrash*, sees de' Rossi's primary purpose as proving the truth about Titus' death from the multiplicity of sources. Segal, *A Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'or Enayim*, 140-43.

by which He requires Himself on those who rise up against Him, particularly the haughty and insolent, who receive their due punishment by means of the smallest of His creatures.”¹⁵⁵

If the stories about Titus were to continue to offer hope to the Jews of de’ Rossi’s day, Jews would have to acknowledge that these accounts were not useful as history. In late 16th century Italy, it was no longer possible to hold onto the historicity of Jewish stories of ultimate Roman demise. The Church was ascendant; Rome appeared not just strong, but on the point of ultimate victory. And references that would undermine the Roman case, such as those identifying Rome with *Edom*, were not just censored but dangerous to assert.

C. The Increasingly Unified Jewish Community of Northern Italy

As of the later part of the 16th century, Italy’s Jews were concentrated in the north. Mantua had the largest concentration of Jews, while Ferrara had the largest concentration of *conversos*. If money was concentrated with the Sephardim in Ferrara (and Venice, and to an extent Florence), Jewish intellectual leadership was situated in Mantua. The differing cultures of Jews were now concentrated in northern Italy like nowhere before; de’ Rossi’s Jewish community was intellectually vibrant, culturally diverse and geographically contained. He had good reason to think that his people might be responsive to a new framework for where they had been, where they were going, and the importance of their role in the mean-time.

Jewish Mantuan presence was long-established. Christian annalists said that the first Jews to settle had come to Mantua as prisoners from Titus’ war.¹⁵⁶ In the 13th century, Mantuan students studied with Tosafists in Germany.¹⁵⁷ Certainly by the 14th century, after the Black Death and the massacres of German Jews that followed in its wake, the Mantuan community had grown from the influx of immigrants from communities of Central Europe.¹⁵⁸ Late in the 14th century, in the 1380s, there were Italian migrants from Rome who took up residence in Mantua as moneylenders, due to growing economic opportunity.¹⁵⁹ They were joined by Germans and French in early 15th century.¹⁶⁰

The influx into northern Italy from expulsions from Germany and France in the 14th century, plus those Jews moving north from southern expulsions in the 15th century meant that for the 16th century, the center of gravity of Italian Jewish life was in the north.¹⁶¹ As a result of the 1509 war, Jews departed from Venice to Mantua, Ferrara (and indeed Germany).¹⁶² More

155 Ibid., 300-301.

156 Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher Ltd., 1977), 2.

157 Ibid., 3.

158 Joseph Davis, “The Reception of the “*Shulhan ‘Arukh*” and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity,” *AJS Review* 26, no. 2 (Nov., 2002): 253.

159 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 4.

160 Mantua had, since the early part of the 15th century, been a welcome home to Jewish merchants. The Gonzagas favored bankers, who retained the most prominence even after other traders and artisans entered the city. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 11-12. Ibid., 5. Mantua had, since the early part of the 15th century, been a welcome home to Jewish merchants. The Gonzagas favored bankers, who retained the most prominence even after other traders and artisans entered the city. Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 11-12.

161 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 4.

162 Moses A. Shulvass, “The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy,” *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 1 (Jan., 1951): 8-9; 12.

Jews left Venice for Mantua from the 1513/14 German invasion (and again as a result of fears of deportation following the victory at Lepanto late in the century).¹⁶³

By the mid-16th century, there was a German community in Mantua (along with Verona and Venice, as well as Rome).¹⁶⁴ Mantua in fact served as the predominant center for German-Jewish life. In northern Italy, Germans predominated to the northeast, French to the northwest, and Italians dominated the center of the north, forming a majority to the Ashkenazi minority in Mantua. (Neighboring Verona was mostly Ashkenazi and so was the region north of Mantua.) French Jews assimilated into the German group if they emigrated east from Piedmont. In any event, the Germans and Italians were more similar in outlook and culture than were the Iberians — who formed their own communities in Venice, Ancona, Leghorn,¹⁶⁵ and then Ferrara. Mantua as the German/Italian center of Jewish life possessed “unusually rich communal activity” suggesting a degree of numerical strength.¹⁶⁶ “Instances of the community of Mantua’s assistance to individual Jews, and to communities facing difficult times, were manifold.” Such leadership included “financial and moral assistance”.¹⁶⁷ Mantua was refuge to Jews during time of Paul IV and the book burning in other towns. In 1556 Meir ben Ephraim founded a printing establishment and a publishing office there.¹⁶⁸ In 1567, the Duke of Mantua contracted with two more bankers, one of Bologna, in 1567.¹⁶⁹

Mantua absorbed refugees expelled from the Papal States in 1569.¹⁷⁰ The Papal States dominated nearly all of central Italy, from one coast to the other, the region of Romagna with its capital in Bologna. There was a high ratio of Jews to Christians in this portion of Italy; 1/3 to 1/2 by mid-century. In 1527 there were about 2000 Jews in Rome, although the population was down to 1500 by 1556; in Bologna resided 800-900 Jewish persons.¹⁷¹ Upon the expulsion in 1569, most of these Jews ended up in Mantua. Some came directly, some by way of Ferrara.¹⁷² And others by way of Pesaro, when the Duke of Urbino expelled these refugees in 1571.¹⁷³ As many as 4,000 refugees requested admittance (from Papal State and Venice) in 1571 and 1572; many found refuge there.¹⁷⁴ When the Jews of Bologna fled from Papal strictures, Joseph Hacoen reported that “they fled by night...where they settled in Mantua where they live to this day.”¹⁷⁵ De’ Rossi himself was one of these refugees. The population had skyrocketed: there were likely at least 2000 Jews in Mantua in 1570.¹⁷⁶ By 1600 the Jewish population of Mantua

163 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 28 n. 100.

164 Davis, “The Reception of the “*Shulhan ‘Arukh*” and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity,” 253.

165 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 4-5.

166 Shulvass, “The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy,” 17.

167 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 429.

168 David Kaufmann, “Meir B. Ephraim of Padua, Scroll-Writer and Printer in Mantua,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 11, no. 2 (Jan., 1899): 272.

169 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 220.

170 *Ibid.*, 430.

171 Shulvass, “The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy,” 20-21.

172 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 28-29.

173 *Ibid.*, 29.

174 *Ibid.*, 28.

175 *Ibid.*

176 But see John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700 (Christianity and Society in the Modern World)* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 91. (In 1500 Mantua had just 200 Jews; there were 960 in 1587 and 2,325 in 1610).

was twice that of the Jewish population of Venice;¹⁷⁷ Jews constituted 20% of the city's population.¹⁷⁸

When, in 1480, Giovanni Francesco II of Mantua, married Isabella d'Este of Ferrara, "there was no city of Italy in which Renaissance currents so deeply influenced [the Jewish community]." ¹⁷⁹ At this time, and throughout the 16th century, Mantua far out-shadowed Venice.¹⁸⁰ In the 15th century, Judah Messer Leon had taught philosophy in Mantua.¹⁸¹ As of the late 16th century, Mantua was home to R. Judah Moscato,¹⁸² R. David Provenzali and his son Abraham, a doctor,¹⁸³ and of course, to de' Rossi himself. The Mantuan community was the community of Jews most integrated into the Christian polity of the time; it was the community most affected by the Renaissance in the 16th century.¹⁸⁴

Ashkenazim in 15th century joined the Italiani who resided in Ferrara, but there, unlike in Mantua, the German presence was not terribly significant.¹⁸⁵ While Ferrara drew refugees from Venice in the war of 1509,¹⁸⁶ and Ashkenazi exiles from Padua in 1510,¹⁸⁷ Iberian exiles ended up predominating in Ferrara in the 16th century: in 1531 Portuguese *conversos* and then Spanish exiles from Naples arrived, followed by similarly situated Jews from the Papal States in 1569.¹⁸⁸ Spanish Jews predominated in Ferrara early on. In 1500 it was one of most important Jewish cities; the city limits had to be expanded to deal with the influx of Jews, especially after the *converso* influx upon the instigation of the Inquisition in Portugal. Many of these returned to Judaism in and about the year 1531.¹⁸⁹ In the 1550s, Ferrara welcomed a press for Spanish print, which allowed Jews to read their texts without knowledge of Hebrew.¹⁹⁰ Only later, in 1532, was there founded a synagogue for Ashkenazim.¹⁹¹

Italian Jews from Rome joined the Ferraran community in numbers in 1556, followed by exiles from Bologna and Romagna in 1565: these constituted about 2000 people, many of whom settled in Ferrara.¹⁹² Those who fled from Bologna came first to Ferrara, which was relatively near; only some proceeded on to Mantua.¹⁹³ As of 1570 there were more than 2,000 Jews who

177 Ibid., 90 (Venice's population expanded from 900 in 1552 to about 2,500 in 1600).

178 Shulvass, "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy," 18.

179 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 12.

180 Ibid., 12-13.

181 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 582.

182 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 36.

183 Ibid., 42.

184 Ibid., 247.

185 Shulvass, "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy," 18.

186 Ibid., 8-9; 12

187 Shulvaas, "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy," 3-24, 13, 18.

188 Ibid.

189 Shulvass, "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy," 13.

190 Renata Segre, "Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey," in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World After 1492*, ed. Alisa Meyuhus Ginio (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1992), 136.

191 Shulvass, "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy," 13.

192 Ibid., 18.

193 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 28-29.

were a vital part of Ferrara's economic life.¹⁹⁴ As of the late 16th century, "most of the city's businesses [were] in the hands of wealthy Jews."¹⁹⁵ These were *conversos*. Dona Gracia Mendes had resided in Ferrara, from which she tried to organize a boycott of Ancona and the Papal States by Turkish Jewish merchants who would transfer their trade to Pesaro.¹⁹⁶

However diverse the Jewish communities were of northern Italy in the late 16th century, and distinct those of Mantua and Ferrara were specifically, they were, nonetheless, part of the same Jewish community. In a *responsa* as early as the 13th century, the Jews of Ferrara, Mantua and Verona were considered together.¹⁹⁷ David Reubeni, who claimed to be sent by his brother, king of Reuben, to obtain military assistance in struggle against the Turks, received assistance from the Jews of Venice and was heralded throughout Bologna, Mantua and Ferrara, where he traveled before heading to Portugal.¹⁹⁸ Trade from Mantua included exports to Ferrara, as well as Reggio, Parma, and Verona.¹⁹⁹ From the Christian perspective, the cities in which the Jews lived were linked as well despite their respective Spanish and Germanic affinities. The Holy League of 1571 comprised not just Spain and Venice but the Duchies of Savoy, Parma Ferrara and Mantua.

The result was that as the century wore on, the German and Sephardic communities in northern Italy became closer. Venice was largely German, as was Mantua.²⁰⁰ In Venice, in terms of population, there was domination by the Germans over then Spanish and Levantine.²⁰¹ Yet, the Ashkenazim were the least privileged in this city: they were only allowed to engage in money lending and clothes trading because they had no Ottoman protection; Levantine Jews, by contrast, had the benefits of extensive trading relationships,²⁰² the result of which was a disproportionate power held by the Sephardim. Levantine Jews were allowed to stay in Venice temporarily after 1541 following the example of Duke of Ferrara — to regain trade with Turkish empire via Balkans, which was increasingly in hands of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. The importance of Sephardim to oceanic trade unified in particular the communities of Venice, Ferrara and Ancona. "Indeed, so it seemed, no Italian ruler with an eye on the Levant traffic could afford to hold back from the scramble to attract Levantine Jews."²⁰³ The Mendes family (New Christians from Portugal) and Abrabanel (Jews from Naples) shared a common network of cities through which they engaged in trade: Venice, Ferrara, Ancona.²⁰⁴ *Conversos* would circumcise themselves in Ferrara and return to Venice wearing Levantine turbans.²⁰⁵ The

194 M. Shalem, "Una Fone Poco Nota Sul Terremoto Di Ferrara Del 1570," *Revista Geographica Italiana* (1938): 118.

195 Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. Elvin I. Kose (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 133.

196 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 302.

197 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 3 n. 10.

198 Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 191-192.

199 Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua*, 272.

200 Shulvass, "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy," 11-12.

201 *Ibid.*, 12-13.

202 E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 50. See generally Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, 85 (by 1600 three 'nations' of Jews in Venice: Germans, Pontine (Spain, Portugal, Netherlands) and Levantines).

203 *Ibid.*, 89.

204 Segre, "Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographic Survey," 132.

205 Brian Pullan, "'A Ship With Two Rudders': 'Righetto Marrano' and the Inquisition in Venice," *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 1 (Mar., 1977): 37-38.

Righetto trial in Venice in 1570 featured four witnesses from Venice, but six from Ferrara; the Inquisitor Pietro da Rimini spent time amidst the earthquake rubble assembling evidence for Righetto's trial.²⁰⁶ Venetian booksellers, under pressure from the Counter-Reformation Index, could sell to Ferrarans.²⁰⁷ Most notably, in Venice, while the German and Spanish communities usually spoke separately, a petition in 1566 spoke in name of both.²⁰⁸

Scholars traveled easily and frequently between the northern Italian principalities. De' Rossi likely remained in close contact with the Mantuan Jewish community while residing in Ferrara. We must imagine that ideas percolating in the respective Jewish communities did too. The physician Amatus Lusitanus, born Joao Rodrigues, came from Antwerp to Italy, first at Venice and then at Ferrara.²⁰⁹ His case histories range from Florence, 1551 to Venice, 1566.²¹⁰ Diogo Pires (Shlomo Molkho) traveled from Venice to Ferrara and then to Ancona.²¹¹ The Mantuan Leone de' Sommi Portaleone, born 1525, pupil of David Provenzal, wrote a play presented for both the dukes of Mantua and of Ferrara.²¹² The same fluidity had existed in the previous century. Pico worked in Florence with Johanan ben Isaac Alemanno, who had sought him out and replaced Elijah del Medigo then in Venice. In 1470 the scholar was in Mantua.²¹³ Abraham (Farisol?) was encountered with Elijah del Medigo in Pico's home; Farisol had departed Avignon in Papal states in 1451 and in Italy had settled first in Mantua and then in Ferrara; he participated in a disputation in 1503-04 with Dominican and Franciscan friars in presence of Duke Ercole I.²¹⁴ In the 1520s Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga sought Jewish actors from the Duke of Ferrara.²¹⁵ The Mantuan Abramo Colorni attended courses of Christian professor of Medicine at the University of Ferrara.²¹⁶

Jews might well say that they bore allegiance to their city-state, as does de' Rossi,²¹⁷ but in truth the political bond was the social, the religious. David de' Pomi extolled the divine origin of Venetian republic,²¹⁸ but that was likely nothing more than lip service to ears already primed to think their city divinely founded. Professed loyalty to one's city over that to Jerusalem may, however, be more than just a trope, particularly in the politically turbulent 16th century: "I have no desire for Jerusalem; I have no desire or affection except for my city of Siena."²¹⁹ There was a comfort, even a sanctity, even in the walls of the ghettos that ultimately closed around Rome and

206 Ibid., 29.

207 Paul F. Grendler, "The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 129.

208 Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul*, 50.

209 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 226-227.

210 Ibid., 228.

211 Ibid., 19-20.

212 Ibid., 255.

213 Ibid., 118-119.

214 Ibid., 121-122.

215 Ibid., 248.

216 Daniel Jutte, "Trading in Secrets: Jews and the Early Modern Quest for Clandestine Knowledge," *Isis* 103, no. 4 (Dec. 2012): 672.

217 De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 1 ("Thus says the novice Azariah de' Rossi . . . who was born in the delightful city of Mantua").

218 Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 224.

219 Ibid., 32 (Ishmael da Tieti, hosting David Reubeni in Siena). Interestingly, it is by comparison to Jerusalem that de' Rossi makes his own claim for partiality to Mantua. See Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 1 n. 6.

other Jewish sections of cities. The walls easily summoned up the walls of Jerusalem,²²⁰ hopelessly far away. And from the perspective of language, the ghetto, with its hard Germanic “g,” sounded like the divorce, or *ghet*, that Jews were just as happy to have from Christian society.²²¹

The 16th century was marked by “more formalized structures of self-government” in Italian Jewish communities,²²² and such formality, in the face of a contracting space in which to live, led to greater centralization of the Jewish community. Communal organization of the late 15th and early 16th centuries was more visible during the second half of the 16th century: taxes, social and educational institutions increased. Municipal assemblies and *procuratori* were mimicked; communal ledgers, synagogues, cemeteries, and charitable associations all developed.²²³ Part of this can be attributed to a self-conscious “Jewish political tradition,” which may have developed in parallel to the increasing centralization of empire.²²⁴ In this sense, the large numbers of Jews now in northern Italy led to conformity of liturgy, “a stabilizing factor that allowed for a sense of continuity in the face of disruption and displacement”.²²⁵

Azariah de’ Rossi himself was an archetypical Italian Jew whose life straddled both the German and Spanish worlds. De’ Rossi was proud of the fact that his family had impeccable Italiani pedigree: his family was one of the four noble families that, according to Jewish tradition, Titus brought to Italy. That said, de’ Rossi was a Mantuan. “Thus says the novice Azariah de’ Rossi,” he writes, “who was born in the delightful city of Mantua.”²²⁶ It is a connection de’ Rossi does not tire of making. “Mantua,” de’ Rossi claims elsewhere, is “my land”. Later still, de’ Rossi identifies himself as “I, Azariah de’ Rossi, a Mantuan.”²²⁷ De’ Rossi has strong ties to the city.²²⁸ He married the sister of the Mantuan banker Hayyim Massaran.²²⁹ De’ Rossi mentions a Benedictine monk from Abbazia de Polirone, near Mantua (who tells him of a copy of an Aristobulus text the abbey has that he cannot borrow).²³⁰ He refers to contemporaries who lived in Mantua: Judah Moscato, Eliezer Ashkenazi, Provenzali brothers.²³¹ De’ Rossi refers to his Mantuan friend Judah Leone ben Isaac de’ Sommi Portaleone (“wise,

220 Stephen J. Milner, ed., *Stigma, Acceptance, and the End to Liminality: Jews and Christians in Early Modern Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 84.

221 *Ibid.*, 83 (“*nostro ghet*”).

222 Bernard D. Cooperman, “Ethnicity and Institution Building Among Jews in Early Modern Rome,” *AJS Review* 30, no. 1 (Apr. 2006): 119.

223 David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 61.

224 But part resulted from the Christian confinement of Jews in ghettos: in a more defined place there was a greater sense of cohesion. *Ibid.*, 62.

225 Cooperman, “Ethnicity and Institution Building Among Jews in Early Modern Rome,” 137-138. But cf. Lawee, “Abravanel in Italy: The Critique of the Kabbalist Elijah Hayyim Genazzano,” 244 (emphasizing conflict between Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Italian traditions).

226 Salo W. Baron, “Azariah de’ Rossi: A Biographical Sketch,” in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 1.

227 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 720.

228 See *ibid.*, xiii.

229 *Ibid.*, xv (“I saw the work which was in possession of my brother-in-law Rabbi Hayyim Massaran”). *Ibid.*, 292.

230 *Ibid.*, 189.

231 *Ibid.*, xvi.

experienced”) (1527-92).²³² He printed *Me’or ‘Enayim* in Mantua.²³³ He apparently was well enough connected with the Duke of Mantua that he hoped that the Duke of Mantua would allow (and subsidize?) a translation of another text: “Then God would accept that I should procure the agreement of his majesty the duke to sanction a translation of the text as though legislated from time immemorial for the purpose of the greater glory of the Torah.”²³⁴

Rossi also lived in Ferrara, most notably at the time of the earthquake.²³⁵ Amatus Lusitanus, born Rodrigues Joao de Castelo Branco (1511-68) met de’ Rossi, aged 35 in a bookshop that was probably in Ferrara.²³⁶ Amatus advised de’ Rossi to avoid the damp climate of Mantua and Ferrara — where de’ Rossi apparently had been living at the time.²³⁷ Amatus says de’ Rossi was studying medicine.²³⁸ De’ Rossi himself stated that he had studied in Ferrara: “Similarly, it is only to one’s god to be circumspect with regard to the texts of our law books and codes. In fact, this was actually borne out by my own present experience in the study house of the esteemed Yeshivah which was founded by those people of the Lord, the Sephardim, who live here in Ferrara. The members of the gathering appoint one leader for each day who serves in rotation.”²³⁹ Amatus says de’ Rossi had pupils, also apparently in Ferrara.²⁴⁰ De’ Rossi stated that he worked as a censor in the past.²⁴¹ Jews censored their own books in Ferrara to be sure that they were consistent with the Index of 1554; indeed, the Rabbis of Ferrara decreed in 1554 that no book should be printed without Rabbinic approval — perhaps to assure that it not be confiscated or burned.²⁴² De’ Rossi refers to Ferrarese, namely Avtalion Modena, the uncle of Leon Modena.²⁴³ At time of the earthquake, de’ Rossi refers to the generosity of the “leaders of the holy congregation of Ferrara” including Isaac Abravanel (grandson of Don Isaac), the children of Isaac Berechyah da Fano, Joseph Halevi, Aaron Degale and Solomon Modena, as well as “special individuals from the holy community of Sephardim.”²⁴⁴ He knows there are 10 synagogues in Ferrara.²⁴⁵ De’ Rossi’s name is on the list of Ferrarese Jews who raised money for Jews expelled from Ancona in 1574.²⁴⁶

And yet, de’ Rossi was subject to the pressures of Jews who lived in neighboring communities. Isaac Foa of Reggio wrote to Menahem Azariah da Fano regarding de’ Rossi’s treatment of Rabbinic *aggadot* (which had been seen by R. Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen) concerning a 1574 decree by Venetian Rabbis that people not read *Me’or ‘Enayim* without

232 Ibid., 322.

233 Ibid., xlii (1573-75).

234 Ibid., 189 n. 42 (first draft) (into Latin or Italian, as per Josephus and Yedidyah).

235 Baron, “Azariah de’ Rossi: A Biographical Sketch,” 1.

236 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xv. Friedenwald thinks Ancona in 1548/9 but supposes de’ Rossi born 1514; if 1511, possible met in Ferrara, where Amatus professor of anatomy lecturing on Galen and Hippocrates (went to Ancona in 1547). Ibid., xv n. 25.

237 Ibid., xvi.

238 Ibid.

239 Ibid., 331.

240 Ibid., xvi.

241 Ibid., 707.

242 Ibid., xvi n. 32.

243 Ibid., 331 and n. 75.

244 Ibid., 29.

245 Ibid., 29-30.

246 Ibid., xvii.

permission; others, such as the Rabbis of Ferrara and R Abraham Cohen Porto of Cremona determined that the book should not be read until the Mantuan Rabbis (and de' Rossi's friends) Judah Moscato and David Provenzali had spoken on the matter. De' Rossi himself decamped to Venice; he decided to incorporate Moses Provenzali's critique of his text, and he removed three examples of what he claimed to be Rabbinic hyperbole in a revised edition of his text.²⁴⁷

De' Rossi was familiar with other northern cities as well. He studied in Bologna, where he lived before he fled from the Papal States: "Moreover, while I was in the alma mater of Bologna, I was present while a Christian taught geometry to a large number of students. In unison with them he would chant aloud the multiplication tables which they were required to memorize. Time after time, he would strike a block with a hammer, which as I myself experienced, was the final test that those lessons had actually been committed to memory."²⁴⁸ He fled in 1567, two years before Jews were expelled: "In the year 5327 [1567] He performed miracles for me when He delivered me from the grasp of the angel of destruction when I was staying among the holy congregation of Bologna."²⁴⁹

De' Rossi was conscious of the landscape beyond even if he hadn't visited. He apparently hadn't been to Florence — he had been told that the Laurentian Library had a copy of a Greek work of Aristobulus regarding the Mosaic Torah for Ptolemy Philometer, but he had not seen it for himself.²⁵⁰ He may have been familiar with Savoy. He wrote elegies in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Italian with Latin translations for Margaret, wife of Emmanuel Philibert, duke of Savoy (who had attempted to prevent the expulsion of their Jews due to papal pressure).²⁵¹

The Jewish community in which de' Rossi lived and for which he wrote was focused in northern Italy, specifically Ferrara, Mantua and Venice. This community was diverse, with its three largest components being the Italiani, the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi. Increasingly, however, these communities were becoming one, as the places in which to live in Italy diminished and to the degree to which Jews of different communities were compelled to live close together. As of the later part of the 16th century, Italy's Jews were subjected to strong cultural winds on rivers on which they lacked a ship for secure navigation. Some claim to Roman authority governed the struggles between the rump of more or less independent principates (the most notable of which included Mantua and Ferrara) and the Pope, the conflict between Catholic and Protestant and the existential struggle between West and East. Rome dominated Christian identity in the past, the present and in the future. But the Jews simply had no stake in these conflicts, were subsumed by them, and could not identify with Rome at all. To survive, they needed an identity -- one that both drew from the dominating culture and allowed distinction within it. De' Rossi turned to the Classical empire that was Greece, namely to Hellenistic history. That is the subject of the next chapter, Chapter IV.

247 Ibid., xlii-xliii.

248 Ibid., 707.

249 Ibid., 30; *ibid.*, xvi. See generally *ibid.*, 31 n. 113 (expulsion from Papal States, 1567; from Bologna 1569); Baron, "Azariah de' Rossi: A Biographical Sketch," 167 (1569).

250 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 189.

251 Ibid., xvii.

CHAPTER IV: DECONSTRUCTING THE ROMAN PAST

We have seen that while Christian society has eagerly adopted a Roman identity, that identity completely excluded Jews (Chapter II). In the last chapter, Chapter III, we saw how de' Rossi believed that the Jewish counter-identity of superiority to Rome was no longer sustainable in the late 16th century Counter Reformation. Jews could no longer play at Rome while remaining Jewish. Jews needed a new identity that would permit them to see themselves (likewise, the Christian majority to see them) as valuable members of the greater Christian society, a society informed by both religious faiths but not determined by either. But to create, de' Rossi first needed to destroy. How he did this and prepared the ground for reconstruction is the topic of this chapter, Chapter IV.

De' Rossi wanted to show that the Christian account of the Roman-Jewish past was not the only post-Biblical history available to Jews, and that Jewish identity did not need to be defined in the Roman terms that were increasingly suffocating. He wanted to propose an alternative past that the Jews could actually use to envision a viable Jewish identity in his late 16th century environment. He does so in four steps. First, de' Rossi indicates that the Christian account of the Roman-Jewish past was not true. Second, de' Rossi argues that the Jewish tradition valued only history that was useful. Third, de' Rossi suggests that the Jewish tradition offered Hellenism as a model of a politically useful greater identity. Fourth, and finally, de' Rossi introduces Josephus, Philo and Aristeas to rebuild Jewish foundations upon a Hellenistic past. Hellenistic history offered Jews what Rome offered only to Christians: the rediscovery of past glory, participation in the scholarly challenge of reconciling divergent textual traditions, and eschatological hope. In short, Hellenistic history offered Jews a renewed identity.

A. The Christian Account of the Roman-Jewish Past Was Not True

De' Rossi first needs to demonstrate that the Christian account of the Roman-Jewish encounter was not history but rather rhetoric. Jewish survival of the earthquake of Ferrara gave him the approach he needed. De' Rossi knew that Christianity had equated the destruction of the Jewish faith with earthquakes; why not rebuild his faith on the same basis?

De' Rossi makes clear his readers know of the Christian connection between destruction of the Second Temple and an earthquake. De' Rossi references "the curse uttered by their savior that stone would not remain on stone" and explains the Christian interpretation of that curse on the grounds that Jews had refused to recognize Jesus as messiah.¹ This is a reference to Luke, in which the destruction of the Second Temple is said to be as a result of the Jews' failure to recognize Jesus as God: "They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."² That point was likely driven home by the Pope's admonition to the ruler of Ferrara, Alfonso (discussed above, in Chapter II), that the earthquake that had destroyed his city was recompense from God for Alfonso's offering refuge to Jews fleeing Counter-Reformation expulsion. It is not unlikely that the feeling was known, if not

1 Azariah de' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 302 & Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, 302 & n. 47.

2 Luke 19:14.

appreciated, among the Catholic population of Ferrara generally -- so too the likely negative reaction to that sentiment that would have been generated by those resisting papal control whether or not they were partial to Jews. De' Rossi as a scholar in contact with the Christian thinkers of his community was likely aware of the timeliness of the symbolism of the earthquake to Christian-Jewish relations and of its use. Regardless, he had certainly read of contemporary Christian interest in the connection between earthquakes and God's message to the Jews in the account of the Ferraran earthquake written by Buoni, in which the link between an earthquake and the destruction of Julian's attempted reconstruction of the Second Temple was discussed.³

De' Rossi notes the disconnect between the destruction wrought by the earthquake upon Ferrara as a whole and the fortune of the Jewish community and used the difference to the advantage of his people, building upon the strength of the Christian connection between earthquake and the will of God. "Though destruction was rampant in the city such that all passersby on being sighted would be warned to watch their feet and heads, yet not one able-bodied Jew died or came to any harm."⁴ More than that, the community itself had survived. Leaders of the congregation helped the less fortunate. "Many of the elect of our people, the leaders of the holy congregation of Ferrara, will always be remembered for good" including Don Isaac Abravanel, grandson, Isaac da Fano, Joseph Halevi, Solomon Modena — and community of Sephardim charity⁵ and the Jews as a whole responded with piety, arranging "fast days"⁶

In particular, de' Rossi notes that Jewish places of worship had been spared. De' Rossi recounts the general devastation of the event in architectural detail: the earthquake "razed buildings, tore down walls, shattered houses and inflicted cracks and fissures," he relates. "[H]ere in the great city of Ferrara clefts and fissures, destruction on a large scale, were inflicted. All the strongest and weightiest buildings, particularly those which were situated on the corners of the marketplaces and streets which lacked the cover or protection of an adjoining house to buttress them were subject to the most devastating damage—the earth had become a terror sent from God."⁷ Specifically, however, the synagogues had barely been touched. They had been damaged, certainly, and "[y]et, miraculously, not one of the ten prayer houses and synagogues devoted to God here in Ferrara fell into disuse."⁸

De' Rossi parlays the fact that the synagogues survived the Ferraran earthquake to undermine the Christian assertion that the destruction of the Second Temple must have indicated Christian supersession. Since de' Rossi could not assault the Christian interpretation of the fall of the Second Temple directly, he targeted his arrows all around his target. One arrow aimed at the Christian claim that the rebuilding of the Second Temple, the abortive attempt under Julian, had been thwarted by earthquake. De' Rossi knew that Christians had long identified the destruction of Julian's attempted reconstruction of the Second Temple with the divine work of earthquake. He had read of the connection in Nicephorus Callistus's *Chronicle* and in Socrates the Christian — at least the passages cited by Buoni in his work on the earthquake of Ferrara, and in Platina's

3 Azariah de' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 301-302. Buoni himself referenced Platina's *Lives of the Caesars*. See discussion below.

4 *Ibid.*, 30.

5 *Ibid.*, 29.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, 10.

8 *Ibid.*, 29-30.

Lives of the Caesars, where the prophecy in Luke was applied not just to the destruction of the Second Temple but to its continuing destruction: “In the course of their account, they also relate the incidents associated with the rebuilding of the Temple. . . . For they say that when they embarked on the construction, an earthquake occurred that threw the whole edifice to the ground. This, they say, was due to the curse uttered by their savior that stone would not remain on stone.”⁹ In response, de’ Rossi states that there is no evidence for this claim. “It is likely that the event did not happen as they describe for I cannot find any ancient source which refers to that earthquake.”¹⁰ Any of de’ Rossi’s readers must have at least considered the question of the historicity of Christian accounts of the fall of the Second Temple itself.

In another, more developed line of attack, de’ Rossi suggests that the Christian accounts of destruction of the Second Temple were mere rhetoric. De’ Rossi does this by praising the foremost Roman historian, Livy, as a practitioner not of history but rather of rhetoric — someone who had to make up stories of human interaction due to the lack of examples set forth by God in the Torah. “The blessed Lord foresaw that in view of the limitation of the human intellect and its weak and flaccid constitution, there would be a need for signs and examples that would be seen or known through experience which would help to preserve the teaching that is engraved in the mind.”¹¹ The ancient historian, according to de’ Rossi, *needs* to reconstruct the past. And, like Livy, he needs to do so skillfully. Livy had a “creative ability” that emphasizes his rhetorical skills, not his truth-reporting skills.¹² Rhetorical “history” -- what we would call legend -- is constructed to read like it happened, when it did not,¹³ all to inspire the readers/audience.¹⁴ And what is the goal of these historical rhetoricians? “Their aim was to instill and infuse the people with knowledge of the goodness and justice to which they should aspire, and to impress upon their souls the purpose of morals and instruction which are requisite for us.”¹⁵

The creativity of Livy and the purpose of rhetoric inherently delegitimize the historical value of Christian history, for Livy was well recognized as the foremost practitioner of history. De’ Rossi specifically links Livy’s rhetorical use of the past to Christian history of the Jewish-Roman interaction. De’ Rossi makes the link explicit in his own chapter regarding Titus: “when there was a dearth of true events to recount, the gentile sages invented and made certain representations of stories to serve as illustrations for the audience.”¹⁶ Generally, the comment recalls the rhetorical skill of Livy. Most specifically, the only “gentile sages” referenced in that chapter on Titus are Nicephorus Callistus and Socrates the Christian, and the only other time in

9 Ibid., 302. Weinberg notes: “This statement is deleted by censors in some of the first editions.” Ibid., 302 n. 48.

10 Ibid., 302. Weinberg notes: “This statement is deleted by censors in some of the first editions.” Ibid., 302 n. 48.

11 Ibid., 384-85 [chapter 27, Livy].

12 In his praise, de’ Rossi compares Livy to Bezalel, the individual who crafted the design for and built the sanctuary of God in the First Temple. Weinberg notes that the phrase comes from Exodus 35:32. Ibid., 384 n. 1.

13 And good rhetoricians sought to craft the tale in a way “to give the impression that they were telling a story that actually happened.” Ibid., 301.

14 In this way, de’ Rossi argues, Livy is no different from Cicero: “The poems and rhetoric of the gentile sages are replete with representations of events which never took place. They invented imaginary events for the moment so that those who ‘saw those sounds’ or imagined them would be inspired to acquire wise counsel and knowledge. This was the way many of them wrote and in particular their gifted Orator, Cicero, in the first Philippics and in his oration Pro Roscio.” Ibid., 299-300.

15 Ibid., 300.

16 Ibid., 384-85 [chapter 27, Livy].

which de' Rossi cited them was in the context of their use of Second Temple history for the needs of the Christian faith.¹⁷ “In the course of their account, they also relate the incidents associated with the rebuilding of the Temple. But they succeed in describing it to our detriment.”¹⁸

The rhetorical use of history in support of faith is as expected as it was necessary, for de' Rossi, because he believes that history is a tool of identity, and Christian history was merely that faith's interpretation of what had actually happened: “Nevertheless, one should not reproach them for this, since their intention was to inspire people to their belief.”¹⁹ De' Rossi made sure to support this line of reasoning, lest it be under-valued. He recognizes the Christian scholars as sages; he genuinely values how they contributed to their specific — if conceptually antagonistic — religious tradition. De' Rossi was well aware of the Christian appropriation of the prophetic corpus of the Hebrew Bible,²⁰ and de' Rossi notes that “the greatest Christian doctor” (Augustine) had tried to extract precisely the same meaning from the Hermetic texts. Augustine had argued that “Hermes uses the expression ‘son’ as if he were a foreseer of their religion.”²¹ So too, Gelenius, the recent translator of Philo into Latin.²² De' Rossi's response? “And truly, the upright will deem them worthy of praise for this, inasmuch as the more a person can transform something to the merit of his religion, the more deserving is he of praise.”²³

We can learn from the Christian technique, de' Rossi argues. We can take their method and use what they say that we agree with to our advantage. Since Jerome had much to say that was helpful to the Jews, de' Rossi can refer to him as “*noster interpret*”,²⁴ There is no reason to run from Christian authorities just because of their faith: it takes nothing from the Jewish faith to recognize that Augustine is “the greatest Christian doctor.”²⁵ Josephus is a sage, but so is Eusebius and Clement,²⁶ as well as Justin Martyr.²⁷ In fact, de' Rossi is quite open about his view that we can distinguish between the message and the messenger, be they Christian, Jewish or not: “By the very nature of the work which confronts me, it has been necessary for me to seek the help of many gentile sages for the clarification and elucidation of certain issues.”²⁸ Importantly, Jewish censorship did not require any changes in this regard; de' Rossi made only minor changes in this regard, and these were self-imposed.²⁹

17 Ibid., 301-02 [Ch. 16, Titus].

18 Ibid., 302. Weinberg notes: “This statement is deleted by censors in some of the first editions.” Ibid., 302 n. 48.

19 Ibid., 302.

20 See, e.g., chapter fifty-one, “Concerning the pronouncement of Haggai the prophet [2:9]: The glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former.” Ibid., 621 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 1. (De' Rossi “is also undermining a dominant Christian approach to the verse as given by Augustine (to whom he refers) and anti-Jewish polemicists such as Pietro Galatino and Sebastian Munster who, like de' Rossi, interpreted the verse in reference to the second Temple, but on the grounds of its glorification of Jesus' presence”).

21 Ibid., 117.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid. De' Rossi's statement is all that more forceful in that it echoes the exhortation to Jews to recall the Exodus in the Passover Seder. Ibid., 117 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 57.

24 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxviii-xxviix; see e.g., de' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 193.

25 Ibid., 166.

26 Ibid., 167.

27 Ibid., 165.

28 Ibid., 86.

29 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xliii (“the holy order of the blessed ones” becomes “the famous Benedictine

And yet de' Rossi makes quite clear that none of this respect for sources requires abandoning any attempt to preserve Jewish identity. History supports identity; he understands what Christian scholars are doing and he does it too. He pointedly ignores facts or opinions reported by Christian sages when they do not support his own position. In translating Augustine, de' Rossi omits anti-Jewish sentiment.³⁰ He omits Platina's statement that it was for persecuting Christians that Hadrian put Ben Koziba to death.³¹ In proffering Philo's *Breviarium de temporibus*, de' Rossi translates: "He [Herod] also murdered Salome, his sister, and her husband who was of the tribe of Judah," but he omits the very next sentence: "He killed his son from his wife of the same tribe because in the law he was predicted to be the Christ."³²

De' Rossi's most forceful barrage against Christian rhetorical history, however, is far more interesting — and potentially effective — than simply his attack on the lack of Christian historicity regarding the earthquake that destroyed the rebuilding of the Second Temple (or upon Christian history itself as rhetorical). It comes by friendly fire. De' Rossi attacks the Christian account of Second Temple destruction by completely obliterating the historicity of the parallel *Jewish* account, namely that of Titus' death as the work of God. As we have seen in the previous chapter (Chapter IV), de' Rossi did, in fact, value the Rabbinic accounts if not for their historicity. The shock to Jewish identity brought about by the destruction of the Second Temple had required an account that responded to that affront with recompense from God. And so, the Rabbis had developed an account of the punishment of Titus that derived not from his act of victory but from his act against God in his victory, and it was by avenging this injury to God that the midrashic accounts of Titus' death attempted to bring solace to the Jews themselves who might otherwise feel abandoned by their God. "Surely it is permissible to modify the truth in this way," de' Rossi states, "in the interest of bringing peace between us and our Father in heaven."³³ Now, however, when the historicity to the Jewish account could no longer be maintained either in terms of scholarship or facts on the ground, de' Rossi thought it far better to use the account as a Trojan Horse of sorts in the Christian-Jewish encounter. De' Rossi hoped his fellow Jews would realize, as would any Christians eager to accept de' Rossi's demolition of the Rabbinic history, that acceptance of de' Rossi's critique of Jewish historical rhetoric necessarily undermined the very foundation of the historical rhetoric of the Christian faith itself. As stated above, de' Rossi explains the rhetorical goal of the Rabbinic Titus *midrashim* by referencing Livy generally and Nicephorus and Callistus specifically. To accept one is to accept the other.

In this regard, it is a curious thing that while his fellow Rabbis required de' Rossi to remove his critique of certain *midrashim*, they apparently were silent regarding his historical demolition of this most significant example.³⁴ Perhaps they appreciated de' Rossi's point.

brothers".

30 Weinberg, 254 n. 11: Augustine's great number of Jerusalemite dead and captive needed to support large population displaced but context was divine punishment of Jews.; here "sage" not "greatest Christian sage".

31 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 248 n. 58.

32 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 418.

33 Ibid., 301.

34 Criticism re: chronology (so incorporated Moses Provenzali's critique), hyperbole in chapter 20 — requested to erase three on grounds that they contained heavenly secrets literally. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xliii n. 154). But see Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews," 213-214 (stating that de' Rossi's contemporaries were upset not at the criticism of the Titus *midrash* but at his evaluation of *midrash* in light of non-Jewish sources). At least one influential Rabbi from another community, however (Rabbi Judah Loew), did take issue with de' Rossi's

Alternatively, perhaps any *midrash* regarding the Second Temple's destruction had for a long time — and out of necessity — been viewed as allegorical.³⁵ Either way, the point is the same: Jews of de' Rossi's day were eager for an interpretation of the past that could provide hope.

De' Rossi's third, and final, release of arrows is the most practical and immediate, namely an appeal to the natural human desire to read hopeful meaning into survival of disaster. This he does by introducing Hellenistic Jewish literature in complement to Rabbinic texts. Perhaps in response to the Christian identification of the destruction of the Second Temple with an earthquake, the Rabbis themselves, de' Rossi knew, had laid the foundation for divine punishment of *enemies'* structures by earthquake. In response to question about why earthquakes happened, de' Rossi quotes Rabbi Akiva: "At the time when the Holy One blessed be He looks and sees His Temple destroyed by the nations who live in a state of peace and tranquility, He becomes jealous as it were."³⁶ And de' Rossi cites Rabbi Nehorai's response to Elijah's inquiry regarding the cause of earthquakes to similar effect: "But the main reason is that when the Holy One blessed be He looks and sees the many houses which stand intact while His own Sanctuary lies in ruins..."³⁷

The Rabbinic authorities, combined with the destruction of Ferrara, certainly would suggest not just that God's favor had been shown the Jews, but that God was punishing the Christians. De' Rossi could hardly say this, of course, but he could build upon the natural feeling of relief experienced by his fellow Jews and use the divine connection between God and earthquakes indicated by the Rabbis to suggest that something good, something salutary to the Jewish community, could arise from the earthquake. This is where Hellenistic Jewish literature came in. In his account of the earthquake, de' Rossi features a speech of Herod's that suggested that survival of an earthquake could be a sign not of defeat but of victory. That speech was related by Josephus. Herod was addressing his army, which had just survived a devastating earthquake because they had been camped in fields, outside of the town. Herod needed to instill confidence that despite the disaster, success could be theirs. He told them: "My brothers, my people, the elements like everything else that exists under the heavens are subject to natural defects. There is no reason to fear that yet more trouble will follow in the trail of what has already happened. There may be some presages of future pestilence, destruction, famine, or earthquakes which are in themselves serious disasters and ills. But such disasters which are

interpretation of the Titus *midrashim*. Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'Or 'Einayim* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 142-143.

35 Solomon ben Adret (the Rashba), explaining the *aggadot* in Berakhot, stated: "Know that what is said in this Aggadah regarding tears, clapping of hands, pressing of feet and roaring is entirely allegorical and is intended to demonstrate sadness and distress about the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the people." Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 18 n. 54. Generally speaking, Italian Jewry was quite comfortable with ahistorical reading of *aggadot*. Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 153.

36 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 16 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 43 (citing Shemot Rabbah 29:9): "This passage was often censored and de' Rossi seems to have changed the text slightly from the way it appears in most printed editions, which read: 'He sees the houses of the idolators and His own house destroyed and put into the hands of the uncircumcised.'"

37 *Ibid.*, 17 & n. 49 (citing PT, Tanhuma and *Midrash Tehillim*); here, Weinberg notes, the uncensored text reads: "The Holy One blessed be He sees the theaters and circuses."

sufficiently calamitous in themselves should not be regarded as portents of other such events.”³⁸

De’ Rossi recognizes that the speech is not a philosophical disquisition on natural causation but rather an indirect emotional pitch that God had preserved his soldiers for a greater purpose: “In truth, this speech of one who was a warrior and not a scholar was most appropriate for the occasion, particularly since the situation demanded that he should instill his army with the courage to face the impending war.”³⁹ De’ Rossi makes clear that he knows that the words do not, strictly speaking, correspond to Torah. Herod’s views, he says, were inconsistent with the Rabbinical view that one should, in fact, act not just as if God’s hand is behind disasters but as if those disasters are a warning regarding human behavior.⁴⁰ This is lip service, and de’ Rossi’s readers would know it. There would be a natural sympathy between Ferraran Jews and these soldiers, a common need to look for purpose in survival. That providential view is made clear by de’ Rossi’s justification of Herod’s speech not just from the needs of a general but from the accuracy of Herod’s prediction: “Indeed the time was opportune for God came to their aid,” Josephus — and de’ Rossi — had continued, “and in a short while they defeated their enemies.”⁴¹

If the point was not sufficiently clear in the Voice of God, de’ Rossi returns to the subject towards the end of Words of Understanding in chapter 54, as he had said he would. Consider how de’ Rossi sets up the connection. In Voice of God, de’ Rossi states that he will take up later in his book Herod’s (properly) Rabbinic view that God does speak to man through earthquakes. (Herod, de’ Rossi explains, had not stated that God *never* works through nature but that natural disaster does not *necessarily* mean that God is speaking.) Accordingly, what de’ Rossi says he will focus upon is the part of what Herod had said that was strictly speaking, Rabbinically correct, namely that man “is informed of impending disasters by certain portents which appear prior to the event” — and de’ Rossi references the upcoming Chapter 54 of Words of Understanding. To be sure, when de’ Rossi gets there, he does pick up that theme, but he is interested in emphasizing no such thing. First, he tweaks Herod’s statement beyond the scope of Rabbinic propriety, characterizing as Herod’s view that “Great disasters ought to be preceded by indicative omens,”⁴² — a claim that Herod never made — and simultaneously, de’ Rossi undermines even the Rabbinically consistent part of Herod’s speech by the very title of chapter 54. There, he makes explicit the positive connotation of Herod’s speech that was previously implicit: “On the phenomenon of omens that sometimes foreshadow great blessings or calamities.”⁴³

De’ Rossi emphasizes the providential nature of the earthquake of Ferrara, and implicitly, its ability to serve as a corrective to the Christian interpretation of the fall of the Second Temple, in chapter 54. The chief Rabbinic passages that de’ Rossi now considers juxtapose omens of Second Temple destruction — omens that are reflected both by the Rabbis and by Josephus —

38 The speech is reported by Josephus in both *Ant.* XV:121-46 and *BJ* I:370-79. The speech is reported by Josephus in both *Ant.* XV:121-46 and *BJ* I:370-79. Weinberg notes that de’ Rossi’s rendition is only a “partial synthesis” and “that de’ Rossi ignores part of the description in *Ant.* (144ff.) which is more theological in vein.” *Ibid.*, 21 n. 64.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*, 657.

43 *Ibid.*

with a sense of providence that can only come from Josephus's citation of Herod's speech. De' Rossi relates the account of the heavy Temple doors swinging open of their own accord.⁴⁴ He also relates the prophecy of destruction once Romans had breached the city walls and had converted the Temple walls into a fortress.⁴⁵ De' Rossi has brought Josephus's history into accord with that reported by the Rabbis — and specifically concerning the meaning of earthquakes. But he has done so to ratify his own view that Jewish survival of the earthquake in Ferrara in 1570 presaged good news for the Jewish community.

Not just the title of chapter 54 makes this clear. De' Rossi's chief example of the sort of blessing that can be announced by natural disasters is *translatio imperii*.⁴⁶ And it is on a note of optimism that de' Rossi concludes this chapter on omens. Jews should not worry, de' Rossi explicitly states. If the omens are negative, they are negative to all equally. The logical corollary, of course, is that the message would be meant more for Christians than for Jews, who had fared relatively well. Alternatively, the sign was a sign for the Jews. But in that case, given Jewish survival, the signs portended well, in keeping with the fact that God was partial to His people.⁴⁷

Whatever his fellow Jews might think about the historicity of the Christian account of the Roman-Jewish past, the Christian view that God has abandoned his people was false. The earthquake had shown that. And it had done more — it allowed for provident reconstruction. “We had already begun to see that many of the damaged buildings of Ferrara had been impaired for their own good in order to be repaired and built more strongly and better than before.”⁴⁸

B. Jewish Tradition Valued History So Long as It Was Useful

The Jewish tradition was open to Hellenistic history, de' Rossi argues, because while the Rabbis had testified to the fear of a Judaism subsumed by foreign influences, they had admired Hellenistic culture and were receptive to Hellenistic cultural support of the Jewish faith. But the Rabbinic support of Hellenism was hardly programmatic; de' Rossi had to tease it out.

The challenge, for de' Rossi -- and, frankly, for his tradition -- was presenting history in a way that made its use evident to Jews. Biblical history was relevant, of course, but that was the word of God — accounts set forth from which Jews were to draw inspiration for proper conduct. There was nothing to be gained by considering supplementary or alternative accounts of those events — that information was useful only for non-Jews. Post-Biblical history was almost exclusively that of the Fourth Empire, Rome. For Jews in de' Rossi's community, awaiting the end of that empire, all that had happened since the advent of Rome and all that would happen until its fall was idle curiosity. The small period in between Torah and Rome was Hellenistic Greece — and concerning its chief historians, Josephus, Aristaeus and Philo, the Rabbis had been silent. All of “history,” therefore, was of uncertain use to Jews. “For what relevance does it hold

44 “The doors of the eastern gate of the inner court were made of brass and were so massive that it was with difficulty that twenty priests would close them in the evening. They were fastened with iron bars and many bolts were fixed into the large stone which was on a block under the gate. At the sixth hour of the night it was observed that these opened of their own accord.” Ibid., 658 & n. 7 (citing *BJ* VI:293-96).

45 Ibid., 658 & n. 8 (citing *BJ* VI:310-11).

46 Ibid., 657.

47 Ibid., 659-660.

48 Ibid., 32.

for us?” de’ Rossi imagines his readers asking. “[A]fter all, what happened, happened thousands of years ago or seven times again.”⁴⁹ De’ Rossi’s challenge was well supported by the Jewish tradition, even if not particularly well developed. “That is to say, history that does have a bearing upon a Jew’s cultural self-perception, and particularly Jewish history, should not be condemned. On the contrary, it should be praised, just as all other useful readings should be praised.”⁵⁰ The problem of making history useful was shared by Jews even in the 16th century, as seen below.⁵¹

Rabbinic accounts of past events, therefore, as seen in *midrashim*, were not necessarily meant to be taken as true: Rabbis were not interested in the past for the past but merely in whether the past was useful. If it was useful for the Rabbis, they kept it but if it wasn’t, they either ignored it⁵² or transformed it into something that was useful, whether for moral or religious truth.⁵³ Particularly where these lessons conflicted with the historicity of what actually

49 Ibid., 406. According to Bonfil, “there are no grounds for assuming that the idea of history as unworthy intellectual occupation was widely accepted during the Middle Ages [and into the Renaissance]”. See Robert Bonfil, “Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times,” *Jewish History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 36 n. 37 (reversing his contrary position in Robert Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 233.). Bonfil’s analysis, in essence, acknowledges the dearth of Jewish history in the Middle Ages and Renaissance but argues that “the real problem was therefore not how to justify history as an intellectual activity, but rather how to find a proper formula for Jewish history regarding both contents and literary genre.” Bonfil, “Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times,” 28. This is a complex issue, the resolution of which is beyond the scope of my project. I am content to point out that the impression of monolithic Rabbinic resistance built by de’ Rossi is exaggerated. Bonfil cites as the main example of Jewish use of history in the sixteenth century Elia Capsali’s *Seder Eliahu Zuta*, a history of the Ottoman kings with a focus upon Jews from the origins of the Ottoman empire to the author’s sixteenth century context. Ibid., 17-19. The self-consciousness with which Capsali introduces his work as history, combined with that of ha-Kohen in his own introduction of himself as an historian (17) suggest at least as much, it seems to me, the awkwardness of the Jewish use of history, however familiar Jews may well have been with the notion of the Jewish past. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989).

50 Bonfil, “Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times,” 13-14. Bonfil does not in this article explore in any meaningful detail the notion of de’ Rossi as a cultural historian, but his emphasis upon the usefulness of history supports that notion directly. By contrast, for example, a scholar such as Weinberg can notice the usefulness of the scholarship undertaken by de’ Rossi and yet connect the issue more to the static pursuit of truth rather than to the dynamic use of history. See Joanna Weinberg, “The Beautiful Soul: Azariah de’ Rossi’s Search for Truth,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 113: “His purpose was not to fathom the depths of Rabbinic wisdom, but to demonstrate that the *aggadot* did not stand up to historical investigation or scientific evidence. By thus eradicating the intellectually untenable elements in the *aggadot* and by divesting the stories of their literal meaning, de’ Rossi believed that he was thereby removing the obstacle to constructive reading of the texts. He was thus able to achieve his main objective, that is, to give the true version of the historical episodes alluded to while absolving the Rabbis of responsibility for the promulgation of erroneous information, and excusing himself from what might seem an irreverent treatment of the Rabbis of old.”

51 Bonfil, “Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times,” 13-14.

52 “For since the sages of blessed memory were exclusively devoted to and immersed in the study of Torah and did not distract themselves by the conceit of idle talk or read documents about the remote past, it will not come as a surprise to us should they make some mistakes or give a shortened account of any of those stories. For when people are not interested in a subject, they do not normally engage in investigation of all its facets. They simply transmit the version that they themselves were given.” De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 387-388; see also 390; 391.

53 See discussion of Titus, above.

happened, most notably as with the accounts of the death of Titus, de' Rossi needed to sacrifice any claim to historicity in order to retain the more important claim to meaning, for in the scholarly criticism of the Counter-Reformation, the weakest reed on which Jews could lean was that which was demonstrably false: "Rather, our aim is to ensure that our Rabbis are not found to be giving contradictory accounts of well-known events."⁵⁴

But the Rabbis did recognize that there were times that history *had* utility, and when it did, "what happened" was relevant and worth inquiring into. "What happened, happened" is the Rabbinic refrain that de' Rossi often interposes, rhetorically questioning the value of his historical inquiry.⁵⁵ And yet, de' Rossi makes clear that there were at least three separate occasions on which the Rabbis answered their own rhetorical question about the usefulness of history with the admonition *to study history*. The Rabbis urged Jews to inquire into the validity of sacrifices,⁵⁶ the punishment of the priest's daughter who had transgressed the sexual laws,⁵⁷ and about the order in which Moses had clothed Aaron as high priest.⁵⁸ The third example was the most compelling to de' Rossi because there the Rabbis had responded to the objection that "what is past is past" specifically because they thought inquiry was useful.⁵⁹ Understanding that Torah passage might not be relevant now but it was going to be relevant in the future, for it was certain that the Temple would be rebuilt, its laws to be enforced.⁶⁰ In fact, de' Rossi himself uses a goodly number of facts reported in Rabbinic texts as evidence for history that is relevant to issues involving historical events that are unquestionably of interest to the Rabbis themselves.⁶¹

By contrast, where it was clear there was nothing to be gained from the inquiry into certain aspects of the Torah, the Rabbis had not responded to their "what is past is past" interjection, letting it stand. "With this concern of theirs *not to expend their time on the study of history which had no value for them*, they stated in *Ketubot*: 'Whatever pertained before the time of Ezra's enactment [is irrelevant] because what was in the past, is past.' And they state that speculation on what is above and below may be acceptable, but as regards that which was before creation and after, when the world is finished, 'what is past is past.'"⁶² The former concerns the appropriate days for marriage in the time of Ezra,⁶³ which would not return, while the latter involves speculation outside of history itself — namely, what has happened and will happen.⁶⁴

54 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 241.

55 Indeed, while there are other meanings to this phrase in the Talmud, de' Rossi repeatedly uses them in the sense "that antiquarian study has no implication or practical significance for the present." Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 241 n. 12.

56 B.Zev. 44b-45a. The Soncino Babylonian Talmud, accessed February 3, 2014, www.halakhah.com. See Ibid., 406 n. 5.

57 B.Sanh. 51b. The Soncino Babylonian Talmud, accessed February 3, 2014, www.halakhah.com. See Ibid., 406 n. 6.

58 B.Yoma 5b. The Soncino Babylonian Talmud, accessed February 3, 2014, www.halakhah.com. Ibid., 406. The examples are important. De' Rossi repeats them, as promised, in chapter 46. Ibid., 595-596.

59 B.Yoma 5b.

60 Ibid., 406.

61 For example, chapter thirty-seven discusses Rabbinic accounting of the number and moral quality of high priests in Second Temple times, *ibid.*, 457-465; chapter thirty-eight discusses the Rabbinic discussion of the succession of the kings of Persia. *Ibid.*, 466-473.

62 *Ibid.*, 387 (emphasis supplied).

63 *Ibid.*, 387 n. 23 (B.Ket. 3a).

64 *Ibid.*, 387 n. 24 (B.Hag. 16a).

Any significant study of such subjects took away time from the study of the Jewish texts; the risk was not just that one would “waste time” but that one would fail to “master even [the] single discipline” of Torah.⁶⁵ “The fact is,” de’ Rossi says, “that since Torah is our life and the length of our days, nothing should stand in its way.”⁶⁶

C. The Jewish Tradition Offered Hellenism as a Possible Model

De’ Rossi presents the Rabbis as well aware of the attractions of Hellenism and of Greek texts in particular. Indeed, such knowledge was both a cultural and political threat. Ordinarily, foreign literature was “regarded as aliens [lit., *Kittim* and *Dodanim*] whom we do not usually introduce into our community.”⁶⁷ By this de’ Rossi meant the Greeks.⁶⁸ Such aliens as *Kittim* had long been identified with cultural conquerors, and specifically with that of Rome. Permitting aliens to cross the hedge around the Torah opened up the possibility of weakened traditions at best and conversion at worst. Such was the cautionary tale of Elisha ben Abuya, “Elisha Aher” said to study Greek texts so much that when he stood up they fell from his lap.⁶⁹

The story of Elisha demonstrated the risk of the community’s loss of an individual. Having spent the effort searching for answers in a different tradition, one would be likely to find them in that tradition and lose one’s way back home. “For the person who becomes absorbed in his reading and comes to regard the books of such worth that he eagerly imbibes their words will be sure to harm himself. He will leave the fount of living water to dig for himself wells whose waters, it will be claimed, are not ours.”⁷⁰ This “habitual study” of Greek wisdom led Elisha to his abandonment of his Jewish faith.⁷¹ What to do about an “Elisha,” in other words, one who strayed enough from tradition to be considered “*Aher*” — other — by the Rabbis, was a social issue: to what extent was the individual still a member of the Jewish community?⁷² De’ Rossi conveys his own agreement with the point of that story by the name he gives to Elisha. Called either Elisha ben Abuya, his name, in the Talmud, or else *Aher*, to indicate his “otherness,” de’ Rossi combines the two names in a fashion that indicates “*Aher*” as a patronymic, much like Eusebius of Caesaria and Philo of Alexandria.

The dangers weren’t just to the individual, who might lose his way, but to the community put at a disadvantage by he who happened to possess hybrid knowledge. For with learning the

65 Ibid., 386.

66 Ibid., 387.

67 Ibid., 86.

68 Recognizing the *Kittim* and *Dodanim* as sons of *Yavan* (Greece) in Gen. 10:4, Weinberg says de’ Rossi “probably chose the expression deliberately since the argument hinges on the Rabbinic attitude towards Greek wisdom”; noting also *Bereshit Rabbah* in which *Dodanim* = *dodim*, kinsmen. Ibid., 86 n. 2. See Ibid., 89: “In sum, all books excluding holy Scripture may be classified in the general category of Hamiros literature, the cursory study of which is not forbidden.”

69 Ibid., 90. See Ibid., 90 n. 38: B.Hag. 15b: “Greek song did not cease from his mouth. It is told of Aher that when he used to rise from the schoolhouse, many heretical books would fall from his lap.”

70 Ibid., 88.

71 Ibid., 90.

72 Rabbi Meir, the student of *Aher*, continued to seek wisdom from his teacher. The justification was that the student could listen to those who had by their deeds excluded themselves from the Jewish community, so long as the student did not imitate the acts of the teacher. Ibid., 91 & n. 52.

ways of others comes the ability to use that knowledge against one's fellow Jews. Such is a likely meaning of the Rabbinic admonition that Greek, as any foreign tongue, was a "symbolic and enigmatic language" — a determination based, according to the Rabbis, upon the fact that a Jew advising Hyrcanus in his fight against Aristobulus behind the walls of Jerusalem used his knowledge of Greek sacrifices of "unclean" animals to stop Temple sacrifice, thus losing the city. The Jews behind the walls were allowed to hoist up "clean" sacrificial victims on a daily basis despite the siege: upon the Jew's provision of a pig for sacrifice, there was a halt in the Temple sacrifice and demoralized, the Jews behind the wall simply surrendered.⁷³

And yet, the Rabbis were well aware that for those Jews connected to the courts of the ruling powers, familiarity with Greek was essential to maintain cultural fluency, and taking advantage of the personal and political power the position afforded was understandably worth the risk to cultural identity. It was permissible, therefore, for those "closely associated with the ruling powers to study Greek wisdom".⁷⁴ De' Rossi also cites the Book of Esther, as interpreted by the Rabbis, for a Biblical openness to non-Jewish (in that case, Persian) wisdom: "What is more, it is not just that we may pay attention to the words of their sages about whom we are taught: 'Whoever says something wise, even if a gentile, is called a sage for it is written, *Then Haman told his wife Zeresh . . . And his wise men said to him* (Esther 6:13)'"⁷⁵

Rabbinic balance came from subordinating Greek knowledge to that of Jewish culture. Traditionally, the way to do this was simply to make sure that study of the former was limited.⁷⁶ But there was a way to do it which was more inclusive, and that simply meant using Greek wisdom to bolster Jewish wisdom. De' Rossi could readily find Rabbinic authority for studying even "heretical works" where the object was to support the Torah.⁷⁷ Akin to this argument and perhaps indirectly building upon it is the argument that Greek thought proved an underlying debt to prior Jewish thought. Thus was the Zohar quoted by the Italian kabbalist Recanati: "'That which has no blemish (Numb. 19:2) — This is the kingdom of Greece for they drew near to the paths of truth.' Recanati explains that this is an allusion to the philosophers, Aristotle's predecessors, who sometimes expressed views which bear affinity to those of our Rabbis."⁷⁸

73 Ibid., 91 & n. 49, citing B. Sota 49b. It is ironic, as stated above, that de' Rossi advocates a return to Greek-Jewish interaction in order to restore Jewish identity.

74 Ibid., 91.

75 Ibid., 96.

76 There is a Rabbinic prohibition on the study of extra-canonical literature that can be considered heretical. The word *hisonim*, which properly interpreted means extra-canonical literature, Weinberg regularly translates as "profane" since de' Rossi gives *hisonim* "a more general application" to include other non-Jewish works. E.g., Ibid., 86 & n. 4. See also Ibid., 88-89 re cursory study: "Profane literature comprises such texts as Ben Sira and Ben La'ana but the reading of the books of Hamiros and all works which were written beyond that is comparable to the reading of a secular document. . . These books are permitted for cursory perusal and not for wearying studying."

(PT) Ibid., 89: "the books of Hamiros and all literature beyond that (i.e., apart from the twenty-four sacred books of Scripture), may be read in the manner that one reads a secular document, in sum, all books excluding holy Scripture may be classified in the general category of Hamiros literature, the cursory study of which is not forbidden."

77 Ibid., 92 & nn. 62 & 63, citing B.Sanh. 17a and M.Men. 65a). More recently, Judah Messer Leon's view that oratory of pagan sages "truths from Assyria or Egypt" helps us appreciate Scripture. Ibid., 98. There is only one passage cited by de' Rossi that conceivably supports his exaggerated position, so he simply dismisses it, lest it be taken seriously: When was it appropriate to study Greek, day or night? (B.Men 99b; P.Peah I, i 15c.) The answer, neither day or night, was dismissed by de' Rossi as not legally binding. Ibid., 90.

78 Ibid., 91-2.

De' Rossi particularly suggested that the Rabbis had a respect for the eponymous city of Hellenism, Alexandria. As his destruction of Christian Roman history focused upon the Second Temple, de' Rossi's appreciation of Alexandria was based upon the structure associated with Jewish worship there. "Whoever has not seen the double portico of Alexandria never saw the glory of Israel".⁷⁹ It even seems likely that de' Rossi's introduction of Greek literature, above (i.e., by using the terms *Kittim* and *Dodanim*) suggested Alexander's influence specifically. Alexander is said to be from the land of the *Kittim* in I Maccabees, a text that de' Rossi not only read but cited over ten times in *Me'or 'Enayim*.⁸⁰

In addition, the most extensive historical investigation conducted by de' Rossi that involved use of Rabbinic sources, as well as those of non-Jews, concerns Alexandria, namely the identity of the leader responsible for the destruction of that city's longstanding Jews. De' Rossi frames this discussion -- and only this discussion -- with two separate citations to the "whatever happened, happened" motif to indicate the importance of the history involved. At the beginning, de' Rossi states: "Now we have undertaken to investigate the truth of all this [who destroyed Jewish community of Alexandria], although we are not really concerned with the actual event, for whatever happened, happened."⁸¹ His explanation is clearly insincere: "Rather, our aim is to ensure that our Rabbis are not found to be giving contradictory accounts of well-known events."⁸² To be sure, there is a legitimate concern: the Rabbis have conflicting accounts: Alexander, Hadrian and Trajan.⁸³ And yet, as we will see in the following chapter, there is no real contradiction between the Rabbis and other sources. Besides that, de' Rossi had already provided a sufficient rejoinder: the Rabbis were not trying to get history right anyway.

Indeed, de' Rossi sees Hellenistic history as a particularly compelling example for his fellow Jews. At the conclusion to this chapter, he repeats the Rabbinic dictum: "Now the greater part of this chapter has been devoted to inconsequential investigations which one could dismiss by saying 'what happened, happened' or on the grounds that it has no bearing on any law or precept." He promptly answers himself with his most expansive justification for studying history, a pitch that goes beyond the political and into the spiritual: "Nevertheless, the beautiful soul yearns to know the truth of every matter and the way of man in the world even when such issues are not directly relevant to it."⁸⁴ If Hellenistic history has such spiritual power to offer, de' Rossi argues, surely it is a potent tool for social reconstruction.

D. De' Rossi Rebuilds Jewish Identity upon a Hellenistic Foundation

Now that de' Rossi had cleared the Christian overlay from the Second Temple, de' Rossi could rebuild the image of that Temple under Greece. Reconstruction of a Jewish identity in ruins due to its domination by Rome was de' Rossi's theme, and if the texts of Hellenistic Jewish

79 Ibid., 237.

80 Ibid., 766.

81 Ibid., 241.

82 Ibid.

83 By way of example, in considering the identity of the individual who destroyed the Jewish community of Alexandria (a topic to be explored in more detail in the forthcoming chapter, chapter V), de' Rossi cited Plutarch, Curtius, Arrian, Valerius Maximus, Justin, Contractus — and Livy. Ibid., 242-243.

84 Ibid., 251.

history were the bricks, the keystone was the Letter of Aristeas. The occasion for de' Rossi's translation of that text into Hebrew arises directly out of the earthquake. It is due to the earthquake that de' Rossi and his Christian neighbor are discussing the text in the hills outside of the city. The neighbor comes to de' Rossi seeking clarification of textual meaning, for the neighbor can only read it in Latin, and he thinks de' Rossi has access to the original in Hebrew. It is the assumed loss of this original Hebrew text that the neighbor believes de' Rossi can use the leisure time presented by the earthquake to remedy: de' Rossi can restore glory to the Jews by making the text of Aristeas available once again to his people: "When I informed him that we had no such thing he was utterly amazed as to how such glory could depart from Israel who could deservedly win great prestige from it," the neighbor had told him, and he encouraged de' Rossi to translate it for his community.⁸⁵ De' Rossi emphasizes the connection between his translation and the earthquake: he depicts his moment of inspiration by means of moving walls.⁸⁶

The foundation story of *Me'or 'Enayim* is rhetoric, not history,⁸⁷ and it is a rhetoric that posits the rebuilding of Jewish community out of the Hellenistic period depicted in the Letter of Aristeas. For while the Jewish-Roman past was now useless -- the events at the end of the Second Temple period thoroughly dominated by Christian interpretation -- the smothering Roman cloak of those events could be shaken off and replaced by robes of an earlier time free from Christian influence in which Jews could once again feel proud.

De' Rossi's chief witnesses in *Me'or 'Enayim* are Josephus, Philo and Aristeas — Hellenistic authors with whom, de' Rossi believed, the Jews of 16th century northern Italy could identify. Hellenistic history, according to de' Rossi, allowed Jews to navigate the three intellectual currents of northern Italian cultural life while it simultaneously allowed Jews to have an identity in distinctively Jewish terms. Hellenistic history offered, for the Jews, the rediscovery of past glory common to Renaissance political thought, justification for the eschatological hope that was particularly fervent in the Protestant Reformation and the opportunity for participation in the scholarly challenge of reconciling divergent textual traditions common to the humanism that underlay the period from Renaissance through Reformation and Counter-Reformation. In short, Hellenistic history offered Jews a renewed identity: a proud past, a hopeful future, and a meaningful way to negotiate the present.

1. Josephus, Aristeas and Philo Are Central to *Me'or 'Enayim*

Josephus, Aristeas and Philo are the foremost sources used by de' Rossi; they are the foundation upon which he builds a Jewish Hellenistic identity. Aristeas is most important. The translation forms the second of the three sections of *Me'or 'Enayim*. The artifice of de' Rossi's discussion of that text serves not just as the introduction of the work as a whole but ties the

85 Ibid., 31.

86 "I lifted my eyes to the mountains to see whether they would skip like rams and to the walls should they move." Ibid. The reference of the first part of the passage is to Psalms 114:4, *ibid.*, 31 n. 117, but that does not include the movement of walls. It is possible that this second part is a reference to the well-known Rabbinic story concerning the oven of Akhnai, in which God ratifies the views of two competing Rabbis by moving the walls of the study house. BT, Seder Nezikin, Baba Metzia 59b. The Soncino Babylonian Talmud, accessed February 3, 2014, halakhah.com. If so, de' Rossi could be having God ratify his Hellenistic history project.

87 Weinberg notes its "literary flourish". *Ibid.*, 31 n. 116.

section on the earthquake to the section translation the Letter of Aristeas. Aristeas' testimony concerning the clothing of the Temple's high priest is the only passage quoted twice — once in full in the translation of the Letter itself and once near the end of Words of Understanding where de' Rossi collects testimony on that subject from Aristeas, Philo and Josephus. Philo is introduced, in the very beginning opening prayer and under the Jewish name de' Rossi gives him (Yedidyah the Alexandrian), in the company of Torah and Talmud. Immediately upon justifying the introduction of Hellenistic literature, de' Rossi devotes three chapters to exploring Philo's thought in detail — the only author whose text merits such detailed treatment. And Josephus makes not just the first powerful appearance through providing the speech of Herod but regular appearances throughout, supplementing not just Biblical history but Rabbinic history and serving as a corrective to the well-loved *Josippon*, with which de' Rossi identifies him (i.e., “the Roman *Josippon*”). Among authors who did not write in Hebrew, Josephus is most cited source.⁸⁸

De' Rossi considers these three authors as a group. In the chapter of Words of Understanding in which de' Rossi presents each of their testimony concerning priestly vestments, de' Rossi emphasizes what they share, namely their objectivity as to what they could relate of Second Temple times: “All these writers lived in Temple times; their statements were not guess-work or hearsay but presented what they and not others had witnessed.”⁸⁹ Their centrality is clear to scholars, if not the reason. “The words of Aristeas, Philo, and Josephus provided de' Rossi with some of the crucial evidence for his discussions of the historical problems related to the second Temple period and the description of the priestly vestments.”⁹⁰

2. Aristeas, Philo and Even Josephus Are Newly Available to the Jewish Tradition

De' Rossi posits that the Rabbis simply had not known of Josephus, Aristeas and Philo. He couches his view, viz., the Rabbis “did not set eyes on the Greek writings of the Jewish writers Yedidyah [Philo] and Josephus or else they did not believe in them,”⁹¹ but it is clear that de' Rossi himself advocates the former.⁹² These writers are, from his perspective, newly discovered Jewish sources — sources from non-Rabbinical contexts, to be sure, but Jewish sources nonetheless — that have lain forgotten for centuries. Regarding the three in particular, de' Rossi states: “Now our blessed God has granted the people of our times to become acquainted with the writers of antiquity who wrote in their own context and with authors whose works have lain hidden and buried away from the sight of our people.”⁹³ It is Aristeas, Philo and

88 Joanna Weinberg, “The Me'Or 'Enayim of Azariah de' Rossi: A Critical Study and Selected Translations” (PhD diss., University College London, June, 1982), 186.

89 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 596.

90 Ibid., xxxvi. Indeed, de' Rossi groups them as the three sons of Noah, Josephus representing Shem, the Pharisaic Jew, Philo representing Japhet, the Hellenistic Jew, and Aristeas representing Ham, the gentile. Weinberg, 2001, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, 610; see also *ibid.*, xxxvi & n. 119.

91 Ibid., 482.

92 The rediscovery of the Jew Philo had to proceed cautiously. Rabbinic silence on the subject could be interpreted as implied censure, while the widespread Christian approbation of Philo could not be ignored . . . He could not be adopted by his co-religionists without due consideration.” Joanna Weinberg, “The Quest for the Historical Philo in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography,” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert and S. Zipperstein (London: Peter Halban, 1988), 164-165.

93 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 596 and n. 89 (referring to the recovery of works of classical antiquity in the

Josephus — and only these three writers — who are mentioned in this context. Their works are “The discourses of those ancient writers which have recently come to light”.⁹⁴

a. Aristeas

Before de’ Rossi, Jews had limited knowledge of Aristeas. It was, by de’ Rossi’s own admission, “not a major work.”⁹⁵ De’ Rossi makes no reference to — and likely was unaware of another Hebrew translation of Aristeas earlier in the 16th century by the convert Domenico Gerosolimitano.⁹⁶ De’ Rossi relates that the text was originally written in Greek and had been translated into Latin, and then Italian; the Latin translation that he read was the critical edition of Matthias Garbitius published about a decade before de’ Rossi wrote (1561).⁹⁷ It was through the Latin that de’ Rossi,⁹⁸ as well as his fellow scholars who were Christian, gained its knowledge. The text itself had not attained much critical attention, even from Christians. Only Ludovico Vives, whose commentary on Augustine’s *City of God* de’ Rossi had read (but whose reference to Aristeas de’ Rossi curiously omits),⁹⁹ makes a passing reference to its spurious authority as a text.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, both traditions must have been relatively unfamiliar with the text in order for the central conceit of de’ Rossi’s introduction — the Christian neighbor’s inquiry of de’ Rossi — to make any sense. The neighbor had expected de’ Rossi to have access to the original Hebrew, which is why he had sought out his friend for textual clarification.¹⁰¹

Nonetheless, the text must have been attractive to some Jews, giving it some potential to be activated. Aristeas had, after all, been repeatedly translated.¹⁰² Jews were likely aware of the

Renaissance).

94 Ibid., 597.

95 Ibid., 5.

96 See Alberto Vaccari, “La fortuna della lettera d’Aristea in Italia”, in *Civiltà Cattolica* 1930, 208-326), reprinted in *Scritti di erudizione e di filologia*, I, Rome, 1952, 9-10. For a comprehensive discussion of the transmission history of the *Letter of Aristeas*, see Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

97 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 4-5 & nn. 33-36; 31 n. 116.

98 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 5.

99 Ibid., 3 & n. 21. Weinberg comments: “It is interesting to note that de’ Rossi appears to ignore Vives’s critical remark in which he questions the ascription of the *Letter* to Aristeas.”

100 Vives joined Erasmus in commenting upon Augustine’s *City of God* (commentary 1522): “In book 12 of Josephus’ *Antiquities* there are letters of Ptolemy to the priest and of Eleazar to the king about this matter taken from Aristeas, not Aristeas of Proconnesus but some follower of Ptolemy, who says that he was one of the ambassadors sent by Ptolemy to Egypt (sic, for Jerusalem). There exists a little book under his name about the LXX translators composed in my opinion by someone more recent.” Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*, 242.

101 There is something of a private joke here, to be discussed below. If, as de’ Rossi presents the textual transmission history, the original was in Greek, surely an educated Christian would know this too. And if de’ Rossi had really been discussing the text with his neighbor, his neighbor presumably would already have known its source through conversation with de’ Rossi. The Christian’s ignorance is contrived, but it would appear unlikely that de’ Rossi’s Jewish readership, who themselves needed to be introduced to the history of the text, would feel that they had superior knowledge to the Christian thus rendering his request of de’ Rossi ironic and humorous.

102 Many versions of Aristeas were printed in the 16th century due to fact that the Greek Bible of which it told was the Bible of Paul and apostles, and the Church Fathers had spoken of event as divinely inspired. Weinberg, “The Me’Or ‘Enayim of Azariah de’ Rossi,” 68.

existence of and increased access to the text, especially since its story of the translation of the Torah into Greek in Ptolemy's time was itself the subject of Talmudic discussion.¹⁰³ Its contents may well have been known more generally by way of its inclusion in Malermi's 1471 Italian translation of the Bible.¹⁰⁴ And it must have been of sufficient interest for de' Rossi and his Christian neighbor to have discussed it repeatedly — or at least for the conceit of that discussion to form an introduction to *Me'or 'Enayim* that itself needed no justification.

But the text was a foreign text, so if reading the text in moments of leisure did not raise any Rabbinic eyebrows, certainly translating it into Hebrew did. De' Rossi takes pains to say that the effort was quite easy: he claims to have completed his task in twenty days and presents it to a Rabbinic audience, as one might expect, “as no useless endeavor”.¹⁰⁵ But he also appealed to the Renaissance notion of uncovering something that had been lost and the excitement of bring the newly discovered to reinvigorate tradition. De' Rossi's neighbor's surprise is constructed in a way to suggest that Aristeas consists of Jewish knowledge previously known and then lost to the mists of time. De' Rossi's neighbor “was utterly amazed that such glory could depart from Israel who could deservedly win great prestige from it.”¹⁰⁶ It is the “new” that can help explain the old that de' Rossi urges his fellow Jews to see in Aristeas.¹⁰⁷ There is “novel information related to our Torah contained in the book,” he states. He alludes to one — the work provides express reasons for certain obscure *mitzvot* that the priest Eleazar explains to Ptolemy. Another he conceals, a teaser that he promises to clarify in later (and, unusual for de' Rossi, unspecified) chapters.¹⁰⁸ De' Rossi recognizes the Rabbinic admonition that “new” can be overrated, and yet he suggests that newness in the pursuit of Torah is praiseworthy.¹⁰⁹ He embraces the new in Aristeas, giving it a new title, Splendor of the Elders, much as naming “a new born babe”.¹¹⁰

b. Philo

If Aristeas was a fringe text, Philo was becoming mainstream. Philo was newly popular among influential Jews in Mantua -- specifically, the Provenzali brothers of Mantua. De' Rossi writes: “I know that there are learned and upright contemporaries of mine who thirstily imbibe his words and set a golden crown on his head, regarding him as a noteworthy member of our people”.¹¹¹ Most notable was David Provenzali, whose work on Philo de' Rossi was intending to reply to.¹¹² In responding to his critique of *Me'or 'Enayim*, de' Rossi credits David Provenzali with the introduction of Philo into the Jewish community: “he was the first to promulgate his name among our people by means of his learned studies. He is indeed justified in not giving the

103 Rabbis familiar with Aristeas. Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*, 64.

104 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 5 n. 34.

105 Ibid., 5.

106 Ibid., 31.

107 Ibid., 5.

108 Ibid., 31.

109 Ibid., 5-6.

110 Ibid., 6.

111 Ibid., 158.

112 Ibid., 158 n. 69; see also *ibid.*, 102 & n. 8.

appearance of introducing an alien among the holy.”¹¹³ The respect that David commanded in his community was considerable; he was to pass judgment on owning or readership of de’ Rossi’s book.¹¹⁴ “The learned Provenzali brothers, who uphold the Torah in Mantua,”¹¹⁵ de’ Rossi relates, had rejected his own opinion that Philo was ignorant of the Hebrew language; that he cites their argument¹¹⁶ is further evidence of the community’s familiarity with Philo. Judah Moscato, another Mantuan and friend of de’ Rossi, used Philo’s work in his commentary on the *Kuzari*.¹¹⁷

Philo’s work was well known, if not fully accepted.¹¹⁸ De’ Rossi introduces him prominently at the start of *Me’or ‘Enayim*, an authority which would have been pointless had his work not been well known. And it would have been silly to identify an unknown author with a newly made-up name, Yedidyah the Alexandrian and sandwich him in between the Palestinian Talmud and Zohar, on the one hand, and Plato on the other.¹¹⁹ Philo could easily be read by Jews in Latin. The translation of Philo in Latin that de’ Rossi used was that of Gelenius (Lyons, 1555).¹²⁰ His initial references to Philo contain not just book but section, suggesting the availability of the text.¹²¹ That his fellow Jews would have had access to it is also evident from the fact that de’ Rossi distinguishes between the well-known works of Philo, on the one hand, and the work *De temporibus*, which he states was “recently translated from Greek into Latin”.¹²²

What was new in de’ Rossi was the comprehensive evaluation of Philo,¹²³ and especially

113 Ibid., 158 n. 69.

114 Ibid., xliii.

115 Ibid., 189.

116 Ibid., 189-90.

117 Ibid., 158 n. 69.

118 “The fact that he devotes so much space and energy to the Philonic problem stems from the great popularity which that author was enjoying at the time among the Italian Jews after a long period of oblivion.” Salo W. Baron, “Azariah de’ Rossi’s Historical Method,” in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 223.

119 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 1.

120 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 1 n. 4.

121 Ibid., 1 (referring to Life of Moses, book 3).

122 Ibid., 2. This is a reference to that part of the forgeries attributed to Philo that were published by Annius of Viterbo in 1498, republished numerous times in the 16th century (including the version that he himself used, Lyons, 1554). Ibid., 2 n. 8. De’ Rossi translated sections from this work in *Me’or ‘Enayim* (ch. 32 at 415-19) due, presumably, to its lack of currency among the Jews. Other passages translated were of particular significance, such as those discussing the Essene sect and the priestly vestments.

123 “What was truly original was the enterprise itself, the first comprehensive assessment of Philo to be undertaken by Jew or Christian.” Weinberg, “The Quest for the Historical Philo in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography,” 165. This is, we can assume from the lack of references to even the work of the Provenzalis, the most extensive discussion of Philo in the Jewish tradition in centuries. Philo had, in fact, been noted in earlier Jewish literature, however perfunctorily. He was first considered by the Karaites. Giuseppe Veltri, “The Humanist Sense of History and the Jewish Idea of Tradition: Azariah De’ Rossi’s Critique of Philo Alexandrinus,” *JSQ* 2, no. 4 (1996): 382-383; Weinberg, “The Quest for the Historical Philo in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography,” 164 and n. 15, p. 180. Scaliger claimed the only Jew to have considered Philo was Abraham Zacuto in his *Sefer Yuhasin* (Constantinople, 1566), but the comment, ‘A great Jewish sage called Philon the Jew, the priest, wrote a book on the soul in Greek,’ did not show much knowledge. Similarly, there was a reference to ‘Philo, friend of Joseph son of Gorion’ in the medieval *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*. Ibid., 180 n. 15. He was the earliest author we have to refer to him in print. See, e.g., Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxxvii (citing Momigliano: “The Jews forgot Philo even before they forgot Greek. Philo was rediscovered for the Jews in a Latin translation by the Italian Jew Azariah de’ Rossi”). He

of his Jewishness. De' Rossi says he leaves the verdict on whether or not to welcome Philo as a Jew to his readership:¹²⁴ "I cannot absolutely absolve or convict him. I shall call him neither Rav nor sage, heretic nor sceptic." He is welcome, de' Rossi states, as a disinterested witness: "as any other sage of the world to whom a hearing will be given when he makes general statements and has no vested interest in the subject".¹²⁵

And yet de' Rossi's own assessment is clear. Philo is cited in the very opening prayer to de' Rossi's work. Immediately upon explaining the importance of his use of sources not traditionally considered in the Rabbinical Jewish community, de' Rossi devotes a full three chapters (chapters 4-6), indicating the importance to de' Rossi of that writer and of his testimony.¹²⁶ De' Rossi's final chapter on Philo is entitled "A plausible defense of Yedidyah on all charges leveled against him and our final verdict concerning him," suggests both that Philo can and should be welcomed. De' Rossi's renaming of Philo, replacing his Greek name for a Jewish one, is conclusive, for there is no reason for de' Rossi to have done so in order to consider Philo's work.¹²⁷ De' Rossi's ostensible withholding of judgment notwithstanding, by the end of Words of Understanding, de' Rossi has placed Philo firmly in the Jewish camp with the Pharisee Josephus: he is one of "the two Jewish witnesses".¹²⁸ De' Rossi is favorably influenced by historicism, namely that Philo was considered a member of the Jewish community by his own contemporaries, who "regard[] him as a noteworthy member of our people". In particular, de' Rossi notes that the *Josippon* and Josephus both refer to him favorably, as well as

was "the first Jewish writer to cite his ancient coreligionist Philo of Alexandria". Elliott Horowitz, "Families and Their Fortunes," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 603. For a discussion of the Christian tradition that incorporated Philo, beginning with Eusebius, see Weinberg, "The Quest for the Historical Philo in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography," 163.

124 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 159.

125 Ibid. Conceivably, his position on Philo was *less* favorable than that of David Provenzali. Concerning that Provenzali brother's work on Philo, de' Rossi noted, "He is indeed justified in not giving the appearance of introducing an alien among the holy." Ibid., 158 n. 69.

126 In these chapters, de' Rossi characterizes Philo not as belonging to the Pharisees, the "community of our sages" praised by Josephus and of which Josephus was a member, but rather as belonging to the Boethusians, otherwise known as Essenes. Ibid., 103-109. Philo, says de' Rossi, praises Torah and advocates nothing inconsistent with it. Ibid., 117-127. The problems are with Philo's lack of agreement with the Pharisaic/Rabbinic tradition, namely (1) that he follows the Septuagint, *ibid.*, 128 (2) that he believed in primordial matter, *ibid.*, 134 (3) that he argues that the true essence of certain factual stories in the Torah is allegorical, *ibid.*, 137, and (4) that Philo does not recognize the oral Torah, which include the *Talmudim* and *midrashim*. Ibid., 140-141. De' Rossi believed that Philo could easily be successfully defended against three of the four charges: the Septuagint was the Torah with which his audience was familiar, *ibid.*, 146, Philo had also testified against the existence of primordial matter, *ibid.*, 150-151, and Philo's allegorical interpretation was not meant to supplant literal interpretation. Ibid., 152. Regarding Philo's denial of the oral Torah, there was nothing direct to say, so de' Rossi's defense was both historicist and polemical, namely to welcome Philo as a Jew because, as an Essene, Philo historicized Christianity as a subsidiary branch of Pharasaic Judaism. See *ibid.*, 153-158. Compare Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxxvii: "There seems to be an underlying strand to de' Rossi's critique whereby he is attempting to undermine the Christianizing process and to find the Jewish, or rather Pharisaic, elements in Philo...De' Rossi's emphatic description of Philo as a sectarian Jew may be contrasted with the patristic statements in which Philo is portrayed as a writer recording Christian truths and praising Christian institutions."

127 David Provenzali, apparently, had done the same without needing to do something as creative as this. "He is indeed justified in not giving the appearance of introducing an alien among the holy." Weinberg. *Light of the Eyes*, 158 n. 69.

128 De' Rossi, 596-597.

the fact that Philo's own writings showed that he served as a leading representative of Alexandria and called effectively for the deliverance of that community.¹²⁹

c. *Josephus*

Josephus was not Philo and certainly not Aristeeas: he was in no way new to Jews in the 16th century,¹³⁰ even though Jews for the most part read not *The Jewish War* but rather the *Josippon*.¹³¹ De' Rossi introduces Josephus (i.e., Flavius Josephus, the "Roman Josephus") as the "Latin *Josippon*" indicating conventional Jewish comfort with the *Josippon*, whatever its limitations. Indeed, the *Josippon* was newly popular in the 15th and 16th centuries. The initial imprint was made in Mantua sometime before 1480. The Constantinople edition of 1510 was reprinted in Venice 1544, and there was a 1541 edition of Sebastian Munster printed in Basel, with Latin translation. De' Rossi consulted all of these.¹³²

Yet the Jews of de' Rossi's time did appreciate Josephus. It would not be lost on de' Rossi, or any scholar, for that matter, that Josephus was to the Christian Roman tradition what Livy was to the pagan Roman tradition.¹³³ The vast majority of Josephus' work was not just accessible to Jew and Christian alike in Latin but was free of any Christian interpolation. Josephus was safe to appreciate, also to respect. Critical dismissal of fantastic elements in the *Josippon* by Munster notwithstanding, it must not have been shocking for Jews in de' Rossi's time to appreciate the historicity of Josephus himself over that of the *Josippon*.

129 Ibid., 158.

130 Many Jews in earlier centuries had cited Josephus in support of their views: Saadia, ibn Ezra, Ramban, Kimhi and Abravanel, particularly regarding the prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Daniel and Ezra. Ibid., 408. "For a brief description of Josephus in Hebrew literature, see H. Schreckenberg, *RezeptionsgeschichBiche und textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josaephus*, Leinden 1977, 48-53. Schreckenberg refers to a possible allusion to Josephus in the *Derekh 'Erets Rabbah* (ed. Goldberg, Breslau 1888, 10-11), the use of Josephus in the *Chronicle of Jerachmeel*, the *Sefer Ha-Yashar*, the *Josippon*, in Hayyim ibn Musa's *Magen we-Herev* (written in 1456 but never printed, in Zacuto, de' Rossi and Leo da Modena." Weinberg, "The *Me'Or 'Enayim* of Azariah de' Rossi," 183 n. 1. Immediately before de' Rossi, Isaac Abravanel likely read a Latin translation of Josephus in preparing his commentary on Daniel, and de' Rossi would have been familiar with the Josephus material thereby, at least indirectly. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxxv-xxvi. The most extensive reference to Josephus took place immediately before de' Rossi wrote his work was by Abraham Zacuto, whose 1566 work, *Sefer Yuhasin*, de' Rossi managed to see after he had written the first draft of *Me'or 'Enayim*. Ibid., 2. Yuhasin has occasional references to Josephus including, as does de' Rossi, a description of Jewish sects and the conversion to Judaism by the royal family of Adiabene. Weinberg, "The *Me'Or 'Enayim* of Azariah de' Rossi," 184. Zacuto's work (perhaps interpolated) notes the parallels between Josephus and the Talmud; he certainly indicated references and wrote first Hebrew translation of *Contra Apionem*. Ibid., 185. However, in contrast to de' Rossi, Zacuto accused Josephus of hyperbole and calculations at odds with plain meaning of Scripture. Ibid., 187.

131 Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 3 n. 17: *Josippon* was "generally regarded as a genuine work of Josephus in the sixteenth century." But see *ibid.*, xxxviii ("*ha-Josippon la-Romiim*" in contrast to "*ha-Josippon la-Ivriim*").

132 Ibid., 331-32 & nn. 78-80.; 353 & nn. 26-31; 730. The definitive modern edition is David Flusser, ed., *Sefer Josippon*, vols. 1 and 2 (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1978, 1980).

133 Eusebius considers Josephus to have been the most learned man of his day (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, iii. 9, trans. G.A. Williamson (New York: Dorset Press, 1965)), 121; and Jerome ("Ep. xxii. ad Eustachium") calls him "the Greek Livy," xiv. 4. 3. For Cassiodorus, Josephus was "almost a second Livy". Cassiodorus. "Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning" and "On the Soul", trans. James W. Halporn and Mark Vessey, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004, I.17.1.

De' Rossi prefers Josephus himself as a source.¹³⁴ De' Rossi read Josephus' works, as of those of Philo and Aristeas, in Latin translation. He consulted the edition of Gelenius (1567), published just three years before he began writing, along with the earlier Latin version of Ruffinus.¹³⁵ And he was unlikely alone in making his way through this author's texts. De' Rossi's first reference to Josephus, to his *Antiquities*, specifically, does not bother to identify the particular work of Josephus, much less cite the book or section.¹³⁶ Nor does de' Rossi identify the book or section for his second reference to Josephus, the story of the translation of the Hebrew Bible related in the Letter of Aristeas.¹³⁷ De' Rossi even seems to presuppose enough familiarity with Josephus to treat with sensitivity the discrepancy between that author's identification of the high priest with whom Alexander met as Jaddua, on the one hand, and the name Simeon the righteous provided by the *Josippon*, on the other — leaving the actual identity unresolved at first.¹³⁸

What was new in de' Rossi? For one, the extent of the citation to that author. “The genuine Josephus had been read by a few of de' Rossi's Jewish predecessors but not with the thoroughness and precision that characterize his reading.”¹³⁹ To de' Rossi, the most evident issue is the comparative accuracy of Josephus over the *Josippon* in its textual transmission. There has been less “fabrication” with the text of Josephus than with the *Josippon*.¹⁴⁰ There are a number of issues with accuracy identified by de' Rossi regarding the *Josippon*,¹⁴¹ and yet de' Rossi does not develop these, for reasons explained above. It would be more accurate to say that the most obvious effect of welcoming Josephus was de' Rossi's effective abandonment of the *Josippon*, along with the welcoming of Josephus as useful supplement or corrective to Rabbis.¹⁴²

3. Previous Scholarship Recognizes but Does Not Integrate the Importance of Aristeas, Philo and Josephus as Hellenistic Authors

The earliest scholarship on de' Rossi tapped into de' Rossi's interest in Hellenistic Jewish history, specifically his desire to portray Second Temple Jews as meaningful and valued members of their Hellenistic society. Most of this scholarship has relied upon de' Rossi's statement at the end of *Voice of God* that this was his express purpose in translating the Letter of

134 “Moreover, in contrast to his respectful attitude toward the genuine works of Josephus, de' Rossi often dismissed the *Josippon* as an ‘insignificant work’. When he does quote it, it rarely carries much weight in the argument, and when it presents a divergent account from Josephus, he invariably dismisses it.” Ibid.

135 Ibid., 3 n. 17.; 422 & nn. 18-20.

136 De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 3. The reference is to the priestly lineage from Jaddua to Onias to Simeon the righteous, whose brother is the Eleazar with whom Ptolemy negotiated the translation of the Hebrew Bible. The passage as Ant. XII:157ff. Ibid., 3 n. 119.

137 Ibid., 3 & n. 23. The passage is Ant. XII:11-118. Ibid., 3 n. 23.

138 Ibid., 4 & n. 26.

139 Ibid., xxxvii.

140 Ibid., 331.

141 Ibid., 331-332.

142 “Josephus's evidence was indispensable for unraveling the historical problems in Rabbinic texts and useful as a guide through the badly chartered years of the second Temple period. The pitting of the historian Josephus against the authoritative Rabbis is a constant feature of the book. Wherever possible de' Rossi tried to iron out the discrepancies between Rabbinic accounts and Josephus, but where this would jeopardize the historian's integrity, Josephus would be given the final word (something which modern scholars would probably appreciate).” Ibid.

Aristeas. Graetz pointed to de' Rossi's recollection of his Christian neighbor's emphatic endorsement of Jewish greatness: Jews "knew nothing of their own brilliant literature of the period of the Second Temple, whilst Christians resorted to it to dispel melancholy thoughts."¹⁴³ Recently, Veltri has articulated the same point. De' Rossi, by way of presenting the text of Aristeas, "wishes to restore to Israel the historical brilliance that it had already lost in antiquity."¹⁴⁴

Bonfil has made the point more broadly than simply referencing the Letter of Aristeas. He has noted de' Rossi's interest in Hellenistic history in general, and in particular, believed that de' Rossi sought to bolster Rabbinic testimony of Alexander the Great's respect for Jewish wisdom: "Any Renaissance Jew would certainly have been grateful to de Rossi for having made known Ptolemy's testimony in the letter of Aristeas concerning the superior political achievements of the Jews; de Rossi devoted much space to the subject (all of *Hadrat Zkenim* as well as chapters 8-9), so that Jews could learn that Alexander's admiration of Jewish wisdom, known to them from Rabbinic literature, was no isolated phenomenon."¹⁴⁵ More generally, and less explicitly related to the Hellenistic time period of the history cited by de' Rossi, Bonfil has noted that de' Rossi was interested in the "Jewish contribution" to culture generally, viz., linguistics, poetry (ch. 56-60)¹⁴⁶ This notion of locating the source of culture in one's own tradition was a common feature of Italian Renaissance humanism, and Aranoff has argued specifically that de' Rossi's translation of Aristeas was in keeping with that phenomenon. By publishing the Letter of Aristeas in the context of the sixteenth century, she has stated, de' Rossi sought to reinforce the notion that the Jewish humanism that he perceived at his time was itself evident in Late Antiquity: his Hebrew rendition of Letter, a translation that emphasized the Jewish nature of a text conventionally thought at de' Rossi's time to be written by a non-Jew, "served to establish the Jewish character of the ancient Hellenistic text, and restored the place of humanist traditions and political wisdom in the classical and formative stages of Jewish antiquity."¹⁴⁷

De' Rossi's interest in using not just Aristeas, but also the Hellenistic authors Philo and Josephus, to illuminate the Jewish past is clearly recognized by Weinberg as part of de' Rossi's project of integrating the Jewish past into that of the Classical and Christian historians, even though she does not emphasize de' Rossi's interest in Hellenistic Judaism per se. "The works of Aristeas, Philo, and Josephus provided de' Rossi with some of the crucial evidence for his discussions of the historical problems related to the second Temple period and the description of the priestly vestments."¹⁴⁸

143 Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. IV (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), 615.

144 Giuseppe Veltri, "Conceptions of History: Azariah De' Rossi," in *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb: Foundations and Challenges in Judaism on the Eve of Modernity*, Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy (Boston: Brill, 2009), 78-79.

145 Bernard Dov Cooperman, ed., *Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah De Rossi's Meor Enayim in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry*, Center for Jewish Studies Harvard Judaica Texts and Studies II, vol. Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 38.

146 Ibid.

147 See Deena Aranoff, "In Pursuit of the Holy Tongue: Jewish Conceptions of Hebrew in the Sixteenth Century" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2006), 132, 134, 144-45.

148 David Kaufmann, "La Defense De Lire Le Meor Enayim D'Azaria De Rossi," *Revue des Etudes juives*

It is more specifically built upon a recognition of de' Rossi's Hellenistic interests that Segal has claimed that de' Rossi utilized Aristeas to provide a "fuller understanding" of the Jewish condition in Ptolemaic Egypt and the circumstances relating to the Septuagint, as the Jewish record in the Talmud was neither complete nor consistent.¹⁴⁹ Josephus, Weinberg has stated, served as de' Rossi's "main guide" through that text,¹⁵⁰ while Baron noted equally Josephus' contribution to discerning the dates and events relevant to the beginning of the Seleucid era,¹⁵¹ as well as his evidence on the distinctiveness of Jewish poetic meter.¹⁵² Apart from Aristeas, though, it is Philo who has received the most attention. Baron noted that he was not just a key witness but an important subject of study himself: four chapters were devoted to the circumstances of this thinker and the comparison of his thought to Rabbinic and Christian authorities. Furthermore, Baron noted the importance of de' Rossi's identification of Philo as a member of a Jewish sect that had much in common with nascent Christianity, putting the Jewish/Christian divide in historical context,¹⁵³ while Weinberg has emphasized that de' Rossi had set the basis for Jews to reclaim Philo as a Jewish sectarian (not a proto-Christian), one of their own.¹⁵⁴

Aristeas, Josephus and Philo, then, have been noted — both singularly and collectively — as important sources for de' Rossi, yet to date there has not been any evaluation of the importance of the Hellenistic Jewish authors (or of the Hellenistic Jewish period) to *Me'or 'Enayim*. I argue that these authors provide the key testimony that allows de' Rossi to present the Hellenistic period as one that supports a viable counter-identity for the Jews of 16th century Italy.

4. Josephus, Aristeas and Philo Allowed Jews To Reconstruct a Meaningful Identity from the Hellenistic Past

Hellenistic history did not simply undermine the Christianization of Roman-Jewish history, although that was important. Nor was the value of its work limited to allowing Jews to see themselves as valued members of Roman society, whether framed in terms of the values of the Renaissance, Reformation or Counter-Reformation thought. Jews could never truly share the Christian identity with Rome. So, more than carving out a space for Jewish distinction in Christian culture, Hellenistic history allowed Jews an identity that de' Rossi thought would articulate the value of Jews to Christians -- and hence support Jewish participation in daily

XXXVIII, (1899): 280-241; Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah De' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xxxvi.

149 Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah De' Rossi's Me'Or 'Einayim* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 49.

150 Joanna Weinberg, "The Me'Or 'Enayim of Azariah De' Rossi, 186.

151 Salo W. Baron, "Azariah De' Rossi's Historical Method," in *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, eds. Arthur Hertzberg, Leon A. Feldman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 235.

152 *Ibid.*, 238.

153 *Ibid.*, 236.

154 Joanna Weinberg, "The Quest for the Historical Philo in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, eds. A. Rapoport-Albert and S. Zipperstein (London: Peter Halban, 1988), 169.; Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 322.

culture -- while preserving Jewish distinction.

It is important to note that de' Rossi does not favor Hellenistic history simply because it is history, in and of itself, but rather because of its usefulness. That has important consequences, and we should take a moment to spell them out here. De' Rossi is not interested in truth for truth's sake — that is a modern notion, if it is even possible at all. Nor is de' Rossi simply using the truth of history defensively, deploying it as a tool to purify what really interests him, which is Jewish faith. Rather, de' Rossi believes that Hellenistic history permits him to establish a new political identity that affords Jews a degree equally of safety from and pride in the terms of their surrounding community. In this way, he is a thinker in the mold of Baron and Bonfil, who emphasize his political commitment, and in the mold of Weinberg (but not, here, Bonfil), who emphasizes his sense of belonging to the greater Christian scholarly community. In some ways, he is best thought of not as a Renaissance humanist or as a Counter-Reformation apologist but rather, due to his constructive use of historicism, as a Jewish Protestant thinker, using textual criticism to recover an earlier religious tradition of contemporary usefulness.

It is important to come to grips with the fact that de' Rossi does not think of himself as an historian. He never characterizes *Me'or 'Enayim* as history.¹⁵⁵ He does not discuss the subject of history until Chapter 27 of *Words of Understanding*, and there the ostensible purpose is to say that history is for gentiles, while Jews have the Bible.

In fact, de' Rossi's chief Hellenistic sources, Aristeas, Philo and Josephus, are not all "historians". We know that at least on some level, de' Rossi considers Josephus and Philo to be historians (the latter because of the spurious *De brevis temporibus*) — because he groups Xenophon, Metasthenes, Philo, Josephus and Eusebius as "writers of epochs," (*kotvei eitim*)¹⁵⁶ and otherwise uses the terms to cover later writers of successive Roman emperors (including Abraham ibn Daud). But he does not privilege the term.¹⁵⁷ Aristeas is certainly not history to de' Rossi, even though it is as much presented as a first person account of an embassy as Philo's Embassy to Gaius is (and as de' Rossi's own account of the earthquake, for that matter). Aristeas is never treated as an author but as a text. It is quite likely that de' Rossi both read and agreed with Vives' criticism of the text as spurious.¹⁵⁸ For that matter, we cannot be certain that de' Rossi thinks of Philo's Embassy to Gaius as history; as stated above, de' Rossi only specifically referenced Philo's *De brevis temporibus*.

Nor is there a helpful term that de' Rossi uses to embrace specifically Josephus, Philo and Aristeas. That is surprising, in that the three are such important sources, both individually and

155 Bonfil over-emphasizes de' Rossi's identification with history as a discipline. Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?," 240 ("he certainly maintained that ultimately, he was writing history"). De' Rossi identifies his genre (that which he uses in *Words of Understanding*) as miscellanea, Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 81 n. 4; xxiii, but that is not necessarily the genre of the work as a whole. (Indeed, it ignores the narrative style of the first section of the work, *Voice of God*.)

156 David Cassel, ed., *Sefer Me'Or 'Enayim* (Vilna: 1866), 88; 216.

157 Elsewhere, historians are "writers of recollections" (*kotvei/sifrei zichronot*). E.g., de' Rossi, "*Sefer Me'Or 'Enayim*," 88; 216. Elsewhere still, historians are simply "writers" (*sofrim*) — and this term encompasses not just Livy and Tacitus but the *Josippon*.

158 Aristeas isn't considered an historian, despite "historia" in its title (*De legis divinae ex Hebraica lingua in Graecam translationis per Septuaginta interpretes historia, nunc primum Graece edita . . . , Cum conversione Latina autore Matthia Garbitio*. Basel, 1561. See de' Rossi, 734. It seems likely on this account that de' Rossi was aware of Vives' critique (but leaves it alone unlike that of Munster regarding the *Josippon*).

collectively. De' Rossi uses the term "*kotvei kadmoniot*" (writers of antiquity), "*misparim*" (writers) and speaks of "*dibreihem*" (their statements).¹⁵⁹ The conclusion must be that it is what these writers say, not the form in which they wrote it, that is of interest to de' Rossi. For our purposes, it is particularly important to note that — as stated earlier in this chapter — de' Rossi values Aristeas, as much as he does Josephus and Philo, as an objective eye-witness to history. What are we to make then of de' Rossi's use of the Letter of Aristeas?

De' Rossi most likely considers the Letter of Aristeas to be legendary material that nonetheless contains historical facts. It does so due to the fact that the author — whenever he lived at the time of Ptolemy II or not — lived during the time of the Second Temple.¹⁶⁰ Those facts of relevance to de' Rossi deal with the Second Temple building, its furniture and the vestments of its priests. But de' Rossi's appreciation of the Letter of Aristeas is not limited to its factual material (although it is that material that he translates twice). De' Rossi appreciated the legendary material too, just as he appreciated the legendary Rabbinic material. Appreciation of history does not necessarily exclude appreciation of legend, and it definitely does not if de' Rossi's goal in using both is the same: the reconstruction of political identity.

Now, while de' Rossi never characterized himself as a historian, de' Rossi did take the time to explore in some detail what the *use* of history was. History supported identity. The setting is Chapter 29, the first chapter of the "Days of the World" unit of "Words of Understanding." De' Rossi is about to launch into a sustained investigation of chronology, a huge chunk of text that investigates what we know about the time frame for history itself — from how long it has been since the world was created to how long it will last. (The next to last chapter of this unit is devoted to proving that the end will not arrive imminently, in 1575.) Because of its importance, I set forth the passage below in full:

"The fact is that from the very outset I can imagine you saying to yourself, kind reader, that this investigation is a type of halakhah suitable for messianic times or of an even lesser significance. For what relevance does it hold for us; after all, what happened, happened thousands of years ago or seven times again. But you could answer your own objection once you take into consideration the following points. First, the truth itself which is the quest of thousands of sages in investigations more obscure than this one is in fact like a seal of the true God, the characteristic of the beautiful soul, and the good to which all aspire. Secondly, and more important is that in the course of this investigation we shall happen to gain understanding of the meaning of certain passages in holy Writ. You are already aware as to how the Rabbis of blessed memory regarded messianic halakhah. For in their discussion of the validity of sacrifices, a priest's daughter who transgresses the sexual laws, and about the order in which Moses clothed Aaron in his vestments which nowadays has no relevance to us and is no importance, they encourage such study and investigation either for the purpose of clarifying Scripture or for the purpose of 'expounding and receiving reward.' We

159 Weinberg, "*Sefer Me'Or 'Enayim*," 399.

160 The authorship of an Aristeas himself could be suspect, *pace Vives*, and yet the text would still provide evidence of Second Temple times.

shall illustrate this further, if the Lord is pleased with us, in our discussion of the priestly vestments in chapter 46 in section 4. The third reason for undertaking the investigation is not devoid of importance — for in the process of the debate, halakhah relevant to the time of the Messiah will be explained correctly, and according to many distinguished persons, this time is imminent. It seems to us that the subject is profitable and worthy of discussion today, as will be shown, God willing, in chapter 43, inasmuch as well will be able to remove a stumbling block from the path of our people. In view of these three points in particular (quite apart from the other things that will emerge in the course of this study), I evaluate this subject not only permissible and open for discussion, but also a religious duty that deserves a reward from our bountiful God.”¹⁶¹

This is a statement that history, the past, is useful for the Jewish community as it conceives of itself *in history*, in time. History is useful for establishing — or, in de’ Rossi’s case — for re-establishing, a community’s sense of its past, its present, and its future. That Hellenistic history can provide the three temporal aspects of Jewish identity is made clear by comparing these elements to de’ Rossi’s proposed use of the Letter of Aristeas in his Introduction.

a. *Use of History: Glorious Past*

De’ Rossi argues, first, that the past is useful because it provides lessons: it can illustrate the right way to act. The quest to understand what actually happened — a God-inspired desire recognized by the “beautiful soul” — is inextricably intertwined with “the good to which all aspire”.¹⁶² For de’ Rossi, there is no value in the past unless there are lessons to be gained from it, and these are simultaneously moral and political lessons. What happened, even long ago, can help Jews learn what to do and what not to do. This is de’ Rossi’s first reason for studying history. The truth he identifies is truth not in and of itself but truth that helps each of us pursue “the good”. It is not an exclusively Jewish value, but is an eagerness implanted in all, and acted upon by the wise in any religious community. This is the Renaissance idea of history.

It is also how de’ Rossi introduces his translation of the Letter of Aristeas in particular. As noted above, de’ Rossi explained that his translation of the Latin version of this account into Hebrew arose from the specific encouragement provided by his Christian neighbor, who had noted how the text demonstrated Israel’s “glory” and spoke of the work’s “great prestige”.¹⁶³ For de’ Rossi, the text allows contemporary Jews to think well of themselves and their community leaders. It is a pride that derives from the topic of the text, namely the respect shown Jewish priests by the Hellenistic monarch. The reader’s “enjoyment,” de’ Rossi explains, “will be enhanced once he recognizes the greatness of those sages of old whose expertise was not confined to the legal aspects of the Torah, but who were also social and political figures worthy

161 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 406. It is this passage that Bonfil relies upon specifically to support his claim that de’ Rossi considers himself an historian. Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?,” 240.

162 De’ Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 406.

163 *Ibid.*, 31.

of being received at court.”¹⁶⁴ This interest in the precedent of imperial respect for Jewish wisdom and religion is specifically why de’ Rossi named the translation “Splendor of the Elders”. “Profound reasoning went into the choice of this title,” de’ Rossi explained. “As a result of this event [namely, Ptolemy’s request that Eleazar and his fellow priests translate the Hebrew Law], the elders acquired a splendid reputation in which they shall bask for eternity.”¹⁶⁵ Reflecting upon this glory, de’ Rossi explained, was salutary for the Jewish community. Just as the rebuilding of damaged structures in Ferrara now were being “repaired and built more strongly and better than before,” so too did de’ Rossi conceive of his translation as a “good” for his Jewish community.¹⁶⁶ His Christian neighbor was in agreement, announcing that de’ Rossi’s translation would bring glory to his people.¹⁶⁷

A glorious past in which Jews were respected by their rulers, both for their religious faith and the wisdom, was something that was possible with Hellenistic history. As we will see in the following chapter, Jews could look to their experience with Hellenistic rulers such as Alexander and Ptolemy in order to have pride in their past and model their behavior. Jews could not share in the Christian recovery of Roman political identity, but they could share in the recovery of a past, Classical identity — that of Hellenistic Greece.

b. Use of History: Meaningful Participation in Present

De’ Rossi’s second argument for the utility of history is that historical evidence can assist with an “understanding of the meaning of certain passages in holy Writ”, the text that regulates the daily life of his Jewish community.¹⁶⁸ Earlier, in his Introduction, de’ Rossi had featured this as a chief benefit from making the text of Aristeas known to the Jewish community. Immediately after focusing upon the value of a narrative that provided precedent for royal court admiration for Jewish leaders, de’ Rossi focused upon a different sort of “useful” information, namely “the reasons for some of the biblical precepts” under which Jews lived.¹⁶⁹ In his translation of Aristeas, de’ Rossi turns the curious questions about Jewish law into a challenge more consonant with the defensive posture of Jews in the Counter Reformation: Aristeas reports: “many people regard a considerable number of the statutes contained in the Law of the Jews as having no foundation”.¹⁷⁰ Specifically, Aristeas mentions the laws prohibiting the consumption of certain food and drink and the contamination of those who consume (or even touch) prohibited animals. But the inquiry was far broader: “these and many similar prescriptions of the Law appear to be meaningless details — and, in fact, they are observed with an even greater regard to the minutiae which are but vanity of vanities.”¹⁷¹

164 Ibid., 5.

165 Ibid., 6.

166 Ibid., 32 & nn. 122-32 & nn. 123.

167 Ibid., 31.

168 Ibid., 406.

169 Ibid., 5.

170 Ibid., 50.

171 Ibid., 51. That de’ Rossi “emphasizes the negativity of the sentiment” is noted by Weinberg. Ibid., 50 n. 55. In the Greek, Aristeas states: “most men feel some curiosity concerning passages in the law dealing with food and drink and animals regarded as unclean”. Moses Hadas, ed., *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 153. De’ Rossi’s translation of the priest’s response is consonant with the original text,

A present in which Jews have a meaningful role as interpreters of the word of God is likewise possible through the use of Hellenistic history. As we will see in the following chapter, Jews could look to their experience with Hellenistic rulers such as Alexander and Ptolemy in order to envision a successful and appreciated role of cultural intermediary by which they had the unique wisdom to interpret the will of God. In a Christian culture in which Protestants vied with Catholics for the proper interpretation of God's word, Jews did not simply have to either stand on the sidelines or be content to be used as a weapon by one side against the other. Through Hellenistic history, they could play an important role in clarifying the will of God.

c. Use of History: Hopeful Future

Third, and finally, de' Rossi argues that historical inquiry is justified not just because it provides inspiration from the past and guidance for the present but because it provides knowledge that will be needed in the future. As a result of his historical inquiry, de' Rossi claims, "*halakhah* relevant to the time of the Messiah will be explained correctly." Whether for those who thought the messianic age was imminent,¹⁷² or for those like de' Rossi himself who dismissed the imminence of the messianic age as a result of imprudent human calculation regarding the Divine, de' Rossi claimed that his inquiries would be relevant for the messianic era whenever it might happen, because happen it would. The Christian Roman empire, the fourth and final empire predicted by Daniel, would come to an end. At that time, the Jewish community would have to know how to clothe the priests who would minister in the Third Temple. Historical inquiry *now* in preparation for what *will be* was not just "permissible and open for discussion, but also a religious duty that deserves a reward from our bountiful God."¹⁷³

The future value of historical inquiry is equally relevant to de' Rossi's translation of Aristeas, namely through the valuable testimony that text provides regarding the clothing of the high priest. De' Rossi considers the use of the evidence of Aristeas for the time of the Third Temple to be key — he announces to his readers early on, again in his Introduction, that he will use Aristeas "for the clarification of certain problematic statements about the priestly vestments made by our later sages" — a purpose that is "more fundamental" than any light Aristeas might

however: he notes that the commandments "promote righteousness," de' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 52, and that this underlying sense of moral purpose underlies not just the food that is permitted and refused but also the separation of Jews from those who act differently, *ibid.*, 53, the result of which is that the Jews' laws promote proper conduct within the greater community as a whole: they "teach us to preserve justice and goodness in our dealings with all people as long as we live". *Ibid.*, 55. Cf. "Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)," 153-165.

172 De' Rossi recognized that many thought that this was so. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 406.

173 *Ibid.* Accordingly, de' Rossi presents his inquiry into Torah passages regarding priestly vestments as relevant both because the Torah dictates what one is to study right now and because the full value of an understanding of those passages will benefit the community when the Third Temple arises in the future. *Ibid.* It is interesting to note that de' Rossi's contemporary Abraham Portaleone studied how to make Biblical incense and wrote an encyclopedia designed to bring the Second Temple period to life. Andrew Berns, "Judah Moscato, Abraham Portaleone, and Biblical Incense in Late Renaissance Mantua," in *Rabbi Judah Moscato and the Jewish Intellectual World of Mantua in the 16th-17th Centuries*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 113, 118. A similar interest was expressed in identifying the music of the Temple. Alessandro Guetta, "Can Fundamentalism Be Modern? The Case of Avraham Portaleone (1542-1612)," in *Acculturation and its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience Between Exclusion and Inclusion*", eds. David N. Myers, Massimo Ciavolella, Peter H. Reill, and Geoffrey Symcox (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 105.

shed on the meaning of Torah today (much less the social and political acceptance of Jews among their temporary Christian rulers).¹⁷⁴ Indeed, as stated above, the language of Aristeas regarding the clothing of the high priest of the Temple is set forth in full not just once, in de' Rossi's translation, but twice — the second time in chapter 47.¹⁷⁵

A future in which Jews could have hope was possible through Hellenistic history in a way that was all but foreclosed through the history of Rome. As we will see in the following chapter, Jews could look to their experience with Hellenistic rulers such as Alexander and Ptolemy to see the providence of God in history and know that their eventual salvation from Rome was secure. De' Rossi's Jewish community was clearly primed for eschatological thought as a result of the Spanish Expulsion and enthralled with eschatological environment of northern Italy due to Protestant sensibility and the advancing Ottoman forces. Hellenistic history allowed de' Rossi to tamp down any potentially catastrophic enthusiasm for immediate salvation with the confidence from history that salvation would indeed arrive at the appointed time.

E. The Structure of *Me'or 'Enayim*

The structure of *Me'or 'Enayim* mirrors de' Rossi's interest in the past, present and future value of history. The Voice of God focuses upon the present. It is not just that the earthquake of Ferrara was very recent history; de' Rossi presents it as it unfolds. The event is perpetually “now” for his readers. By contrast, the Splendor of the Elders is set in the past. De' Rossi sets the text in the distant past relative to the earthquake: it is not just a text he was reading with his neighbor but one that needs clarification given the dross of time -- glorious wisdom that has been lost and can be recovered. By setting forth the Letter of Aristeas in full, in (edited) translation, de' Rossi emphasizes the text rather than its present value. That will come, of course, but in a separate part. That part is Words of Understanding.

Words of Understanding is comprised of four sections, the most important of which is section three, which bears its own name, Days of the World. This part of *Me'or 'Enayim* -- its most lengthy part -- is devoted to the future. That orientation, of course, has been noticed by Weinberg and Bonfil; my contribution here is merely to heighten the observation by comparing it with the emphasis that de' Rossi brings to bear upon the present and the past in the other parts of the work. Regarding the fourth section, as intimated above, I think it fair to say that the material is timeless. More specifically, this is material that is relevant to the time when the Third Temple has been built, in Messianic time, at the end of historical time. This is the time in which Hebrew is restored and in which the knowledge regarding the priestly vestments comes again into play.

The centrality of the priestly vestments is closely tied to the testimony of Aristeas, Philo and Josephus and unifies the work more than the testimony of Aristeas himself. Note that de'

174 Ibid., 5.

175 Ibid., 598. More, the issue of priestly vestments frames *Me'or 'Enayim* as a whole, for it is not simply highlighted in the introduction and in the translation but forms an important unit near the end of the work. The “problematic statements” of the sages to which de' Rossi had alluded are finally set forth in chapter 46, Ibid., 586-597. A chapter that introduces Aristeas along with Philo and Josephus as the trinity of objective witnesses to Second Temple facts; the testimony of Aristeas is presented in chapter 47, the testimony of Philo is set forth in full in chapter 48, Ibid., 601-604. and that of Josephus is set forth in chapter 49. Ibid., 605-608. Chapter 50 completes the topic with testimony from Christians as well as Rabbis, reconciled to that of Josephus. Ibid., 609-620.

Rossi takes pains not to privilege Aristeas in this regard. Aristeas' testimony is set forth first in section four (chapter 47)¹⁷⁶ -- indeed, this is remarkable given that the Letter of Aristeas has already been translated in full -- but it is followed by Philo (chapter 48)¹⁷⁷ and Josephus.¹⁷⁸ These three witnesses are of equal importance as impartial witnesses to a history of immeasurable significance and usefulness.¹⁷⁹ The theme of priestly vestments serves as well to unify de' Rossi's text as a whole, for it reinforces the importance of de' Rossi's work of history toward the service of an identity that can survive until the rebuilding of the Temple. The opening prayer with which de' Rossi begins his work suggests the reconstruction of the Temple and the vital role of the high priest.¹⁸⁰ And the concluding prayer -- "With a second, yea third revision, I shall build it up again and again"¹⁸¹ -- emphasizes de' Rossi's own role in preparing for Messianic times.

In short, Hellenistic Jewish history permitted Jews to find Second Temple history useful and vibrant by giving them a past in which they could be proud, a present in which they played a valuable role, and -- most important -- a future filled with hope. Jews could shake off the oppressive cloak of Christian Rome. By focusing upon the Second Temple in Hellenistic times before it fell to Rome, the Jewish community could develop a new identity that both drew upon and remained distinct from the intellectual streams of 16th century northern Italy. In the following chapter, Chapter V, we will see how de' Rossi reconstructs Jewish identity by using the Hellenistic model of imperial respect for the Jewish high priest. Whether between the High Priest and Alexander, between Eleazar and Ptolemy, and even between Philo (the Alexandrian community's pious leader) and Gaius (to de' Rossi, a Hellenistic monarch) -- this model best permitted de' Rossi to demonstrate how the Jewish Hellenistic texts permitted a viable past, present and future for his fellow Jews.

176 Ibid., 598-600.

177 Ibid., 601-04.

178 Ibid., 605-08.

179 Ibid., 596 ("these [three] writers lived in Temple times; their statements were not guesswork or hearsay, but rather what they and not others actually witnessed"). In accord with de' Rossi's decision not to privilege Aristeas, note that in his comments to that text in *Splendor of the Elders*, de' Rossi does not cite to Philo's *Life of Moses*, the text in which Philo reports his version of the Septuagint translation. That comes only now, in the fourth section of *Words of Understanding*, when Aristeas is no longer featured as an example of past glory but rather is providing evidence -- along with others -- for the future.

180 Ibid., 1. The quotations -- including here one from Philo's *Life of Moses* -- emphasize the unity between de' Rossi's project and the rebuilding of the Temple by way of the high priest.

181 Ibid., 721.

CHAPTER V: JEWS, EMPIRE AND THE HELLENISTIC PAST

In the previous chapter, Chapter IV, we saw that de' Rossi proposed the Hellenistic past as a viable alternative to a Roman past that no longer worked for a Jewish identity. There are many ways in which de' Rossi tried to integrate Hellenistic history into his Jewish tradition in *Me'or 'Enayim*. The purpose of this chapter is to identify one major way in which he did this, namely to argue that the interaction of Hellenistic rulers with their Jewish subjects provided Jews with a political history that was useful: a glorious past, a valuable role for the present, and a hopeful future. Because de' Rossi's goal was to integrate Hellenistic history into the Jewish tradition, he does not privilege Hellenistic history over Rabbinic legend. Hellenistic history complements Rabbinic legend, and the Jewish experience in the Hellenistic past that is evidenced by both sources provide useful inspiration for re-invigorating the Jewish faith.

To de' Rossi, historical epochs were based upon imperial control over Jerusalem and the concomitant rise and fall of the Temple. The Babylonian epoch had begun when Jerusalem was taken, the First Temple destroyed, and the Jews taken into exile. The Persian epoch was marked by Persia taking Babylon and allowing the Jews to return and reconstruct their temple. The Greek epoch commenced when Alexander defeated Darius. It too was marked by the Second Temple, but here it was Alexander's destruction of the competing Samaritan temple. Especially important for modern readers to understand, de' Rossi and his fellow Jews would have considered the Roman epoch to commence not with the battle of Actium and the advent of Augustus but rather under Titus. It was Titus who destroyed the Second Temple and exiled the Jews again into the diaspora into which they had been living for over fifteen hundred years. Earlier Roman rulers such as Gaius ruled in the Greek period so far as the Jerusalem Temple and the Jews were concerned. De' Rossi turned to the Greek -- Hellenistic, for modern readers -- period, instead of Rome.

De' Rossi particularly emphasized the material from Aristeas, Philo and Josephus that allowed the Jews to replace their troubling vision of the Roman-Jewish past with their glorious experience under the Hellenistic empire. Specifically, de' Rossi selects political accounts, namely narratives that demonstrate Greek respect for the leaders of the Jewish community. De' Rossi takes as his starting point the Letter of Aristeas: the account of Ptolemy's interaction with the high priest Eleazar (as well as the 72 priests on the embassy) is the catalyst provided by de' Rossi for *Me'or 'Enayim* as a whole, and its entire translation is the second of the work's three parts. But de' Rossi is interested in far more. He is interested in the model of the Alexandrian diaspora community in which and for whom the translation of the Tanakh was made. The Alexandrian community that had generated Aristeas, Philo and even to some extent the Greek-writing Jew Josephus (although he would witness the end of the Alexandrian empire and the beginning of the Roman empire) was founded by Alexander himself, Alexander the Great, who had accorded great respect to the Jewish polity. It was a wonderful heritage with an impeccable pedigree, and de' Rossi thought to reconstruct the foundations of the Jewish diasporic identity upon its history.

How de' Rossi seeks to reconstruct a basis for Jewish identity in diaspora through Alexander's relationship with Jaddua/Simeon, Ptolemy's relationship with Eleazar and Gaius' relationship with Philo is the subject of this chapter. Through the material not just of the Hellenistic authors but of the Rabbis themselves, de' Rossi argues that the Jews of his time could recover a viable political identity through Hellenistic history: a glorious past, a meaningful way to interact with non-Jews in the present, and a hopeful future.

A. Counter-identity

De' Rossi's use of Hellenistic history is, in my view, "counter-identity", not "counter-history".¹ Unlike with "counter-history," de' Rossi does not seek to transform or counter any Classical or Christian account of Hellenistic history to serve Jewish ends. For example, he does not seek to present Jews, as opposed to Romans, as the cultural heirs of the Greeks. (Nor, for that matter, does de' Rossi seek to "counter" the link between Rome and Christianity.)² Rather, de' Rossi seeks to use Hellenistic imperial interaction with Jews to support an alternative construction of Jewish identity in the way that he perceives Christians employ the power of the Roman empire. Hellenistic history, I argue de' Rossi contends, can allow Jews to participate in contemporary culture while remaining distinct from it. Part of de' Rossi's constructed "counter-identity" is, to be sure, triumphalist. He believes that Hellenistic history shows that ultimately, God will save the Jewish people from foreign domination and restore them not just to their homeland but to rulership. In this sense, the rhetorical import of de' Rossi's "counter-identity" is the same as "counter-history" -- but de' Rossi also emphasizes Jewish *belonging* to the surrounding Christian culture. "Counter-history," as used by Biale and others, presupposes a polemical response by Jews to Christianity, and I believe that de' Rossi exhibits not hostility but respect toward Christianity.

How de' Rossi develops his "counter-identity," is, I argue, akin to the process that Gruen has identified in the very Hellenistic culture that de' Rossi seeks to emphasize and renew as a source of identity for Jews in 16th century Italy. De' Rossi, like his Hellenistic forebears, sought "cultural self-definition" through twin processes: one, establishing a measure of belonging, "a place within the broader Mediterranean world," and at the same time, two, a sense of transcendent superiority, a way to secure "their distinctiveness".³ Indeed, Gruen features two of the main stories used by de' Rossi himself, that of Alexander the Great's encounter with Jaddua,

1. Funkenstein's term has proved useful — and malleable — in recent years. It has been employed to describe the Jewish use of Christian iconic imagery to transform the Roman conquest of Second Temple treasures into a tale of Jewish victory over Christianity, Gregg and Kevin L. Osterloh Gardner, ed., *The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple At Rome and Constantinople: Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire*, *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 330-331; 371, as well as the Christian use of Jewish history for Christian purposes. Gregg and Kevin L. Osterloh Gardner, ed., '*Jewish Christianity' as Counter-History?: The Apostolic Past in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, vol. *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 212-213. And nothing in principle requires that "counter-history" be limited to "history" itself. One scholar has found it helpful to conceive of the Rabbinic "discovery" of Second Temple objects in Rome as a reversal of the Roman (now Christian) conquest of Jerusalem. Here what is transformed is not so much a narrative account as a historical process; while this, too, could be called "counter-history," the scholar prefers to characterize it as a "counter-geography" in which Jews have creatively reversed the "direction of travel and exploration" if not conquest, a transformation that has the effect of "turning Christian sacred space inside-out". Boustán, "The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple At Rome and Constantinople: Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire," 332. Another scholar has used "counter-memories" as a way of characterizing modern Jewish history; there, the purpose was to emphasize the continuity of modern Jewish history with pre-modern accounts of the past not ordinarily thought of as "history" proper. David N. and Amos Funkenstein Myers, "Remembering "Zahor": A Super-Commentary [With Response]," *History and Memory* 4 (2), no. 2 (Fall - Winter, 1992): 141.

2 By contrast, that would appear to be the task of the *Josippon* and of commentators who build upon that text such as Isaac Abravanel. As shown above, that process involves severing the traditional Jewish connection between Esau and Christian Rome by transforming Esau's grandson Tsefo into a Jewish figure who himself founds Rome.

3 Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xv.

the high priest of the Jews, on Alexander's way to defeat Darius of Persia, and that of Ptolemy Philadelphus's request that the high priest Eleazar grant him translator priests in order that he might obtain a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible for his encyclopedic library.⁴

But while the twin processes that Gruen notes were employed by Hellenistic Jews are likewise used, in my view, by de' Rossi, there is a great difference between the Hellenistic world in which these stories originated and the Christian-dominated world of the Counter-Reformation in which de' Rossi writes. I believe that this has two consequences that are particularly important here. First, de' Rossi is not crafting tales; rather, he's picking and choosing from Hellenistic accounts along with later versions. The result is that we can see to a much greater extent than we can with Hellenistic sources themselves what has been accepted and what has been rejected from alternative accounts. Second, because the religious intolerance of the Catholic church was serious and often deadly, humor at the expense of the Christian majority was unlikely,⁵ and any indications of distinctiveness that bordered on superiority had necessarily to be oblique. De' Rossi needed to be careful regarding how to phrase this part of his message — not just to Christians (and to former Jews eager to sense trouble and serve their new faith), but to the reticent among the Jewish community who feared that too much pride of place could — or would — lead to disaster.⁶

B. Alexander's Encounter with Jaddua/Simeon

But de' Rossi aimed high. Rather than cede the Second Temple's destruction to Jewish lack of faith in Jesus, he emphasized the Second Temple's glory due to Alexander's respect for the Jews. While Christians traditionally associated an earthquake with the destruction of the Temple, de' Rossi sought to convert that image to emphasize the divine shift in favor of the Jews that had started with Alexander. "Thus in my opinion," de' Rossi states, "the primary purpose of Haggai in his prophecy, *In just a little while longer* (2:6) and in his second prophecy, *I am going to shake the heavens and the earth* (2:21) was to allude to the exploits of Alexander. For after the second Temple had been standing for some time, his wars shook all nations and he overthrew the imperial throne. He came to Jerusalem together with the highest nobility and the kings that were in his train, who were indeed the gem of all the nations (Hag. 2:7) for that generation, and their best representatives."⁷

1. The Grandeur of Alexander's Respect

The story of Alexander's encounter with the high priest⁸ of the Second Temple provides proof of the Hellenistic monarch's respect for Jews and their faith. De' Rossi drew upon both the version of Josephus and that of the Rabbis; both emphasized the dream of God's messenger experienced by Alexander, his proskynesis to the Jewish high priest, the political favors Alexander accorded Jews, and the religious advantages he provided vis-à-vis the rival

4 Ibid., 189-245, ("Kings and Jews"); see, in particular, 189-99 (Alexander and Jaddua) and 206-22 (Ptolemy and Eleazar)

5 See generally Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*, 246-291. ("Pride and Precedence").

6 James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

7. Azariah de' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah de' Rossi*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 627.

8. See below on the question of the Rabbis' identification of the priest as Simeon.

Samaritans. This was a story in which the Greek imperial lord of the world recognized that his power came from the Jewish God and honors his new Jewish subjects accordingly.⁹

De' Rossi favors the story of Josephus because it links that honor to the Second Temple itself. This account of Alexander's encounter with the high priest was well known to de' Rossi's audience.¹⁰ "[W]e should turn our attention to a matter of common knowledge," de' Rossi relates. "I am referring to the great deeds of Alexander of Macedon in his encounter with the high priest who came from Jerusalem to meet him."¹¹ The details presented come from Josephus, not the Rabbis: "For contrary to the expectation of his servants, Alexander prostrated himself before him, and while he waged tempestuous wars with all nations of the world, he behaved with great kindness and love towards us. With great veneration he approached the Sanctuary with the priest and donated a meal offering and pleasing sacrifices and he requested the Lord regrading the final outcome of his wars with Darius."¹² Josephus, not the Rabbis, emphasized Alexander's recognition that the Jewish God had foreknowledge of his wars with Darius and sought that knowledge from the Jewish priests, as with a Greek oracle. Josephus had mentioned Alexander's donation of gifts. In the Rabbinic account, no such request was made, no gifts were detailed.¹³ While upon first mentioning the high priest, de' Rossi leaves him unnamed (perhaps out of deference to the Rabbinic version),¹⁴ when he does name the priest, de' Rossi identifies him in keeping with Josephus as Jaddua -- not, as the Rabbis had it, Simeon the Righteous.¹⁵

Josephus' account emphasizes the political, supra-imperial, stature of the Jews under the leadership of the high priest. Alexander dreams that the Jewish God, in the image of Jaddua the high priest, assures him that he will be master of Asia, appears before his victories in battle and meets him in person on the outskirts of Jerusalem, a distinctive figure in blue surrounded by priests in white flowing robes, all with the backdrop of the Holy City. Alexander dismounts his horse and bows to Jaddua, to the amazement of his companions who have only seen conquered peoples do this to their leader. Alexander accompanies the high priest to the Temple where he is shown the Book of Daniel and, perceiving himself to be the figure indicated to bring destruction to the Persians, leaves content. But before leaving, he awards to the Jews the right to live by their own laws in his Empire and to be relieved of tribute every 7th, Sabbatical, year. To de' Rossi's readers, this is a story of imperial inclusion. This point has been well established in the Hellenistic context itself by Gruen.¹⁶

9. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* (afterwards called *Ant.*) XI(viii)(3)-XI(viii)(6), in *Jewish Antiquities Books IX-XI*, ed. Ralph Marcus, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937).

10. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 627.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. An account of the difference between the Josephus and the Rabbis regarding Alexander is beyond the scope of this paper. From the perspective of de' Rossi's privileging the account of Josephus, two factors of likely relevance are (1) a preference for the memory of an intact Second Temple over one that has been destroyed, and (2) a greater sense of imminence of the end of empire.

14. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 4 n. 26.

15. The Rabbinic account is at B.Yoma 69a, B.Tamid 27b and Meg.T. 339.

16. Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 189-199. The degree to which Josephus himself shaped the story, or rather transmitted an earlier Hellenistic account need not concern us here. The point made by Gruen, *ibid.*, 196-197, that this is a confident Jewish assertion of a role in Hellenistic Egypt will be addressed below. The audiences are different, of course. Josephus may well have been writing to an audience conditioned to appreciate the Jewish transformation of stories of Greek power. Such familiarity may have attendant upon it a sense of humor that was likely lost in the far different context of Christian dominated Italy of the Counter-Reformation.

Josephus also emphasizes Alexander's recognition of the Jews as politically useful to empire. The Jews are loyal imperial subjects. They tell Alexander that their loyalty cannot be to him while they are Persian subjects. Alexander must defeat Persia first. This type of loyalty takes courage, for at that moment Jews were exposed to the forces of Alexander, not Persia. De' Rossi explicitly references that part of the Rabbinic account that presents Jews as praying for Alexander's empire.¹⁷ Beyond that, de' Rossi notes that Alexander himself recognized and rewarded Jewish loyalty. Alexander offers Jews the opportunity to participate in his army "while still adhering to the customs of their country,"¹⁸ a clear recognition of not just the loyalty of the Jews but their usefulness to the state as Jews. By way of contrast, the Samaritans proffer loyalty but it is worthless. As recounted by both Josephus and the Rabbis, the Samaritans profess immediate, but unprincipled, loyalty, unlike the Jews. The Samaritans are shown to be mendacious in claiming to be true Jews. Alexander's response also highlights Samaritan duplicity: Alexander does not repudiate the Samaritans, risking their mercurial nature; that shows his political acumen. He simply defers resolution of their request for a later date.

The Rabbinic account emphasizes the Jewish tradition's incorporation of gratitude to Alexander into the Jewish faith.¹⁹ The tale accounts for its description due to the need to explain a religious festival celebrated on a specific day. The parties jointly approach each other, a necessary symbolic feature to allow encounter between rival groups located at Mt. Gerizim, on the one hand, and at Jerusalem, on the other, at a neutral site of sorts midway between the two locations. The name of the town of meeting, Antipatris, is indeed on the northern border of Judea and Samaria and a believable location for any encounter between Samaritans and Jews.²⁰ In the Rabbis' account, Alexander hands the Samaritans over to the Jews and permits the Jews to destroy the competing Samaritan temple. The Rabbinic account is less about the Jews' relationship with Alexander's empire than with their gratitude for his assistance in thwarting their rival religious sect. In effect, aside from preserving the Second Temple, he is just passing though.

2. The Integration of Biblical into Classical History

If de' Rossi was to securely rebuild Jewish identity upon a Hellenistic footing, he needed not just to show that Hellenistic history could provide a glorious past but that studying this past was a valuable way in which Jews could participate in contemporary culture. He did so by showing that Jewish engagement with Hellenistic history permitted Jews to contribute

17. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 662.

18. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books IX-XI*, ed. Ralph Marcus, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), XI(viii)(5).

19. To be sure, there is Rabbinic material which might suggest hostility to Alexander. Aside from the material involving Alexander in the destruction of Alexandrian Jewry, discussed in Chapter V, above, there is the suggestion that Alexander saw himself as a god. De' Rossi tells of Rabbi Jonah's words through which Alexander rose in the air like a bird, seeing the world as an orb. Although employed ostensibly to exonerate the Rabbis from accurate scientific knowledge — not their specialty — the meaning of the tale as repeated by de' Rossi is suggestive of the divine role arrogated by Alexander: the Rabbis forbade statues holding an orb in hand. *Ibid.*, 210. What distinguishes Rabbinic (and de' Rossi's) criticism of this Alexander story from that of Alexander's interaction with the high priest is specifically that while in the former he himself arrogates the power of the divine, in the latter he recognizes the power of the Jewish God.

20. But note that Antipatris itself as a town was constructed by Herod in Roman times and did not exist at the time of Alexander. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Antipatris." Farmington Hills, MI: Keter Publishing House Ltd. and Thomas Gale, 2007.

information valuable to the humanist interest in reconstructing the ancient past while doing so in a way that secured Jewish primacy.

Introducing Jews into Classical history was extremely useful to de' Rossi and to any Jews interested in Classical antiquity. The integration of different people's histories -- establishing a unified chronology or historical record -- came to the fore in the last 16th century, constituting "a discipline in its own right."²¹ Greek history had been notoriously silent about the Jews from the time of Herodotus, whose scope was world-wide.²² Josephus, a Roman source who had written Hellenistic history and included Jews, could fix that problem. Josephus could establish the context for Alexander's visit with the Jewish high priest. The historical Alexander stopped in Jerusalem on his way to defeat Darius, respecting the Jewish faith and acknowledging its God, and the priest he met was Jaddua.²³ Even though Josephus was no eye-witness to Alexander specifically, de' Rossi nonetheless emphasizes Josephus' credibility not just from his own mouth (i.e., that Josephus was particularly concerned about his reputation should he be shown to be in error) but from the writer de' Rossi likely perceived as his source, Arrian, whose *own* source had included a Jewish historian embedded with Alexander's troops.²⁴ By using a source that could be respected by Christian and Jew alike in a way that allowed Jewish integration into Classical history, de' Rossi could bolster the historicity of both Josephus' account and that of the Rabbis regarding an event of importance to the Jews that could nonetheless be accepted by Christian scholars. Indeed, there was no Christian account that had perverted the Jewish connection to Hellenism in an attempt to make that connection its own. De' Rossi could not be sure of Josephus' account, but he could be sure enough given contemporary standards. This was the sort of history that was useful — proud history that was both plausible and could not be denied. No more, no less.

3. The Hope for Ultimate Jewish Victory over Christianity

While Alexander's obeisance to Jaddua (or to Simeon) emphasizes the monarch's recognition that the Jewish god is responsible for his success, Josephus' story relates how Alexander ratifies the progression of history set forth in the Jewish Bible. In accepting the prophecy that Greece would supplant Persia, Alexander accepted as well the part of Daniel in which his own rule -- and that of Rome afterwards -- was destined to end. Gruen has pointed out the humor and claim of superiority inherent in this account. After all, the priests played a trick of sorts on Alexander, showing him what he might wish to see,²⁵ while not showing him what was

21. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, xxvii. See generally, Anthony Grafton, Joseph Scaliger. *A Study in the History of Scholarship II: Historical Chronology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

22. This was a point emphasized in the Letter of Aristeas itself, the current significance of which was highlighted by de' Rossi's gloss on this question. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 76.

23. *Ibid.*, 608. There is no evidence of contemporary Christian criticism of the Rabbinic account in which Alexander encountered Simeon the Righteous (or frankly, the Josephan account), but given de' Rossi's concern with the historicity of the *Josippon* and of the Rabbinic *midrashim* regarding Titus, it would not have been lost on him that cementing Jaddua, not Simeon, as the high priest encountered by Alexander would remove any notion that the Rabbinic account purported to be historical.

24. *Ibid.*, 199-200.

25. Alexander would have been told about the prophecy of the goat and the ram in chapter 8. That suggested Greek domination: "I looked and a ram standing between me and the river; he had two horns; the horns were high, with one higher than the other, and the higher sprouting last. I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward. No beast could withstand him, and there was none to deliver from his power. He did as he pleased and grew great. As I looked on, a he-goat came from the west, passing over the entire earth without touching the ground. The goat

to come.²⁶ If Josephus' audience might have appreciated the humor, de' Rossi's audience would have appreciated the sense of relief from the oppression under which they were living. For Alexander, in accepting the *translatio imperii* of Daniel had ratified not just that he would be replaced but that Rome would as well.²⁷ For de' Rossi's Jews would know that the Fourth Empire was not the Hellenistic Empire identified by Alexander but rather its successor, Rome.

The Rabbinic account was particularly useful in this regard, because its reference to the Jewish defeat of the Samaritans could easily be seen to presage ultimate victory over Christianity. In both Josephus and the Rabbis, the Cutheans/Samaritans are rivals to the Jews, with a temple on Mount Gerizim. But while the Cutheans in Josephus sought the same sort of rights Alexander had given to the Jews and had been deferred, in the Talmud, the Samaritans sought to destroy the Jews and supplant them. In the Talmud the Samaritans have successfully petitioned Alexander to allow them to destroy the Temple and are marching on it with Alexander's army. Indeed, this section of the Alexander-Eleazar story from the Talmud in particular is summarized in *Me'or Enayim*.²⁸ It is not hard at all to see the Samaritans as Christians, seeking to replace the Jews -- and Alexander's troops as the Romans doing their bidding, threatening imminent destruction of the Temple. The connection between Samaritans and Christians is made even more apparent in the Jewish critique of the Samaritans: Jews declare

had a conspicuous horn on its forehead. He came up to the two-horned ram that I had seen standing between me and the river and charged at him with furious force. I saw him reach the ram and rage at him; he struck the ram and broke its two horns, and the ram was powerless to withstand him. He threw him to the ground and trampled him, and there was none to deliver the ram from his power." Lawrence M. Wills, Daniel 8:3-7, 1658. "The two-horned ram that you saw [signifies] the kings of Media and Persia; and the buck, the he-goat — the king of Greece; and the large horn on his forehead, that is the first king." Ibid., Daniel 8:20-21. This is the specific prophecy indicated by Josephus. Josephus, "Jewish Antiquities Books IX-XI," XI(viii)(5), 337, pp. 476-77 & n.d. "And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated..."; see also X(xi)(7), 272-74, pp. 308-11. Cf. Laurence Henry Rubinstein, "The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis" (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1965), 50 (specifically referencing the prophecy of the goat and the ram).

26. The prophecy had stated next that the horn of the Greek ram would break, and four horns would replace it, "but without its power". Ibid., Daniel 8:8 and 22, 1658-59. Then would arise a destructive king who would challenge God Himself and fail. Ibid., Daniel 8:9-14 and 8:23-25. See de' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 4; 352-53; 627-28. And there are other prophecies Alexander would not have liked to hear. Daniel 11 too spoke directly and clearly to the Greek conquest of Persia. Alexander would have had no trouble identifying with this prophecy either. In it, "Persia will have three more kings, and the fourth will be wealthier than them all; by the power he obtains through his wealth, he will stir everyone up against the kingdom of Greece. Then a warrior king will appear who will have an extensive dominion and do as he pleases." Ibid., Daniel 11:2-3, 1662. That is where the priest would have stopped reading. But here is what comes next: "But after his appearance, his kingdom will be broken up and scattered to the four winds of heaven, but not for any of his posterity, nor with dominion like that which he had; for his kingdom will be uprooted and belong to others besides these." Ibid., Daniel 11:4. That prophecy speaks even more starkly about the lack of a legacy, making it clear that there will be none at all.

27. Such a limitation might well have been implied by the *Josippon*'s detail of the high priest's promise that in exchange for Alexander's respect, all priests born would be named Alexander -- but just in the coming year. Rubinstein, "The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis," 48-51; 52 ff. De' Rossi uses no other part of the encounter between Alexander and the high priest. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 332. The main feature of the *Josippon*'s account that is problematic, in comparison to both that of Josephus and the Talmud, is its emphasis upon the tension between God and Alexander. The vision that Alexander encounters is minatory, warning Alexander with death should he dishonor the Temple and its priests. Furthermore, Alexander's offer at the Temple is insulting in that he wants to honor the Temple with a statue of himself.

28. Ibid., 663 (citing *Ant.*XIII:74-79).

that the Samaritans are idolators, a common Jewish polemical charge against Christians. Indeed, it is in response to this charge of Samaritans as Christians that Alexander changes his mind, giving the Samaritans over to the Jews who punish them precisely as the Samaritans would have punished the Jews, including destroying their rival's temple.²⁹

Such a message of ultimate triumph over Christianity may well be understood, if implicitly, by de' Rossi's recapitulation of the dream of Simeon experienced by Alexander that is present in the Rabbinic account but not in Josephus. This account echoes the "*in hoc vinces*" vision of the cross reported by Eusebius to have been received by Constantine before his victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge.³⁰ Whether or not the Christian story was well known to the Rabbis, it certainly would have been part of the Christian culture to which de' Rossi's Italian Jews were exposed. It is even possible that a re-emphasis upon this Rabbinic story could serve as a counter-claim of sorts to the Christian claim of *translatio imperii*, reminding Jews that as indicated in their own accounts of the Hellenistic past, there was clear hope for the Jewish future.

De' Rossi even translates Josephus at times to emphasize the connection between Samaritans/Cutheans and Christians, itself serving to render the past relevant to the future. Josephus, claimed de' Rossi, "relates that the Cutheans filed a complaint against the Jerusalemites to Ptolemy the fourth (Philometor) claiming that the holiness of Mount Gerizim was greater than that of the Temple."³¹ "This," says Weinberg, "is a free translation. Josephus states that they claimed that the temple had been built 'according to the laws of Moses'".³² It is a claim, in fact, that echoes that of Haggai (2:9), *The glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former*, the topic of Chapter 51. That, of course, was a prophecy that had been interpreted by Christians to refer to the greater glory of the Second Temple due to the presence of Jesus.³³

In the same chapter, de' Rossi discusses the temple that Onias, grandson of Simeon the Righteous, is permitted by the Ptolemies to construct in Alexandria. This temple, like the Samaritan temple, is built to model the Jerusalem temple and it too has a Jerusalem Temple family priest.³⁴ Here as well de' Rossi appears to be reflecting the Christian/Jewish religious competition of his age; for while the text of Josephus reads "*templum*," de' Rossi translates this temple as a mere "*mizbeah*," or altar.³⁵ One final hint is apparent in this chapter: de' Rossi entitles the chapter as follows: "On the differences between our sages and the Christians and gentile writers in their narration of certain stories. And new information regarding the sanctuary erected on Mount Gerizim and the figure of a dove that was found there. And as to how many people called King Jannai lived in Temple times."³⁶ De' Rossi discusses everything he says he will, but there are no Christian writers narrating any stories in this chapter — only Jewish stories interpreted in a way to suggest superiority to Christianity.

29. BT Yoma 69a. The Soncino Babylonian Talmud, accessed February 3, 2014, www.halakhah.com.

30. BT Yoma 69a. See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), Book I:28-32, 80-82.

31. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 345 citing (Ant.XIII:74-79).

32. De' Rossi., 345 n. 29; Ralph Marcus, ed., *Jewish Antiquities, Books XII-XIV* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), XIII(iii)(4).

33. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 621 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 1 (citing Hag. 2:6, 9).

34. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 344.

35. Ibid. & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 16.

36. De' Rossi., 342.

C. Ptolemy's Encounter with Eleazar and the 72 Priests

1. The Recognition of Superior Jewish Wisdom

Ptolemy, de' Rossi mentions up front, is a Hellenistic monarch, one who followed closely upon Alexander himself (third in succession),³⁷ and whose decision to commission the translation of the Torah is of great pride to the Jews. Through both Hellenistic history and Rabbinic legend, de' Rossi makes the role of Ptolemy in the translation of the Septuagint central.

Jews were the bulwark of Alexander's Hellenistic empire. Much as Josephus had lauded Jewish military assistance to Alexander, the Letter of Aristeas emphasized the Jewish loyalty to Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Based upon Jewish military service, Ptolemy was more than willing to free all of Egypt's Jews in captivity as a prelude to commissioning the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek.³⁸ This was the reasoning expressed by Aristeas to Ptolemy,³⁹ and this was the reasoning articulated in Ptolemy's text to Eleazar, where he spoke of the valor and loyalty of the Jews, and specifically of their incorporation into his army and court.⁴⁰ As did Josephus with the account of Alexander, so too did Aristeas provide equal evidence of Jewish loyalty to the Persian kingdom before that of Greece. Aristeas had put the Jewish sword and shield at the service of the Persian king's foray into Egypt (indeed, even earlier, alongside the early Saitic ruler Psammetichus).⁴¹ Jewish captives made great soldiers, and Ptolemy Soter benefited greatly from them. Soter's Jews helped crush Coele Syria and "the cities of Edom".⁴²

Jewish wisdom was superior to that of the Greeks. The wisdom of the Jews is needed for Ptolemy's library. Not only is it the singular missing piece of wisdom, it is divine. The superior wisdom of the Jewish priests reported in the account of the Letter of Aristeas emphasizes the superiority of the source of their wisdom. Ptolemy and all of his court recognize this, for the answers of the 72 priests to Ptolemy's questions are uniformly considered to be perfect. But equally important to de' Rossi is the fact that these priests were welcomed into Ptolemy's court as political emissaries. This was a useful event for Jewish pride. "Moreover, [the] enjoyment [of he who learn of this account] will be enhanced once he recognizes the greatness of those sages of old whose expertise was not confined to the legal aspects of the Torah, but who were also social and political figures worthy of being received at court."⁴³ It is this political "glory"⁴⁴ that de'

37. Ibid., 3.

38. Ibid., 35-37.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 39.

41. Ibid., 35.

42. Ibid. More on Edom below. It is worth noting that de' Rossi does not seem at all concerned with any possible conflict inherent in his accounts of Alexander's regard for the Jews, on the one hand, and that of the Ptolemies, who made use of Jews as captives, not citizens. Most notably, de' Rossi makes nothing of the odd circumstances through which Alexander's favorites were enslaved in huge numbers by his successors. It is a conflict he simply accepts, passing over it in silence. What is important for de' Rossi here is the historical principle that Jews are loyal and useful soldiers for the regime. Eleazar says precisely this in his letter to Ptolemy Philadelphus: "Therefore we have not hesitated to offer burnt offerings for you, your sister, your children, and your admirers. During the sacrifices, the entire congregation sung praises and prayed that all your endeavors would succeed to your satisfaction, and that the benign God who sustains all would preserve your realm in peace and glory . . ." Ibid., 40.

43. Ibid., 4-5.

44. Ibid., 31.

Rossi's Christian neighbor called to his attention upon reading the Letter of Aristeas; it is a point reinforced by de' Rossi's announcement that his fellow Jews should take delight in this honor.⁴⁵

De' Rossi's translation of Aristeas enhances the positive role played by the Jews in this Hellenistic text. De' Rossi emphasizes the military prowess of the Jews. The Jewish temple is fortified. Aristeas and Andreas were admitted to Temple "after we had been stripped of our weapons";⁴⁶ the phrase "we were unarmed" in the original Greek suggests nothing of the sort.⁴⁷ Furthermore, while in the Greek only five individuals could enter the Temple precincts at one time, de' Rossi states that only five could leave at one time. The change removes any suggestion that the Jews were concerned about attack. De' Rossi emphasizes that Eleazar the High Priest is eager to be of assistance to Ptolemy. "We shall not refrain from satisfying your every wish; whatever you deem advantageous to you, even if it overrides our capabilities."⁴⁸ The original text suggested an isolationist reluctance: "even if it be contrary to our nature".⁴⁹

The Rabbinic account of divine sanction allowed de' Rossi to claim Rabbinic ratification of this central Hellenistic event. By and large, the Rabbis treat Ptolemy's translation favorably, and no more so than by the representation that all 72 scholars had made identical translations (with identical changes, no less!) under divine inspiration.⁵⁰ The account was short and presented in substantially the same manner throughout the Rabbinical corpus: "It is taught: it is told of King Ptolemy that he assembled seventy-two elders and put them in seventy-two rooms without disclosing to them the reason for their conduct. He went in to each of them and said 'Write out the Torah of Moses your teacher for me.' The Holy One blessed be He instilled each one of them with wisdom and they all gave identical renderings of the text and wrote ...[13 variants]."⁵¹ Even the ambivalence of the Rabbis to studying Greek had its important exception, and that was the Septuagint: "When they permitted Greek, they only permitted it for a scroll of the Law. This was because of the episode with Ptolemy the king."⁵² The point was the honor shown the Jews by Ptolemy. That last passage is important because here we have a Rabbinic suggestion at the

45. Ibid., 6. Here, also, note Gruen's analysis regarding Hellenistic invention and cultural appropriation. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 204-05; Gruen, 2008, *Die Septuaginta -- Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten: Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D)*, Wuppertal 20-24, July 2006, 134-156.

46. Ibid., 47.

47. Moses Hadas, ed., *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 141.

48. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 40.

49. Ibid., 40 n. 21; Aristeas, "*Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*," 119. De' Rossi also minimizes the connection present in the Letter of Aristeas between the Jewish people and the land of Judea. In his translation, he writes that Jews were taken into captivity "from their lands", whereas the translation that he was using specifically mentioned "from Judea". De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 35 & n. 7. Similarly, de' Rossi omits gifts for Temple repairs from his translation, referencing only the sacrifices made at the Temple; the reference to gifts would have suggested the continuing loyalty to the Temple of Jews in the diaspora of de' Rossi's time. Ibid., 40; compare to the Greek, Aristeas, "*Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*," 117. Finally, in mentioning the historical presence of the Jews in Alexandria, he took pains to point out that the Jews were quite happy being Jews in that city and had no need of Jerusalem: "They had already, as is right, selected a place for the sacred service — just as the Alexandrians had done when they were enjoying times of peace — and for that reason did not think of going up to Jerusalem." De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 262.

50. Philo already had emphasized the divine inspiration that rendered identical translations possible. Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, vol. II, trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 25-44. Cf. Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 37; 52-53.

51. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 160-61 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, nn. 1, 3, 5-7 (citing B.Meg.9a-b; Mikhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael, bo, 14 (I, 111-12); B.R. 8:11 (64); P.Meg. I(9) 71d; V.R. 13:5 (290)).

52. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 180 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 54. (B.Meg. 9a).

importance of the event, separate from the story recounting the event itself. And we have a discrete interest in what happened as something of relevance for the use of the Jews.⁵³

For de' Rossi, the Rabbinic accounts do not just echo the pride taken in Jewish identification with Ptolemy and his relationship with their community -- they invest the interaction with an element of divine favor. God Himself had supervised the translation, ratifying the importance of the connection between His community in Alexandria and the Hellenistic empire. Here is a circumstance where it is particularly clear that de' Rossi does not throw out Rabbinic legend because it is legend. Here the legend is useful.⁵⁴ Now, it is quite likely that de' Rossi himself believes that God was not specifically involved. He lauds Josephus' support of Aristeas as well as that of Jerome, who himself spoke of Aristeas as a witness.⁵⁵ Philo, de' Rossi makes clear to say, wrote some 300 years later,⁵⁶ and while he undoubtedly reported what he thought was the truth — namely that Alexandrian Jews of his time believed that the translation was divinely sanctioned — that had nothing to do with what had actually transpired.⁵⁷ But the notion of divine guidance had been useful to the Rabbis as it had to the Alexandrian Jews who had created the annual festival noted by Philo. There was no reason why the legendary account of this singular Hellenistic event could not be equally useful for the Jews of de' Rossi's day.

2. Jews as Custodians and Interpreters of Truth

De' Rossi recognized that his Christian contemporaries were increasingly focused upon the fact that the Septuagint, the Bible used by Jesus and the apostles,⁵⁸ differed considerably from the Hebrew Bible. Given that Jesus was supposed to be the true inheritor of the Jewish tradition, how could that be? The traditional Christian answer was particularly perilous in the Counter-Reformation: Jews had tampered with their texts to subvert the Christian faith.⁵⁹

53. Indeed it is framed positively, in that the Rabbis note the long-lineage (10 rulers). *Ibid.*, 181. And yet there are hints that the translation was met with disfavor. Interestingly, opposition seems to have arisen precisely around the issue on which divine favor was sought — the adequacy of a translation to preserve the meaning of the original. The most expressive way of denoting the disapproval was this: “It happened that five elders wrote the Torah in Greek for King Ptolemy. That day was as calamitous for Israel as when the golden calf was made because it was impossible to make an adequate translation of the Torah.” De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 161 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 10 (Sof. 1:7). The meaning could not be more plain: with translation comes different interpretation of the word of God and the certainty that a good deal of the Jewish population would worship, in effect, another God. As phrased in another part of the Talmud, the heavens themselves were darkened; that image in particular focused less on the error of following another path and exclusively upon the lack of light for direction along the proper path. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 161 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, nn. 11-161 & nn. 12. In the context of these hazards of inadequate translation, it was only natural that an account would develop under which Ptolemy had compelled the translation, for why else would it have been done? *Ibid.*, 162 (Rabad).

54. Aranoff emphasizes the usefulness of the legend to de' Rossi's own translation efforts specifically and to his advocacy of a Jewish identification with the syncretism inherent in humanism in general. Deena Aranoff, “In Pursuit of the Holy Tongue: Jewish Conceptions of Hebrew in the Sixteenth Century,” (PhD diss., University College London, 1982), 132, 134, 144-45. The point is valuable; I diverge to note the usefulness of the legend not just to a claim of participation in humanist activity but also to one of superiority.

55. In support are Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome, Clement, and Epiphanius. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 164-167.

56. *Ibid.*

57. De' Rossi noted that the existence of a festival at the time in which Philo and Justin wrote showed that Alexandrian residents then accepted the notion of a divine translation. *Ibid.*, 179. Along with Philo and Justin as supporters of this notion were Irenaeus, Eusebius, Isidore and Augustine. And of course the Rabbis. *Ibid.*, 164-167.

58. *Ibid.*, 182.

59. *Ibid.*, 178. De' Rossi responded with an argument that promoted the value of Jews as scholars of the textual transmission history of the Biblical text. The first part of the argument was defensive, more polemic than apology. It

De' Rossi proposed an interpretation of what had transpired between Eleazar and Ptolemy in the context of Septuagint preparation that both exonerated the Jews and created a role for them as custodians of Scriptural truth in contemporary society. The proposed solution was as admirable for its ingenuity as it was hopeless for achieving its intended result: the Jews had simply permitted Ptolemy to have an inaccurate copy of the Torah, and that was the Torah that Jesus used. De' Rossi phrases his argument thus: the Jews, knowing that Jewish popular tradition differed from Jewish sacred tradition, provided a Torah adjusted for popular consumption. In Ezra's day, de' Rossi notes, the Torah was no longer written in the Hebrew language ("holy tongue") but rather in Aramaic, due to the popular familiarity with Aramaic spoken (and read) in Babylon.⁶⁰ In addition to using the Aramaic language, de' Rossi states that in Ezra's time, the Aramaic was written in Hebrew script, not its original Assyrian script.⁶¹ Ezra, upon his return to Jerusalem, cleaned house and brought back the holy tongue (Hebrew) and the Assyrian script.⁶² With a clear separation now between the text and language used by the priests and the common people, the version of the Torah that the priests brought to Ptolemy — which they copied perfectly⁶³ -- was the version for the common people, not the version for the priests.⁶⁴ As de' Rossi sees it, this decision of the priests would have worked both for Ezra and for Ptolemy in that the version used was that which could be read by and understood by the common people.⁶⁵ It would have been version used by Philo and Josephus.⁶⁶ And it would have been the version used by Jesus, "the Christian himself".⁶⁷

was the Greeks and Egyptians who had tampered with the Septuagint, not the Jews. Ibid. 174. Such a position was consistent with the evidence adduced by Philo and Josephus that the Egyptian Greeks of Alexandria were jealous of the Jews, and historically so: "Reliable evidence will be advanced to show that the Greeks who were living in Alexandria at the time were contrivers and liars by nature, and that they bore a heartfelt hatred for the Jews who had been the target for their hatred ever since they had left Egypt. So all the honors which Alexander of Macedon and Ptolemy the king bestowed on our ancestors must have been like coals heaped on the heads of the Alexandrians." Ibid., 176 (noting Philo, *Leg.* 170 and Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, II, 31-32). The position also had been ratified by Augustine. Ibid., 177. Clearly there was an element of claimed superiority too, for the resentment came from the special favor shown by Alexander and his successors to the Jews of Alexandria. But the major import of this argument remained polemical: these people had equally abused the Christian writers too, such as Origen. Ibid. 177. Philo, he argued, should not be judged solely by his adherence to the Hebrew Torah as it had been preserved in Jewish tradition but in accordance with this version that had been altered by Jewish enemies: Philo too had relied upon a Torah that had been tampered with. Ibid. 178-79. De' Rossi must have recognized that this approach, while consistent with humanist historiography, would not work. There was an obvious weakness, in that the Talmudic accounts of the Septuagint were nearly uniform in their acknowledgement that there were 13 divergent readings, while only 4 of those 13 remained and in de' Rossi's day a host of additional differences existed when one accounted for "vocalization, letters, and words." Ibid. 171. Was all this to be blamed on Egyptians? There was no Rabbinic position with which de' Rossi could agree, so he invented one that would work, he hoped, both for Jews and for Christians.

60. Ibid., 182.

61. Ibid., 185.

62. Ibid. De' Rossi notes that Christians reported that Ezra had changed the script from Hebrew to Assyrian so that Jews and Samaritans wouldn't mix (note that de' Rossi refers to people, not texts, see Ibid., 186 & n. 29). More on this below.

63. Ibid., 187.

64. Ibid., 187-188.

65. Ibid., 187.

66. Ibid., 188. Note that an advantage for de' Rossi here is that his theory comports with Philo's testimony that the Torah was originally written in Aramaic. Ibid., 189.

67. Ibid., 191-192.

This is an attempt at making Jewish knowledge important to the Christian humanist interest in the textual tradition of the Septuagint, while preserving Jewish importance. De' Rossi must have hoped that the Christian in search of the accurate past would embrace the Greek expression of the Bible as a popular variant of Judaism much in the same way de' Rossi hoped the Jews would accept Josephus and Philo (Philo, especially, as the preeminent exemplar of Jewish Hellenic culture) as a result of their dependence upon the Hellenistic popular tradition.⁶⁸ As a common popular variant, the Septuagint would then be a common basis for Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity. De' Rossi undoubtedly underestimated the resentment that would accompany any claim that the Jews retained the original text in its unaltered form, the importance of which de' Rossi reiterated with his account of Maimonides' transcription of the original text from Ezra himself.⁶⁹ And yet if we take de' Rossi at face value in the proffer of his solution, it is an approach that he thought had the potential to bridge the differing traditions with a common Hellenistic foundation, and he expressly notes that it would be a foundation that would require the approval of both Christians and Jews.⁷⁰

3. Translation and the Ultimate Jewish Victory over Christianity

Much as with Alexander, de' Rossi emphasizes the role of God in saving His people in his presentation of the relationship between Ptolemy and the Jews. This is not simply indicative of future religious victory but political victory specifically. Alexander, as described above, saved the Jews from their Samaritan enemies. Ptolemy not just sanctifies the Alexandrian Jewish community but does so in a context that permits Jews to return to political independence in Jerusalem.

Releasing Jews who had been slaves in Egypt was a precondition emphasized by Aristeas in his encounter with Ptolemy. Ptolemy followed through, releasing not just those who had been

68. *Ibid.*, 193 (noting that the popular version was used “as well as by other Jews who lived in those days”).

69. *Ibid.*, 194-195.

70. *Ibid.*, 182. In support of his pitch to his fellow Jews, de' Rossi sought to re-introduce the Seleucid calendar from Hellenistic times, dating the Septuagint and the present era within it -- a chronology that did not depend either upon the Jewish (creation-focused) or the Christian (Christ-focused) calendars. There were three steps to this process: establishing when the Seleucid era began, calculating the length of time into that period the Septuagint was created, and subtracting that number from the current Seleucid year. The last step was easy: Maimonides had made the equivalence. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 4 n. 32. As for the first two steps, de' Rossi accomplished them using Classical and Ecclesiastical texts. He showed that Alexander ruled by himself for six years before rulership of his empire shifted to the varied lieutenants whose successive kingdoms constituted the rule of Greece. The book of I Maccabees noted the twelve year reign of Alexander, a period echoed by the early Rabbinic text *Seder Olam*. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 360 (*I Macc.* 1:7; *Seder Olam* ch. 30). Arrian noted that Alexander had captured Darius in the 6th of those twelve years. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 4; 360 & n. 8 (*De rebus gestis* III, 21.2). De' Rossi also cites Curtius V and Plutarch but, as noted by Weinberg, those sources do not provide dates. *Ibid.*, 4 n. 27. And Josephus confirmed, for his part, that the Seleucid era (naturally) began with Alexander's lieutenant Seleucus Nikator, who assumed local control of a portion of Alexander's empire immediately upon the leader's death. *Ibid.*, 360 (*Ant.* XII.119). Next, de' Rossi added to the six years the length of time for the two Ptolemies who ruled immediately after Alexander in Egypt: 36 years for Ptolemy Lago, and 31 years for Ptolemy Philadelphus. *Ibid.*, 3. De' Rossi states that Ptolemy Philadelphus ruled for 39 years but commissioned the translation in his 31st year. The sources cited by de' Rossi do not provide these dates. See Philo *De Vita Mosis*, 29-44; *Ant.* XII (ii)1 [Ptolemy Soter, 41 years; Ptolemy Philadelphus, 39 years only]. De' Rossi makes a point of referencing the translation of the Septuagint by way of the Seleucid calendar itself: the Septuagint had been translated 1883 years from date on which de' Rossi wrote (5331; 1570/71). *Ibid.*, 4. De' Rossi also sought to explain the Rabbinic period of the 6 year “Rule of Elam” as the years during which Alexander himself ruled before his imperial era began under his successors. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 360-361.

taken captive during the time of his father but any who had been enslaved previously. Ptolemy's actions are proof that God delivers His people not just from harm but into their own land.

De' Rossi also introduces his translation of the Letter of Aristeas in a way that demonstrates that he views Ptolemy's actions as taking place within the tradition of succession of empire detailed by Daniel. Many Jews had come to Egypt before Ptolemy I's conquests "with the kings of Persia."⁷¹ Aristeas had simply written king,⁷² but kings shifts the focus from a specific ruler to the time of a specific empire. De' Rossi also employs the terms "deported" and "exiled" in Ptolemy's letter; these were not in Aristeas.⁷³ Their presence references the exile of Jews in Egypt to that of Jews in Persia during that empire. Indeed, de' Rossi states that Jews were brought to Egypt by Ptolemy Lago "when he first claimed sovereign power over the country" and conquered it — imagery from Jeremiah 43:10-11 about Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt.⁷⁴ Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, of course, was the first empire.

De' Rossi translates the Letter of Aristeas itself in a way to communicate the coming end of Christian Rome. He enhances the notion of exile, first of all, as a precondition to any notion of deliverance. He specifically mentions "exile" repeatedly in Ptolemy's letter to Eleazar, giving his release of Jewish captives a heightened, almost foretaste of Jewish communal redemption.⁷⁵ When combined with de' Rossi's suggestion of a present Jewish role as cultural interpreter of Septuagint transmission history, de' Rossi's connects the history of Ptolemy's redemption of the Jews as part of that process to the possibility that acceptance of de' Rossi's program could likewise lead to redemption. De' Rossi's reference to Ptolemy's attitude of liberality is enhanced by de' Rossi's deployment of the use of language from Esther. Aristeas' statement, "Consequently, when the king in company of his friends became merry at the banquet,"⁷⁶ emphasizes the connection between the king's agreement to release all of his Jews from captivity and the national liberation celebrated in the book of Esther. Indeed, much of what may have recommended the Letter of Aristeas to de' Rossi was its story of providence: Aristeas, much like Esther, had pleaded for the Jews and achieved significant royal recognition and redress. While Esther had preserved the Jews and obtained some measure of revenge for them, Aristeas had freed Jews improperly enslaved and permitted those remaining in Egypt to live under their own law.⁷⁷ In short, de' Rossi has subtly changed the Letter of Aristeas to render Ptolemy himself an unknowing agent of Jewish redemption.⁷⁸

71. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 35 & n. 9.

72. Ibid. (where "king" identified with Cambyses, son of Cyrus the Great; "De' Rossi's translation 'kings' may have been influenced by a later passage in which Ptolemy writes about the Jews who had been captured 'by the Persians'). But de' Rossi does it again. Ptolemais, city recently built by Ptolemy, he translates as "city of the Ptolemies," emphasizing their dynastic longevity unnecessarily. Ibid., 487 n. 46.

73. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 39.

74. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 34 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 4 (Jer. 43:10-34 & n. 4 (Jer. 43:11)).

75. Ibid., 39 (cf. XII(ii)(5); Aristeas 35-40, pp. 113-17). By way of reference, Philo omitted Ptolemy's liberation of Egyptian Jews entirely. Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*, 25.

76. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 36 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 13 (noting Esther 1:10).

77. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 35-37.

78. This attitude may be one reason why de' Rossi does not appreciate the take of the *Josippon* on this account. For beyond that text's acceptance of divine sanctioned translation — explained above as something that is not a real problem for de' Rossi but is actually an advantage — the *Josippon* lacks the feature of an orchestrated buy-in of Ptolemy to his own demise. Ptolemy in the *Josippon*, the text suggests, had conquered Judea along with its books but could not read them; the Jews ransomed their prisoners in exchange for a translation. Rubinstein, "The *Josippon* of Joseph Ben Gorion: A Translation of Part I With an Introduction and Source Analysis," 88. This is a victory of sorts, but it is a hollow one, unless the Jews obtained the freedom of all Jews enslaved in Egypt, whether recently or no (as in Aristeas). There is no satisfaction of Ptolemy choosing as his own fate Jewish liberation.

Just as with Alexander, de' Rossi identified Jews with Greeks against the yet to be conquered Romans/Christians by way of referencing Samaritans, here in Aristeas, de' Rossi introduces the Edomites. As we have seen above, the connection between the Edomites and the Christians was well established. The only problem was that there were no Edomites in the Letter of Aristeas. But there were Philistines. A well-known aphorism known to the Rabbis tied God's hatred to both of these nations, and to only these two nations: "Two peoples my soul detests . . . the inhabitants of Seir and Philistia . . ."79 De' Rossi simply substituted one for the other, actually introducing the charged name "Edom" in a way that would survive censorship, for ostensibly all de' Rossi had done is make a puzzling geographical error.⁸⁰

Aristeas showed the *Edomites* -- not the Philistines -- to have been defeated by the Macedonian Greeks under Alexander's empire. When Ptolemy Lago captured Jews, he did so when he attacked Coele-Syria and "the cities of Edom" (*cava Syria et Phoenicia*).⁸¹ This is a symbolic reversal of history, an account of the Greek empire emerging victorious over that of its successor, Rome. As seen below, in the discussion of Gaius, de' Rossi will transform Alexander's victory over Edom into a victory of the Jews themselves. The result is that the Philistines, artificially characterized as Edomites, stand in for the Roman Christians, and the conquest of the former by the Greeks suggests the demise not just of Rome but of its Christian iteration.

Likely the most "useful" thing that emerges from the translation of the Letter of Aristeas, however, is practical guidance for the future. Recall that when de' Rossi introduces the translation of the Letter, he obscures the primary reason for its attraction to him: for of the two "useful" things that emerge from Aristeas, he detailed only the first, clarification of Biblical precepts, while deferring until the end of his work the "more fundamental" second point. It is a point, de' Rossi states, that he will use "for the clarification of certain problematic statements about the priestly vestments made by our later sages of blessed memory."⁸² The only evidently "problematic statements" adduced by de' Rossi is the lack of sufficient information to clothe the priests when the messianic time arrives.⁸³ That information can be supplemented, de' Rossi argues, by the testimony of Aristeas, Philo and Josephus.⁸⁴ The evidence of these eye-witnesses does not just provide historical examples of deliverance that support the certainty of the messianic age but, through helping Jews determine how properly to clothe the high priests at the

79. *Sirach* (i.e., *Ben Sira* or *Ecclesiasticus*) 50:25-26. Otto Mulder, *Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50: An Exegetical Study of the Significance of Simon the High Priest as Climax to the Praise of the Fathers in Ben Sira's Concept of the History of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 221. *Sirach* was well attested in the Talmud. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 87. See also *Ibid.*, 345 n. 30.

80. The two territories, Philistia and Edom are roughly contiguous, but cannot be confused for each other. The former is coastal territory, while the latter is well inland. Weinberg notes the issue: "De' Rossi strangely changes Phoenicia to 'cities of Edom.' It would seem unlikely that de' Rossi's geographical knowledge was so deficient that he confused Edom with Phoenicia." De' Rossi., 35 n. 8. Weinberg gamely proffers a suggestion by Momigliano, namely "that de' Rossi may have deliberately used the word *Adom* for Phoenicia, having in mind the etymology of *Phonicia* (red) and the Hebrew word *adom* (red) or the Italian *fenico e punico-rosso purpureo* which was current usage between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries." I suggest that the combination of seeking an identity infused with hope in a time of ecclesiastical censorship provides a more likely solution.

81. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 35 and Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n.8; De' Rossi, 37 (Ptolemy Lago brought soldiers to "regions of Syria and Edom" where they captured Jews). See also Josephus, *Ant.* XII:28.

82. *Ibid.*, 5.

83. *Ibid.*, 586-596.

84. *Ibid.*, 596-597.

appointed time, evidence from Aristeas, as well as Philo and Josephus, *can allow the messianic age to be effectuated.*

D. Gaius' Encounter with Philo

1. A Jewish Community Privileged by Alexander Loyal to the Second Temple

If the accounts of Alexander's interaction with Jaddua (or Simeon the Righteous) and Ptolemy's interaction with Eleazar (and the other priests) spoke to the Hellenistic appreciation of Jewish priests and thereby the Second Temple, the account of Philo's interaction with Gaius was significantly different. Philo was not a priest -- he was an Alexandrian like Aristeas. But like a priest, Philo was a leader of his community, and like a priest, Philo represented and protected the institution of the Second Temple. De' Rossi drew pride both from Philo and from that community's encounter with Gaius. Here too de' Rossi both emphasized history and Rabbinic legend.

Philo, de' Rossi announces, was known to Josephus (and to the *Josippon*) for his "wisdom and virtue",⁸⁵ but it is particularly his role in protecting the sanctity of the Second Temple that de' Rossi features. While Philo himself wrote that he went to Rome to address the wrongs inflicted by Alexandrians on his Jewish community,⁸⁶ de' Rossi shifts the focus to the Second Temple itself, subordinating the political needs of the Alexandrian community to the religious needs in Jerusalem: "It is also known that the great community of Alexandria appointed him as their spokesman and sent him to plead their cause so that they could be freed from the evil decree of the emperor Gaius who had ordered his statute to be placed in the holy Temple."⁸⁷ Indeed, while issues of Philo's specific brand of Judaism -- and his failure to recognize the oral Torah in particular -- had attracted grave doubt about the "Jewishness" of this sage at the beginning of *Me'or 'Enayim*, after having fully considered the man and his thoughts, de' Rossi had no compunction about identifying Philo as "defender of Jews before Gaius."⁸⁸

De' Rossi was eager to emphasize Philo's Jewish piety as key to his worthiness to argue before Gaius, and to prevail. He does what the king, resident in Rome, cannot. Agrippa, the Jewish king, was too upset by events to intervene personally with Gaius; he had simply sent a note. De' Rossi translates Philo's Embassy to emphasize that Philo had supplanted Agrippa as leader of the Jewish community. De' Rossi translated that portion of Agrippa's letter in which Agrippa explains that Gaius' predecessor, Tiberius, had respected Agrippa "because of my love of the truth".⁸⁹ By not translating the portion in which Agrippa had said the same thing of Gaius himself, de' Rossi elides the praise Tiberius had afforded the Jewish king with the respect that de' Rossi himself thought Gaius should have had for Philo, the individual who actually stood up for his community. De' Rossi echoes this historical endorsement of Philo with Talmudic legend. De' Rossi mentions the Rabbinic account of the oracular voice that announced the death of

85. *Ibid.*, 158.

86. Philo, *Leg.* xxviii (178).

87. De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, 158. See also *ibid.*, 630 ("In the course of his discourse, he relates how King Agrippa the first endeavored to plead the cause of his people before Emperor Gaius and to dissuade him from placing a statue of himself in the holy precincts"); 631 (citing Agrippa's letter to Gaius regarding the placement of a statue in the Temple). In Philo's work, while Gaius thought himself a god, xxv (162), his decision to erect a statue to himself as Zeus was announced only once Philo was in Rome, xxix (188).

88. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 407-408.

89. *Ibid.*, 630-31 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, n. 67.

Caskalgus (Gaius Caligulus), and the reversal of his decrees.⁹⁰ By doing so, de' Rossi makes Philo's advocacy effective,⁹¹ ratifying his leadership much as de' Rossi had noted (in the Voice of God) that Josephus had done through noting that Herod's encouraging speech to his troops was born out by events.

De' Rossi even embellishes the story of Philo to make his piety appear more Biblical. De' Rossi writes that Philo, like Esther before him, had imposed a fast upon their communities before engaging in a mission fraught with danger not just for themselves but for their people as well.⁹² That notion of the fast is present neither in Philo's own account⁹³ nor in those of Josephus.⁹⁴ For de' Rossi, Philo's decision to represent the Jews before Gaius shows Philo to be a true Jew in the same way that Esther had to reveal her own Jewishness to prevail before Ahasuerus.

De' Rossi's protagonist in the conflict with Philo is as much the Jewish community of Alexandria as it is Philo, but the real hero is Alexander, the founder of the eponymous city. Josephus had noted three gifts accorded the Jews throughout Alexander's empire: religious freedom, freedom from tribute, and freedom to fight for the conqueror while obeying their own laws.⁹⁵ What it comes down to, however, is not simply Jewish rights, but that Jewish rights are greater than those of others. De' Rossi writes: "For we know how much Alexander of Macedon esteemed and showed favor to the Jerusalemite Jews when he was leaving Jerusalem to march against Darius during the high priesthood of Jaddua. And at the requests of the high priest, Jaddua, he also granted many favors to all the other Jews of his empire. This is described by our Rabbis of blessed memory in tractate Yoma and at the end of Shemini Rabbah and by the Hebrew and Roman Josephus. And in the second book about our wars, Josephus states that he bestowed greater honors and respect on the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria than on the rest of the Greek population of the city."⁹⁶ And the Jewish population had grown to be quite a thing to behold: "Whoever has not set eyes on the double portico of Alexandria never saw the glory of Israel."⁹⁷ There were more than 1 million Jewish inhabitants, the Jews conducted business freely with their own law courts, and religious sentiment was richly prevalent as evidenced by "innumerable study houses".⁹⁸

And yet de' Rossi's focus upon the importance of the Alexandrian Jewish community

90. Ibid., 635.

91. The close association of Gaius' death and the reversal of what he had done, which was to proliferate altars to his worship throughout Judea, is most evident in the *Josippon*. Leonard Simon Zoll, "A Critical Translation of Joseph Ben Gorion's *Josippon* - Part III" (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1965), 1-2. Gaius is killed and immediately Claudius reverses his provocative decrees. By contrast, Tacitus simply notes that the upheavals ended with the death of the emperor: "But when the Jews were ordered by Caligula to set up his statue in the temple, they preferred the alternative of war. The death of the Emperor put an end to the disturbance." Tacitus, Hist. v.9.

92. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 180.

93. The closest Philo comes to reporting any decision by a Jew in support of communal action is actually the letter of Agrippa, but there the person taking action on behalf of others is the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, and the community helped is the "entire world," not simply the Jews. Ibid., 631; Leg. 306.

94. God, not Philo, was responsible for the miraculous deliverance of the Jews, wrote Josephus. Josephus makes clear that Gaius won't even hear Philo but has Philo state that the disrespect was, in effect, not to him but to God, whose judgment Gaius would now face. Josephus *BJ* II (x)(1); Josephus *Ant.* XVIII (viii)(1). It appears only in the *Josippon*. But there, the fast is not Philo's decision but rather that of the community -- and from the context, namely Gaius' sending Philo away with a declaration that the Jews of Rome should be killed, the community fasting is that of Rome, not Alexandria. Zoll, "A Critical Translation of Joseph Ben Gorion's *Josippon* - Part III," 2. Ibid.

95. Josephus, "*Jewish Antiquities* Books IX-XI," XI(vii)(5), p.479.

96. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 243.

97. Ibid., 239.

98. Ibid., 242.

requires him to ignore Josephus' testimony⁹⁹ about the testy if not hostile relationship in Alexandria between Jews and others: "At Alexandria," Josephus related, "there had been incessant strife between the native inhabitants and the Jewish settlers since the time when Alexander, having received from the Jews very active support against the Egyptians, granted them, as a reward for their assistance, permission to reside in the city on *terms of equality* with the Greeks."¹⁰⁰ In fact, it was this privilege of equality, not preference, which had been "confirmed by his successors".¹⁰¹ Non-Jewish authors too noted the respect afforded Alexandrian Greeks as Greeks due to the connection of that city with its august founder.¹⁰²

De' Rossi did, in fact, acknowledge the hostility, but he bases this upon the supposed priority accorded Jews. Both Josephus and Philo had noted the hatred of the Jews in Alexandria resulting from their respect in that city.¹⁰³ This turns the negative, namely the hostility, to the advantage of the Jews because it now serves as evidence of Alexander's favor -- his granting Jews priority in civic privileges. It was a sentiment he knew that Christians such as Augustine had noted).¹⁰⁴ Philo indicated a discriminatory taxation policy under Gaius that actually took priority, as he described it, over Gaius' plan to install statues of himself everywhere.¹⁰⁵ For de' Rossi, this was evidence Jews were Alexander's "chosen people". This is why it was that de' Rossi sorted out the Rabbinic accounts of the destruction of the Jewish community of Alexandria: not because learning the identity of the perpetrator was useful but specifically because it was useful to establish that that person was *not Alexander*.¹⁰⁶

2. Understanding Christianity as an Historical, not Religious, Development

At the time de' Rossi wrote *Me'or 'Enayim*, most Jews would not have heard of Philo but they would have heard of the Boethusians, one of the Jewish sects of Second Temple times identified by the Rabbis as heretics. Interest in Philo was resurgent in 16th century Mantua, as stated in Chapter IV above. Those who read Philo encountered a figure seemingly midway between Judaism and Christianity. On the one hand, he was a figure long appropriated by the

99. Even more, de' Rossi ignores the bulk of the evidence on this issue that comes from Philo's *Flaccus*. Philo, *Flaccus*, trans., ed. F.H. Colson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

100. Josephus, *The Jewish War, Books I-III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927) (*BJ*.II (xviii)(7), p. 513). Greeks, of course, were privileged over "aliens." Ibid. (*BJ*.II (xviii)(7), p. 513).

101. Ibid. (*BJ*.II (xviii)(7), p. 513). See generally Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002, 54-83 ("The Jews in Alexandria"). Scholarly consensus holds that the civic rights of Jews were in fact distinct from and inferior to those of the native Greeks, especially regarding religious ritual intertwined with political power. Id. at 73.

102. Plutarch in *Moralia*: Caesar Augustus entered Alexandria holding the hand of an Alexandrian friend and agreed not to make the citizens captives: "I willingly accede to your entreaties for the sake of this great city, out of respect for the king Alexander of Macedon, its founder, and as a token of my friendship for this man who is one of its inhabitants." De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 243 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 243 n. 23. Pointing possibly in another direction, however, is de' Rossi's suggestion that it was from the Jews that Caesar derived his calendar. Ibid., 515. Were this true, it would certainly suggest a dominant cultural presence in Alexandria of the Jews, with non-Jewish Alexandrian Greeks a minority.

103. Ibid., 176 (Josephus, Philo). See, e.g., Josephus, *Contra Apionem* II 31-32; Philo, *Flaccus*, 43; *Leg.* 194; 276-329; 333; 337; 346.

104. Ibid., 176-177.

105. Ibid., 241.

106. By contrast, for example, Segal argues that de' Rossi's clarification of events here is a humanistic search for truth. Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Traditions in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'or 'Einayim* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 137-39.

Catholic church; he was a Jew, to be sure, but he believed many strange things, possibly heretical. In this context, Philo's thought was esoteric possibly, and extrinsic, certainly, to mainstream Jewish Rabbinic thought. Embracing Philo, was, for de' Rossi, a way for Jews to participate in Christian humanism while establishing their own superiority. For if de' Rossi could convince his fellow Jews that Philo's advantages outweighed his disadvantages, then re-appropriating this Hellenistic Jew would have an incalculable advantage to a Jewish community whose very existence was denied continuing significance by Christians -- it could revitalize the Jews. Specifically, the history out of which Philo arose was that out of which Jesus arose. Accepting Philo's historicity, and considering him as a Jew of his time and place, meant that Jesus' existence could be explained as a historical development too, not a divine development. That was significant enough -- for Christianity then would not be a new covenant replacing Judaism but rather an historical eddy in the development of Judaism, a backwater of sorts. But there was more still to be gained: Christianity now could be viewed by Jews as Christians viewed Judaism -- an historical phenomenon lacking in theological relevance. Christianity, not Judaism, would be limited by history, rendered a mere historical (albeit persistent) cult.

De' Rossi made clear that Philo was the sort of Jew that the Rabbis could have accepted, at least as a Hellenistic variant, if not completely consistent with Rabbinic tradition. De' Rossi may have approached the topic gingerly, but I believe there was no doubt as to his conclusion: Philo was a Boethusian, to be sure, an Essene, as the term would be known outside of Rabbinic literature,¹⁰⁷ and along with his Alexandrian community, diasporan Jews. Rabbinic Boethusians, de' Rossi explained, were Essenes, and Philo was one of their group.¹⁰⁸ They constituted the Second Temple congregation of Jews in Alexandria, and they were sizable, about four thousand in number.¹⁰⁹ It was a glorious community, with a place of worship behold. And if Essenes were not the majority of Egyptian Jews, it had to be the case that their beliefs were acceptable to the majority, for they had chosen Philo as their representative to the emperor, very literally entrusting him with their lives.

Philo, as an Essene, could be acceptable to Jewish tradition, even as self-consciously Pharisaic, between Essenes did not believe anything contrary to the Pharisees. De' Rossi argues that the Essenes, unlike the Sadducees, were fundamentally similar to Pharisaic Jews in doctrines that de' Rossi considered essential to Judaism: the resurrection of the dead, reward and punishment in the afterlife, the existence of spirits apart from bodies.¹¹⁰ There was (only) one major doctrinal difference between the Essenes and Rabbinic Jews, however, that required due consideration: the Essenes denied the validity of the Oral Torah. This was a relatively recent development in Roman times, although it formed the very backbone of Rabbinic Judaism. De' Rossi's answer was to contextualize, i.e., to historicize, Philo, which is one of the features that has merited de' Rossi the designation "historian". Philo's opinions might seem strange to us, de' Rossi said, but we should remember that Philo was using the Septuagint, not our Hebrew Bible. As explained above, he was using a "popular" text to explain Judaism, so how could he be blamed for interpretations that strayed from those of the original text?¹¹¹ Furthermore, his

107. Ibid., 102. Josephus, for example, refers to three groups of Jews in Second Temple times: Pharisees, Saducees and Essenes. *Ant.* XIII:171-73; *BJ* II:119-66. See also De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 102 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 102 n. 9.

108. Ibid., 158.

109. Ibid., 107; Moshe Idel, "From Italy to Safed and Back, 1540-1640," in *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

110. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 144-145.

111. Ibid., 146.

audience was not, de' Rossi said, Jews but rather Greeks and Romans. As those populations had no conception of the oral law or of *midrash*, of course Philo stuck to the Biblical text and would not have supplemented it.¹¹² Finally, we should not be put off by Philo's use of allegory, de' Rossi argues, for while that would well have appealed to his specifically Greek audience, we should realize that Philo nonetheless advocated deriving the meaning of the Biblical text from the revealed text itself.¹¹³ Besides all this, de' Rossi explained, it was the case that certain Essenes had received the gift of prophecy from God.¹¹⁴ How do we know this? From Josephus himself.¹¹⁵ This was akin to a Rabbinic endorsement, for Josephus was unambiguously a Pharisaic Jew.

De' Rossi's opinion was favorable — not just of Philo but of his Alexandrian community; these were Jews that, as a community living in diaspora, had successfully negotiated a *modus vivendi* between their own tradition and the culture in which they happened to live. This required change of expression while maintaining integrity of thought. Put in a way de' Rossi might not himself have stated it, Alexandrians such as Philo were Jews because the content of their thought was traditional, while the manner in which they phrased it was local. On the one hand, de' Rossi phrased his judgment carefully: Philo was a man who “fell between two stools on whom no decision, as it were, can be reached.”¹¹⁶ That sounded balanced. And yet de' Rossi shows his hand openly. For having spent chapters explaining how Philo and his fellow adherents were Essenes, de' Rossi states clearly (albeit indirectly) that as Essenes, the Alexandrian Jews should be considered as Jews. “Everything I said about those four thousand Greeks is dependent on the fact that their form of Judaism was a variety of the Sadducean type,” which, of course, they were not. “However, if they were imbued with a different spirit,” namely that of the Boethusians/Essenes, “I have no quarrel against them.”¹¹⁷ De' Rossi had identified Philo as a Jew by the end of *Me'or 'Enayim*. He was not simply admirable as a leader of the Alexandrian Jewish community but its representative. Alexandrians were not Pharisaic Jews but they were Jews nonetheless.

The fact that Alexandrian Jews were Essenes undermined the notion that Christianity had succeeded Judaism religiously and instead presented Christianity historically, as a Jewish sect. De' Rossi introduced the modern historical study of Second Temple religious sectarianism, explaining Christian development indirectly as he investigated Alexandrian Jewish development specifically. The Essenes and the Christians shared a past, utilizing practices that were almost identical. Josephus, Philo and Eusebius all had agreed: the Alexandrian Essenes were proto-Christians: “They observed all the same regulations which as we see nowadays are maintained by the Christian orders of brothers and which affect all aspects of the maintenance of their community. One could thus infer that these Christian orders followed in their footsteps and took their [i.e., the Essene] lifestyle as their model.”¹¹⁸

Any Jew who accepted the Essenes as a Jewish community could therefore find an element of commonality with -- and superiority to -- the Christian community that had evidently developed equally out of the Alexandrian milieu. Unlike the Roman history through which Christians conquered and supplanted Jews, Hellenistic history allowed Rabbinic Jews not just to

112. Ibid., 146-147.

113. Ibid., 152.

114. Ibid., 107-108.

115. Ibid., 107.

116. Ibid., 159.

117. Ibid., 107.

118. Ibid., 107.

remain dominant as the inheritors of Pharisaic Judaism but to historicize their Christian neighbors as simply a diasporic variation of Phraisaic Judaism that happened to be dominant in their time and place. Instead of being sidelined in history, Pharisaic Judaism now flows forward while the Christian interpretation eddies. To the extent that he was able to persuade Jews to see Philo as a Jew, de' Rossi was also encouraging them (whether they were aware of it or no) to see Jesus himself as simply a Jewish sectarian. If Christianity itself became merely about politics, Christianity would lose much of its appeal as a rival faith. All historical evidence of Christianity's development under Roman times was by de' Rossi's time presented in a way to emphasize Christian religious meaning, but here, in Hellenistic times, while the Temple still stood, Jews could see how Christianity had developed as a local sect, just as had the Essenes.

Philo and Alexandrians merged Judaism and Greek philosophy. The affinity between the thought of Plato and Philo was well known. As Jerome had written concerning Philo over fifteen hundred years ago, "Either Philo is like Plato or Plato is like Philo."¹¹⁹ And Christians had taken advantage and continued to take advantage of Greek thought, bringing it closer to their own way of thinking. The phrase "son of God" was a perfect example, for while Christians had taken as evidence of their faith similar language from Philo, so too now Christian scholars were trying to appropriate the Hermetic texts.¹²⁰ De' Rossi must have been aware that the flexibility that he sought in encouraging fellow Jews to welcome Philo and his Alexandrian community was precisely what had happened two thousand years previously between the Greeks and this community, resulting eventually in Christianity.¹²¹ What was to stop Jews from doing the same thing and reinvigorating their faith by adaptation from other traditions? Why not strengthen Judaism by reclaiming Philo? Philo was as much a Jew as he was a Christian. And the more he was a Jew, the less Jesus was a Christian.

3. The Ultimate Jewish Victory over Rome

As much as de' Rossi was eager to emphasize Philo's piety in his worthiness to argue before Gaius, so too de' Rossi noted that God had in fact responded to that piety. Philo's speeches were "persuasive".¹²² But de' Rossi emphasizes God's role. One distinctive use of the oracular voice in early Rabbinic thought that de' Rossi chose to echo was that announced concerning the death of Caskalgus (Gaius Caligulus), and the reversal of his decrees.¹²³ By doing so, de' Rossi makes Philo's advocacy consistent with that of God Himself¹²⁴ in much the same way that Josephus had argued that the success of Herod's troops ratified Herod's exhortation to them about the importance of their survival of that earthquake.

As with Aristeas, de' Rossi embellishes the story of Philo to make his interaction appear more like Esther. De' Rossi writes that Philo, like Esther before him, had imposed a fast upon

119. Weinberg. *Light of the Eyes*, 111 n. 1.

120. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 117.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.* 630.

123. *Ibid.*, 635.

124. The close association of Gaius' death and the reversal of what he had done, which was to proliferate altars to his worship throughout Judea, is most evident in the *Josippon*. Zoll, "A Critical Translation of Joseph Ben Gorion's *Josippon* - Part III," 1-2. Gaius is killed and immediately Claudius reverses his provocative decrees. By contrast, Tacitus simply notes that the upheavals ended with the death of the emperor: "But when the Jews were ordered by Caligula to set up his statue in the temple, they preferred the alternative of war. The death of the Emperor put an end to the disturbance." *Hist.v.9*.

their communities before engaging in a mission fraught with danger not just for themselves but for their people as well.¹²⁵ As stated above, that notion of the fast is present neither in Philo's own account nor in those of Josephus. Also, as stated above, the role of Philo as representative of his people, much like Esther was that of hers, is emphasized more than in the accounts of Josephus and Philo himself. For de' Rossi, the presentation of Philo's interaction with Gaius shows that Philo was able to preserve his community precisely because God considered him to be a true Jew, in the same way that Esther had to reveal her own Jewishness to prevail before Ahasuerus. Indeed, while Philo reports that he had made no headway with the emperor at all, and that Gaius simply calmed down and decided that the Jews were merely deluded -- and not, as Apion and his cohort had intimated, dangerous --¹²⁶ de' Rossi implicitly emphasizes Philo's piety as an important component to the salvation.¹²⁷ De' Rossi also invokes the account of the Maccabees, accepting the account in I and II Maccabees along with that of the Rabbis — since both accounts, history and legend, provide the confidence that tyrants who try to usurp the authority of God for themselves, such as Antiochus, will be overthrown. De' Rossi portrays Gaius precisely as the Hellenistic leader — someone who wanted to set up images of himself for worship by Jews.¹²⁸

The miraculous nature of the delivery of the Jews under Philo can serve to show that just as God has acted to preserve the Jews in the past, so too can He be expected to act to preserve the Jewish community in the future. There is even a combined advantage that de' Rossi gains from merging the accounts of Philo as a successful political leader and that of a worthy spiritual leader, namely that the domestic political success in Alexandria can suggest the return of Jewish leadership in Judea — an event that will happen when the Second Temple is rebuilt. This combination of spiritual and political can serve the messianic impulse within the Jewish community of the time while simultaneously welcoming Philo as a legitimate Hellenistic Jew.

Recall that de' Rossi introduced the charged term Edom for Phoenicia in the Letter of Aristeas, suggesting that Ptolemy's Hellenistic empire had in fact conquered the empire that succeeded it, Christian Rome. De' Rossi makes a similar substitution in presenting Philo's Embassy to Gaius, but here, the suggested victor is not the Greeks but the Jews. In the Embassy to Gaius, Agrippa explains to Gaius that the Jews themselves had conquered not Phoenicia but rather Edom, in that they had colonized "the nearby neighboring lands like Egypt, Edom, Syria, and that part of Syria called the Hollow [Coele-Syria] and the rest of its territories"¹²⁹ As in the context of his translation of the Letter of Aristeas, de' Rossi's translation of Phoenicia as Edom is without explanation.¹³⁰ Given the connotation of Edom with Christian Rome, there is no chance that de' Rossi's Jewish audience would fail to make the link between Edom and Rome and consider the hopeful significance of that empire's victor. is a given. The understanding of de' Rossi's substitutions of Edom for Phoenicia that makes the most sense is that the change was an intentional and concealed message of hope, and that de' Rossi has used the "fact" of an enemy's defeat in the past as proof that this enemy will be destroyed in the future.

Consistent with this interpretation, de' Rossi also introduces the language of Esther into the Letter to Gaius, much as he did in his translation of Aristeas: Agrippa was unable to meet

125. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 180.

126. Philo, *Leg.*, 367.

127. But note that de' Rossi explicitly credits "persuasive pleas" of Agrippa himself. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 630.

128. *Ibid.*, 551-553 & Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, nn. 81, 82, 85, 86, 92, 93 (referencing *I Maccabees*; Josephus).

129. De' Rossi, *Light of the Eyes*, 255.

130. Weinberg, *Light of the Eyes*, 255 n. 25 (*Leg.* 281-83).

with Gaius in person and had to send his letter due to the “crisis” involving the status of the Jewish community.¹³¹ This is the same term used in Esther to describe the situation in Shushan after Ahasuerus has agreed with Haman’s plan to exterminate the Jewish population,¹³² and its use here suggests de’ Rossi’s equation of the perils of the Jews in both situations. As with de’ Rossi’s use of Ptolemy, therefore, de’ Rossi introduces Edomites to suggest that Hellenistic history -- here, God’s punishment of Gaius and His delivery of His people -- provides confidence about the Jewish people’s ultimate deliverance from the empire of Christian Rome.

Hellenistic history provided de’ Rossi with examples from which he could reconstruct a Jewish identity that would be viable despite the pressures of the Counter-Reformation. The interaction of Hellenistic emperors and Jewish leaders revealed the usefulness of history to Jews at a time in which history seemed determined to prove Jewish error and irrelevance. Jews could look to these interactions, not just in as presented by Aristeas, Philo and Josephus but by the Rabbis themselves, for a glorious past, a meaningful present, and a hopeful future.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid., 255 n. 23 (in Esther 3:15).

CONCLUSION

Me'or 'Enayim is neither history nor apology; it is an argument that Hellenistic history can vivify Jewish identity.

De' Rossi is not interested in presenting a narrative account of the Jewish people. As Bonfil noted, this is not "history" as conceived at the time. Little is to be gained even by Bonfil's game attempt to characterize the work as "cultural history". The category is amorphous, and the point to be gained -- that the writer selects from history what he (or she) finds of cultural value -- begs the question of just what use the writer seeks to make of that history. If not national development, then what?

Yerushalmi's observation that Jews have made use of the past without writing history is trenchant and impossible to avoid. We should not be compelled to identify as history even a work such as *Me'or 'Enayim* that both displays great interest in that subject and deft skill at resolving what actually happened when. Yerushalmi's own nod toward the seductively modern critical approach of de' Rossi's text is to punt it into the world of the Italian Renaissance. That response is useless in helping us understand what de' Rossi was doing, however. It assumes that in the Renaissance world the work would be recognized as history (which Bonfil indicates is not the case) and leaves undefined and unexplored just what the relationship is between the Jewish subjects of de' Rossi's work and the Renaissance way in which he deals with them. The willingness of both Bonfil and Yerushalmi to bend their criteria to include de' Rossi's work as historiographical in some way is compelling evidence that it simply does not fit.

But neither is *Me'or 'Enayim* best thought of as apologetics, as described by Bonfil. True, all previous scholars have noted a strain of what can properly be called "apology" -- in advancing his positions, de' Rossi again and again makes clear his awareness of, if not respect for, traditional Jewish positions and of contemporary Christian polemical attacks upon the Jewish faith. Regardless if one views de' Rossi as a corrector or defender of Rabbinic positions, the sense that de' Rossi's purpose is to strengthen the authority of his faith is inescapable. But to what effect? Why select certain issues for consideration and avoid others? Why structure the work as de' Rossi did? To conclude that the work is not history but rather apology leads nowhere. And to consider it as both, such as Baron or Segal, more describes the problem than helps us solve it.

Weinberg's approach to *Me'or 'Enayim* as literature -- even literature expressing a profound interest in history -- is promising, primarily because it forces us to consider what de' Rossi was doing on his own terms. The scholar who has devoted the greatest proportion of her professional life to this author, Weinberg has assiduously avoided characterizing his work, preferring instead to chart his path through his sources, to show that he reflects neither the simple image of a Renaissance humanist scholar nor that of a Counter-Reformation apologist. Weinberg's contribution may be to have demanded that any explanation of de' Rossi's work must account for the man's "Renaissance" interest in history and textual criticism in a time period most well-known for the profound religious oppression of the Counter-Reformation.

Weinberg's account of de' Rossi's work as a discursive walk through a garden, stopping to look at various flowers that were fashionable to plant, has the merit of taking de' Rossi's own description for his purpose and yet is too limited. To be sure, accepting de' Rossi's proffered image of the scholar casting his glance at topics of interest through a garden justifies the discursive approach of the chapters and of their contents -- de' Rossi himself says as much. But de' Rossi also said more. He spoke of concealed intentions that had to be divined by the careful

reader. He drops discussions, telling the reader that he will pick up the thread in a particular chapter many chapters later and invariably does so, indicating a sense of structure that is belied by the simple garden walk. And of course, the garden, as it were, is just the third portion of *Me'or 'Enayim*; surely it must relate in some way to the *Letter of Aristeas*, the translation of which is the second portion of the work, and to the earthquake of Ferrara described in the first portion, which is the occasion for its translation.

To use de' Rossi's garden imagery, if we were to step back and look at *Me'or 'Enayim* as a whole -- taking it in from the hills outside Ferrara, what would we see? We would see, I suggest, not a garden to be enjoyed but an edifice to be constructed. De' Rossi wants to rebuild Jewish identity out of the rubble of the earthquake, an identity that can survive until the Second Temple is rebuilt and the messianic age heralded. And Jewish survival of that event has prompted him to try to cast off the oppressive cloak of the Roman empire worn for so long and with such pride by the Christian nation and find renewed Jewish pride in a prior Hellenistic past.

Instead of thinking of the dichotomy presented by scholars between Renaissance historicism and Counter-Reformation apology, it is helpful to think of de' Rossi as a Reformer in the spirit of the Protestant Reformation. I don't mean to belabor the analogy; there is much here to consider that is beyond the scope of this paper. The advantage that we gain from simply raising the issue is significant though: we permit ourselves to emphasize de' Rossi's creative contribution to reformulating his faith. For de' Rossi, history is not a search for objective truth, nor is it a scalpel with which to scrape that which is demonstrably false from a religious tradition.

Rather, history is a tool in the service of faith. There are skills to the exercise of this tool, and de' Rossi has mastered them: like humanist scholars in the Renaissance but also in the Counter-Reformation, de' Rossi values original texts, philology and textual comparison. History can be used defensively, and de' Rossi does this, not by stripping away Rabbinic history as outdated history but by arguing it was never meant as history, rather as instructive *midrash*. But de' Rossi also uses history to build, to reshape.

De' Rossi used the earthquake and his interest in Hellenistic texts to present a political message to his fellow Jews: they had a choice. They could continue seeing themselves as adverse to the Roman empire -- whether as conquered adversaries who would ultimately triumph (as in the Titus *midrashim*) or as crucial allies upon whom Roman power was dependent (as in the *Josippon*) -- but that model was not working and was likely to fail. Roman Christianity was pressing hard upon Judaism like never before, and Jews were becoming more and more subsumed by the political forces about them. The Roman-Jewish narrative had long been swallowed by Christianity and the facts on the ground now made the traditional Jewish responses unpersuasive and uninspiring.

De' Rossi suggested turning to Hellenistic Greece as a model. There the Jews could find a narrative untouched (and indeed supported) by Christian hands. It was a narrative in which Jews were greatly respected for their tradition, were valued as custodians and transmitters of knowledge in the culture of the day, and were recognized by their imperial overlords as ultimately triumphant. He tried to show how such a model worked through the texts of Josephus, Philo and Aristeas, and how that model was consistent with Rabbinic texts. The structure of *Me'or 'Enayim* supported de' Rossi's approach to identity: Hellenistic history could provide a glorious past (Splendor of the Elders), a meaningful present (The Voice of God) and a hopeful future (Words of Understanding). The primary way in which de' Rossi demonstrated this message, through each of the three sections of *Me'or 'Enayim*, was to focus upon the interactions

of key Hellenistic monarchs with the religious representatives of the Jewish people: Alexander with Jaddua/Simeon, Ptolemy with Eleazar and the 72 priests, and Gaius with Philo. Indeed, the three monarchs that de' Rossi featured spanned the Hellenistic imperial period, Alexander having founded it, Ptolemy near the middle and Gaius near its end.

De' Rossi did not set out to write history. Rather, he encouraged his fellow Jews to find meaning in history. He believed that history could be of use to Jews and that by exploring Hellenistic history in particular, Jews could both reinvigorate their tradition and prepare the way for their own salvation. *Me'or 'Enayim* is not a work of history; it is a work about history. It is a work that posits that Jewish history is, and can always be, a renewable source of Jewish identity.

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