

Jonathan Ray. *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry*. New York: New York University Press, 2012. x + 214 pp. \$39. ISBN: 978-0-8147-2911-3.

As is well known, 1492 marked the end of centuries of Jewish presence and culture under generally favorable conditions in medieval Spain. Faced with the choice of conversion to Christianity or expulsion, an actual minority of the Jews chose the latter course and set off for various destinations, chiefly Portugal and Italy at first, but also ultimately the Ottoman Empire (including North Africa and the Land of Israel).

This book purports to chronicle these movements in the sixteenth century (why the fifteenth is ignored is not clear) and focuses especially on the reconstitution of Jewish communities in their Mediterranean dispersion. Obviously, in a mere 162 pages, not counting footnotes and bibliography, it is impossible to do more than provide a rough outline of this long and complex story. Rather than expecting a detailed account even of the most important aspects of these “migrations,” as they are called, the reader will find a broadly sketched canvas clearly incomplete but nonetheless aesthetically pleasing. That is to say, the author’s elegant prose and easy writing style enable fast scanning, and lest major points be missed there are helpful conclusions to each of the chapters.

The arguments that communities had to be restructured and that there was often conflict among the settlers from various parts of Spain, who meanwhile had lived for a generation or more in Portugal or Italy before being uprooted yet again to settle in the Ottoman Empire, is not surprising. The strength of this book lies in its focus on this and other aspects of social and communal history, but with only fleeting glimpses of religious or cultural developments.

Because of this, major figures, central also to communal and social history, are missing. There is no mention here of important dynasties of scholars and writers, such as the Ibn Yahya family of Portugal, Italy, and later the Ottoman Empire. Members of this family were authors of important books and some also were prominent physicians. The last of the line was Tam Ibn Yahya in Constantinople, where he was the physician of Sultan Suleiman. He was said to be so learned in Muslim law that judges used to consult with him. He had two sons: Joseph, also a physician to the sultan; and Gedalyah (not the chronicler), who was also a physician in Salonica and a friend of Amatus Lusitanus (unmentioned here), a Marrano and one of the most famous physicians of the age, who fled Portugal for Italy, living in various cities before settling in Dubrovnik (an important Sefardic center also not mentioned by Ray). Finally, he went to Salonica, where his Jewish sympathies were openly shown. He dedicated the fifth volume of his medical work *Centuries* to Joseph Nasi, the famous Jewish courtier and Marrano (who is only briefly mentioned). Space does not here permit discussion of other important physicians and courtiers, such as Moses Hamon, physician to Suleiman I, or Moses Benveniste (or Bienveniste) of Salonica (b. ca. 1550–60), who was involved in the political intrigues surrounding the treaty with Spain in 1586 and also was

a supporter of the small but significant group of Hebrew poets in Salonica and Rhodes.

We miss also any discussion of the important diplomatic efforts of such leaders as Jacob Roti, *nagid*, or head, of the Sefardic community of Morocco between 1530 and 1550, whose efforts were directly responsible for the alliance between Portugal and Morocco. While noting the constant quarrels among rabbis and between congregations in Salonica, no mention is made of the disastrous fire in 1545 that destroyed twenty of the thirty-six synagogues and cost numerous lives. This is reported to have been the result of a quarrel between the famous Rabbi Joseph Ibn Lev and another individual.

The book indeed partly fulfills its promise, but understandably, given the limitations of space imposed by modern publishers, much is left out. It should serve as useful supplementary reading for undergraduates and a lucid general survey for lay readers. The bibliography is balanced and chosen with an eye to accessibility, although many expected titles, both of books and articles, are missing.

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