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Livornese Traces in American Jewish History: Sabato Morais and Elia Benamozegh

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Livornese Traces in American Jewish History: Sabato Morais and Elia Benamozegh

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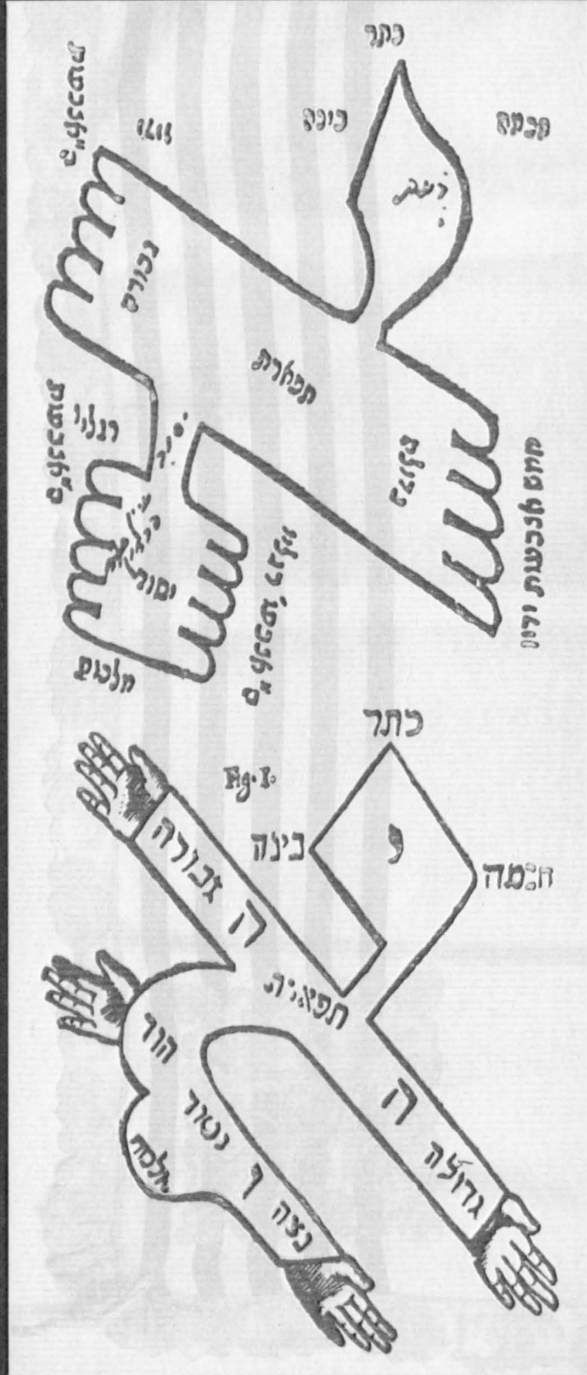
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Per
Elia Benamozegh.
 Alessandro Guetta (ed.)

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ATTI DEL CONVEGNO DILIVORNO SUBENAMOZECH (2000). Con due appendici:
 L'Origine des dogmes chrétiens, cap. III. Da *Em La-Migrà*, commento a *Genesi I, 1*.



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A. Guetta, *Filosofia e Qabbalah. Saggio sul pensiero di Elia Benamozegh*, 2000.



Per Elia Benamozegh.

Atti del Convegno di Livorno (settembre 2000)

Alessandro Guetta (ed.). Con due appendici:

L'Origine des dogmes chrétiens, cap. III, e da *Em La-Miqrà*, commento a Genesi I, 1 - di Elia Benamozegh.

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Elia Benamozegh.

in appendice:

L'Origine des dogmes chrétiens, cap. III.

e

Da *Em La-Miqrà*: commento a Genesi I, 1.

(Testo originale. Presentazione e traduzione di Alessandro Guetta)

Di

Elia Benamozegh.

טעם לשד

משיב דברים נכוחים, וטעמים מרווחים, כפי חפני ופנחס
המתוכחים, ובמקל נעם כמשפט לאשר בהלכה נוחים,
יקיים מצות הכנסת אור'חים

משפטים ידבר על ספר הויכוח על חכמת הקבלה
להחכם החוקר נשא ורם שמואל דוד לוצאטו מפארווא
מאת אליהו בן אמוזג מליוורנו

NOUVEAUX DIALOGUES SUR LA KABBALE

ou

Refutation critique, historique, et theologique
des Dialogues sur la même
de M. le Prof. LUZZATO de Padoue
par
ELIE BENAMOZEGH
Rabbin Predicateur à Livourne.

LIVOURNE

CHEZ L'AUTEUR ET C.

1865.

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PRESENTAZIONE

di A. Guetta

Arthur Kiron

University of Pennsylvania - Philadelphia

LIVORNESE TRACES IN
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY:
SABATO MORAIS AND ELIA BENAMOZEGH¹

¹ I am especially grateful to Alessandro Guetta and Samuel Zarrugh for inviting my participation and to Heidi Lerner and Benjamin Nathans for reading an earlier draft.

Among Sabato Morais' personal papers, which are mainly housed at the Center for Judaic Studies Library at the University of Pennsylvania, there exists a printed prospectus titled "Manifesto." On the top of the first page, in Morais' hand, appears the date "June 1876." The announcement, written in Italian, proposes a new work of theology for publication, aiming to serve not only a pedagogic purpose but also to stimulate, it is hoped, a new ecumenical rapport about the underlying unity of all religions, as based upon Judaism. The prospectus was issued by the Livornese rabbi, Elia Benamozegh. According to the Manifesto, the forthcoming book will bear the Italian title: *Israele e l'Umanità*. Printed beneath the announcement appears an excerpt from a letter written by Giuseppe Mazzini, the prophetic spirit of Italian unification, in support of the religious principles found in "Israel and Humanity." Benamozegh, according to Mazzini, had sent him the manuscript to read and comment upon. Mazzini managed to do so before his death in 1872. He therefore was able to aid posthumously the cause of its publication as formally proposed four years later².

Here we find a rather typical yet entirely neglected triangulation: Jewish religious humanism, Italian nationalism and American Jewish history. Where does this document come from? The city of Livorno. Where do we find it today? In Philadelphia. The existence of this rare printed notice for what would eventually

² Sabato Morais Papers, Center for Judaic Studies Library [henceforth SM-CJSL], University of Pennsylvania. Box 16, FF5.

become Benamozegh's most famous work (Israel et L'humanité) in fact hints at a hitherto unexamined relationship that ultimately bridges the Atlantic Jewish world of the nineteenth century.

Benamozegh and Morais' intellectual biographies provide a kind of case study for comparison and contrast. Both Benamozegh and Morais, despite the different locations in which they lived out their lives, first and foremost must be understood in relation to their formative years in Livorno. Briefly, Eliyahu ben Abraham Benamozegh was born in the Italian port city of Livorno on April 24, 1823³. Shabthai ben Shemu'el Morais was born there eleven days earlier on April 13. The city's Jewish population then numbered perhaps 4,000 residents, largely concentrated in a central area near the city's port and only synagogue⁴. Both were educated and went on to receive their rabbinical training in Livorno. Benamozegh's primary tutelage came from his maternal uncle, the kabbalist Rabbi Refael Curiat; the city's halakhic authority, Haham Abraham Barukh Piperno, trained Morais. In 1846, their paths separated. Morais, in need of employment, moved to the port city of "London on the Thames," as he called it, to become headmaster at a Jewish Orphan Home. In 1851, at the age of twenty-seven, he crossed the Atlantic to live in yet another port city, Philadelphia, where he won by election the position of *Hazan* (Cantor) at the city's Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Mikveh Israel. Benamozegh, meanwhile, rose to become an eminent rabbi in Livorno. Morais went on to found the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City in 1886, the achievement for which historians chiefly remember him. Unlike the reputation Benamozegh garnered in Europe after his death, Morais' legacy quickly faded from view. Nonetheless, his Yiddish-speaking contemporaries memorialized his passing in 1897 as the loss of "*der grester fun ale ortodoksishe rabonim in amerika, uhn sofek* (without doubt... the greatest of all orthodox

³ NB: Benamozegh's year of birth is frequently and erroneously given as 1822. On Benamozegh's life, see Guglielmo Lattes, *Vita e opere di Elia Benamozegh* (Leghorn: S. Belforte, 1901) and additional bibliography compiled by Alessandro Guetta, "Elia Benamozegh: bibliografia," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* [henceforth RMI] vol. 53, nos. 1-2 (1988), pp. 67-81 and *idem*, *Philosophie et Cabbale: Essai sur la pensee d'Elie Benamozegh* (Paris and Montreal, 1998), pp. 307-352. On the importance of port cities for Jewish history, see, for example, Lois Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, CA, 1999) and David Sorkin, "The Port Jews: Notes Toward a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1 (1999), pp. 87-97.

⁴ In 1823, the year of Benamozegh's and Morais' birth, Livorno's general population (including Jews) numbered 65,560. By 1846, the year of Morais' departure for London, it had risen to 82,009. Within these totals, Jews constituted approximately 4-5 percent of the population, assuming a minimum, relatively stable figure of 3,000-5,000 Jews. See Umberto Cassuto, *UJE* (New York, 1939), s.v. Livorno and *EJ* (New York, 1971), s.v. Leghorn: 3,500 in 1838 and 4,543 in 1852 "after a temporary influx from other towns. By the end of the century, the number of Jews had diminished to 2,500". For a detailed analysis of the Livornese Jewish community, its family structure and characteristics, based on public and communal records as well as census data from 1841, see Anna Sercia Gianforma, "Gli Ebrei Livornesi nel Censimento del 1841," *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti* (1841-1938). Memoria familiare e identità. Ed. Michele Luzzatti (Livorno, 1990), pp. 23-59. According to her research, there were 4,771 Jews in Livorno in 1841. For the history of the growth of the Livornese Jewish community, see Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e Pisa (1591-1700)* (Florence, 1990), pp. 60-64, 119-29, 141-54 and esp. pp. 119ff. where he discusses the sources and measures of population growth, mortality rates and other demographic information.

rabbis in America).⁵"

After Morais left Livorno, the two remained in touch. Their extant correspondence is not substantial, but Morais publicly spoke of Benamozegh with great respect⁶. He claimed to have read nearly everything Benamozegh wrote, and summarized enough of his works to provide evidence to confirm as much⁷.

Thus, each shared similar formative life experiences in Livorno and each would rise to become a revered spiritual leader and preacher. More specifically, there is one discernible clue in Morais' life and writings which also figures prominently in the outlook of Benamozegh: the concept of abnegation, *abnegazione* in Italian, *humilité* (in French), *'anavah* (in Hebrew). For Morais the concept of abnegation contained several nuanced layers of religious and political, as well as personal meaning: selflessness, sacrifice, duty and service. It is abundantly clear that these concepts were widespread both in the world of the *Risorgimento* and in the religious community in which he grew up.

The notion of abnegation that Morais brought with him from Europe, however, in reality stood in tension with the individualistic value system of the American culture in which he came to live. Specifically, his outlook conflicted with regnant versions of enlightened liberalism that strictly separated religion and state. Especially characteristic of nineteenth-century America liberalism was the enduring belief in *laissez faire*. According to this economic ideology, limited government regulation provided the surest path to achieving the public good: the greater the freedom allowed each family and individual to engage in the private, self-interested pursuit of wealth, the better off would be all members of society from the ensuing competition that would result⁸. This ideology could not have been more different from Morais' own civic humanist⁹ religious outlook that called for the dutiful subordination of one's private interests to the needs of the collective. Whereas the enlightened liberal self

⁵ The following essay builds on sections of my dissertation, "Golden Ages, Promised Lands: The Victorian Rabbinic Humanism of Sabato Morais" (Columbia U., 1999), especially chapters one and four. The quote is from the Yidishe gazeten (New York) ("The Jewish Gazette"), *Pesah Blat* ("Passover Issue"), March 24, 1899, p. 12, quoted and cited in Arthur Kiron, "Dust and Ashes: The Funeral and Forgetting of Sabato Morais," *American Jewish History*, vol. 84, no. 3 (September 1996), pp. 156-57, and p. 157, note 5. A revised version of "Dust and Ashes" appears as chapter eight of the dissertation.

⁶ SM-CJSL, Series I. Correspondence and Box 16, FF5.

⁷ Sabato Morais, "Biografie d'illustri israeliti italiani viventi. Elia Benamozegh," *Vessillo Israelitico* vol. 28 (1880), pp. 205-08; cf. *idem*, *Italian Hebrew Literature, compiled and edited by Julius Greenstone* (New York, 1926), pp. 212-17. On page 217, Morais states: "If I understand Benamozegh correctly and I have read with more or less profit nearly all of his multifarious writings in Hebrew, Italian and French, I may declare him a staunch defender of the faith, interpreted after a philosophic-dogmatic Kabbalism." Also, cf. Henry Samuel Morais, "Elias Benamozegh," *Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century: A Series of Biographical Sketches* (Philadelphia, 1880), pp. 23-27.

⁸ On the *laissez faire* ideology, see especially Sidney Fine, *Laissez Faire and the General Welfare State: A Study of Conflict in American Thought, 1865-1901* (1958; reprint Ann Arbor, 1985); for the way in which *laissez faire* specifically affected the urban development of Philadelphia, see Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968).

⁹ On the "civic humanist" republican tradition, see especially, J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), passim; Gordon

looked to one's own private ambitions as the key to a republic's success, Morais' religious republican notion of self derived from communitarian traditions of looking outward, not inward, in order to achieve the redemption of the republic.

Morais' religious and political belief systems, in short, derived from his youth in Livorno and early adulthood when he lived among *émigré* Italian nationalists in London, not from his time in America. Despite his own belief in the fundamental compatibility of the two sides of his Atlantic experience, in many important ways just the opposite was true. The variegated world of the *Risorgimento*, in short, helps explain the similarities as well as distinguish important differences among the outlooks of Morais, Benamozegh and their common inspiration: Giuseppe Mazzini.

Livorno: the port city as a place

The historical background to this story begins in 1591-93 with Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici's promulgation of a set of charters of toleration designed to attract merchant trade to Livorno¹⁰. The "Livornina" of June 10, 1593 was more than a remarkable set of privileges for Jews and other merchant groups. It was the legal precondition for the emergence of a thriving cosmopolitan free-port urban culture. The issuing of the Livornina directly affected the formation of a hospitable environment for Jewish resettlement in an era otherwise noteworthy for its expulsions, ghettoization and climate of intolerance. The favorable reputation engendered by Livorno's local conditions, in turn, attracted to the city refugees and heretics, *Conversos* and Sabbateans, dissenters and believers (Jews and non-Jews) alike. Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, figures such as Simone Luzzatto (one of Venice's leading rabbis) and John Toland (an Irish-born freemason and advocate of religious and political toleration) point to the role of Jews in Livorno's

Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic (New York and London, 1969)*, pp. 46-90; Joyce Appleby, "Republicanism and Ideology," *American Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4 (Fall 1985), p. 465 and *idem.*, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s (New York, 1984)*. This topic is discussed in Kiron, "Golden Ages, Promised Lands," *op. cit.*, chapters one and four.

¹⁰ For more detailed information about this charter, see Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e Pisa (1591-1700)*, *op. cit.*, [the definitive study of Livorno's Jews in the early modern period], pp. 41-48 and pp. 419-35; and Bernard Dov Cooperman, "Trade and Settlement: The Establishment of the Jewish Communities of Leghorn and Pisa," (Unpublished dissertation: Harvard University, 1976), pp. 124-247 and esp. chapter 4, "The Livornina: Blueprint for the Community," pp. 248-378, and additional bibliographical references provided there. For those interested in seeing an original copy of the charter, handwritten on vellum, see: <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/> — SCETI (Laurence J. Schoenberg Center for Electronic Texts and Images, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania).

¹¹ Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso circa il stato de gl'hebrei et in particular dimoranti nell'inclita città di Venetia (Venice, 1638; reprint: Bologna, 1976)*; Hebrew translation by A.Z. Eshkoli, *Ma'amar 'al yehude Venetsiyah [Epistle on the Jews of Venice] (Jerusalem, [1950])*; John Toland, *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland. Reprint of London, 1714 ed. (Jerusalem, 1963)*.

¹² Cf. Cooperman, "Trade and Settlement," *op. cit.*, pp. 247: "It is questionable whether the Jews were the major factor in the economic development of Leghorn. Nevertheless, there is no question that Leghorn did prosper after their coming, and Europeans naturally linked the two phenomena."

flourishing economy and culture in their political, religious and economic arguments for the admission and naturalization of Jews in Christian lands¹¹. Right or wrong, their treatises popularized the opinion that the expulsion of Jews brought economic decline to their former homelands and introduced prosperity to their new places of residence¹².

Livorno came to enjoy a reputation among Jews not only for tolerance and prosperity but also culture. Livorno's rabbinical academies, first established in the 1600s, included *Reshit Hokhmah*, where David Nieto served as *rosh yeshivah*¹³. In the late seventeenth century, a literary association, *Accademia de los Sitibundos*¹⁴, was established in Livorno. This *Accademia* provided a forum for Jewish men, as well as some Jewish women, to meet and discuss science, recite poetry and write and stage plays. Jose Faur has drawn attention to the religious humanist strand in Livornese Jewish thought. He has focused specifically on the relationship between some of the city's Jews and Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), the brilliant and creative philosopher of history from the port city of Naples¹⁵. Arnaldo Momigliano has cautioned against reading too much into a note in Vico's autobiography that he formed a friendship with Livornese Jews like Joseph Attias¹⁶. It is nonetheless clear that in the 19th century Livornese Jewish intellectuals like Benamozegh and Morais, as well as Morais' teacher and friend from nearby Pisa, Salvatore De Benedetti, were reading, publicly quoting and otherwise engaged with Vico's writings. In the last century, Vico has become even more widely read, particularly in Anglo-American circles, including by Jewish intellectuals such as Isaiah Berlin and Amos Funkenstein¹⁷.

Faur was one of the first scholars to emphasize Vico's importance for Benamozegh, a relationship that Alessandro Guetta has further analyzed in his recent study *Philosophie et Cabbale: Essai sur la pensee d'Elie*

¹³ Not coincidentally, the name of the yeshiva, *Reshit hokhmah* ("the beginning of wisdom.") derives from the wisdom traditions of the Hebrew Bible; see Proverbs 1:7; 9:10 and Psalm 111:10 ["the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom"]. On the rabbinical academies and scholars of Livorno, see Renzo Toaff, *Nazione*, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-58; Guido Sonnino, "Il 'Talmud Torà di Livorno,'" *RMI* vol. 10, nos. 4-5 (August-September 1935), pp. 183-96; Alfredo Toaff, "Il Collegio Rabbinico di Livorno," *RMI* vol. 12, nos. 7-9 (1938), pp. 192-95.

¹⁴ "Los Sitibundos," i.e., those who "thirst" for knowledge. Cf. Isaiah 55:1 ("let all who thirst, come for water"). See also, Flora Aghib Levi d'Ancona, "The Sephardi Community of Leghorn (Livorno)," *The Sephardi Heritage: The Western Sephardim*, eds. R.D. Barnett and W.M. Schwab. 2 vols. (Grendon, 1989), 2:185.

¹⁵ See, for example, Jose Faur, "Sephardim in the Nineteenth Century: New Directions and Old Values," *PAAJR*, vol. 44 (1977), pp. 29-52; *idem.*, "Vico, Religious Humanism and the Sephardic Tradition," *Judaism* vol. 27, no. (Winter 1978), pp. 63-71; *idem.*, "The Splitting of the Logos: Some Remarks on Vico and Rabbinic Tradition," *New Vico Studies* vol. 3 (1985), pp. 85-103.

¹⁶ Vico, *Autobiography*, trans. English by Fisch and Bergin (*Ithaca and London, 1995*), p. 173; Arnaldo Momigliano, "Vico's Scienza Nuova: Roman Bestioni and Roman Eroi," *History and Theory*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1966), p. 9.

¹⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas (New York, 1976)*; *idem.*, *Against the Current (New York, 1980)*; *idem.*, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity (New York, 1991)*; Amos Funkenstein, "Natural Science and Social Theory: Hobbes, Spinoza and Vico," *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene; consulting editors, Isaiah Berlin ... [et al.]; special advisors, Ernesto Grassi ... [et al.] (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 187-212; *idem.*, *Theology and the*

Benamozegh (1998)¹⁸. Benamozegh, Faur writes, “realized the momentous importance of Vico’s methodology” for modern Jewish thought, and how “philology and history (serve as) the links between rhetoric and jurisprudence.” According to Faur, “for the Jew, Vico’s vision of religious humanism and cultural pluralism represented the first modern alternative to the predicament imposed on him by Cartesian epistemology and the secular rationalism of the Enlightenment. On the one hand, the Jew could now participate in the cultural and political life of the state. On the other hand, this new culture taught that there are absolute canons determining the ultimate value of all cultures and societies at all times and in all places.¹⁹”

In 1876 (the same year Benamozegh’s *Manifesto* appeared), Morais translated into English a lecture by De Benedetti about the originality of the Hebrew language. In a footnote to that publication, Morais identifies for his American readers the opening reference to the “Neapolitan genius” mentioned by his teacher (De Benedetti) as “Gian Batista Vico, a deep thinker of the seventeenth century regarding the common origin of all nations.²⁰” Here we find a common ideational thread. Morais’ own views about the originality of Hebrew and the underlying unity of humanity parallel not only those of Vico but also what Moshe Idel has called Benamozegh’s Renaissance-based understanding of the antiquity and unity of religion²¹. So, for example (in the context of a public debate about the death penalty in 1870), Morais framed his defense of the Mosaic legislation in universal terms, even as he endorsed the rabbinic view circumventing the clear statements in the book of Exodus [e.g., 21:12] affirming capital punishment. In the course of his defense of Jewish tradition, Morais explained that the Bible’s divinely authored moral code was intended by God not only for “the government of His priestly nation,” the Jewish people, but for all the “offspring of Adam” who “strive to shape their moral code after

Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century (Princeton, 1986), esp. pp. 202-213, 279-289 and *passim*.

¹⁸ Alessandro Guetta, *Philosophie et Cabbale: Essai sur la pensee d’Elie Benamozegh* (Paris and Montreal, 1998), p. 109ff. (forthcoming in English translation for SUNY Press).

¹⁹ Jose Faur, “Vico, Religious Humanism and the Sephardic Tradition,” op. cit., pp. 63-71.

²⁰ See the *Morais Ledger*, SM-CJSL, p. 74 for a clipping of a serialized set of essays surveying “Italian Hebrew Literature,” published in the *Jewish Messenger* (New York), between January 1, 1875 and April 16, 1875. In this article, the concluding essay to the series, Morais translates an essay entitled “Originality of the Hebrew Language” by Salvatore De Benedetti, which Morais claims was originally delivered by “his old teacher,” the “Professor of Oriental Languages in the royal university of Pisa” to his students.

²¹ See Moshe Idel, *Appendix to Israel and Humanity*, translated from the French, edited and with an introduction by Maxwell Luria (New York, 1995), p. 394.

²² *Sabato Morais*, “Capital Punishment,” *Sunday Dispatch* (Philadelphia), February 27, 1870. Reprinted in the *Jewish Messenger*, March 4, 1870 [a clipping is pasted in the *Morais Ledger*, SM-CJSL, p. 43].

²³ For the Seven Laws of Noah, see Genesis 9:1-7; TB Sanhedrin 56a-60a. On Benamozegh and the Noahide Laws, see e.g., *Israel and Humanity*, op. cit., esp. pp. 260-80 and *passim*. There is an extensive secondary literature about the Noahide laws. It is noteworthy that Isaac La Peyre, Voltaire, and other enlightened philosophes, as well as their admirers in the nineteenth century, such as Isaac Mayer Wise, denied the Biblical account of common origins in favor of the view of separate human development. For discussion and sources, see Kiron, “Golden Ages, Promised Lands,” op. cit., pp. 218-19.

that bright model.²²” Morais clearly shared with Vico and Benamozegh a religious belief in the common origin of all humanity created in the image of God. He applied this moral code universally to all people - what Benamozegh elsewhere systematically and explicitly formulated in terms of the Seven Laws of Noah²³. Moreover, Morais not only defended the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic tradition from their critics; he also aligned himself with the well-known views of yet another leading figure of the Italian enlightenment, and an opponent of the death penalty, [Cesare Bonesana, Marchese di] Beccaria in his 1764 work entitled *Dei delitti e delle pene* [On Crimes and Punishments]. In so doing, he reaffirmed, in the context of a partisan debate about capital punishment in the United States, ideas familiar to him from his Italian background.

Easy to overlook, however, is that in the footnote to his translation of De Benedetti’s essay, Morais demonstrated his awareness of Vico; in fact, this footnote is the first trace of Vico in the history of American Jewish letters. In this barely discernible way, the Livornese-born Morais was engaged in introducing Vico to his American audience. Still, easier to find than this one stray footnote Morais authored are the parallel intellectual threads which recur in his sermons, published writings and in the institutions he founded. In a general sense, Morais’ understanding of a special, yet universal mission providentially assigned to the Jewish people to disseminate this ancient Jewish moral theology paralleled that of Vico. Despite the overall difficulties involved in interpreting the problem of causation and determinism in Vico’s notion of providence (i.e., how to discern the way in which God participates in a human-made historical process), there is little question that for Vico the Jewish people as a nation have escaped the historical cycles of birth, development and decay, and in that providentially invested sense are the bearers of a divine law whose

observance prevents people from returning to an antediluvian state of bestiality²⁴.

Morais left no doubt about the universalism underlying his own providential understanding of Jewish history when he declared "I firmly believe that the dispersion of Israel was designed by Providence to effect the moral regeneration of the gentile world."²⁵ The mission idea also was widespread among 19th century Reform Jewish thinkers, such as David Einhorn for example, who turned the 9th of Av into a day of celebration to emphasize that this holiday of lamentation (which commemorates the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews), also initiated their universal mission. Morais and Benamozegh, by contrast, embraced the universal mission of the Jews while adhering to traditional understandings of Judaism's holidays and practices. For each, Judaism provides a particular and necessary historical means to realize a universal, messianic end. In each case, the conceptualizations echo familiar themes found in Italian religious humanist as well as in Jewish traditional sources.

Livorno in the time of the Risorgimento

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic occupation and the reassertion of the Hapsburg hegemony, albeit indirect, over Tuscany, there were two decisive historical events that affected young Jews growing up in Livorno. Both factors helped to shape a modern religious humanist outlook: one was the program of enlightened educational reform introduced by the city's merchant class; the other was the political drama of the *Risorgimento*.

In March of 1832, shortly before Benamozegh and Morais' ninth birthdays, the Jewish community opened a new co-educational school of "Reciprocal Instruction" as part of a broader merchant reform program then underway to educate the lower classes.

²⁴ Cf. Mark Lilla, G.B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern (Cambridge, MA and London, 1993), pp. 16-23. Lilla emphasizes the theological and specifically Biblical dimensions underlying Vico's thinking over against the "secular interpretation" of Benedetto Croce and subsequent readers.

²⁵ A clipping of this newspaper article may be found pasted in Morais' personal scrapbook. The scrapbook, reported lost over fifty years ago by Moshe Davis in his annotated bibliography of Morais' writings, was recently donated to Penn's Center for Judaic Studies Library. It contains numerous anonymously published articles not listed in Davis' bibliography and is in very fragile condition. Some of the clippings are acidic, and pieces of articles have occasionally broken-off. I discovered the section of the article (containing Morais' annotation identifying Vico) broken-off and tucked underneath the translation Morais anonymously published of De Benedetti's work. Efforts are now underway to conserve, microfilm and scan the scrapbook.

²⁶ David G. Lo Romer, Merchants and Reform in Livorno, 1814-1867 (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1987), p. 287.

²⁷ Morais, in an 1891 essay he published sketching the history of the Jews of Livorno, praised the new Jewish educational institution in Livorno where: "scores of infants under the superintendence of well-trained female teachers acquire rudimentary knowledge and are promoted from grade to grade, always joining secular to religious studies, so that while, to a male child, that institution affords the means of becoming a bookkeeper, a mechanic or a Rabbi, to a girl it offers the facilities of gaining accomplishments fitting her for the parlor not less than for the kitchen." See Sabato Morais, "The History of the Jewish Congregation of Leghorn," Menorah Monthly, vol. II, no. 6 (1891), p. 356; cf. SM, IHL, p. 190. NB: G. Sonnino, "Il Talmud Tora di Livorno," op. cit., p. 190, who states that the infants school instituted by the Massari in 1771 was "il germe del più fiorente asilo che sorgerà fra il 1833 e il 1837, sotto gli auspici di Salvatore Uzielli." [the seed of the later flowering pre-school that arose between 1833 and 1837, under the auspices of Salvatore Uzielli.]. Interestingly, the 1771 directive, written in Portuguese, also called for co-education: "para a boa educação das crianças [creancias] de hum e outro sexo, es necessario de proveer hua maestra, qual se asuma o encargo de educar os ragasses de tendre etade fin anos seis, e as femias fin hua etad conveniente." [for a good education of the beliefs of both sexes, it is necessary to provide one female teacher, who is entrusted with the task of educating boys from the tender age of six and girls until the appropriate age (for marriage).]. I am grateful to Esperanza Alfonso for her help with this translation.

²⁸ Lo Romer, Merchants and Reform, op. cit., pp. 171-78.

In these schools, modeled on the Lancasterian system of education brought over from England, one head teacher would train a head student, who in turn would train other students²⁶. In this way, all the students became "reciprocally" responsible for each other's education²⁷. David LoRomer, who has studied Livorno's merchant reform program, explains that the reciprocal schools emphasized a "spirit of association," cultivated gentleness (*mansuetudine*) and harmony among the students. The program aimed at nothing less than the "moral perfection of the population". Also characteristic of enlightened educational reforms at this time was the growing effort to provide instruction for females²⁸. According to the new way of thinking, women needed to be properly educated because they were increasingly viewed as responsible for transmitting correct values and behavior to their children, the future citizens of the newly emerging republics. This outlook was intrinsic to the kinds of activities to which Morais would devote himself later in life as a minister and teacher.

At the same time that educational reform was underway, the secret society of *Carbonari*, followed by the *Giovine Italia* (Young Italy) journal (1832-1834) and movement founded by Mazzini, began to organize the politically divided peninsula into revolutionary cells. This circle of political activists, which included a number of Livornese Jews, began urging in print and later by force the unification and independence of a new Italian republic. In fact, one of the first *Young Italy* lodges to be organized was established in Livorno by Mazzini himself in 1830. Already as a youth, "Sabatino", as he was known, supported the republican revolution against the *ancien regime*. The household in which Morais was raised was infused with revolutionary fervor. Samuel Morais, Sabato's father, reportedly once suffered imprisonment as a suspect in a plot to overthrow the government. According to Salvatore De Benedetti, Samuel's creed, what De Bene-

detti calls "*la religione [della] sua vita*" was republicanism. In his memorial address honoring Samuel, De Benedetti repeatedly referred to his abnegazione: "his was a real abnegation, the exercise of virtue illumined by an acute sense of duty, not something done in the hope of reward ("Però fu vera abnegazione la sua, esercizio di virtù per istinto e coscienza del dovere, non per isperanza di premio"). Samuel Morais raised his children on these same austere principles²⁹.

His son Sabato similarly embraced religious republican ideas not only in theory but also in practice. As a teenager, Morais joined the freemasons, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather; as he later put it: "at the hazard of being ostracized for holding revolutionary tendencies, I patronized with all who acted secretly while hoping for the realization of Italian Union.³⁰" Morais also did so in the language and terms of his religion. He once drew upon the Exodus story, for example, to justify his claim that Judaism could never be equated with despotism or servitude, that Judaism never recognized "nobility of birth," and that the notion of monarchy found in the Bible was never intended in the medieval sense of being divinely infused, but rather only existed as a means to a greater end: the service of God. The type of king found in the Bible, Morais argued, "was only a supreme magistrate, the representative of the laws, a man who exceeded others in wisdom, who exhibited humility, and enforced justice.³¹" Moreover, throughout his writings appear characteristic sprinklings of allusions to or analyses of Jewish and non-Jewish authors such as Bahya Ibn Paquda, Maimonides, and Moshe Hayim Luzzatto (Ramhal) as well as Dante, Petrarch, and Manzoni³². In short, Morais' concept of republican virtue, like that of his contemporary Benamozegh, was fully steeped in Sephardic and Italian humanist writings as well as in the contemporary events of his time.

²⁹ Salvatore De Benedetti, "Parole di S. D-B. Lette in nome di lui il 12 Giugno 1862 nell'occasione dei funerali di Samuel Morais, morto il di 27 Maggio 1862," p. 2. A copy is located in the SM-CJSL, Box 17, FF27. "... cadde in sospetto di complicità in una conspirazione, contro il governo, e venne carcerato [... he had fallen under suspicion as complicitous in a conspiracy against the government and was incarcerated."].

³⁰ Ms. Fragment, SM-CJSL. Quoted in Max Nussenbaum, "Sabato Morais: Champion of Orthodoxy," (D.H.L. (unpublished thesis for the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters), Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University, 1964), p. 32.

³¹ Sabato Morais, "A Sermon Delivered on Thanksgiving Day (November 25, 1852) Before the Congregation Mikveh Israel at their Synagogue in Cherry Street by the Rev. S. Morais, Reader of the Congregation (Philadelphia, [1852])," p. 3.

³² It is noteworthy that each of these Italian humanists promoted the Italian vernacular as a national language, just as Morais came to emphasize Hebrew as the national language of the Jewish people.

Already within the first few years of his arrival in America, Morais was expounding his religious republicanism before American audiences. He did this as a pulpit preacher, as a teacher, as a public lecturer, as a writer and as a translator. Morais insisted on the valid role of religion in public life: "For the American people to be virtuous," Morais wrote in 1852, only a year after he had arrived in Philadelphia, "she [America] must be religious; for virtue disconnected from religion is a word void of sense; it is but a mask to conceal ambition or avarice. [The Republic] must be religious by exercising those virtues which the Bible inculcates.³³" The fact that Morais was already propounding these views so shortly after arriving in America, suggests that he brought his point of view with him to the U.S. from London and Livorno, and did not derive it from his new home. Additional evidence can be adduced in support of this claim.

In December of 1876, the same year in which he had translated De Benedetti's article alluding to Vico (and the same year in which he received Benamozegh's *Manifesto*, which quotes from Mazzini's writings), Morais delivered a public address about Giuseppe Mazzini. His address in 1876, during the Centennial anniversary of the founding of the American republic, offered a public occasion to honor the memory of his lamented friend. It also provided Morais with the opportunity to introduce Mazzini to his American audience (including American Jews) and to convey to them his understanding of the meaning of patriotism and the duties of citizenship³⁴.

Morais' personal relationship with Mazzini dated from the five and a half years (1846-51) he had spent in London where he had lived among a community of *émigré* Italian nationalists. If one report is correct, he and Mazzini clearly formed a relationship of trust. Henry Morais, in a memoir of his father, reports that Sabato, upon leaving London for America, gave his passport to Mazzini, enabling the exiled leader to travel

³³ Anonymous [Sabato Morais], "An Address. Delivered by a member of the Masonic Order on the 24th of November, it being the thanksgiving day appointed by the governor of the State of Pennsylvania", *Masonic Mirror and Keystone (Philadelphia)*, December 7, 1853, p. 3 [clipping found in the Morais Ledger, SM-CJSL, p. 3].

³⁴ Sabato Morais, "'A Patriot,' (Mazzini) Lecture Delivered at the YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association) of Philadelphia (1876)." The manuscript is found in SM-CJSL, Box 12, FF11.

in secret to the continent under the name of a Livornese Jew. After arriving in America, Morais remained in touch with Mazzini, though the extant correspondence is scant³⁵. The depth of intellectual influence Mazzini exerted over Morais, however, is readily apparent from a perusal of Morais' voluminous published and unpublished sermons and addresses.

One main idea in Mazzini's political program which appealed to Morais was the effort to ground republicanism on a religious basis. Mazzini believed "religion and politics are inseparable ... Religion is the supreme, educative principle, politics is the application of the principle to the various manifestation of human life." Mazzini made this point explicit and recurrent in his famous essay, "*Dei Doveri dell'uomo*" [*On the Duties of Man*], published in 1851. This principle of "DUTY," according to Mazzini, involved convincing "men that they are all sons of one sole God, and bound to fulfil and execute one sole law here on earth: that each of them is bound to live, not for himself, but for others, that the aim of existence is not to be more or less happy, but to make themselves and others more virtuous." Mazzini specifically criticized the moral consequences of the poverty and economic injustices he beheld. "Working Men!" he declared, "We live in an epoch similar to that of Christ. We live in the midst of a society as corrupt as that of the Roman Empire ... The sufferings of the poor are but partially known to the wealthier classes; *known* but not *felt*." The remedy, Mazzini believed, was to teach people to imitate Christ's example, to adopt a spirit and mode of action of humility and sacrifice. "Christ's every act was the visible representation of the Faith he preached and around him stood Apostles who incarnated in their actions the faith they accepted. Be you such and you will conquer. Preach Duty to the classes above you and fulfil - as far as in you lies - your own. Preach virtue, sacrifice and love, and be yourselves virtuous, loving and ready for self-sacrifice³⁶."

³⁵ For the account of Morais giving his passport to Mazzini, see Henry S. Morais, *Memoir*, pp. 12-13; Leon Elmaleh, (who knew Morais and succeeded him as minister at Congregation Mikveh Israel), Commemoration of the Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of The Reverend Doctor Sabato Morais by the Congregation Mikveh Israel in the City of Philadelphia, Wednesday Evening, April 18, 1923 (*Philadelphia*, 1923). Cecil Roth accepts this account as factual in his *History of the Jews of Italy* (*Philadelphia*, 1946), p. 457. On Mazzini and the Italian Jewish émigré circle in London, see Alessandro Levi, "Amici israeliti di Giuseppe Mazzini," *RMI* vol. 5, no. 12 (April, 1931); Dennis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (*New Haven and London*, 1994), pp. 21-48, 49-76, passim.

³⁶ Joseph [Giuseppe] Mazzini, "On the Duties of Man," *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, 6 vols. (*London*, 1891), 4:222-230.

As an observant and faithful Jew, Morais did not (unlike Benamozegh) ever try to resolve the implicit tensions between his own faith and the explicitly Christian dimensions of Mazzini's belief system. In fact, despite these differences, Morais' attachment to Mazzini was so deeply felt that in his memorialization of him, he rhetorically recast him in Jewish terms. Though "not even a Jew" Morais wrote, [Mazzini] "bore the highest type of a Hebrew, the deepest impress of a Rabbi; Aye, a Melchizedek was he, ministering to the altar of the Most High God."³⁷ Perhaps the most stirring feeling Mazzini inspired among his followers, Morais observed, was a willingness to sacrifice oneself to a higher cause, and in particular to be willing to subordinate individual concerns to the Duty and needs of nation-building. "Many a noble youth," Morais wrote, "kindled with enthusiasm by the teachings of the Apostle of truth, bent to receive the death shot as light-hearted as a fond child runs to [his or her] mother's arms."³⁸ "Abnegazione," the most crucial element of Morais' religious republican outlook, also stood at the heart of Mazzini's demands upon each individual to adopt a personal stance of humility and sacrifice.

This concept of abnegation is a constant thread which recurs throughout Morais' later moral-theological writings published in America and is characteristic of virtually every description of him. Morais may have inherited a natural shyness. Shortly before his death, Morais would still write of himself: "From the earliest years of my life which I can recall I remember myself a shy, easily scared creature, trembling all over at the idea of being brought forward, preferring solitariness to merry company." Whatever personal idiosyncracies his shyness reflected, Morais nonetheless came to formulate the concept of humility as an essential principle and a defining guidepost of practical conduct. He repeatedly emphasized this same theme throughout his life in America as the basis for the moral and religious education of young people.

³⁷ H.S. Morais, *Memoir*, op.cit., pp. 12-13.

³⁸ *ibid.*

This element is already clearly present in the earliest sermons Morais delivered in Philadelphia. Consider, for example, Morais' inaugural Sabbath sermon delivered at Congregation Mikveh Israel on March 21, 1851, only a week after arriving in America. "True worship," began Morais, speaking his first public words before the judging eyes of his future congregation, "resides in the heart, and truly it is by purifying our hearts that we best worship God; still, the ordinances [*mitsvot*] which we are enjoined [commanded] to perform aim but at this object: to sanctify our immortal soul, to make it worthy of its sublime origin... We must also be on our guard lest the essential should become secondary; we must take heed not to confound true devotion with false piety. [True worship] is simple, modest, it does not strive to attract the attention of men, but like the devoted Hannah, it speaks with the heart, the lips move and the voice is scarcely audible. [False piety] is clamorous, affected, full of ostentation."³⁹

There are a variety of sources that could have informed Morais' concept of *abnegazione*, such as Bahya Ibn Paquda's *Hobot ha-Lebabot*, Moshe Hayim Luzzatto's *Mesilat Yesharim*, and Giuseppe Mazzini's own literary output. A pre-existing Jewish *musar* (moral-pietistic) tradition easily fused in Morais' mind with Mazzini's rhetoric of humility, duty and sacrifice, albeit without him being overtly troubled by his explicit Christian references. One illustrative rabbinic lesson which Morais, as was typical of his religious education knew by heart, is found in the early rabbinic work entitled *Pirke Aboth*. Attributed to Akabiah ben Mahalalel (to whom Morais once referred in the course of a round of published polemics about the (un)importance of credentials), is the following saying: "Ponder three things and you will not sin: know from where you come and where you are going and before whom you will ultimately have to give an account. From where do you come - *mi tipah seruhah* ("from a

³⁹ News item. Asmonean (*New York*), vol. 3, no. 23 (March 28, 1851), p. 181.

⁴⁰ Pirke Aboth 3:1. Cf. Kiron, "Golden Ages, Promised Lands," *op. cit.*, pp. 53-55.

⁴¹ Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidut ke-mistikah* [Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought] translated into English by Jonathan Chipman, (Princeton and Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 67-79, pp. 111-143; Louis Jacobs, "The Nature of Hasidic Prayer," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New York and London, 1991), pp. 330-62; Daniel C. Matt, "Varieties of Mystical Nothingness: Jewish, Christian and Buddhist," *Festschrift for David Winston. Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* vol. 9 (1997), pp. 316-31. Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, 1995), pp. 105-11; 114-23, 130-32, 141-42 and *passim*.

putrid drop") and to where are you going: "*li-mekom 'afar, rima ve-tole'ah* ("to the place of dust, worms and maggots. And before whom will you give an account: before the King of Kings, the Holy One blessed be He"). Akabiah's view aptly sums up Morais' own outlook. As Morais once put it, commenting on the oft-quoted verse of the prophet Micah (6:8) ["And what does the Lord require of you: only to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God"]: "Let not the performance of religious observances be a cloak to your vanity... Let it be the conviction of your nothingness and the necessity that frail mortals have at all times to fly to the footstool of the most High for counsel and support."⁴⁰

Morais' exploration of the reason why a Jew should pray and perform *mitsvot* - to purify one's heart and sanctify one's soul - points to the difference between his own understanding of *'anavah* and various other interpretations of the concept of humility. The genre of Jewish literature which treats this vexing problem of explaining the reasons underlying the divine commandments is called in Hebrew *ta'amei ha-mitsvot*. The contrast between Morais' view and that of other streams of Jewish thought on this topic is clearly evident by the way his differed, for example, from the doctrine of self-abnegation (*bitul ha-yesh*) propounded by Eastern European Hasidim. The performance of the *mitzvah* of *tefilah* (prayer) for Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezhirech (d. 1772), as Rivkah Schatz-Uffenheimer has shown, served a theurgic purpose. To pray successfully, a Hasid had to achieve a state of self-annihilation for that prayer to be truly effective. In other words, in order for a pious Jew to effect changes in the supernal realm through prayer this Hasid would first have to be capable of completely emptying himself of all sense of self and any petitionary intent to satisfy any needs of the self. While the degree of self-denial varied, the "Hasidic ideal," according to Louis Jacobs, was contemplative prayer through self-annihilation⁴¹.

Morais, in fact, explicitly distinguished what he deemed to be the misguided and harmful mysticism of the Hasidim from that of the mystical outlook of his contemporary Benamozegh. Morais cautioned his readers that they would “err egregiously who should suppose that Elias Benamozegh countenances the vagaries of Kabbalism as exhibited in Sadagora” [in Galicia, where one of the Hasidic leaders held court]⁴². Benamozegh himself emphasized in his writing not a theurgical but rather a world-historical purpose in the performance of *mitsvot*: “This task [keeping the *mitsvot* and the seven laws of Noah] is, in fact, the only reason for Israel’s existence and persistence. Israel is to be the cornerstone for the religions of the world.⁴³” In one sense, Morais agreed. *Mitsvot*, Morais once wrote, “are not indeed the ends, but they are the means... [E]xternal observances... keep alive national sentiments, prevent the laws and the prophets from being forgotten, and... are calculated to uplift our souls to their maker and thus withhold us from sin.” For Morais, prayer and *mitsvot* were not understood as either theurgical or world-fleeing acts seeking an ecstatic union with the divine (*devekut*)⁴⁴. In a similar vein to what Moses Mendelssohn argued in the second part of *Jerusalem*, Morais believed the observance of the commandments prompted their observers to ponder the divine legislator. Morais’ was an entirely human interpretation of the need for commandments, not for God’s sake but to remind people of God, to prevent people from sinning, and to preserve the Jewish people as a nation.

Benamozegh explicitly located the concept of humility at the heart of his theosophical system. He and Morais, thus, shared an appreciation of the centrality of the concept of ‘*anavah*. The same word, however in fact referred to a different set of meanings according to each’s respective theosophical or theological system of thought. In his *Morale Juive et Morale Chrétienne*, for example, Benamozegh devoted

⁴² Morais, *Italian Hebrew Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁴³ Benamozegh, *Israel and Humanity*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ On *devekut*, see Gershom Scholem, “*Devekut, or Communion with God*,” *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-298. Note, however, the critical view of Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven and London, 1988), *passim*, who argues for the interpretation of a complete unio mystica among Jewish mystics.

an entire chapter to explaining the correct, esoteric understanding of ‘*anavah*. He identified this attribute of humility with the *sefirah* of *malkhut*, the last of the esoteric divine emanations that provides a gateway to the perception of divine mysteries. Benamozegh first presents this familiar kabbalistic symbolism and then takes a more radical step: is not the humility (‘*anavah*) characteristic of *malkhut*, identified with God’s female indwelling presence, “*shekhinah*,” he rhetorically argues, also characteristic of the humility of Jesus (“N’est-ce pas la *Schechina* qui est appelée ‘*anavah* (humilité)... et qui explique l’humilité caractéristique de Jésus, cette autre incarnation, cet autre *malchout*?)”⁴⁵ In fact, Benamozegh continues, the attribute of humility which marked Jesus’ personality is the indispensable supreme condition for the study of the amazing “mysteries” of the *merkavah* [i.e., the esoteric divine chariot doctrines flowing out of the interpretation of chapter one of the book of Ezekiel] (“...c’est que, toujours et partout, on a fait de l’humilité la condition suprême, indispensable, pour l’étude des formidables mystères de la *Mercaba*, c’est à dire, selon nous, des doctrines qui furent la source de celles de Jésus”)⁴⁶.

Though Morais clearly did not share this theosophical mode of understanding, nor Benamozegh’s radical attempt to reconcile the historical tensions between Jewish and Christian doctrines, Jewish and Christian doctrines, he did share with Benamozegh a similar conception of the instrumental function of *mitsvot* in the service of a messianic historical outcome. Both Morais and Benamozegh believed that the ultimate purpose of keeping the commandments was to preserve the Jewish people as a nation of priests instructing all of humanity about the universal truth of God’s revelation. For both writers, moreover, the fulfillment of this mission did not require a radical negation or self-annihilation or complete assimilation into a greater reality, whether it be nationhood or the divine through

⁴⁵ Elia Benamozegh, *Morale Juive et Morale Chrétienne* (2^e ed., Firenze, 1925), p. 113.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 115.

an *unio mystica*. Here we see, thus, a hint of common ground between the “rationalist” rabbinic humanist Morais and the “theosophic” rabbinic humanist Benamozegh: the end of days, as in the beginning of days, assumes unity and undifferentiated universality. For both, Jewish particularism is respected in historical terms. In the universal messianic thinking of both, however, particularism ultimately collapses into a fundamental kind of Universalism.

These writers clearly shared a similar rhetorical repertoire. Closer examination, however, shows that for each of them the same word could have different referents. From an analytical perspective, three distinct types of abnegation are discernible within the religious republican triangulation with which we began: the (non-Catholic) Christian, the Theosophic, and the Moral. For Mazzini, abnegation refers back to the image of Jesus on the Cross. Patriots adopt a posture of sacrifice in the service of nationhood and should be prepared to make an ultimate sacrifice, in imitation of Jesus, in the service of humanity. For Benamozegh, abnegation ultimately refers to the *sefirah* “*malkhut*,” represented by the female divine presence or *shekhinah*. Benamozegh took the radical step of identifying his theosophical interpretation with both the Christian understanding of Jesus’ attribute of humility and ultimate sacrifice. In this instance and in general he relied upon parallels he detected in the monotheistic faiths of both Christianity and Islam to prove the antiquity of the *Zohar*. In so doing, he felt he could successfully argue as a universalist for Judaism, his own particular faith tradition, as the original source of this ancient theology (*prisca theologia*).

Morais, by contrast, shared with both Mazzini and Benamozegh the rhetorical trope of abnegation as well as their universalist religious republican political ideals. He did so, however, from an entirely Jewish reference point, and so without an ulterior agenda of needing to demonstrate the antiquity of the *Zohar*, and thus the authentic original truth of the Kabbalah. For Morais,

abnegation as a concept neither derived from nor referred to either the image of the Cross or to the *Zoharic malkhut*. Rather, abnegation belonged to the Jewish historical tradition of martyrology which he dates from the time of the Maccabees in the second century, B.C.E.

Morais most vividly identified this martyrological tradition of sacrifice with the historical experience of the Conversos from whom he personally descended. So for example, in commenting on the question of recognizing the newly-installed revolutionary government in Spain in 1868, Morais wrote: “I will not judge Spain by her past. The atrocities committed in her name have indeed thrilled mankind with horror. The shades of millions consigned to the rack by autos da fe flit now before my vision. I see that hideous monster, brought from the Vatican, to devour Andalusia; that accursed Inquisition which turned a lovely spot on earth into a charnel house. Every stone therefore is reddened with the blood of the martyrs of the Jewish faith...”⁴⁷

On many occasions, Morais referred to the memory of the martyrs to emphasize the obligation incumbent upon each Jew to remain religiously loyal, ritually observant and to imitate the models of faith offered to him or her from the Jewish past. Already in London in the 1840s and continuing later in America, Morais repeatedly drew upon these ancestral, moral and religious meanings to fuse a new, programmatic vision of Jewish national-religious regeneration in America. At the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation *Sha'ar Shamayim* at Bevis Marks in London, where he served as the Head Master of its Orphan School, Morais delivered a Sabbath sermon in 1850 praising the Maccabees for their courage and religious strength and declaring them role models of piety for imitation for his young charges. Nearly forty years later in New York City, in December of 1887, on the eve of the opening of the first classes of the Jewish Theological Seminary,

⁴⁷ Sabato Morais, “Thanksgiving Sermon,” reprinted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 27, 1868 [clipping, *Morais Ledger*, SM-CJSL, p. 36].

Morais again returned to the model of the Maccabees' "abnegation - the regard for duty before life" as models of faith for all Jews to follow. The memory of the martyrs' willingness to die for their faith, Morais hoped, would inspire all Jews to observe "the sabbath of the Decalogue, the covenant of Abraham and the dietary laws."

The fact that Morais repeated a similar sermon on the same holiday (*Hanukah*) is beside the point. Morais' main point transcended the particular occasion upon which he delivered his sermon. A year earlier, on January 30, 1886, the day before the Seminary was officially founded, Morais declared: "the basis of the [seminary] shall be humility, not hostility, its sustaining pillars steadfastness and fealty to the ancestral traditions, not boastfulness and vainglory." Morais was unequivocal about the centrality of humility for the future seminary. It is noteworthy that from that day forward, and continuing on an almost weekly basis throughout the first year of the Seminary's existence, as he rallied financial support for the new institution, Morais delivered a series of lectures on the Sephardic and Italian Jewish heritage in which he had been raised.

There is no evidence, conversely, to demonstrate that Morais, as the chief founder of the Seminary in New York City, had imagined the Breslau Juedisch-Theologisches Seminar (or Zecharias Frankel's theory of positive-historical Judaism which is often associated with it), as a fundamental model to imitate. Rather, Morais tried to implant his notion of abnegation and the role models he identified with its core meaning at the heart of the institution. As he put it in his first presidential address in 1890: "The knowledge imbibed in our Theological Seminary shall tend to qualify believing Jews to go forth as heralds of duty; not such as is woven into a laurel of self-glorification, neither such as is forged into a lever to raise up high one's material interests, but a knowledge free from egotism, fruitful of humanizing and soul-elevating results."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Sabato Morais, "Address by Rev. S. Morais, L.L.D.," PJTSA, 2nd Biennial Convention [held on March 16, 1890], p. 27.

Taken together, these elements of abnegation — the defining place of the human condition of mortality as the ultimate measure of things, loyalty to tradition and family, the republican duties of citizenship and sacrifice, underscored by a vivid historical consciousness of the *Converso* martyrs from whom he descended, and the severe morally refining principle of humility, of being but a putrid drop destined to become dust whose final reckoning will be made by God not man - recur in Morais' words and deeds not merely as a personality trait but as part of a broad religious and political world view. This worldview was based in particular on the prophetic teachings of the Bible, the rabbinic tractate *Aboth*, the Sephardic *musar* tradition. It emerged in the context of the *Risorgimento*, and specifically in relation to the teachings of Giuseppe Mazzini. Morais brought his rabbinic republicanism with him to America in 1851. He devoted the remaining forty-seven years of his life in the United States to advancing it in a programmatic way in the community in which he lived.

To conclude: rabbinic humanists like Benamozegh and Morais advocated abnegation as a religious-political stance. They embraced Mazzini's teachings and fused them with Jewish prophetic, theosophical and *musar* traditions. I would suggest here that Faur's basic insight regarding the distinction between humanism and enlightenment is correct. The fundamental antagonism between humanism and enlightenment for some Jews, however, was not between religion and secularism. The most dramatic change affecting them in the nineteenth century was the relationship of the individual to the state. As Jews became fully enfranchised citizens, their coercive mode of self-government as an autonomous community by necessity changed⁴⁹. Henceforth, each Jew would relate individually to the state and not indirectly through the mediated relationship of the self-governing Jewish communal authority. To act *religiously* as a citizen

⁴⁹ Cf. Salo [W.] Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?" *Menorah Journal* vol. 14, no. 6 (June 1928), p. 524: "Emancipation was a necessity even more for the modern state than for Jewry; the Jews' medieval status was anachronistic and had to go." See also, Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, "Emancipation and the Liberal Offer," *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*, ed. Birnbaum and Katznelson (Princeton, 1995), pp. 4-36

involved fashioning a new notion of the individual. For some liberals, the separation of religion and state, and the sharp delineation of private and public spheres, seemed the obvious solution. For Mazzini and those who identified with his outlook, the individual citizen had to be religious and the content of their religiosity had to inform the character of their patriotism.

The legal emancipation of Jews across Europe and the *de facto* reality of citizenship for Jews in America created new and unforeseen kinds of tensions. Philosophically, two versions of the self now stood in conflict: the self-referential self and the self-abnegating self. The former celebrated the autonomy and natural rights of the individual, the autonomy and universality of reason, the separation of Church and State, and defended on moral and sometimes religious grounds the pursuit of one's private economic interests; the other subordinated private interests to the needs of the collective, rejected the autonomy of reason, subordinating it to the needs of moral-religious cultivation, saw religion and state as inseparable and demanded the emptying of the ego as a precondition of both piety and patriotism. The Sephardic model Morais advanced (and in keeping with Mazzini's teachings) resolved this conflict not by separating religion from state but by basing state on religion, with the Hebrew Bible serving as the source of a universal moral legislation in keeping with a belief in the common origin of all humanity and universal applicability of the Noahide laws.

Morais, as his contemporaries tell it, was the outstanding exponent and defender of the enlightened orthodox Jewish point of view and the founder of an institution to secure its place in American society. To understand the origins of that institution, we must understand its chief founder. To understand Morais and Benamozegh, we must return to their sources. In other words, we first must look to the port city of Livorno.